



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Coreper/Council

Subject: Draft Council conclusions on EU statistics

Delegations will find attached the draft Council conclusions on EU statistics, as prepared by the Economic and Financial Committee.

Encl.:

Draft Council conclusions on EU statistics

Following the priorities set in the ECOFIN Council Conclusions of 10 November 2009, 10 November 2010, and 20 June 2011 and on 30 November 2011 on statistical governance, priority setting, robust quality management, and the Status Report on Information Requirements in EMU, the ECOFIN Council has reviewed the progress made in these areas and endorses the EFC opinion on EU Statistics.

EU Statistical Governance

- The Council WELCOMES the Commission proposal for amending Regulation (EC) 223/2009 on European statistics, in view of reinforcing the governance framework especially regarding professional independence of the national statistical institutes.
- The Council WELCOMES the strengthening of the national statistical institutes' coordination role which is key to ensure the implementation of the Principles of the Code of Practice for European Statistics throughout the European Statistical System, while recognising that statistical functions of national central banks performed through the European System of Central Banks are coordinated under a separate legal framework.
- The Council ALSO WELCOMES the parallel adoption in September 2012 of a new decision on Eurostat, which clarifies and reinforces within the Commission the role and responsibilities of Eurostat, and considers that this decision signals the renewed commitment from the Commission on confidence in European statistics developed, produced and disseminated by Eurostat.

- The Council CONSIDERS that Commitments on Confidence in statistics are an important feature of the statistical governance and could serve to enhance its credibility and that Member States should commit themselves to further enhance confidence in European statistics by complying with the legal obligations to be agreed in the course of amending Regulation 223/2009. The Council ACKNOWLEDGES that national legislation in some Member States already provides the statistical governance requirements as stipulated by the European Statistics Code of Practice. It stresses the importance to quickly establish and implement Commitments on Confidence in statistics in all Member States, either by provisions similar to those adopted by the Commission with its Decision on the role of Eurostat or by the developments of the Commitment, taking fully into account national specificities with the launch of pilot exercises as a first stage, as stated in the Council conclusions of 30 November 2011.
- The Council WELCOMES the fourth report of the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) and its recommendations, acknowledging the progress achieved at Eurostat level and in the implementation of national improvement actions to adhere with the Code, but underlining the need to accelerate the pace of progress. The Council AGREES with ESGAB in urging governments to acknowledge their share of responsibility in reinforcing professional independence and strengthening the credibility of European statistics.

Quality assurance of key statistical output

- The Council WELCOMES the progress made in the implementation of a preventive approach to enhance the quality of EDP statistics, in particular regarding upstream dialogue visits. It TAKES NOTE that the delegated act sanctioning the manipulation of EDP statistics will enter into force in November 2012. The Council ASKS the Commission to fully take into account national institutional organisations, in particular when requiring the assistance of staff from Member States' administrations.
- The Council WELCOMES the progress made in the preparation of the implementation of Directive 85/2011 for enhancing the collection and publication of short-term public finance statistics by Member States (monthly and quarterly) and Eurostat (quarterly) and of annual off-balance sheet information on contingent liabilities by Member States. The Council AWAITS the conclusions of the Commission's study on the suitability of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) for Member States.
- The Council REQUESTS that Eurostat presents by early 2013 to the EFC an interim report on the impact of the new ESA 2010 on public finance statistics.

The 2012 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in EMU

The Council ENDORSES the 2012 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in the EMU.

In particular, the Council

- WELCOMES the progress since 2011, and notes that the availability and quality of PEEIs generally have improved but that a harmonised indicator on house sales is not yet available. Timeliness of the PEEIs has improved slightly, but the release dates still remain well behind the targets for quarterly sector accounts and national accounts employment.
- WELCOMES the strategy and the roadmap outlining the further development of the PEEIs that gives the highest priority to the implementation of the current targets and the punctual dissemination of the agreed PEEIs showing a high reliability and acknowledges that some of the measures may take several years to implement.
- NOTES that Eurostat and the ECB participated in defining the indicators for the G20 data gaps initiative that emerged with the economic and financial crisis; these efforts have contributed to the publication of quarterly G20 GDP growth data since March 2012.
- CONSIDERS that co-operation with partner countries and organisations should be reinforced in order to ensure the timely availability of the required data in all countries involved.
- TAKES THE VIEW that the provision of G20 aggregates fulfilling the data quality frameworks in place would be required.
- INVITES Eurostat and the ECB to provide an updated EFC Status Report on the fulfilment of the updated EMU statistical requirements in 2013.

