



TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS

**An Comhchoiste um Airgeadas, Caiteachas Poibli agus Athchóiriú, agus
Taoiseach**

An Cion Polaitiúil maidir le

**COM (2016)551 Togra le haghaidh Rialachán ó Pharlaimint na hEorpa
agus ón gComhairle lena mbunaítear creat comhchoiteann le haghaidh
staidreamh Eorpach a bhaineann le daoine agus le teaghlaigh bunaithe
ar shonraí ar an leibhéal aonair arna mbailliú ó shamplaí**

agus

**COM(2016)557 Togra le haghaidh Rialachán ó Pharlaimint na hEorpa
agus ón gComhairle lena leasaítear Rialachán (AE) Uimh. 99/2013 ó
Pharlaimint na hEorpa agus ón gComhairle maidir leis an gclár staidrimh
Eorpach 2013-17, trí é a fhadú go 2018-2020.**

Samhain 2016



HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE, PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND REFORM
AND TAOISEACH**

Political Contribution on

**COM (2016)551 Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament
and of the Council establishing a common framework for European
statistics relating to persons and households, based on data at
individual level collected from samples**

and

**COM(2016)557 Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament
and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the
European Parliament and of the Council on the European statistical
programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-2020.**

November 2016

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REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

Introduction

1. The Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach is pleased to participate in the on-going dialogue between National Parliaments and the European Commission and is grateful for the opportunity it affords to contribute to policy development in the European Union. The Joint Committee believes that the political dialogue between the Commission and the Houses of the Oireachtas is a key factor in the development of better EU policy and laws which properly reflect the concerns and needs of Irish citizens.

Background

2. The Joint Committee has noted that there is a growing debate at European level regarding the relevancy, coherence and comparability of statistical data and their contribution to improved policy-making. In this context, the Joint Committee welcomed the publication of the Commission's Proposal *COM (2016) 551 – Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households, based on data at individual level collected from samples*.
3. On 29th September 2016, the Joint Committee discussed the Commission's proposals as part of its EU scrutiny legislative remit. Following this meeting, the Joint Committee decided to elicit further information and observations from a key participant in the statistical domain. The Joint Committee subsequently met with the Central Statistics Office [CSO] on 13 October 2016.
4. The Joint Committee wishes to thank the Central Statistics Office for their assistance in relation to the Committee's work on these significant proposals.

Decision of the Committee

5. On 17 November 2016, the Joint Committee agreed that the enclosed political contribution be forwarded to An Taoiseach, Mr. Enda Kenny TD, Mr. Jean Claude-Juncker, President of the European Commission, Mr. Martin Schulz MEP, President of the European Parliament and Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council.
6. The Joint Committee further agreed that, in the interests of inter-parliamentary cooperation on EU matters, to forward a copy of this report to the appropriate Committee in each EU Member State's National Parliament and to ensure that a copy is made available to Ireland's MEPs.



POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION ON COM (2016) 551

The following are the observations and recommendations of the Joint Committee, based on its consideration of COM (2016) 551 *Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council – Establishing a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households, based on data at individual level collected from samples.*

The Joint Committee considers that:

1. The focus of the proposal towards eliminating fragmentation and consolidating the five existing legislative measures concerning statistical collection into one unifying Regulation is a welcome development.
2. The intention of the Regulation in streamlining and enhancing the statistical collection process for the purposes of contributing to better policy-formation and service delivery in key EU social and economic streams should be lauded.
3. The direct linkage of the proposal to enhancing and elevating the social importance of statistical data is crucial. That the Regulation is drafted and makes reference to the proposed “European Pillar of Social Rights” is a positive development. The well-being and improvement of all EU citizens lives, both from a social and economic perspective, should remain at the “heart” of the Regulation’s purpose.
4. It is acknowledged that the establishment of a unified legal framework in the statistical domain provides for greater levels of comparison, benchmarking and mutual learning at a EU level.
5. It is further acknowledged that statistical information collected needs to be relevant, timely, accurate, comparable and coherent to maximise the input that feeds into EU social and economic policy formulation. In that context, the integration of data collections and standardisation of variables are viewed as beneficial developments.
6. Modernisation in terms of the collection and production of statistical data at both the individual and household level should be promoted. It is important that additional EU investment, in conjunction with national authorities support, is directed towards modernising and using the available technology to make the collection of statistical data more efficient and practical.

The Regulation should attempt to harness technological developments to attract new participants in data surveys. The Regulation should lend itself to demonstrating that statistical collection can be flexible and user-friendly. This approach would also support the EU “Digital Agenda” and the twin concepts of re-usability and interoperability.



