



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 31 October 2016
(OR. en)

13805/16
ADD 1

ECOFIN 970
UEM 344
STATIS 87

COVER NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	2015 ESGAB's Recommendation and Eurostat's improvement in response to the recommendations

Delegations will find attached the 2015 ESGAB's recommendation and Eurostat's improvement in response to the recommendations.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EUROSTAT

2015 ESGAB'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND EUROSTAT'S IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Eurostat's compliance with the Code of Practice – follow-up of 2014 peer review

Recommendation 2015/1

When appointing the Director General of Eurostat, the Commission should in future ensure that candidates' professional competences in the field of statistics are independently assessed. ESGAB could be consulted in the course of the recruitment process and informed, where applicable, why its advice has not been taken into account.

Current situation:

Eurostat Directors-General as well as all other senior managers of the Commission are recruited and appointed following the transparent policy established by the Commission, based on guidelines which are publicly available. The policy and the guidelines correspond to the requirements set out in the Code of Practice. The indicator of the Code related to professional competence is not defined therein. The assessment of competence remains with the appointing authority alone. Strong indicators for assessing the competence of Eurostat future Directors-General are established in the Commission Decision on Eurostat (2012/504/EC). ESGAB's tasks are defined in Decision No 235/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and does not include involvement in the recruitment of the Director-General of Eurostat.

Improvement action:

As Eurostat has a divergent view on the recommendation no improvement action is proposed

Timeline:

N.A.

Recommendation 2015/2

Indicators of professional competence in the Code of Practice (especially 1.2 and 1.8) should be more clearly defined in order to improve compliance assessment

Current situation:

Clear definition for indicators of professional competence in the CoP - The action is being launched by Eurostat.

Improvement action 2015/2:

The definition for indicators of professional competence in the ES Code of Practice will be reviewed and clarified, as appropriate, under the guidance of the ESS high-level group on quality.

Timeline:

Before end 2018

Recommendation 2015/3

The selection criteria for future Eurostat Directors-General should include very good knowledge and experience in fields relevant to Eurostat's mission. The criteria should be explicitly stated in the vacancy notice for open calls for candidates and taken into account in internal rotations of Commission Directors-General

Current situation:

Eurostat Directors-General as well as all other senior managers of the Commission are recruited and appointed following the transparent policy established by the Commission, based on guidelines which are publicly available. The policy and the guidelines correspond to the requirements set out in the Code of Practice. The indicator of the Code related to professional competence is not defined therein. The essential requirement for appointing the Director-General, according to the Code, is his or her professional competence. The indicator related to professional competence is not defined in the Code, in particular not by any reference to statistical qualifications as more relevant than other qualifications. Strong indicators for assessing the competence of Eurostat future Directors-General are established in the Commission Decision on Eurostat (2012/504/EC). The assessment of competence remains with the appointing authority alone.

Improvement action:

As Eurostat has a divergent view on the recommendation no improvement action is proposed

Timeline:

N.A.

2015/4

Reasons for dismissing the Director General of Eurostat should not compromise his/her professional independence and should preferably be specified in legislation on European statistics. Until the next revision of the relevant legislation, this could be incorporated as good practice in other publicly available documents.

Current situation:

The conditions for any dismissal of Commission officials – including Directors-General and other senior management – are set out in Article 5 of the staff regulations. The staff regulations, in combination with the Commission Decision on Eurostat, correspond to the Code of Practice indicator on having the conditions for dismissal specified in a legal framework.

Improvement action:

As Eurostat has a divergent view on the recommendation no improvement action is proposed

Timeline:

N.A.

Recommendation 2015/5

Eurostat should seek to set an example in the ESS by further reducing the frequency and number of statistics subject to pre-release access.

Current situation:

Pre-release rules are described in sections 2 and 3 the Protocol on impartial access to Eurostat data for users.

Improvement action 2015/5:

Pre-release rules will be systematically reviewed and practices analysed in order to identify further possible reduction of such cases.

Timeline:

12/2016

Recommendation 2015/6

The pre-release rules should be more easily accessible to the public and state clearly when and to whom statistics are available before their publication.

Current situation:

Pre-release rules are described in sections 2 and 3 the Protocol on impartial access to Eurostat data for users. The protocol is available at Eurostat website under 'About Eurostat – Policies – Quality- European Statistics Code of Practice – Implementation in Eurostat'

Improvement action 2016/6:

A text summarising the pre-release policy (including beneficiaries of pre-releases) and a link to the protocol on impartial access to Eurostat data for users will be published more visibly at the Eurostat website under 'News – Release calendars'.

Timeline:

06/2016

Recommendation 2015/7

Pre-release access should be monitored transparently and publicly.

