

Comments for slides “System of Official Statistics”

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ESS

Slides 3/11 History of EU and of the ESS

As the European Statistical System (ESS) was built-up gradually to provide comparable statistics for the EU, it is important to first refresh some key dates about the European Union (slides 4-7).

The key dates of ESS history are these:

1953: The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was an organisation of six European countries created after World War II to regulate their industrial production under a centralised authority. It was formally established in 1951 by the Treaty of Paris, signed by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany. The ECSC was the first international organisation to be based on the principles of supranationalism and started the process of formal integration which ultimately led to the European Union. In 1953 a statistical service of the ECSC was created.

1958: The statistical service became part of the European Communities. The European Communities (EC) were three international organizations that were governed by the same set of institutions. These were the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom), and the European Economic Community (EEC); the last of which was renamed the European Community (EC) in 1993 by the Maastricht Treaty, which formed the European Union.

1959: The present name of Eurostat as the Statistical Office of the European Communities was adopted, and the first publication was issued on agricultural statistics.

1973-2007: Expansion of the countries and new regulations for the European Communities structure, which evolved in the European Union with the Maastricht treaty. In these years the first Community surveys began, e.g. 1960 First Community Labour Force Survey, 1994 First European household panel held. In other words, the expansion of the European Union and the development of new Community policies brought forth an increasing demand for high-quality, comparable European statistics. This meant that a closer cooperation between Eurostat and the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) was necessary and thus, at the beginning of the 1990s, the foundations of the European Statistical System (ESS) were laid. The establishment of the convergence criteria for joining the Euro, agreed by the EU Member States in Maastricht in 1991, further urged the need for comparable information on economic convergence.

2009: With regulation 223/09 on European statistics the ESS is legally recognised and defined for the first time.

WHAT IS THE ESS?

Slides 12/18 What is the ESS?

The ESS is the partnership comprising the Commission (Eurostat), National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and other national bodies responsible in each Member State (MS) for producing and disseminating European Statistics. European Statistics can most easily be thought of as the aggregate statistics produced by Eurostat. (The European Central Bank also produces European Statistics,

though it is itself not part of the ESS – instead it is at the heart of the European System of Central Banks).

The objective of the ESS is to provide reliable, comparable statistics for EU decision-making, monitoring and evaluation. Statistics are used, for example, in areas as diverse as for economic and monetary policy, environmental and agricultural policy; in the allocation of structural funds, and the determination of MSs' contributions to the EU; in supporting the EU enlargement process, in monitor strategies and policies (such as relating to internal markets, or employment), and in benchmarking.

Slides 19/21 The ESS members: Eurostat

Eurostat is a Directorate-General of the European Commission (EC) and the statistical authority of the European Union (EU).

Eurostat's role is to ensure the production of European Statistics at EU level. In close co-operation with NSIs and other producers (ministries, agencies and Central Banks) of (national) statistics, it ensures that methods, criteria and practices within the ESS are as harmonised and statistics as comparable as possible – frequently by means of Regulations - and then creates European aggregates for the EU Member States and the Euro Area. It then publishes most of this data and accompanying analyses (including tables and a wide variety of indicators) free-of-charge on its website (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>), with much information also available in paper publications.

Eurostat responsibilities:

- ✓ develop harmonised definitions, classifications and methodologies for the production of European official statistics, in cooperation with national statistical authorities
- ✓ calculate aggregate data for the European Union and eurozone, using data collected by national statistical authorities according to the harmonised standards
- ✓ make European statistics freely available to decision makers and citizens via the Eurostat website and other channels

Eurostat has also an important role within the EC, ruled by a 2012 Commission Decision, the [Commission decision on Eurostat](#). Eurostat has to cooperate with other Commission services by coordinating the statistical activities across the Commission. It has to ensure a constant dialogue with those Commission services that use European statistics for their work (e.g. policy Directorates-general) and sometimes produce their own statistics that are outside of the European statistical programme - these statistics are called “other statistics”.

More info on Eurostat co-ordination role of statistical activities are available [here](#)

Slide 22 on EU governance

To better understand Eurostat role as a Directorate-General, let's refresh the main EU institutions and how they work.

The executive bodies of the EU are the European Council – composed by the EU prime ministers – and the European Commission.

The European Commission is the EU's politically independent executive arm. It is alone responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation, and it implements the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU, the two legislative bodies.

The EC is steered by a group of 27 Commissioners, known as 'the college'. Together they take decisions on the Commission's political and strategic direction. A new college of Commissioners is appointed every 5 years.

The Commission is organised into policy departments, known as Directorates-General (DGs), which are responsible for different policy areas. DGs develop, implement and manage EU policy, law, and funding programmes.

Eurostat is a Directorate-General of the European Commission.

In addition, service departments deal with particular administrative issues. Executive agencies manage programmes set up by the Commission.

The European parliament and the Council of the EU are the two legislative bodies of the EU, while the Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors are the two judicial bodies.

Finally, the European Central Bank is the financial body of the EU. Later we will introduce more information on the ECB as it has an important role within the system of official statistics.

Slide 27: This is a schematic representation on how the institutions of the EU work, where you can see the EC position in the center.

Slides 23/27 on EU governance and Eurostat organization

As we said, Eurostat is a Directorate-General of the EU, with Directorates-generals being the departments of the European Union government with specific zones of responsibility (the equivalent of ministries at a national level).

As Directorate-General, Eurostat is headed by one Commissioner – the Commissioner for Economy, currently Mr. Paolo Gentiloni – responsible for the general direction of the DG, and by one Director-General - currently Mrs. Marians Kotzeva - responsible for the management of day-to-day affairs.

Internally, Eurostat is organized in 7 Directorates, responsible for the different sectors of activities. The EMOS is currently managed under Directorate B, unit B1 “Methodology; Innovation in official statistics”.