7. Notwithstanding the positive aspects of the proposal, the Joint Committee is of the opinion that due consideration must be given to the needs of users; the need for consistency with other EU initiatives, such as the '*Beyond GDP initiative*'; the burden placed on respondents; Member States' resources and reliability of the results, in the context of progressing this proposal.
8. Specifically, the Joint Committee is of the opinion that the proposed changes to the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) should be reconsidered as the proposal to move from the existing 'four-wave cycle' to a 'six-wave cycle' poses significant risks to future participation by respondents in statistical surveys. Evidence suggests that the attrition or "fall-out" rate by respondents is increasing and moving to a six-wave model is likely to increase the rate of attrition and also act as a disincentive to future participation of respondents.
9. Furthermore, it is the opinion of the Joint Committee that that the inclusion of wealth as part of the SILC is not appropriate. Article 3(h) of the Regulation concerning Data Sets, the proposal to include *income, consumption and wealth including debts* poses significant risks to the objective of generating relevant and reliable statistical information. The inclusion of wealth as a data set will most likely deter survey participation and threatens to overburden the SILC. Incorporating sensitive data such as wealth is likely to undermine public confidence and arouse unnecessary suspicion on an important and established statistical inquiry. The Committee would support, instead, consideration to be given to a dedicated separate survey for this purpose.
10. Therefore, whilst the broad thrust of the Regulation is welcomed, it is hoped that the Commission will continue to engage and cooperate with National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) in planning and implementing change in the statistical domain. National Statistical Institutes have a unique and valuable insight into the practices and application of surveys at "grass-roots" level. The Commission should seek to harness and take account of individual Member States' experiences when formulating EU wide policy.



POLITICAL CONTRIBUTION ON COM (2016) 557

The following are the observations and recommendations of the Joint Committee, based on its consideration of COM (2016) 557 *Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-2020*.

The Joint Committee considers that:

- (1) The proposal to extend the existing European Statistical Programme [ESP] and align it with the current Multiannual Financial Framework until 2020 is welcome.
- (2) The evaluation of the operations of the 2013-17 programme is an important exercise and the undertaking of a public consultation together with an impact assessment provides a solid basis for implementing improvements in the extended European Statistical Programme until 2020.
- (3) The rationale and focus on extending the European Statistical Programme should remain towards contributing to a "Better Europe". Continuing and modernising the ESP provides the scope to contribute further to developing and implementing the core EU objectives of the EU2020 strategy and the Commission's 10 political priorities. Extending the ESP should enhance the capacity of the EU to draft policy on the basis of evidence based information.
- (4) Modernisation should feature prominently in the extended phase of the programme. Investment will assist in improving the flexibility of statistical production systems and garnering data that is both timely and relevant. There is broad support for the stated goal of using new IT tools and the wider use of administrative data and data-linking techniques.
- (5) Emphasis should remain on respondents, especially, in the context of reducing the administrative burden for survey participants.
- (6) The Regulation specifically provides for the collation of "new statistical outputs" during the extended period of the programme. The supporting rationale highlights existing "data gaps" that need to be captured. Acquiring additional information in the environmental, population, energy and migration domains are understandable.

However, there are serious concerns in regard to the methodology to be employed in the context of collecting data on gender issues. This is especially so in terms of gathering data on gender violence, sexual abuse and instances of domestic violence. Information pertaining to these data-sets is particularly sensitive and concerns have been expressed as to the safety and well-being of individuals who participate in surveys of this nature. For these specific data-sets, door-step statistical surveys are not suitable and should not be used. Instead, the Commission should engage and consult with NGOs, support organisations and National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) which have experience of this field to devise and implement a suitable and more appropriate statistical method.



The Joint Committee looks forward to receiving the Commission's response to its observations and it hopes that the Committee's recommendations can be taken into account.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "John McGuinness". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John McGuinness T.D,
Chairman,
Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and Taoiseach



APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Membership of the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and Taoiseach

Deputies: John McGuinness TD (FF) (Chairman)
 Peter Burke TD (FG)
 Michael D’Arcy TD (FG)
 Pearse Doherty TD (SF)
 Michael McGrath TD (FF)
 Paul Murphy TD (IND)
 Sean Sherlock (Lab)

Senators: Paddy Burke (FG)
 Rose Conway-Walsh (SF)
 Gerry Horkan (Vice-Chairman) (FF)
 Kieran O’Donnell (FG)



Appendix 2: Transcript of Joint Committee meeting

The Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach met the Central Statistics Office in public session to discuss the European Commission's proposal COM (2016)551. Details of the meeting, with a link to the meeting transcript, is set out below.

13 October 2016

Central Statistics Office

[Link to Transcript:](#)