Scoreboard statistics for the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure, ESA 2010 and other structural statistics

- The Council **RECALLS** the importance for the credibility of the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure of having timely statistics of the highest quality for inclusion in the scoreboard and **STRESSES** the need for the Commission (Eurostat) to pursue all necessary initiatives to assure a reliable procedure for the completion of these statistics as well as a continuous improvement of the underlying statistical information. The Council **INVITES** the European Statistical System and the European System of Central Banks to continue to work together on improving the underlying statistics and to ensure comparability.
- The Council **WELCOMES** the thorough process of the ESA revision. The Council is **AWARE** that ESA 2010 is essential for the availability of the required comparable macro-economic statistics for EU purposes and that its successful implementation represents a major investment for the Member States and the Commission. The Council **EMPHASISES** and supports the needs for a swift adoption of the ESA 2010 Regulation.
- The Council **WELCOMES** the progress made in meeting the needs on structural statistics and **UNDERLINES** the need for further work in this area, as outlined in the EPC Report. In particular, the Council **CALLS UPON** Eurostat and the Member States to draw up an action plan to significantly improve the timeliness of statistics on inequality, poverty income and social exclusion in the context of Europe 2020.

Efficiency and priority setting. The modernisation of the European Statistical System (ESS)

- The Council WELCOMES the developments on the modernisation of the European Statistical System and AGREES that improvements in the efficiency of European statistics are essential, and that this could be a good long-term strategic option, especially in combination with a well-functioning priority-setting and simplification strategy, while at the same time ensuring the high quality of statistics in all Member States and taking into account the cost-benefit principle.
- The Council ACKNOWLEDGES that prioritisation in the development and production of statistics based on a strategic priority setting mechanism together with modern methods of statistical production as outlined in the Commission Communication 404/2009 are important elements in the process of efficient use of resources and channelling them into priority areas. Greater progress should also be made in the identification of negative priorities.
- The Council ACKNOWLEDGES that efficiency gains should be searched in particular through a more integrated ESS, as far as they are carefully assessed. For instance, it WELCOMES the exploration of the possibilities for an interoperable European system business registers (ESBRs) and towards single market statistics (SIMSTAT), that need to be fully examined for their potential to reduce burdens, maintain quality of all statistics, also in comparison to any other relevant option.
- It CALLS UPON Member States and the Commission to secure resources and to enhance the collaboration within the ESS based on a sound distribution of roles and tasks between its members, following cost-benefit analyses before implementation of major modernisation projects.

The European Court of Auditors report 'Did the Commission and Eurostat improve the process for producing reliable and credible European statistics'

- The Council TAKES NOTE of the Special Report 12/2012 'Did the Commission and Eurostat improve the process for producing reliable and credible European statistics', which examines whether the Commission and Eurostat have taken all steps necessary to fulfil their role in achieving the implementation of the Code of practice throughout the ESS and whether Eurostat manages the European statistical programme as a tool for improving the production of European statistics well. The Council WELCOMES that many of the elements expressed in the report are being addressed, including with the Commission decision on Eurostat of September 2012, the proposals for amending Regulation 223/2009, and the European Statistical Programme 2013-2017. The ongoing work on amending Regulation 223/2009 should also contribute to better implement the code of Practice.
- The Council IS AWARE that the European statistics Code of Practice represents a challenge for the ESS and will continue to support the ESS efforts to fully implement it.
- The Council NOTES that the proposed Regulation on the European Statistical Programme 2013-2017 includes provisions for putting in place a strategic prioritisation approach and implementing more efficient methods for producing high-quality European statistics, in order to better allocate scarce resources. The Council WELCOMES these new developments.
- The Council ENCOURAGES the Commission and Eurostat to continue the actions and efforts aimed at addressing the points raised by the Court of Auditors.
- INVITES Eurostat to inform the EFC on progress in meeting the points raised by the Court of Auditors.