As stated in art. 7 of Commission decision on Eurostat, Director-General of Eurostat has the responsibility for deciding on processes, statistical methods, standards and procedures, or on the content and timing of statistical releases, in accordance with the European statistical programme and the annual work programme. When carrying out these tasks, the Director-General of Eurostat shall act in an independent manner, without seeking or taking instructions from the Union institutions or bodies, from any government of a Member State, or from any other institution, body, office or entity.

All the information about Eurostat as well as all the European statistics produced within the European programmes are available on the Eurostat website.

Slides 28/29 on NSIs and ONAs

We said that the ESS is the partnership comprising the Commission (Eurostat), National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and other national bodies responsible in each Member State (MS) for producing and disseminating European Statistics.

On Eurostat website the [updated list](#) of the NSIs and ONAs is available. While it is easy to understand what NSIs are, it is important to focus on ONAs. A [guidance note](#) concerning ONAs is

available on the Eurostat website. In this note the Commission specifies that ONAs are important for the coordination of statistical systems both at European and national level. Specific guidelines are available to specify what ONAs are and their identification criteria.

Slides 30/31 on ONAs

Specifically, ONAs are:

- ✓ ESS members to be considered as authorities that comply with the European Statistics Code of Practice and whose statistical activities should be coordinated by the head of the NSI;
- ✓ identified as institutions which are eligible for receiving EU grants without a call for proposals;
- ✓ authorities that should follow national guidelines to be issued by heads of NSIs with regard to development, production and dissemination of European statistics;
- ✓ authorities, whose 'statistical heads' should enjoy a similar level of professional independence as heads of NSIs;
- ✓ responsible for the quality assurance of statistics produced by them and are entitled to transmit results directly to Eurostat.

Slides 32 on ONAs

The identification criteria for ONAs: ONAs are Institutions, or parts of institutions, that:

- ✓ exercise public authority based on national law (regardless of their legal form);
- ✓ have formally been given the responsibility at national level for the production of a specific and identifiable part of European statistics;
- ✓ have production of statistics included among their tasks in the respective basic act (e.g. constitutive legal act, statute, mandate, mission statement, etc.).

The last criterion, introduced to allow some flexibility and adaptation to national circumstances, should be implemented consistently across the ESS. To this end, detailed operational principles and guidelines are available in the guidance note.

Slides 33/34 on ONAs

Typical entities that are most frequently designated by Member States as ONAs include:

- Statistical departments of Ministries.
- Regional statistical offices: in federal states, regional statistical offices with own legal identity can be generally treated as ONAs if they produce European statistics at regional level in a way that the results from all regions only need to be aggregated by the NSI before transmission to Eurostat.
- National central banks: in some Member States, National Central Banks (NCBs) provide parts of European statistics while also being relevant for the activities of the European Central Bank (ECB).
- These NCBs have roles within two separate systems which have their own institutional framework and statistical principles (similar but distinct). We will focus again on the role of the ESCB later.
- Specialized national agencies: Sectoral national agencies in general exercise public authority and they also collect and analyse data necessary for the performance of their tasks. Often, they are responsible for providing these data to the NSI or even directly to Eurostat.
- Subcontractors: NSIs sometimes delegate the production of specific statistics to other entities. Private subcontractors cannot be ONAs, if they do not exercise public authority. Foundations

and research institutes based on private law whose main objective is to provide public services (in particular provision and analysis of statistical information) might be designated as ONA on a case-by-case basis if all other criteria are fulfilled.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONCERNING THE ESS

Slides 36/40 Regulation 223/2009 of the European Parliament and Council

The [Regulation 223/2009](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union of 11 March 2009 established a legal framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics. It introduced the 'European approach to statistics': the establishment of a legal framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics, cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore be better achieved at Community level, without prejudice to national modalities, roles, and conditions specific to national statistics.

The regulation is divided in 6 Chapters. In Chapter 1 the fundamental statistical principles that shall govern the development European statistics are listed. Chapter 2 introduces the statistical governance by defining and setting the roles of the ESS, the National Statistical Institutes and other national authorities, Eurostat. Chapter 2 also established the ESS Committee as guidance for the ESS, in addition to being the Comitology Committee to be consulted for the adoption of implementing acts, introduced the European statistics Code of Practice and the fundamental quality criteria that should be applied to the development, production and dissemination of European Statistics. Chapter 3 and 4 introduced the fundamental aspects concerning the production and dissemination of European Statistics. Chapter 5 focus on statistical confidentiality. Last, Chapter 6 concerns the final provisions.

Slides 41/42 Regulation 223/2009 of the European Parliament and Council

Chapter 1 of the Regulation is about the statistical principles that should govern the development, production and dissemination of European statistics:

- professional independence, meaning that statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner, particularly as regards the selection of techniques, definitions, methodologies and sources to be used, and the timing and content of all forms of dissemination, free from any pressures from political or interest groups or from Community or national authorities;
- impartiality, meaning that statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a neutral manner, and that all users must be given equal treatment;
- objectivity, meaning that statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a systematic, reliable and unbiased manner; it implies the use of professional and ethical standards, and that the policies and practices followed are transparent to users and survey respondents;
- reliability, meaning that statistics must measure as faithfully, accurately and consistently as possible the reality that they are designed to represent and implying that scientific criteria are used for the selection of sources, methods and procedures;
- statistical confidentiality, meaning the protection of confidential data related to single statistical units which are obtained directly for statistical purposes or indirectly from administrative or other sources and implying the prohibition of use for non-statistical purposes of the data obtained and of their unlawful disclosure;
- cost effectiveness, meaning that the costs of producing statistics must be in proportion to the importance of the results and the benefits sought, that resources must be optimally used and

the response burden minimised. When possible, the information can be extract from available records or sources.

Slides 43/44 Regulation 223/2009 of the European Parliament and Council

Chapter 2 of the regulation is about statistical governance.

