EUROPÄISCHER RECHNUNGSHOF

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren!

Hiermit teilen wir Ihnen mit, dass der Europäische Rechnungshof soeben die Prüfungsvorschau ***"The Commission's role in providing high-quality European statistics"*** (Die Rolle der Europäischen Kommission bei der Bereitstellung hochwertiger europäischer Statistiken) in englischer Sprache veröffentlicht hat. Die Prüfung steht unter der Leitung von Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, Mitglied des Hofes.

Der Hof prüft derzeit die Qualität von EU-Statistiken, die ein breites Spektrum an gesellschaftlichen und wirtschaftlichen Aspekten abdecken. Im Fokus der Prüfung steht insbesondere die Rolle der Europäischen Kommission bei der Bereitstellung hochwertiger Statistiken für die EU und ihre Mitgliedstaaten.

Klicken Sie bitte hier, um die Prüfungsvorschau in englischer Sprache und die in 23 EU-Sprachen verfügbare Pressemitteilung aufzurufen.

Für weitere Auskünfte über die Arbeit des Hofes stehen wir Ihnen gerne zur Verfügung. Zudem finden Sie Informationen auf unserer Website eca.europa.eu. Um auf das Publikationsportal des Hofes zu gelangen, klicken Sie bitte hier.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

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EUROPÄISCHER
RECHNUNGSHOF

DE

Pressemitteilung
Luxemburg, den 4. Mai 2021

Europäischer Rechnungshof stellt EU-Statistiken auf den Prüfstand

Der Europäische Rechnungshof (EuRH) prüft derzeit die Qualität von EU-Statistiken, die ein breites Spektrum an gesellschaftlichen und wirtschaftlichen Aspekten abdecken. Im Fokus der Prüfung steht insbesondere die Rolle der Europäischen Kommission bei der Bereitstellung hochwertiger Statistiken für die EU und ihre Mitgliedstaaten.

Amtliche Statistiken sind für die wirtschaftliche und soziale Entwicklung zunehmend von entscheidender Bedeutung. Sie dienen der Politik als Richtschnur, sind Grundlage für Unternehmensentscheidungen und ermöglichen es den Bürgerinnen und Bürgern, Fortschritte zu vergleichen und zu bewerten. Daher muss sichergestellt werden, dass diese EU-Statistiken von hochwertiger, ja sogar exzellenter Qualität sind. Inwiefern dies geschieht, wird der Europäische Rechnungshof im Rahmen einer kürzlich eingeleiteten Prüfung bewerten.

Der Beginn dieser Prüfung fällt in eine Phase sich grundlegend verändernder Bedingungen. Die COVID-19-Pandemie zwang die Statistikbehörden dazu, ihre Verfahren rasch anzupassen, und machte einmal mehr deutlich, wie wichtig aktuelle, vergleichbare und zuverlässige europäische Statistiken sind.

"Zahlen und Fakten: Der Bedarf an quantitativen Daten war noch nie so groß. Geschwindigkeit, Qualität, Informationsgehalt und Nutzen von Daten sind in einer digitalen Gesellschaft von entscheidender Bedeutung", **so Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, das für die Prüfung zuständige Mitglied des Europäischen Rechnungshofs**. *"Zahlen zählen, keine Frage. Aber wie stellen wir sicher, dass sie auch verlässlich sind? Dieser Frage wollen wir bei unserer Prüfung nachgehen."*

Die Daten, die den europäischen Statistiken zugrunde liegen, werden von den nationalen Statistikbehörden der Mitgliedstaaten erhoben. Für die Erhebung und Zusammenstellung aggregierter Statistiken auf EU-Ebene ist jedoch die Europäische Kommission über das Statistikamt Eurostat zuständig. Daher gibt es gemeinsame Normen, die sicherstellen, dass Konzepte, Definitionen und Methoden harmonisiert und vergleichbar sind. Das Europäische Statistische System (ESS) verkörpert diese Partnerschaft. Die Arbeit des ESS wird auch mit anderen Generaldirektionen und Agenturen der Kommission, der Europäischen Zentralbank und

Diese Pressemitteilung enthält die Hauptaussagen der Prüfungsvorschau des Europäischen Rechnungshofs. Prüfungsvorschau in englischer Sprache im Volltext unter www.eca.europa.eu.

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internationalen Organisationen wie den Vereinten Nationen, der OECD oder dem IWF koordiniert.

