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Delegations will find in annex the 2021 Council conclusions on EU Statistics as approved by the Council (ECOFIN) at its 3822nd meeting held on 9 November 2021.

Council conclusions on EU statistics

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

Following the priorities set in the previous Council Conclusions on EU statistics of November 2020, notably on the EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in EMU, and taking into consideration the political guidelines for the Commission 2019-2024, the statistical needs that underpin economic governance, and the exceptional situation still prevailing in 2021 with regard to COVID- 19, the Council has reviewed the progress related to information requirements in EMU, statistics for the EDP and surveillance of macroeconomic imbalances, and structural statistics.

The statistical response to COVID-19

The Council WELCOMES the proactivity and responsiveness of the European Statistical System (ESS) and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB), ensuring that high quality official statistics continued to be published to deadline, in response to existing and new user needs, despite the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on statistical production during 2021.

The Council WELCOMES, in particular, the development by the ESS of the European Statistical Recovery Dashboard, released monthly by Eurostat and covering indicators highly relevant for tracking the economic and societal trends in the recovery phase from COVID-19.

The Council WELCOMES the continuing development by the ESS of new, highly relevant statistics, often on an experimental basis, for which access to new data sources and development of new statistical techniques were fundamental. In this context, the Council REITERATES the importance of increased and sustained access for producers of official statistics –to administrative sources and to new data sources.

In addition, the Council ENCOURAGES the ESS to also continue to explore new data sources and technologies and develop innovative methods for producing high quality, richer and faster European statistics. In particular, the Council SUPPORTS that the ESS should step up the actions and approaches aiming to improve the timeliness of official statistics, while maintaining the other quality criteria of the Quality Assurance Framework.

The Council WELCOMES the involvement and efforts of Eurostat, in close cooperation with the Member States, for providing guidance on the statistical aspects of some policy measures, in particular business and employment support measures in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiatives within the “Next Generation EU” programme, and notably the Recovery and Resilience Fund. The Council CALLS FOR the expansion of statistical accounts for European Union institutions to reflect the impact of these initiatives in the statistics.

Resources for statistics

The Council RECOGNIZES the need to ensure that human and financial resources are adequate for Eurostat and National Statistical Authorities, to allow them to further embrace the new data sources and digital technologies in order to produce timelier and more granular official statistics at Union, national, regional and local level that meet the fast changing data requirements related to the digital transformation, the green transition and climate change, as well as the aftermath of the pandemic.

Access to data for statistical purposes

The Council TAKES NOTE of the ESS position paper on the future Data Act proposal. The Council LOOKS FORWARD to the forthcoming Data Act proposal as offering an opportunity for establishing a sustained and legally framed access to privately held data for official statistics purposes.

In this context, the Council ENCOURAGES the ESS - in close collaboration with the ESCB - to continue on the path towards enabling the use of new data sources, mainly from the private sector but also from administrative sources, to improve statistical information of high public interest through increased timeliness, more thematic and regional granularity of statistical data including experimental statistics.

Statistics in relation to Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Deal

The Council WELCOMES Eurostat's achievements regarding the provision of statistical indicators and information for the monitoring of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at European Union level in the context of the European Semester, and ENCOURAGES Eurostat to continue to monitor progress towards SDGs in cooperation with Member States.

The Council WELCOMES the efforts undertaken by the ESS to meet the emerging information demands from the European Green Deal priority in the fields of energy statistics, climate change related statistics, environmental economic accounts, transport statistics and sustainable finance. The Council WELCOMES that the ECB, as part of its action plan to include climate change considerations in its monetary policy strategy, will develop new experimental indicators for green financial instruments and the carbon footprint of financial institutions, as well as their exposures to climate-related physical risk, in line with progress on the EU policies and initiatives in environmental sustainability disclosure and reporting. The Council ENCOURAGES the further development of timely indicators possibly based on legal grounds, and taking into account the burden on national statistical authorities.

The 2021 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in EMU

The Council TAKES NOTE of the developments described in the 2021 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in the EMU. In particular, the Council:

APPRECIATES the further improvements in country coverage, timeliness, length of time series and overall quality of the Principal European Economic Indicators (PEEIs).

