

ESSnet Workshop

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Final report

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1. Introduction and objectives of the Workshop

The second ESSnet Workshop was organised by Eurostat, Destatis and the ICON-Institute. The objectives of this workshop were:

- to continue the dialogue between existing and future ESSnets
- sharing knowledge and best practices in the technical and methodological fields covered by the ESSnet projects,
- to allow for a common understanding and presentation of technical matters,
- to build on the actions launched so far to elaborate synergies and future collaborations.

2. Workshop Programme and participants

Opening by Eurostat and Destatis, Welcome by ICON-INSTITUTE

General session for discussion on the role of ESSnet projects in the vision of reengineering the statistical production chain

Session 1: Metadata and Data Access

Session 2: Business Statistics

Session 3: Data Linking

Session 4: Thematic ESSnet

General session on the future strategy for ESSnet and aspects for their improvements

Wrap-up of the event, general discussions, conclusions of the "rapporteur"

Closing of the workshop

The Workshop lasted for one and a half days during 27 -28 October 2011. It was attended by 50 participants from 19 Member States, Eurostat and external institutions. During these days a total of 29 presentations were held.

3. Opening

Daniel Defays opened the Workshop in the name of Eurostat. He stressed that against the background of budget cuts the European Statistical System (ESS) has to face emerging new requirements. As expressed by Eurostat in its vision the ESS has to become more efficient and needs a new economic thinking. The strategy has to be set on strengthening the joint capacities of the ESS by exchanging knowledge and best practices and an increased share of products and services. The ESS has to become a more convergent system and move towards a new governance structure. In this regard the ESS could also benefit from the developments in the Science and Research community. ESSnets would be the right tool to follow this strategy.

Peter Schmidt opened the Workshop on behalf of Destatis. He started from the general objective of ESSnets in the spirit of the Cracow Action Plan which is to take advantage of the synergies from co-operation of some partners in order to save costs in solving common problems of European interest and to allow transfer of results and of knowledge to non-participating partners for the benefit of the entire ESS. In his view the first ESSnet workshop in Stockholm has been very successful, a lot of improvements for ESSnets have been reached since then. Nevertheless, there is still a

need for further improvements like enhanced communication and coordination. Concerning ESSnets the relevant question for the future is: How could we maximise the benefits of ESSnets in a spirit of partnership by defining the most relevant ESSnet issues, improving the necessary infrastructure and improving the communication of our results?

Finally Ronald Delémont welcomed all participants in the name of the ICON-Institute.

4. General Session on the role of ESSnet projects in the vision of reengineering the statistical production chain

This session dedicated to overarching issues of ESSnet projects consisted of 6 presentations:

1. General Framework Developments- JM Museux (Eurostat)

The [presentation](#) gave an overview on the main developments of the general framework, mainly the Joint Strategy for the implementation of the Vision. An ESSnet typology was introduced and the existing ESSnets were assigned according to their contribution to a reference architecture and the business processes of GSBPM. Eurostat explained 9 internal modernisation projects, called VIP (**V**ision **I**nfrastructure **P**rojects) aimed at supporting the implementation of the Vision and the improvement of the ESS (infrastructure and production processes).

The overall operational target for the ESS would be to come to a tangible outcome and a so called vertical integration of the work of Eurostat and the Member States as well as an integration and reuse of the IT tools ("putting together the pieces of the jigsaw"). Initially, there is mainly a bottom-up approach and coherence between the different layers is hard to maintain. Conclusions were that the ESS needs

- a kind of industrialisation of statistical production (standardisation)
- an Enterprise Architecture approach.

2. Activities of the Eurostat LAB- Martina Hahn (Eurostat)

The Eurostat Laboratory was established in 2011. It conducts internal Eurostat projects that foster the implementation of the Eurostat Vision and were related to Europe 2020, GDP+ and the Sponsorship on Progress, well-being and sustainable development. At the moment 8 projects were running which were described. Work is based on available data and designed to generate EU-wide data. Eurostat works closely together with the other Commission services (mainly DG Regio and DG R&D). At a more developed stage of the projects the LAB projects will enable in depth discussion of the responsible Eurostat unit with the single ESSnet projects (for more details see the [presentation](#)).