Der Prüfungszeitraum umfasst die Jahre 2013 bis 2021. Geprüft werden unter anderem die Statistikstrategie und das Statistikprogramm der Kommission, ihre Bewertungen der Qualität der europäischen Statistiken sowie die Einhaltung des Verhaltenskodex. Die Prüfer haben drei große statistische Themenbereiche ausgewählt: "Arbeitsmarkt", "Europäische Unternehmen" und "Gesundheit".

Hintergrundinformation

Die heute veröffentlichte Prüfungsvorschau enthält Informationen über eine laufende Prüfungsaufgabe zur Rolle der europäischen Kommission bei der Bereitstellung hochwertiger Statistiken. Die Prüfung wird voraussichtlich Mitte 2022 abgeschlossen sein. Prüfungsvorschauen stützen sich auf vorbereitende Arbeiten im Vorfeld einer Prüfung und sollten nicht als Prüfungsbemerkungen, Prüfungsschlussfolgerungen oder Prüfungsempfehlungen betrachtet werden. Die vollständige Prüfungsvorschau in englischer Sprache kann auf der Website des Hofes (eca.europa.eu) abgerufen werden.

Darüber hinaus hat der Europäische Rechnungshof kürzlich eine Prüfung zur Nutzung von "Big Data" und Datenanalysen für die EU-Agrarpolitik eingeleitet.

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EUROPEAN
COURT
OF AUDITORS

Audit preview

Information on an upcoming audit

The Commission's role in providing high-quality European statistics

May 2021

Official statistics are published by dedicated national authorities and international organisations, providing policy-makers with reliable, up-to-date information to monitor economic, social and environmental policies.

Reliable statistics are also essential for businesses and researchers. They are therefore relevant to all of us.

The European Statistical System comprises Eurostat (a directorate-general of the European Commission) working in cooperation with statistical bodies in the Member States.

We are carrying out an audit to examine the Commission's role in providing statistics for the EU and its Member States. Our audit will look at its strategy for producing high-quality statistics, the cooperation with the national statistical institutes, and its role in applying the quality framework for European statistics.

If you wish to contact the audit team, you may do so at the following email address:
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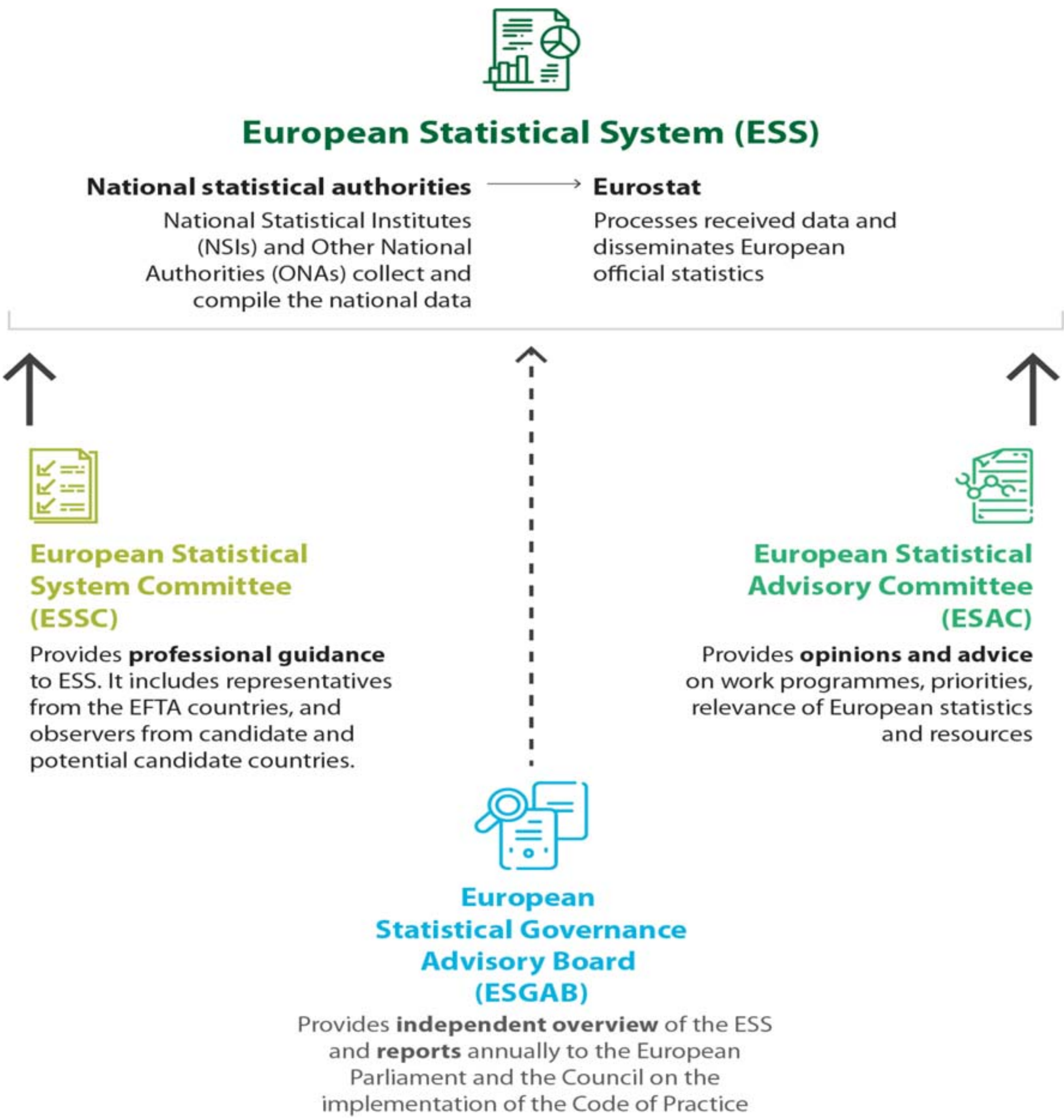
The European Statistical System