In this chapter of the regulation the ESS is legally recognised in EU law for the first time. Its definition as a partnership between the Commission (Eurostat), the national statistical institutes (NSIs) and all other national authorities responsible for European statistics lays the basis for an enhanced cooperation within the partnership and for a consolidation of all its activities. The coordinating role as regards all activities for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics is given to the NSIs at national level and to Eurostat at Community level, respectively.

The European Statistical System Committee (the ESS Committee) is established with the overarching task of providing professional guidance to the ESS for European statistics in general. Moreover, the ESS is the Comitology Committee to be consulted for the adoption of implementing acts. Therefore, the ESS Committee is the cornerstone of the ESS architecture, being involved in issues such as planning and programming, quality and methodology, priority setting and international cooperation.

There are several provisions making reference to cooperation with other bodies, both at EU level, especially with the European System of Central Banks (the ESCB), and at international level.

We will introduce later the ESS governance bodies.

Slides 45/46 Regulation 223/2009 of the European Parliament and Council

Furthermore, Chapter 2 confirms the importance attributed within the ESS to the quality of statistics and public trust. Firstly, the European Statistics Code of Practice is recognised and the ESS Committee is entrusted with its revision. Secondly, a separate article is introduced on statistical quality, expressing a commitment by the ESS to monitor the quality of statistics.

The quality criteria to be applied are:

- relevance, which refers to the degree to which statistics meet current and potential needs of the users;
- accuracy, which refers to the closeness of estimates to the unknown true values;
- timeliness, which refers to the period between the availability of the information and the event or phenomenon it describes;
- punctuality, which refers to the delay between the date of the release of the data and the target date (the date by which the data should have been delivered);
- accessibility and clarity, which refer to the conditions and modalities by which users can obtain, use and interpret data;
- comparability, which refers to the measurement of the impact of differences in applied statistical concepts, measurement tools and procedures where statistics are compared between geographical areas, sectoral domains or over time;
- coherence, which refers to the adequacy of the data to be reliably combined in different ways and for various uses

Later we will better focus on how quality is implemented within the ESS.

Slides 47/50 Regulation 223/2009 of the European Parliament and Council

Chapter 3 of the regulation focus on the production of European statistics.

As regards planning and programming, the development, production and dissemination of European statistics are determined in a multiannual European statistical programme to be decided by the European Parliament and the Council. That programme provides the general framework and the priorities of European statistics for the period covered. Specifically, the **European statistical programme** provides the framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics by indicating the priorities concerning the needs for information for carrying out the activities of the Community. It is drafted by the Commission, examined by the ESSC and then submitted to the European Parliament and Council.

The actual implementation of the programme is decided by individual statistical actions that are included in annual programmes. These are decided either by the European Parliament and the Council, by the Commission or by agreements between the national authorities and Eurostat. In this context the regulation puts a clear emphasis on aspects such as cost-effectiveness, priority setting and reduction of response burden, and also on the importance of specifying how the action is to be carried out.

The possibility for the Commission to decide a statistical action is intended for cases where unexpected needs for European statistics arise, which could not be foreseen at the time of adoption of the European statistical programme.

One of the main purposes of the regulation is to find more efficient ways to produce high-quality European statistics, thereby enabling the ESS to meet current and future challenges. This chapter on the production of European statistics therefore provides especially for flexible tools to increase the efficiency of the ESS and to reduce the burden on respondents and on the members of the ESS.

Chapter 3 introduces the **European approach to statistics**, aiming at:

- maximising availability and timeliness of EU statistics
- reducing the burden on the respondents, the NSIs and ONAs

Examples:

- ✓ use of non-published national contributions, specifically designed survey schemes, partial information by modelling techniques
- ✓ dissemination of European level aggregates by applying statistical disclosure techniques to national data

Slide 51 Regulation 223/2009 of the European Parliament and Council

Chapter 4 of the regulation is on dissemination of European statistics

This chapter sets out the basic principle that all European statistics produced will be disseminated, with the necessary support for users ensured. There is also a provision on public use files containing aggregated non-confidential microdata. These files can be used for instance for teaching purposes.

Slide 52 Regulation 223/2009 of the European Parliament and Council

Chapter 5 of the regulation focus on statistical confidentiality

A high level of protection of confidential data is essential in order to gain and maintain the confidence of respondents and the public in general. At the same time, detailed and thus confidential data is necessary to ensure the high quality of the statistics produced and disseminated and to allow a flexible response to new statistical needs. Access to confidential data is also important in the interest of scientific progress since access to more detailed data allows researchers to make more in-depth analyses. The provisions of this chapter therefore aim at maintaining a high level of protection while at the same time moving forward by introducing some flexibility.

The basic rule is that confidential data shall be protected from disclosure, thus preventing dissemination of statistical results. There are two exceptions to this basic rule, namely that the

statistical unit has agreed to such dissemination or that specific conditions allowing dissemination are laid down in an act decided by the European Parliament and the Council (so-called passive confidentiality).

Another objective is establishing common principles and guidelines on statistical disclosure control among statistical authorities within the ESS.

Slide 53 Regulation 223/2009 of the European Parliament and Council

[Regulation \(EU\) 2015/759](#) of the European Parliament and Council amended regulation 223/2009, which remains the main legislative act on the ESS.

The European statistical legislation in force for each field of statistics is detailed on [Eurostat website](#).

STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

Slides 55/59 European statistical programme

Regulation 223/2009 constitutes the legal basis for the preparation of the European statistical programme, which aims at providing the framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics.

The programme is an ambitious multi-annual programme that establish the **scope, objectives, statistical information infrastructure, financing and legislative framework** for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics over the reference period.

In the programme the ESS has the role of key player in the statistical field.

In order to implement the programme, the Commission adopts a **step-wise approach** via annual work programmes setting more detailed objectives and outputs for each year.

Slides 60/65 European statistical programme

The European Statistical Programme 2021-27 is included in the Commission proposal for a Programme for single market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, and European statistics.