3. ESSnet CORE- Jenny Linnerud (SSB)

The ESSnet CORE (Common Reference Environment, coordinated by ISTAT) continues the work of a previous ESSnet called CORA. The main objective for CORE is to create an architectural model for the definition and execution of statistical processes common to all NSIs in order to promote co-operation. CORE goes in the direction of fostering the sharing of tools among NSIs. Thus the ESSnet can contribute to minimizing duplications and maximising cost-effectiveness. The [presentation](#) gave an

overview on the project structure, the deliverables and the process scenario for testing.

ESSnet oriented aspects were mentioned like reducing administration, an increased number of ESSnet courses, continuing to have ESSnet workshops but also by trying to improve the ESSnet website.

4. ESSnet Microdata Linking and Data Warehousing- Harry Goossens (CBS)

The ESSnet is coordinated by NL and is part of the MEETS program. It started in October 2010 and will run until 2013 (two SGAs). The ultimate aim of the ESSnet is to create fully integrated data sets for enterprise and trade statistics at micro level and thus a data warehouse approach to statistics. Three main actions were mentioned: stocktaking, analysis/development and dissemination. In that respect, one of the crucial points will be to find out what is needed in the ESS. Conclusions of the first SGA were, that Data Warehousing is "hot", metadata is found important but often neglected and that there is a difference between Data Warehousing in statistics and commercial Data Warehousing. Visiting NSIs has proven very effective for gathering information on current practices and for sharing knowledge and expertise. Based on these experiences the working packages for the second SGA have been defined. Concerning project management specific attention will be paid on avoiding overlaps by interconnecting with other ESSnets. Scoping and prioritising work were also regarded as very important to ensure that ESSnets will be manageable. For more details see the [presentation](#).

5. ESSnet on Preparation of Standardisation (StandPrep) - Peter Schmidt (Destatis)

The ESSnet StandPrep was considered to prepare the Sponsorship on Standardisation which started its work in September 2011. The ESSnet had a very short duration (12/2010 – 9/2011) and was coordinated by INSEE. Standardisation aims at increasing the efficiency and quality of the statistical production processes. The ESS standardisation initiative is based on the The Hague action plan, the Eurostat Vision and the joint strategy paper of the ESSC from May 2010. The ESSnet reviewed current methodological handbooks, described processes of adopting and implementing standards as they are applied in international standardisation organisations (ISO) and made suggestions for future work on standardisation. The results have been presented to the Sponsorship on Standardisation. Initial plans were to implement a multi-annual ESSnet in 2012. For more details see the [presentation](#).

6. ESSnet Memobust - Pieter Vlag (CBS)

The ESSnet on Methodology for modern business statistics (Memobust) is coordinated by CBS NL. It started in December 2010, the first phase will end in May 2012 and tentatively followed by a second phase until December 2013. The goal is to update the existing handbook from 1997 and offer it in a modern form to statisticians, methodologists, managers and software architects. The ESSnet tries to seek a basis for the (would be) standards or best practices on how to make business statistics. The [presentation](#) gave an overview on the work packages and the strategy for the update.

Discussion

A. Hamilton (Australian Bureau of Statistics) introduced the discussion by presenting "A perspective beyond the ESS" ([BeyondESS](#)). He described some key points for collaboration between NSIs. Current examples are the High Level Group BAS at UN-ECE level, the OECD Statistical Network or the Statistical Open Standards Group. He advertised a top-down-strategy for industrialisation of official statistics and possibly a "Global Statistical System", which needs several requisites like a common definition of the industry and the scope, common models (GSIM, GSBPM), framework and guides as well as confidence, a cultural change and a critical mass of NSIs. The main messages were: We have to reinvent our products and work together on industrialisation and standardisation. International Agencies could be effective bodies in this regard. We need to provide information in a more service oriented manner ("plug and play"), share knowledge within the European community and advertise towards partners outside the ESS.