Current situation:

Pre-release rules are described in sections 2 and 3 the Protocol on impartial access to Eurostat data for users. Eurostat Directors are annually informed of its application.¹

Improvement action 2015/7:

The annual monitoring of the application of the Protocol on impartial access to Eurostat data for users will continue. The text indicated in the improvement action of recommendation 2015/6 will mention this monitoring.

Timeline:

06/2016

Challenges for the ESS: data revolution, resource constrains and regionalisation

Recommendation 2015/8

ESGAB urges the Greek Government and all responsible political actors to take action as soon as possible to build trust in the modern statistical system established over the past five years.

Current situation:

Following the departure of Mr Andreas Georgiou (previous President of ELSTAT) at the end of his mandate on 2 August 2015, an international selection panel of experts (ESTAT had also designated a representative) was set up to select his successor. Mr Athanassios Thanopoulos was unanimously proposed by the panel and on 1 March was appointed by the Minister of Finance.

Eurostat closely monitors the situation in ELSTAT in accordance with the principles of the CoP and the Joint Overall Statistics Greece Action Plan (JOSGAP).

Eurostat also discussed with the new President of ELSTAT and the SecGen the organisation of a Conference in Greece in autumn 2016 in order to enhance visibility of ELSTAT and the principles of independence and believes this will benefit the perceptions and the support to ELSTAT staff.

Improvement actions 2015/8:

Continue monitoring the situation in Greece and around ELSTAT through the quarterly reporting via JOSGAP.

Consider organising a conference on "Rebuilding trust in statistics" with the involvement of high level EC/EU officials

Timeline:

JOSGAP monitoring every quarter.

Conference to be organised by end 2016 (if the political situation allows for it).

Recommendation 2015/9

ESS members should promote greater awareness and recognition of official statistics as a public good. ESS members and actors in the political and administrative system should engage in dialogue more intensively than in the past, jointly developing and implementing concrete action to improve the current situation.

Current situation:

A lot of actions are already undertaken by ESS members to promote greater awareness about and recognition of official statistics (e.g. implementation of the ESS Vision 2020). Nevertheless, some further specific actions may be envisaged to improve the current situation.

Improvement actions 2015/9:

- (1) Support the initiative by the European Statistical Advisory Committee to launch a European Statistics Day on the 20th of October to keep official statistics on the agenda across Europe during the five year gap between the World Statistics Days.
- (2) Prepare a draft ESS Quality Declaration and propose the outline, including possible building blocks of a branding campaign; present the ESS Quality Declaration to the ESS Committee for endorsement.

Timeline:

End 2016

Recommendation 2015/10

ESS members (in particular NSIs and Eurostat) should improve cost accounting systems and provide early estimates of the costs of producing European statistics in order to ensure adequate comparability and coverage. The estimates should be used for a benchmarking exercise covering statistical systems at international level

Current situation:

- (1) First set of products identified.
- (2) Link between products and EDAMIS flows established.
- (3) In the ESS Resource Director Group in December three countries presented their experiences.

Improvement actions 2015/10.1 to 2015/10.3:

1. To test the methodology for the cost assessment of European statistics in the ESS by launching a test phase on selected statistical products - Deadline: 3rd quarter of 2016.

2. To launch a cost assessment exercise covering all European statistics in the ESS - Deadline: 4th quarter 2016.
3. To share experience between the NSIs on their cost accounting systems – Deadline: end of 2017.

Timeline:

1. 3rd quarter of 2016.
2. 4th quarter 2016.
3. end of 2017.

Recommendation 2015/11

ESS members should measure trust in official statistics so as to gauge cost effectiveness and make the value of official statistics more apparent.

Current situation:

Eurostat asks each year, in its general user satisfaction survey, if users trust the statistics produced by Eurostat.

Improvement action 2015/11:

Eurostat will propose to the ESSC to add a similar question on trust in the user satisfaction surveys organised by the Member States, for those that do not ask such question yet.

Timeline:

12/2016

Recommendation 2015/12

ESS members should step up their efforts to introduce or improve multiannual resource planning and sustainable funding for European statistics.

Current situation:

The ESP 2013-2017 need to be extended and amended for including new statistical outputs to align the statistical production with the 10 political priorities, complemented by major initiatives to reduce burden on respondents and costs on NSIs (European approach to statistics and investment in the infrastructure and new sources).

Improvement action 2015/12:

Make a proposal of ESP extension with a substantial budget increase

Timeline:

End 2016

Recommendation 2015/13

- a) The nature of the future challenges underlines the importance of ESS leadership in exploring and using new methodologies and new data sources such as Big Data and the need further to expand professional capacity and continuous learning for the ESS as a whole.
- b) Training initiatives such as the European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) and the European Master's in Official Statistics (EMOS) should take full account of the changing landscape of European statistics.