The Single Market is the beating heart of the EU. It is the largest market in the world, where people, goods, services and money can move almost as freely as within a single country. EU citizens can travel, study, work and fall in love across borders. Consumers can buy safe products on the market and enjoy a high level of food safety.

For the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027, the Commission proposes **a new, dedicated €4 billion programme** to empower and protect consumers and enable Europe's many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to thrive.

Objectives of the new [Single Market Programme](#):

- Maintain a high level of food safety
- Give even higher protection to consumers
- Boost the competitiveness of businesses, in particular SMEs
- Improve the governance of the Single Market and compliance with rules
- Produce and disseminate high-quality statistics
- Develop effective European standards

The new Single Market programme will bring many activities together under one coherent umbrella to reduce overlaps. It focusses investment where action will have most impact. One of the focus areas are **European statistics**: the aim is to provide funding to national statistics institutes for the production and dissemination of high-quality statistics to monitor the economic, social, environmental and territorial situation. Statistics are important for evidence-based decision making in the EU and measure impact of EU initiatives

The **tools** are an enhanced partnership between Eurostat, the European Statistics Office, and national statistics institutes, using multiple data sources, advanced data analytics methods, smart systems and digital technologies.

A specific action plan will detail the annual work programmes for years 2021-2027.

Slide 66 European statistical programme 2013-2020

The previous programme was in force in 2013-2017, then extended to 2020.

The main objectives of the programme were:

1. provide statistical information, in a timely manner, to support the development, monitoring and evaluation of the policies of the Union properly reflecting priorities, while keeping a balance between economic, social and environmental fields and serving the needs of the wide range of users of European statistics, including other decision-makers, researchers, businesses and European citizens in general, in a cost-effective manner without unnecessary duplication of effort
2. implement new methods of production of European statistics aiming at efficiency gains and quality improvements
3. strengthen the partnership within the ESS and beyond in order to further enhance its productivity and its leading role in official statistics worldwide
4. ensure that delivery of such statistics is kept consistent throughout the whole duration of the programme, provided that this does not interfere with the priority-setting mechanisms of the ESS.

The programme specified some priority areas including the expected Statistical output, Production methods of European statistics and Partnership. For example, Statistical outputs include the definition of new **indicators** and the enhancement of existing ones; providing new **frameworks** for analysis and accounting purposes; providing new **data** and statistics.

The [2020 annual programme](#) can be consulted to see the objectives and the expected results for the 2020.

THE EUROPEAN STATISTICAL SYSTEM GOVERNANCE BODIES

Slides 68/69 The ESS governance bodies

The **ESS** governance bodies are six:

1. ESS Committee – ESSC;
2. Partnership Group – PG;
3. Director Generals of the NSIs – DGNIS;
4. European Statistics Governance Advisory Board – ESGAB;

5. European Statistical Advisory Committee – ESAC;
6. European Statistical Forum – ESF.

Another related relevant body within the ESS is the European System of Central Banks – ESCB.

Slides 70/72 The ESS Committee - ESSC

According to Regulation 223/2009 the ESS Committee is the governance body that should provide professional guidance to the ESS for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics

The ESSC is chaired by the Commission (Eurostat) and composed of the representatives of Member States' National Statistical Institutes.

The ESSC meets three times a year. EEA and EFTA countries' National Statistical Institutes as well as other bodies, for example the ECB, OECD, can participate as observers to the ESSC meetings.

Slide 73 The ESS Committee - ESSC

The rules of procedure of the ESSC were adopted on 15 November 2012 in the 15 meeting of the European Statistical System Committee. A new revision is being discussed currently by the ESSC, expected outcome in February 2021.

These rules specify of the ESSC specify important aspects concerning the ESSC.

Specifically, they specify that the Commission consults the ESSC on issues like:

- the measures which the Commission intends to take for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics, their justification on a cost-effectiveness basis, the means and timetables for achieving them, the response burden on survey respondents;
- initiatives to bring into practice the reprioritisation and reduction of the response burden;
- issues concerning statistical confidentiality;
- any other question, in particular issues of methodology, arising from the establishment or implementation of statistical programmes that are raised by its Chairperson, either on its own initiative or at the request of a Member State.

Slides 74 The ESS Committee - ESSC

The ESSC has an important role regarding the **European statistical programme** and **Annual work programme**:

- The ESS Committee should be consulted in regard to proposed developments and priorities in the European statistical programme
- The Commission should submit the draft European statistical programme to the ESS Committee for prior examination
- For each European statistical programme, the Commission should consult the ESS Committee, on the intermediate progress report and final evaluation report prior to their submission to the European Parliament and to the Council
- Each year, before the end of May, the Commission should submit to the ESS Committee its work programme for the following year

Slide 75 The ESS Committee - ESSC

The ESSC has also a very important role within the quality framework of European statistics. The European Statistics Code of Practice is the primary fundamental document that sets out the standards

to which the ESS operates in producing European Statistics. The Code of Practice should be reviewed and updated as necessary by the ESS Committee.

We will speak more in detail about the Code of practice in the section focusing on Quality within the ESS.

Slides 76/77 The ESS Committee - ESSC

The Agenda of ESSC meetings, submitted to the Committee by the Chairperson, usually includes:

- ✓ proposed measures about which the committee is asked to give an opinion (according to several regulations);
- ✓ other issues not related to comitology items put to the committee for information, consultation or for discussion.

The term ‘comitology’ refers to the set of procedures through which the European Commission exercises the implementing powers conferred on it by the EU legislator, with the assistance of committees of representatives from EU countries. Such comitology committees are chaired by a Commission official and give an opinion on draft implementing acts proposed by the Commission.

Under the Regulation, the committees use two types of procedures: examination and advisory.

The choice of procedure for a committee is made by the EU legislator, and depends on the nature of the implementing powers that are laid out in the basic regulation, directive or decision.