During the following discussion the possibilities of a "Global Statistical System" and a "Global Governance" were questioned. It was felt that a Global Governance does not yet exist and would not be easy to manage. Some participants stated that the focus should not be too wide and that not too many things should be dealt with simultaneously.

Besides global governance, the openness of ESSnets for a global participation was seen as relevant. Best practices do exist possibly outside the EU and in these cases the EU should benefit from external knowledge. The question was raised to open ESSnets either for Non-EU-countries or research institutes or to organise workshops with external experts.

Another aspect of the discussion was the idea for a 'knowledge and expertise centre' and/or a Steering Group (possibly with external advice). It was recognised that this would mean a formal commitment. Additional competences would have to be given to such a group. The benefit of a Steering Group would be a better coordination which indeed was seen as an important aspect.

Eurostat stated that there is still a lack of information in the ESS which can only be overcome by an intensive networking. The ESS must be able to use existing results more intensively. Co-operation was still seen as being a missing link. Additionally, from Eurostat's point of view the ESS needs to go beyond a mere stocktaking of what already exists and reconcile our work. To connect communities, the ESSnet Portal is a first step and Eurostat would be the central point of information in this regard. The ESS should also profit from the "twin" Portal CROS (Collaboration between Researches and Official Statisticians). In sum ESSnets are tool for building up a common framework for the ESS.

5. Session 1: Metadata and Data Access

Conducting surveys in official statistics in the National Statistical Institutes is a complex and labour-intensive process. To achieve community statistics which are comparable across Europe is even more challenging. For a proper use of data from different sources in the ESS and when giving access for advanced analysis of researchers, a good metadata documentation is essential. Six presentations were given in this session, the first three ones are related to metadata whereas the last three presentations refer to the ways and possibilities to get access to official statistics.

1. ESSnet SDMX - Phase II - Dario Camol (ISTAT)

The ESSnet on SDMX - Phase II is co-ordinated by Istat. In this project the implementation of SDMX on a national and international level shall be conducted. Other objectives are the further development of technical standards, guidelines, service infrastructure and IT-tools. Main deliverables will be a new version of PX-Web and a handbook on "how to use SDMX" for statisticians. A workshop with more detailed information on this project and the issue of metadata is planned (16th -18th April 2012 in Rome). For more details see the presentation [ESSnet SDMX - Phase II](#).

2. ESSnet Data Warehouse - Metadata in the S-DWH - Harry Goossens (CBS)

This presentation of the ESSnet Data Warehouse (co-ordinated by Statistics Netherlands) dealt with metadata in a statistical Data Warehouse. It was pointed out that metadata are found very important by everyone but no NSI has completely integrated the metadata in its statistical production process by a complete Data Warehouse and metadata system. The requirements for metadata are changing when using a statistical Data Warehouse in direction of structural and reference metadata. For more details see the presentation [ESSnet Data Warehouse - Metadata in the S-DWH](#).

3. ESSnet ESeG on the harmonisation and implementation of a European socio-economic classification - Anne-Claire Laurent-Zuani (INSEE)

This project aims to build a new socio-economic classification in order to group observations with similar social, economic and cultural characteristics. One goal is to improve the comparability of variables to achieve a better usability for the ESS and for researchers in social science especially in European Studies. The ESSnet has started in October 2011 with a duration of two years and is co-ordinated by INSEE. For more details see the presentation [ESSnet ESeG](#)

4. FP7 DwB project initiative on metadata - Iris Alfredsson (SND), Mike Priddy (DANS)

The project Data without Boundaries (DwB) is financed by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission and aims at the improvement of a remote access infrastructure to provide access to confidential data in Europe. This project is conducted by a network of Data Archives, National Statistical Institutes, National Statistical Agencies and Universities across Europe – coordinated by CNRS/Réseau Quetelet. One major task is also to identify standards and practices of metadata. One of the most exciting issues which need to be solved is the use of different metadata standards like SDMX and DDI3, whereas SDMX is preferred by NSIs and DDI3 by Data Archives. For more details see [FP7 DWB project initiative on metadata](#).