Official statistics are published by dedicated national authorities and international organisations, providing information on economic and social development. They provide policy-makers with reliable, up-to-date information that they can use when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies. Reliable statistics are also essential for businesses and researchers. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted once again the need for timely, comparable and reliable European statistics. They are therefore relevant to all of us.

The European Statistical System (ESS) is the partnership between the Commission (Eurostat, a directorate-general of the European Commission), and the national authorities in each Member State responsible for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. Over the years, the European Statistical System has expanded to cover nearly all statistical fields.

The ESS's work is also coordinated with EU candidate countries and with other Commission directorates-general and agencies, the European Central Bank (ECB) and international organisations such as United Nations, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Monetary Fund, the World Health Organization, and the International Labour Organization. ***Figure 1*** provides an overview of the ESS's governance.

Figure 1 – European Statistical System: its governance bodies



Source: ECA, based on Eurostat.

The ESS is governed by the European Statistical System Committee, which is chaired by Eurostat and made up of representatives from the Member States' national statistical institutes (see also ***Figure 1***). The committee also includes representatives from the European Free Trade Association countries[1], and observers from candidate and potential candidate countries.

Roles and responsibilities

EU level

At EU level, **Eurostat** is responsible for compiling and producing European statistics. It coordinates and funds the NSIs' collection of these statistics and devises common standards to ensure they take a harmonised approach, including uniform concepts, definitions and methods. Eurostat also consolidates the data provided by national authorities to produce EU-level aggregate statistics.

Eurostat also cooperates with these national authorities to improve the efficiency and quality of European statistics, e.g. through specialist collaborative networks in specific fields of expertise, which then share their insights with the ESS as a whole.

National level

Each EU Member State also has its own national statistical system, headed by a National Statistical Institute (NSI), for collecting and compiling the data on which European statistics are based. In some cases, other national authorities are also involved. National systems are meant to cover the same statistical activities as the European system, but may additionally include other statistics for national purposes.

The European statistical programme

The European statistical programme (ESP) is the **EU's multiannual programme** funding the activities of the NSIs and other national authorities. EU spending on the last ESP, which ran from 2013 to 2020, amounted to **€266 million**.

The EU funding mainly takes the form of **grants** to the NSIs and other national authorities, which are generally awarded without a call for proposals and cover at least 70 % of the national authorities' costs in collecting data for the ESS (and in some cases up to 95 %), the rest being financed from national co-financing. These grants cover staff costs, general overheads and depreciation costs. They also cover the **procurement** of IT services, such as maintenance and improvement of the geographical information system, the maintenance and development of statistical infrastructure and databases and IT support in developing statistics, and **other activities**, such as the development of survey questionnaires and innovative tools.