Slides 78/79 The ESS Committee - ESSC

How does the ESSC takes its decisions?

- ✓ When the advisory procedure leads to a vote, the outcome of the vote shall be decided by a simple majority of the committee members;
- ✓ Where the committee's opinion is required, the outcome of the vote shall be decided by a qualified majority
- ✓ Unless a member of the committee objects, the chairperson may, without proceeding to a formal vote, establish that the committee has delivered a positive opinion, by consensus, on the draft implementing act;
- ✓ Each Member State delegation is considered to be one committee member. Each delegation is composed of the representatives of the National Statistical Institutes NSIs of the Member States. Each member cannot be represented by more than one person, but delegations may be accompanied by experts (composition of each delegation to be communicated prior to the meeting)
- ✓ The committee may create working groups chaired by a representative of the Commission to examine particular issues
- ✓ The representatives of EFTA/EEA States and of the Swiss Confederation shall be invited to attend the committee meetings on relevant matters, in accordance with the Agreement on the European Economic Area and the Agreement between the European Community and the Swiss Confederation on cooperation in the field of statistics
- ✓ The Chairperson may decide to invite representatives of other third parties or other experts to talk on particular matters, on his/her own initiative or at the request of a member of the committee. However, a simple majority of the component members of the committee may oppose their participation in the meeting.
- ✓ Representatives of third parties and experts shall not be present at and shall not participate in voting of the committee.

The ESSC adopts legal issues (comitology items) by a qualified majority as specified by the new rules applied in the European Council and in the Council of the EU, as well as in all Comitology

Committees, from November 2014. Specifically, a system of **double majority** of Member States and of population replaced the rules based on a system of weighted votes attributed to each Member State, applied since 1957.

A **qualified majority** is attained under the new rules is:

- 1) at least **55% of the Member States** vote in favour. This means that a qualified majority has to comprise **at least 15 Member States** (out of the 27 current members).
- 2) the Member States voting in favour represent **at least 65% of the population** of the Union.

In order to make it impossible for a very small number of the most populous Member States to prevent a decision from being adopted, a **blocking minority** must include at least the minimum number of Member States which represent **more than 35% of the population, plus one Member State**. This means that a blocking minority must comprise at least **four** Member States.

Slides 80/81 The Partnership Group - PG

The Partnership Group is a group of Directors General of the National Statistical Institutes of the ESS whose mission is to further the development of the ESS at the highest level, notably through ensuring the effective functioning of the European Statistical System Committee.

The PG normally meets three times a year, between ESSC meetings. The PG is composed by 10 members:

The elected chair from a member state (rotating every 2 years);

Eurostat's Director-General (vice-chair);

Eurostat Director of Directorate B (Methodology; Dissemination; Cooperation in the European Statistical System);

Heads of NSIs of the previous, current and next Council Presidencies;

four elected heads of NSIs (rotating every 2 years).

The PG tasks are to:

- Identify and propose strategic issues for discussion by the ESSC,
- Assist in coordinating the cooperation between National Statistical Systems and Eurostat on strategic issues in order to participate in the formulation of the issues before discussion in the ESSC,
- Discuss contentious issues in order either to make proposals to the ESSC with the aim of achieving consensus or to refer them to other bodies (e.g. Sector Groups) for further work,
- Channel ideas from ESSC members on the state of co-operation and how it could be improved,
- Comment on agendas for future ESSC meetings and discuss the substance of upcoming ESSC agenda items,
- Monitor the functioning of the ESSC and its subsidiary bodies,
- Work in an inclusive way, keeping all Heads of National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) informed of discussion and actions through information exchange and ensuring that non-members views can be taken into account.

Slides 82/86 Directors General of the NSIs - DGINS

The Directors General of the National Statistical Institutes (DGINS) meet once a year at a conference organized with the aim of discussing topics related to the statistical programme and methods and processes for the production of Community statistics. The conference is hosted each year by a different Member State and the Director General of the host country chairs the conference.

The conferences usually consider a specific topic of interest. For example, these were the last conferences:

- 2014, Riga: Towards global business statistics
- 2015, Lisbon: Indicators for decision making and monitoring statistics
- 2016, Vienna: Statistics on income, consumption and wealth
- 2017, Budapest: Population Movements and Integration Issues -Migration Statistics
- 2018, Bucharest: Official Statistics in a datafied society (Trusted Smart Statistics)
- 2019, Bratislava: The statistical implications of globalisation
- 2020, Warsaw, Poland: Earth observations for official statistics (postponed to 2021)

After the conference a Memorandum or conclusions are usually drafted containing the DGINS agreed action points, which can include suggested directions and approaches to the ESS and also recommendations for other bodies external to the ESS. The last Memoranda / conclusions are available on the [Eurostat website page dedicated to DGINS](#) by selecting the corresponding conference.

Slides 87/90 European Statistical Governance Advisory Board – ESGAB

The European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) provides an independent overview of the European Statistical System as regards the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice.

The ESGAB advises the Commission (Eurostat) on appropriate measures to facilitate the implementation of the Code of Practice; on how to communicate the Code of Practice to users and data providers; and on the updating of the Code of Practice. The ESGAB may also provide advice regarding questions related to user-confidence in European statistics.

In addition, the ESGAB prepares an annual report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Code of Practice insofar as it relates to the Commission (Eurostat). This report includes an assessment of the implementation of the Code of Practice in the European Statistical System as a whole.

The ESGAB comprises seven independent members with outstanding competence in the field of statistics. The term of office for the chairperson and members of the ESGAB is three years, renewable once. ESGAB usually meets six times per year.

Details on the current composition of the ESGAB are available on the [ESGAB website](#).

Slides 91/94 European Statistical Advisory Committee – ESAC

The European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) was established in in 2008 by the European Parliament and the Council.

The ESAC has 24 members representing users, respondents and other stakeholders of European Statistics (including the scientific community, social partners and civil society) as well as institutional users such as the Council and the European Parliament.