5. ESSnet Decentralised Access - Maurice Brandt (Destatis)

First an overview about the state of affairs to decentralised access to confidential community statistics and a short summary about the finished ESSnet "Decentralised Access to EU microdata sets" were given. This project has proven the feasibility to set up a network of safe centres to guarantee access to community statistics out from a NSI and came up with a pilot recommendation. These results led to the follow up project "Decentralised and Remote access to Confidential Data in the ESS" which has started in October 2011 for a duration of 24 months. It deals with the

implementation of the pilot study for a remote access from safe centres inside NSIs to confidential data in Eurostat. For more details see [ESSnet Decentralised Access](#).

6. VIP SICON (Secure Remote Access) - Jean-Marc Museux (Eurostat)

This infrastructure project is conducted by Eurostat for setting up a pilot for a remote access system. The project is connected with the EGR and Decentralised Access for Scientific Purposes. There are several constraints regarding legal, technical and administrative issues. The project is a real starting point of changing the business process for confidential data access for NSIs and researchers. For more details see [VIP SICON \(Secure Remote Access\)](#).

6. Session 2: Business Statistics

Six presentations were given in this session about projects on business statistics – five ESSnets and one project being part of FP 7 of the European Commission.

1. ESSnet EGR (Euro Group Register) Methodology - Harrie van der Ven (Eurostat)

This ESSnet is aimed at developing the methodology for the EGR, a register of multinational enterprise groups in the European Union. The ESSnet consists of 4 partners and is coordinated by ISTAT as part of the whole EGR project. The EGR should provide an infrastructure for the production of co-ordinated and consistent statistical output on globalisation in the EU. Therefore the legal basis and the processes of inner-community exchanges of register data had to be implemented. A unique platform and a network for the exchange of information have been established as well as an agreement about standards. There is already a remote access of the partners to the central data base which already covers 90% of relevant units in terms of employment of MNEs. Useful information could be taken from the EGR WEB SITE: DATA & METADATA <http://egr.istat.it>. It has been stressed that EGR success will depend on EGR being a “live and used” tool. Consequently, EGR remote access is a crucial turnpoint for success, EGR methodological and technical support has to be organised after the ESSnet and real use of the EGR in national statistical production processes has to be supported. For more details see [EGR](#).

2. ESSnet on Profiling - Pierre Teillet (INSEE)

This ESSnet is aimed at setting up a coherent and consistent methodology for the treatment of Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) within the EU. The profiling methodology to be developed by the ESSnet initiates a kind of “cultural change” in the treatment of units in business statistics. It should no longer be necessary to have predefined units in the business register. Profiling starts from the accounting systems of the MNEs and analyses the operational and accounting structure of an enterprise group and determines the structure of (autonomous) statistical units using a top-down-process. At the end it should support efficient data collection in SBS, FATS, FDI and (if possible) STS.

Within the profiling of MNEs the results of the different Member States are strongly related to each other and a coherent methodology of cooperation has to be developed and implemented. The project is coordinated by INSEE together with 7

partners. The ESSnet will end in 2013, currently it is mainly in a testing phase. The Essnet Profiling has many overlapping or complementary items with other ESSnets such as EGR Methodology, Consistency, Global Value Chains. It tries to cooperate with all relevant European and other international bodies. For more details see [Profiling](#).

3. ESSnet on Global Value Chains - Jasper Larson (Statistics Denmark)

The ESSnet is coordinated by Statistics Denmark. Partners are Finland, Norway, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and France. It started in September 2011 and will end in 2013. The aim of the ESSnet is to develop concepts and methods to measure economic globalisation in order to enable policy makers to better monitor globalisation of the economies. Main work packages are

- to develop globalisation indicators
- to support surveys on global value chains
- to develop the methodology of micro data linking
- to link outward FATS with other statistical registers in order to improve the quality.