Current situation:

a) The ESSnet on Big Data demonstrates strong ESS leadership in exploring and using big data for official statistics; the pilot projects will explore several of the new data sources and will be the subject of specific grant agreements during the period 2016-2018. The operational work is complemented by a specific Methodological Framework contract on Big Data and Macroeconomic Nowcasting, as well as by a dedicated study covering ethics, legislation, communication and the development of a training strategy. A wide range of data science ESTP courses is included in the 2016 catalogue together with contribution to related international events.

b) The European Master in Official Statistics (EMOS) curriculum already includes such topics as big data, integrated sources, data visualisation. Notably, the EMOS learning outcomes were further developed by the EMOS Board in 2015 while taking new skills and competences into account. The ESTP annual programme for 2016, developed under the new Framework Contracts, includes an extensive training offer on data science.

Improvement actions 2015/13.1 to 2015/13.4

1. Organise a dedicated networking seminar to launch the process of expanding the work carried out to meet the need for specific new methods for new data beyond Big Data towards the promotion of Data Science.
2. Launching of specific Methodological Framework Contract in the field of Data Integration with particular attention to Data Virtualisation.
3. Support the development of the professional capacity in the ESS by including dedicated training modules in the 2017 ESTP.
4. The evaluation of the EMOS project including the curriculum is foreseen in 2017, thus providing an opportunity to further align the curriculum with emerging learning needs.

Timeline:

1. Before end 2016
2. Before end 2016
3. 12/2016
4. 12/2017

Recommendation 2015/14

The quality framework and the Code of Practice for European statistics should accommodate anticipated developments and challenges in the changing landscape of European statistics. To this end, a revision of the Code of Practice should commence shortly.

Current situation:

Commence revision of the CoP - The action is being launched by Eurostat.

Improvement action 2015/14:

The mandate of ESS high-level group on quality is expected to be adopted in 2016.

Timeline:

Before end 2016

Recommendation 2015/15

The NSIs in countries with statistical production in regions with a high degree of autonomy should be alert to the challenges posed by the regionalisation process and adopt a strong leadership role and effective coordination procedures. To this end, a clear and definite mandate and wide coordination powers should be enshrined in legislation.

Current situation:

The amended Regulation 223/2009 requires National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) to ensure national coordination of Other National Authorities (ONAs) responsible for the development, production and dissemination of European Statistics. However, some NSIs - especially in countries where European statistics are produced by many different entities - may find it challenging to ensure efficient and effective coordination of all ONAs due to complex decision-taking procedures and reporting lines.

Improvement actions 2015/15.1 to 2015/15.4:

- 1 - Eurostat to clarify the scope of European statistics and establish a catalogue of statistical products to support the identification of ONAs
- 2 - NSIs to provide a complete overview of their national statistical systems
- 3 - Mandate of the national Transmission Coordinators (TCOs) to be revised with a view to providing harmonised elements
- 4 - Eurostat to support member states' establishment of Commitments on Confidence or, in the absence of such a Commitment, of progress reports on the implementation of the Code of Practice, as regards the aspects of the Code which are relevant for NSIs' mandate and coordinating role.

Timeline:

1 – 31/12/2016

2 – 30/06/2017

3 – 31/12/2016

4 – 09/06/2017

Recommendation 2015/16

Governments and NSIs in the transition phase of regionalisation should provide sufficient resources for training and awareness-raising on the Code of Practice.

Current situation:

The current training offer for the ESS includes training on quality management including the Code of Practice, which is open both to NSIs and regional offices. Moreover, all training material is available via the European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP) interest group on CIRCABC, which can be used to complement national and/or regional training programmes. Moreover, the curriculum of the European Master in Official Statistical (EMOS) includes the subjects of ESS governance and the Code of Practice.

Improvement actions 2015/16.1 and 2015/16.2:

1 - Eurostat to remind the National Contact Points in the National Statistical Institutes of the Member States about the available ESTP training offer and existing training material.

2 - Eurostat to raise awareness in one of the next meetings of the ESS WG on Quality in Statistics on the need for governments and NSIs in the transition phase of regionalisation to provide sufficient resources for training and awareness-raising on the ES Code of Practice.

Timeline:

1 – 31/12/2016

2 – 31/12/2016

Recommendation 2015/17

Eurostat should reinforce its capacity to monitor and evaluate Code compliance in regionalised and decentralised statistical systems.

Current situation:

Regionalisation process: monitoring and evaluation of Code compliance - The action is being launched by Eurostat.

Improvement actions 2015/17:

In order for Eurostat to reinforce its capacity to monitor and evaluation Code compliance in regionalised and decentralised statistical systems,

Eurostat will:

- Gather information on the Member States which are concerned by the recommendation, i.e. which have regionalised and decentralised systems;
- Enquire about quality assurance mechanisms between regional and national levels in the Member States concerned.

Timeline:

Before end 2017