The Committee plays an important role in ensuring that user requirements as well as the response burden on information providers and producers are taken into account in developing the Statistical Programmes. It delivers its opinion on the Multiannual Statistical Programme, addressing in particular its relevance to the requirements of European integration. It also gives its view on the balance (priorities and resources) between different areas of the Multiannual Statistical Programme as well as the annual statistical work programme of the Commission.

Aims of the ESAC include:

- the relevance of the Community statistical programme to the requirements of European integration and development;
- the relevance of the Community statistical programme in relation to the activities of the Community;
- the balance as regards priorities and resources between different areas in the Community statistical programme, the annual statistical work programme of the Commission, and possibilities of re-prioritising statistical work;
- the adequacy of the resources needed to implement the Community statistical programme, including the costs incurred directly by both the Community and national authorities and appropriateness to users' needs of the scope, level of detail, and costs of Community statistics;
- the costs related to the provision of statistical information by information providers and possibilities of reducing the response burden.

In addition, the ESAC can:

- draw the Commission's attention to areas in which it may be necessary to develop new statistical activities;
- advise the Commission how to improve the relevance of the Community statistics to users, taking into account the costs borne by information providers and producers.

Slide 95 European Statistical Advisory Committee – ESAC

The [ESAC website](#) reports the main information on ESAC news, events, opinions and documents, including information on the Committee members

Committee composition:

- ✓ Twelve members are appointed by the Commission, after consulting the European Parliament and the Council. They represent users, respondents, and other stakeholders in Community statistics (including the scientific community, the social partners and civil society)
- ✓ Eleven members are appointed directly by the institutions and bodies to which they belong (European Parliament, Council, ECB, ESSC, etc.)
- ✓ Eurostat's Director General, ex officio member

The mandate of the members is for five years, renewable once.

Slides 96/101 European Statistical Forum - ESF

The European Statistical Forum (ESF) was created in 2013 with Memorandum of Understanding to give strategic guidance in the relations between the European Statistical System (ESS) and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB).

Additionally, in 2016, another Memorandum of Understanding on the quality assurance of statistics underlying the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP) was signed between Eurostat and the European Central Bank Directorate General Statistics. This Memorandum represents a milestone in the cooperation between the two systems and provides the practical arrangements for their cooperation in the areas of balance of payments and financial accounts statistics, in line with the European Semester.

Note: The Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP) is a surveillance mechanism that aims to identify potential macroeconomic risks early on, prevent the emergence of harmful macroeconomic imbalances and correct the imbalances that are already in place.

It is based on a scoreboard of stock and flow indicators which can capture both short-term rapid deteriorations as well as the long-term gradual accumulation of imbalances.

The ESF is composed of one representative per Member State from the ESS Committee (ESSC) and from the Statistics Committee of the ESCB respectively. The ESF is co-chaired by the Chairs of the ESSC and the STC.

The ESF is assisted by a Bureau, which prepares its meetings and monitors its activities. The Bureau is composed of the two co-Chairs, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Committee on Monetary, Finance and Balance of Payment statistics (CMFB, the operational platform of the ESF), two members representing the national statistical institutes and two members representing the national central banks. The latter four Bureau members are elected by the ESF.

The Forum meets once per year, in Luxembourg and in Frankfurt alternatively

Note:

The Committee on Monetary, Financial and Balance of Payments Statistics (CMFB) was established by the Council in 1991 to assist the European Commission in drawing up and implementing work programmes concerning monetary, financial and balance of payments statistics.

In recent years, the CMFB had played an important advisory role in the statistical issues related to Excessive Deficit Procedure decisions. The CMFB is the forum for co-ordination of statisticians from the national statistical institutes and Eurostat on the one hand, and the national central banks and the European Central Bank on the other.

The CMFB provides opinions to the European Commission (Eurostat) and the ECB on statistical matters in its field of competence. In addition, the CMFB also provides advice to the European Commission (Eurostat) in the context of the excessive deficit procedure for cases that are either complex or of general interest in the view of the Commission or the Member State concerned.

The close contacts between the CMFB and the ESSC are channelled through the Executive Body of the CMFB and the Partnership Group of the ESSC. ECB Director General Statistics is invited to attend the ESSC meetings, while Eurostat and the CMFB Chairman are invited to attend the meetings of the ESCB Statistics Committee.

Contacts with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Bank for International Settlements (BIS), and senior statisticians in the countries seeking membership of the EU, are promoted through participation in CMFB meetings. The CMFB advises on the updating of - and promotes adherence to - international and European statistical standards, in the interests of consistency and efficiency.

Slides 102/106 European System of Central Banks – ESCB

The European System of Central Banks (ESCB) comprises the European Central Bank (ECB) and the National Central Banks (NCBs) of all EU Member States (in or out the euro area).

Since 1 January 1999 the European Central Bank (ECB) is responsible for conducting monetary policy for the euro area. The legal basis for the single monetary policy is the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Statute of the ESCB and of the ECB. The Statute established both the ECB and the ESCB. The ECB was established as the core of the Eurosystem and the ESCB. The ECB and the national central banks together perform the tasks they have been entrusted with. The ECB has legal personality under public international law.

As we already underlined when presenting the ESS, the production of European statistics is organised around two separate pillars, the ESCB and the ESS partnership, with separate legal frameworks and governance structures.

The ESCB and the ESS need to cooperate closely to maximise synergies, minimise the reporting burden and ensure the production of complete and coherent European statistics

The alignment aims to ensure that the same quality standards apply to both sets of European statistics. The ESCB and the ESS cooperate closely through the Committee on monetary, Financial and Balance of Payments Statistics (CMFB) and the European Statistical Forum (ESF)

Note:

The Eurosystem comprises the ECB and the NCBs of those countries that have adopted the euro.

The Eurosystem and the ESCB will co-exist as long as there are EU Member States outside the euro area.

The euro area consists of the EU countries that have adopted the euro.