UNDERLINES the continuing important role played by the PEEIs as a basis for monitoring short-term economic developments and LOOKS FORWARD TO further progress to close remaining gaps.

With regard to national accounts, the Council TAKES NOTE that there is an ongoing mid-term review of the ESA 2010 Transmission Programme, and ENCOURAGES the further improvement foreseen in the availability and consistency of national accounts data.

Real estate statistics for macroprudential and other purposes

The Council WELCOMES the ongoing initiatives by both the ESS and the ESCB to progress on the conceptual and practical work on commercial real estate indicators. The Council ENCOURAGES both the ESS and the ESCB to continue to attach the necessary importance and urgency to this issue.

Housing costs and inflation

The Council ACKNOWLEDGES the ECB assessment that the HICP remains the appropriate index for quantifying ECB's price stability objective for the euro area. The Council TAKES NOTE of the recommendation of the ECB to include, in a step-wise approach, the cost of owner occupied housing in the HICP based on the "net acquisition approach". The Council WELCOMES the ongoing discussions within the ESS and the ESCB how to better reflect the contribution of housing costs to inflation.

Statistics for the Stability and Growth Pact and the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP)

The Council WELCOMES the quality assurance of statistics underlying the MIP, and APPRECIATES the annual ESS-ESCB quality assessment report on MIP statistics by Eurostat and the ECB, TAKING NOTE of the actions identified therein.

The Council REITERATES its call on Member States to ensure that all statistical data needed for the application of the expenditure benchmark of the Stability and Growth Pact, including data on government revenue in the form of EU funding, are reported to Eurostat.

Demographic statistics and population projections

The Council WELCOMES Eurostat's work on population projections and NOTES in particular, the publication of regional population projections which provides a more detailed picture of population ageing and territorial diversity.

The Council WELCOMES the continued release of data on excess mortality, which informs policymakers and the general public about the magnitude and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on European societies, and progress in advancing the release of provisional estimates of life expectancy at birth for 2020 by nearly one year.

The Council APPRECIATES the new Commission initiative on European statistics on population (ESOP) that aims at proposing a new integrated legal framework for these statistics by mid-2022 and ENCOURAGES Member States to make use, as much as possible, of existing administrative sources and registers for compiling these statistics.

Social statistics

The Council APPRECIATES the progress made on modernisation of social statistics to increase responsiveness to user needs with a level of timeliness, robustness, relevance and efficiency that fully supports policy priorities, in particular the European Pillar of Social Rights, and to further improve the comparability and coherence of EU social statistics.

The Council APPRECIATES the initiative on labour market data for businesses, and the ongoing implementation of the IESS framework.

Business statistics and globalisation

The Council WELCOMES the continuation of improvements in European business statistics through the implementation of the European business statistics Regulation, including better coverage of SMEs in Structural Business Statistics, additional and more frequent statistics for services, greater detail for international trade (particularly for trade in services), and better measurement of digitalisation.

The Council ACKNOWLEDGES the progress made on measuring the Collaborative Economy with the publication by Eurostat of first data on short-stay accommodation booked via four private platforms, based on a landmark agreement to cooperate with e-platforms for accommodation services and use their data to generate new tourism statistics.

The Council ACKNOWLEDGES the work undertaken to address the challenges of globalisation for statistics, also thanks to enhanced cooperation within and between the ESS and the European System of Central Banks. In this context, the Council WELCOMES the ongoing reflections how to further facilitate the sharing of relevant information between statistical compilers.

The Council HIGHLIGHTS the need to facilitate the use of micro-data linking within business statistics, to improve the access to administrative records and to allow the use of new sources that should reduce the burden on business.

Quality and classifications

The Council TAKES NOTE of the launch of the third round of Peer Reviews of the ESS and its member institutions, and EXPECTS that the resulting recommendations will be taken forward to improve the compliance with the European statistics Code of Practice and to enhance the quality of European statistics.

The Council ENCOURAGES the ESS to continue and complete its review of the statistical classifications of industries and products, in full cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, so that they can form the basis for more relevant and detailed statistics in the future.