For more details see the [presentation](#)

4. ESSnet on consistency of concepts and applied methods of business and trade related statistics - Norbert Rainer (Statistics Austria)

This ESSnet mainly aims at improving horizontal consistency (between statistical domains) and vertical consistency (between Member States and EU) within the system of business and trade related statistics. Consistency and coherence is a prerequisite for comparable statistical results and for data linking and data warehousing according to principle 14 of the European Code of Practice. Improvements in consistency and coherence could lower cost and burdens within the production of statistics.

The ESSnet plays an important role within the MEETS programme. Analysis of the consistency issue is done within three work packages. WP1 (coordinated by ISTAT) analyses the use of statistical units in business and trade related european statistics, WP2 (coordinated by Statistics Austria) analyses target populations, frames, reference periods and the application of classifications in that area and WP3 (coordinated by Statistics Sweden) is concerned with characteristics and definitions. WP3 will start in 2012 and still looks for more participants.

An external study submitted to Eurostat in July 2010 is one main input of the ESSnet. The study evaluated the implementation of the European legal acts for business and trade related statistics and is available on the ESSnet portal. For more details see [ESSnet Consistency](#).

5. ESSnet on the use of administrative data for business statistics - Alison Pritchard (ONS UK)

The ESSnet analyses the possibilities of using administrative and accounts data for business statistics like SBS, STS, Prodcom and Business Registers and tries to find guidelines for using such data sources in Member States. The common problems of the Member States concern the methods of quality checking, editing and estimation of missing variables. The ESSnet consists of 8 participating NSIs coordinated by ONS UK.

Main results up to now are:

- the collection of all relevant literature and current practices of European NSIs,
- a glossary of terms relevant to the use of administrative data for business statistics.

Work packages are dealing with:

- comparison of the SBS characteristics with IFRS definitions
- estimation of missing SBS variables
- quality indicators for admin data
- checklists before acquiring admin data and initial cleaning of admin data.

The results are available at the website essnet.admindata.eu. For more details see the [presentation](#).

6. BLUE-ETS project - Jorgen Mortensen (CEPS)

The BLUE-ETS project is part of the FP 7 programme. The principal objectives of the project are to develop new or different ways of collecting, disseminating, using and accessing data for research and policy purposes with the aim of reducing burden and improving the relations between NSIs and businesses. The project looks more from a user's perspective than from a producers perspective on business statistics. Consequently, there is only little overlap to other ESSnets on business statistics (MEETS Projects). In organising conferences and workshops with NSIs and related ESSnets the project is a good example for collaboration between ESSnets. Instead, BLUE-ETS should be complimentary to these ESSnets. For more details see [BLUE-ETS](#)

Discussion

The presentation of the different projects on business statistics was welcomed by the participants of the session. Many links between the projects on business statistics exist which are not always known to the different project partners. This does not necessarily lead to overlapping or redundancies. In many cases the projects are expected to complement each other. But the need for communication and co-ordination was stressed during the discussion, to which the workshop has already contributed. Common thematic oriented workshops of related ESSnets were seen as an adequate instrument for communication and co-ordination. A good example will be a common workshop of the ESSnets on EGR, Profiling and Consistency in November 2011.

7. Session 3: Data Linking

The session consisted of three presentations and was moderated by P. Vlag from CBS NL.

1. ESSnet Small Area Estimation - Stefano Falorsi (ISTAT)

Mr. Falorsi gave a presentation ([ESSnet SAE](#)) about the status and the progress of the project. The ESSnet is coordinated by ISTAT in cooperation with 8 partner NSIs. The objectives of the project are to detect best practises, to define the guidelines for the application of small area estimation (SAE) and to give some advices on software tools. Finally, he emphasized two important aspects:

- The benefit of the ESSnet approach is to allow synergies, exchange of practices and know-how, representing the basis for identifying best practises in similar contexts.
- Communication among similar projects is necessary to borrow strength from other projects on the same area, avoid useless overlapping and exploit common topics. An exchange of results is important.