To join the euro area, the countries have to fulfil the ‘convergence criteria’.

The criteria set out the economic and legal preconditions for countries to participate successfully in Economic and Monetary Union.

Slide 107 Schematical representation of the ESS and ESCB systems

QUALITY WITHIN THE EUROPEAN STATISTICAL SYSTEM

Slides 109/111 Quality within the ESS

The mission of the ESS is to provide reliable, comparable, independent, high-quality statistics for decision making purposes, research and democratic debate.

The Legal framework is the following:

Article 338 of TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) introduced 7 Principles, stating that the production of Union statistics shall conform to impartiality, reliability, objectivity, scientific independence, cost-effectiveness and statistical confidentiality; it shall not entail excessive burdens on economic operators.

Regulation (EC) No 223/2009, as amended by Regulation (EU) 2015/759, introduced 6 Principles: professional independence, impartiality, objectivity, reliability, statistical confidentiality, cost effectiveness. It also mentioned the Code of Practice, quality reporting and the output quality criteria. In applying the quality criteria to data covered by sectoral legislation in specific statistical domains, the modalities, structure and periodicity of quality reports should also be specific.

The ESS quality framework is not legally binding, is a self-commitment and is self-regulatory.

- European Statistics Code of Practice (ES CoP) (self-regulatory)
- Quality Assurance Framework of the ESS (ESS QAF)

General quality management principles (continuous interaction with users, commitment of leadership, partnership, staff satisfaction, continuous improvement, integration and harmonization)

In their dichotomy the CoP and QAF serve different purposes and have their own rationale.

Slides 112/120 The European Statistics Code of Practice

The [European Statistics Code of Practice](#) was adopted by Eurostat and the statistical authorities of the Member States to commit themselves to an encompassing approach towards high quality statistics. It is the cornerstone of the common quality framework of the European Statistical System.

It is a self-regulatory instrument based on 16 principles covering three main branches: institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical outputs. For each principle some indicators are proposed to measure compliance. The slides summarize the main relevant principles for each of the three branches. More details and the full list of the indicators are available on the Code of Practice.

Slides 121/125 ESS commitment to quality

ESS quality reporting presents information on the quality of Eurostat products as well as on tools and standards for quality reporting agreed within the European Statistical System

- Important aspects of the ESS commitment to quality are presented in the Quality declaration of the ESS.
- The [Quality Assurance Framework of the ESS](#) complements and breaks down the Code of Practice. The aim of the Quality Assurance Framework is to accompany the Code of Practice by providing guidance and examples in the form of more detailed methods and tools as well as good practices. The listed methods, tools and good practices demonstrate how the Code of Practice can be implemented in the every-day work of a statistical authority. Together with the general quality management principles, the Code of Practice and the Quality Assurance Framework constitute the common quality framework of the ESS.
- The [ESS Handbook for Quality and Metadata Reports](#) is a component of the ESS standardisation process, encourage sharing approaches to European statistics and the spread of best practices, in particular for quality and metadata reports.

Slides 126/127 Peer review procedures

Peer reviews form part of the European Statistical System strategy to **monitor the implementation of the Code of Practice**. Their objective is to review the compliance/alignment of the ESS with the Code of Practice and to help the statistical authorities making up the ESS to further improve and develop the national statistical systems.

A first round of peer reviews was carried out in 2006-2008 and a second round 2013-2015. The **third round** of peer reviews will take place in **2021-2023**. The three rounds of peer reviews cover all the **Member States of the EU** and **EFTA** as well as **Eurostat**

Slides 128/132 Third round of peer reviews 2021-2023

The third round of peer reviews has two objectives:

1. To review the compliance/alignment of the ESS with the European statistics Code of Practice, in order to demonstrate to the ESS and to external stakeholders that the ESS is a system based on the principles of the ES CoP;
2. To help NSIs, ONAs developing, producing and disseminating European statistics, and Eurostat to further improve and develop the national statistical systems by indicating future-

oriented recommendations; at the same time they should stimulate government authorities to support the implementation of these recommendations.

These two objectives have an internal and external dimension, this second one more difficult to achieve as it covers all stakeholders' active involvement in the implementation of the peer review recommendations and related improvement actions

A combination of an audit-like and a peer reviewing approach will be used to benefit from the positive aspects of both approaches.

The following elements from an audit-like approach will be applied:

- Involvement of external experts to guarantee the credibility and objectivity of the peer reviews;
- The provision of documents as evidence for statements;
- The ownership of the recommendations by the peer review expert team;
- The right for the NSIs/Eurostat to express diverging views on the recommendations for improvement as formulated by the peer review expert team; diverging views will be published together with the peer review report, in an annex;
- The responsibility of the NSI/Eurostat to formulate the improvement actions to address the recommendations in the peer review report.

The following elements of a peer review approach will be used:

- Common agreement within the ESS on the methodology of the peer reviews, including the objectives, scope and implementation arrangements;
- Participation of experts from the NSIs (peers) in the peer review expert teams, including from among the senior management of the NSIs;
- Peer learning through the involvement of experts from the NSIs;
- Focus on improvements as an objective of the reviews.

The implementation of the ESS peer reviews is supported by a contractor, identified through an open procurement procedure. The contractor is responsible for engaging and supporting the peer review experts, for the logistics of the peer reviews, for providing well-formatted and language- checked reports and for organising the training and workshops for the peer review experts and national peer review coordinators from the NSIs.

The implementation arrangements describe the following elements of the peer reviews:

1. The procedure for the selection of the ONAs to participate in the peer review;
2. The self-assessment phase;
3. The composition and selection of the peer review expert teams;
4. The organisation and modalities of the peer review visits;
5. The arrangements for the peer review reports and the recommendations;
6. The procedure to develop the improvement actions to address the recommendations from the peer review expert team and their monitoring.

