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ESGAB: Unprecedented challenges for official statistics in Europe call for a modernisation of the legal basis

ESGAB publishes 19 recommendations to make European statistics fit for the digital age

In its 2022 Annual Report, published today, the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) calls on the European legislators to use the occasion of a revision of the European statistical law, Regulation 223/2009, to create a modern, future-proof legal basis for European statistics.

The revised legislation should enable a regular and secure access to private data sources, new and more agile working methods and the production of experimental statistics, cooperation with academia and research, as well as data sharing among European statistics producers, all with adequate funding. Also, the rules on independence of Eurostat and of National Statistical Institutes, the quality control of European statistics, and the political commitments on confidence in European statistics need further strengthening for the European Statistical System (ESS) to remain the main and trusted source for statistics in the new data ecosystem.

"In order for European statistics to stay relevant and fulfil their public good function, European official statistics producers need to be able to successfully address the challenges and seize the opportunities of the new data ecosystem that have arisen from the digitalisation of society and the increased demand for timely statistics by policy-makers. This requires a solid, modern and future-oriented European legal basis", says Aurel Schubert, Chair of ESGAB.

The ESGAB 2022 Annual Report recommends that those responsible for European statistics should:

1. Adapt their ways of work to ensure that European statistics are fit for the future and are enabled to continue to best fulfil their mission of satisfying the new and evolving information needs of all stakeholders.
2. Strengthen the 'brand' of European statistics as principles-based statistics by reinforcing and highlighting the absolute advantage over other data that arises from their adherence to statistical principles and ethics and, thus, make European statistics the ultimate go-to source of independent, impartial and reliable statistical information.



In light of these considerations, ESGAB makes 19 concrete recommendations for revision of Regulation 223/2009 and for recasting the European Commission's Commitment on Confidence in Statistics.

Regular and secure access by European statistics producers to new data sources, mainly privately-held data, with Eurostat given a leading role, will be crucial to keeping European statistics relevant, accurate, timely, and cost-effective. Such an approach would facilitate responding to the growing needs of policy-makers and society at large for more timely and granular information. Responding to unforeseen and fast-evolving data demands and measurement challenges also requires enhancing the agility of the system of production of European statistics, including the production of experimental statistics. New forms of cooperation and enhanced data sharing with academia and research, including the setting up of a European Research Institute for Official Statistics, would also contribute to increasing agility.

A high priority should also be given to data sharing within the ESS for the production of European statistics, with Eurostat as the hub. Given the incompleteness of data sourced nationally and the need to lower the burden for respondents to statistical requests, such data sharing is essential in the context of the current and future developments of the EU single market and EU integration in general.

Improvements in the underlying governance framework are necessary to support the recommended adaptations and address remaining governance weaknesses that have been evident over the years. They would reinforce the difference of European statistics from the quantitative information that is inundating society. ESGAB recommendations especially emphasize the professional independence of Eurostat and National Statistical Institutes and their respective heads. There is also a need to strengthen in the EU statistical law the requirements for the Commitments on Confidence in Statistics to be made by the policy side in Member States and the European Commission.

To strive for highest statistical quality of European statistics, Eurostat's responsibility for reporting on the quality of Member States' European statistics should be further strengthened, with even higher prominence and legal certainty given to the need to adhere to the European Statistics Code of Practice. Eurostat should also have a clear capacity to coordinate EU bodies and other Directorates-general that contribute data to European statistics.

In addition to the above recommendations for amendment of Regulation 223/2009, the 2022 Annual Report also provides ESGAB's updated Opinion regarding the European Commission's Commitment on Confidence in Statistics (CCS). The Opinion calls for a recast of the CCS so that it becomes a clear commitment from the political side of the Commission to take all the necessary measures to maintain confidence in European statistics, ensure progress in the implementation of the statistical principles contained in the Code of Practice and clearly state the special status and independence of Eurostat within the Commission as the statistical authority of the EU. The CCS should also be very explicit about the conditions that support or manifest the independence of Eurostat and its head. ESGAB further recommends that the CCS pledge adequate and



predictable resources for Eurostat, enhance the coordination function of Eurostat regarding official statistics in the Commission, and address the existing prerelease access to European statistics by the Commission to align it with best practice.

“Users must have full confidence that all European statistics – whether regular or experimental – are produced at the highest quality possible in an independent scientific manner without any political or other external interference.”, says Aurel Schubert.

The 2022 Report is available on [ESGAB’s homepage](#).

Further information about [ESGAB](#), the [European Statistics Code of Practice](#), and the [European Statistical System](#).