The improvement of the linking-up of ESSnets is a good strategy to support the future work in the field of SAE.

2. ESSnet Data Integration - Miguel Guigo (INE)

The ESSnet deals on record linkage, statistical matching and micro integration. It is coordinated by ISTAT with five partners and the ECB as an observer. The project is based on a previous CENEX project and aims at completing the results of the former project. Mr. Guigo gave an introduction to the different methods of data integration and announces an open workshop in November 2011 in Spain. He stressed the strategic meaning of data integration in the NSI's and the need to put the different approaches together. An important issue for the ESSnet is the question how to sustain the findings for the future use over the borders of projects for which the ESSnet portal could play a role. For more details see [ESSnet Data Integration](#).

3. ESSnet on linking of micro data on ICT usage - Mark Franklin (ONS UK)

The ESSnet involves 15 NSIs and two contracted academic partners. The purpose of the project is to making better use of data already existing in the statistical system. This could be done by producing new policy relevant indicators without collecting new data and re-use of data. The ESSnet focuses on economic impacts of ICT usage, but the methodology can be generalised to other areas. Mr. Franklin showed the need to establish meso-indicators between the macro data and the micro data level of statistical production. Meso-indicators help to reuse data, to produce new indicators and to give a brief overview on a middle level of details. They can help to improve the data representativity without additional data sources / surveys in combination with data / record linking. The presentation ([ESSnet ICT Usage](#)) gives a progress report of the ESSNet.

8. Session 4: Thematic ESSnets

The session included three presentations on themes from completely different backgrounds, moderated by P. Schmidt (Destatis).

1. ESSnet GEOSTAT 1A/B- J. Linnerud (SSB)

The ESSnet GEOSTAT works on guidelines for geostatistics and gridded population statistics to link census 2010/2011 geostatistics to a common harmonised grid. These were based on a collection of user needs. Additionally, guidelines for an infrastructure will be developed (GEOSTAT Web Portal, Web Statistical Services and a Business model for the distribution of data). The project plan includes case studies and the spread of knowledge in the ESS. Next steps of the ESSnet would be the realisation of the guidelines, extending work to other statistical areas (support system) and extending work to other geostatistical topics. The presentation also deals with achievements of the ESSnet approach, critical success factors of ESSnets and contributions for the improvements and the further developments of ESSnets. In sum the ESSnet had a positive assessment of the work done so far. From its own the viewpoint the ESSnet can serve as a good platform for co-operation and development of guidelines. For more details see [ESSnet GEOSTAT](#).

2. ESSnet Culture - G. Frank (Ministry of Culture LU)

The ESSnet Culture was coordinated by the Ministry of Culture LU and went from September 2009 to August 2011. The final report was just finished in October 2011. The aim of the ESSnet Culture was to establish a permanent system of coherent and comparable statistics on culture and to link these statistics to the socio-economic development of Member States. Additionally, the ESSnet aimed at concluding on relevant indicators reflecting the cultural diversity in Europe based on definitions as well as on monitoring and evaluating cultural policies (e.g. EU 2020). The final report submits the following recommends to:

- organise norms for european cultural statistics and develop a larger statistical programme for culture
- reach a better coverage in the EU harmonised surveys of the cultural sector
- request for a more detailed level of classifications used in harmonised surveys
- develop cultural satellite accounts in the long run.

ESSnet Culture is not fully satisfied with the results reached as a lot of time pressure was felt to finish the report while the goals envisaged perhaps were too large. As far as a certain lack of support was felt it was stressed that ESSnets need a strong support from political side. The presentation ([ESSnet Culture](#)) included also aspects of preparation efforts for ESSnets, coordination, flexibility and changing priorities.

3. ESSnet Tourism - E. Rosa Pérez (INE Spain)

The ESSnet is coordinated by INE cooperating with 6 NSIs as partners. It started end of 2010 and will run until March 2012. The objectives of the ESSnet are a common XML file structure and an automated way of data collection for European statistics on tourism in line with the Code of Practice. The ESSnet already researched the existing management software packages, analysed the automated data collection systems based on XML files and defined a common XML schema for occupancy surveys.