1. Procedure for the selection of the ONAs

Eurostat will ask the NSIs to start the procedure to select between three to six ONAs, which will participate in the peer review in a given country. The proposed procedure for selecting the ONAs is detailed in Annex I of the [dedicated document](#). The four selection criteria that can be used individually or in combination and be measured by qualitative and/or quantitative metrics are: a) Importance for European statistics, measured by a percentage threshold of producing European statistics; b) Importance for European statistics, measured by its significance; c) Degree of compliance with the ES CoP by an ONA; d) Importance of an ONA from the perspective of the NSI. Once the selection procedure has been finalised, the NSI will send an explanatory note to Eurostat. Once selected for

participation in the peer review, the ONAs will be asked to fill in a self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ) and will be involved in all the meetings and actions of the peer review process.

2. Self-assessment phase

A self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ) for the NSIs/Eurostat and another one for the ONAs is foreseen. The SAQ is organised in three main sections, one for each area of the Code of Practice: institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical output. Within each section, sub-sections correspond to each of the 16 principles and include the relative indicators. The self-assessment questionnaire for NSIs and Eurostat is included in Annex II of the [dedicated document](#); At the very end of the questionnaire, some questions are added in relation to the Covid-19 situation.. The answers to the questions on how the indicator is implemented should be based on the respondents' professional judgment and experiences; in addition, inspiration can be found in the respective methods and tools of the ESS Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). In accordance with the audit-like approach of the ESS peer reviews, NSIs/Eurostat are asked to provide evidence for the answers (e.g. available links, internal documents). The SAQ for ONAs is included in Annex III of the same document. As the SAQ for NSIs and Eurostat, it is also organized in the three main sections of the Code of Practice. The filled-in SAQs of the NSI and the ONAs participating in the peer review will be shared with the respective peer review expert team only.

3. The composition and selection of the peer review expert teams

The peer review expert team will consist of four experts, including at least one external expert and one expert from Eurostat. The composition of the peer review expert team will provide for a balanced combination of competencies, knowledge and skills. Requirements to be selected:

- Senior management experience in an NSI/ONA;
- Knowledge about the set-up and functioning of an NSS;
- Knowledge of strategic developments in statistics at national/EU/international levels;
- Knowledge about recent developments in the ESS;
- Expertise in statistics and modernisation activities;
- Active involvement in ESS related activities.

The composition of a peer review expert team is usually as follows:

- One (current or recent) senior manager from an NSI;
- One external (to the ESS) expert;
- One expert from an NSI;
- One expert from Eurostat.

With the support of a contractor, a pool of experts to be engaged as peer review experts is created. NSIs may propose experts from their own NSI, or from ONAs or even external experts. From the proposed list of experts and based on the requirements for the experts set out in the methodology, Eurostat will select a maximum number of 20-25 experts. Eurostat will furthermore form eight peer review expert teams (with four experts in each team, three of them selected in this procedure and one from Eurostat selected by Eurostat) and nominate the chair of each peer review expert team. Once the experts and the respective teams are selected, they are trained under the strict guidance of Eurostat and based on the peer review methodology approved by the ESS Committee. The training covers the methodology of the peer reviews, the drafting of recommendations and reports with an emphasis on harmonising recommendations, auditing skills and other aspects of the peer review process. The peer review of Eurostat is conducted by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB).

4. The organisation and modalities of the peer review visits

Peer review visits will last four to five working days. The filled-in SAQs (for the NSI and the ONAs participating in the peer review) and relevant documents (core documents and evidence for statements/answers in the SAQs) are sent to the peer review expert team, and the Eurostat Task Force on peer reviews and quality, three months before the start of the peer review visit. The chair of the

peer review expert team holds video/telephone conferences with the peer review expert team (approximately 10 weeks before the peer review visits) to discuss roles of the experts in the visit, answers to the SAQs and potential issues to be raised during the visit and to set agenda for the peer review visit.

The peer review expert team meets in the evening of the day before the peer review visit to the NSI starts, to review the agenda and agree on the specific roles of team members for each day of the peer review visit and on questions to ask. In the evening of every day the peer review expert team meets and summarises the results of the day's discussions with a view to prepare the list of recommendations. A complete list of draft recommendations is prepared by the chair of the peer review expert team, in close consultation with the team, in the evening before the last day of the visit. The draft recommendations are presented by the chair (lead expert) to the senior management of the NSI in a meeting on the last day of the peer review visit.

5. The arrangements for the peer review reports and recommendations

The peer review report follows a standard structure composed by: Executive summary; Introduction; Brief description of the national statistical system/Eurostat; Progress/advancement in the last 5 years; Compliance with the ES CoP and future orientation.

The recommendations included into the report as well as the reports themselves need not to be strictly comparable across countries as such (because the intention of the peer reviews is not to compare among countries) but should be harmonised in terms of scope, magnitude, number and content, as much as possible. The detailed structure and timing of the reports are available on the document.

6. Improvement actions

The procedure for defining improvement actions offers the possibility of involving other stakeholders.

The NSIs shall define improvement actions, if relevant, in cooperation with the ONA(s) and in consultation with other stakeholders. The improvement actions shall:

- be based on the recommendations in the final peer review reports;
- be SMART;
- contain a realistic deadline;
- indicate the responsibility of the improvement action

The NSIs send improvement action(s) to Eurostat within 8 weeks from the reception of the final report. Once the improvement actions are agreed between the NSI and Eurostat, they will be published on Eurostat's website alongside with the peer review report as well as on the NSI's website.

Annually, starting in January 2024 and until the end of 2027, the NSIs shall report on the progress of implementation achieved by the end of the previous year. Eurostat shall produce an annual progress report to the ESS Committee and ESGAB, which describes the progress achieved in the implementation of improvement actions.

All the details on peer reviewing and on the third round are available on [Eurostat website](#).

Slide 134 ESS additional highlights

Other interesting products and initiatives of the ESS are listed, more details are available on the [ESS section of Eurostat website](#).