Legal framework

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

Article 338 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union[2] (TFEU) governs the production of European statistics and provides the European Parliament and the Council with the prerogative to "*adopt measures for the production of statistics where necessary for the performance of the activities of the Union*". It also stipulates that the production of statistics "*shall conform to impartiality, reliability, objectivity, scientific independence, cost-effectiveness and statistical confidentiality; it shall not entail excessive burdens on economic operators*".

The "Statistical Law"

Regulation (EU) No 223/2009 of 11 March 2009[3] (the **"Statistical Law"**) establishes a detailed legal framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics, based on the general principles set out in Article 338 TFEU.

The European Statistics Code of Practice

The **European Statistics Code of Practice**[4] is a *self-regulatory instrument*, adopted in 2005 then further revised in 2011 and 2017, that complements the above legislation by setting standards for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics.

It sets out **16 principles** concerning the institutional environment, in which the EU and national statistical authorities operate, and statistical processes and outputs. Each principle includes a set of **indicators of best practices and standards** (there are 84 in total). These serve as a reference for reviewing the application of the code of practice.

The code of practice is accompanied by a **quality framework**, which provides guidance on how to apply the code of practice.

The European Statistical System's compliance with the code of practice is monitored through **peer reviews**. The first round of peer reviews took place in 2006-2008, and the second in 2013-2015. The third round is currently being prepared and will take place in 2021-2023. The reviews cover the statistical authorities in all EU and EFTA countries, as well as Eurostat. Each year, Eurostat monitors the progress made by the various authorities in the European Statistical System in implementing the recommendations made under the peer reviews.

In turn, an independent **European Statistical Governance Advisory Body (ESGAB)** monitors and reports annually to the European Parliament and the Council on the overall implementation of the code of practice, including a summary of Eurostat's monitoring.

Producing statistics in the context of COVID-19

The restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have made traditional ways of collecting data face-to-face more difficult, and surveys have had to be postponed. This has disrupted data flow from businesses and households. COVID-19 has also posed challenges in terms of interpreting data.

The changing circumstances have required **rapid adjustment**: there has been widespread use of alternative data collection methods such as by phone, online, or using big data (e.g. satellite imagery, data from digital platforms, mobile networks, traffic tolls and energy consumption data). However, this shift may affect the quality and comparability of data.

The ESGAB's 2020 annual report[5] found that the European Statistical System had responded very well to the COVID-19 crisis. Despite some operational and methodological issues, continuity of key indicators had been ensured.

Focus of the audit

The purpose of our current audit is to assess **Commission's role in providing high-quality European statistics to the EU and its Member States.** In particular, we will examine whether the Commission:

— has established a clear and comprehensive strategy to produce high-quality statistics;

— appropriately assesses the quality of European statistics, and disseminates them effectively; and

— was effective in implementing and monitoring the peer review recommendations towards compliance with the European Code of Practice.

The audit will cover the period from **2013 until 2021**. For this audit, we have selected three thematic statistical areas: **“Labour market”**, **“European businesses”** and **“Health”**. We will analyse a sample of projects related to these three areas in five selected Member States (Italy, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania and Finland) to assess to which extent the projects were effective in producing sustainable results.

Our **last audit**[6], in 2012, found weaknesses in the European Statistical System and in the application of the code of practice that governs it. Our current audit will assess the progress made since then. It will also provide input to the ongoing debate about the role of Eurostat within the European Statistical System.

ABOUT ECA SPECIAL REPORTS AND AUDIT PREVIEWS

The ECA's special reports set out the results of its audits of EU policies and programmes or management topics related to specific budgetary areas.

Audit previews provide information in relation to an ongoing audit task. They are based on preparatory work undertaken before the start of the audit and are intended as a source of information for those interested in the policy and/or programme being audited.

If you wish to contact the team in charge of this audit, please do so through the following e-mail address:
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[1] Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

[2] The Treaty On The Functioning Of The European Union (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:9e8d52e1-2c70-11e6-b497-01aa75ed71a1.0006.01/DOC_3&format=PDF).

[3] Statistical Law (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02009R0223-20150608&from=EN).

[4] European Statistics Code of Practice (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/european-statistics-code-of-practice).

[5] ESGAB's 2020 annual report (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/34693/37190/2020+ESGAB+Annual+Report.pdf/6abc714f-9acb-15d8-635c-e29b0443c77c?t=1611302642333).

[6] ECA special report 12/2012 "Did the Commission and Eurostat improve the process for producing reliable and credible European statistics?".