Ongoing work packages will treat applications to receive XML files, an evaluation of NSIs information systems, feed-back reports to establishments and dissemination. A workshop is planned on the ESSnet results to the non-participating Member States. The aim would be to extend the work conducted to other countries so that they can implement the results elaborated. For more details see [ESSnet Tourism](#).

In the following discussion some experiences were exchanged. A common experience is the conflict between regular tasks and ESSnet work and the continuous need to prioritise. Another issue were the administrative efforts needed for ESSnets and a lack of flexibility.

The amounts of work before signing the contract as well as efforts for tasks which are not included in the contract were named as risks for ESSnets. The framework set by the contracts could possibly be too narrow, thus leading to a lack of flexibility regarding aspects which were not seen in advance.

Co-ordination and a strong supporting infrastructure were seen as key factors for ESSnets. Practical implementation of the results achieved was regarded as most important.

9. General Session on the future strategy for ESSnet and aspects for their improvement

The general session on the future strategy was based on five presentations followed by a general discussion.

1. ESSnet on the use of administrative data for business statistics: how to make collaboration between MSs work - A. Pritchard (ONS UK)

The presentation touched different crucial aspects of the organisation of an ESSnet: setting up the partnership, establishing the WP teams, co-ordination and common interests. It was pointed out that time and money are needed especially for the preparation phase of an ESSnet which is not eligible for Eurostat co-funding. From her perspective the ESSnet partners were surprised by the level of detail and precision required for budget elaboration. In reality, such a detailed calculation is hardly possible. In establishing the different teams one has to be aware of differences in expertise and experience. Especially in the case of larger ESSnets like Admin the co-ordination efforts for WP leader, country co-ordinators, and projects co-ordinators are heavy including many meetings and travelling. Nevertheless, face-to-face meetings between all partners on different levels were regarded as crucial. The personal contact was an important factor for trust building between partners. Thus one should not be "afraid" of having project team meetings. As regards the experience gained in the ESSnet Admin data the importance of openness about problems within NSIs was stressed. For more details: [ESSnet collaboration](#).

A different experience was described in discussion by the ESSnet EGR, where no restraints with regard to direct contacts between the partners were seen.

Another point raised was having direct contacts between the project leader and the responsible Eurostat manager during the evaluation phase of a project. Whereas this would simplify the procedures significantly it was questioned if this allowed. Eurostat confirmed its commitment of having adequate decision procedures in time.

2. Experience in preparing an ESSnet - M. Zenke (Destatis)

The presentation described the experience in preparing an ESSnet from the perspective of a NSI in coordinating role. An optimal structure for a project was outlined which should be as simple as possible. Co-ordination accounts for the greatest bulk of work while preparing an ESSnet. It is also associated with a lot of (every day) administrative needs (like filling out forms, documentation) and budgetary tasks even if this is not formally visible (here administrative work accounts only for 2.4 % of all work). Very often preparatory work has to be conducted under heavy time pressure. The challenge is to find the right partners with the specific expertise and to find the necessary agreements (both internally and externally with partners and Eurostat). For more details: [ESSnet preparing](#).

3. Role of steering groups and ways to manage it - V. van der Zande (Eurostat)

The third presentation regarding the ESSnet Data Warehousing introduced the idea of having an ESSnet steering group. It recommended to set up a steering group for all ESSnets with a duration of two or more years and above a budget of 500.000 € systematically. The mandate of a steering group should be to advise and support Eurostat on decisions on the implementation of the ESSnet. Specific tasks should be advice on the work plan, monitoring of the progress, key methodological issues and assurance of knowledge transfer and dissemination. This mandate of a steering group should be foreseen already in the Framework partnership agreement. Participants of a steering group could be the ESSnet co-ordinator, Eurostat's project leader, representatives of specific Eurostat units and, if possible, representatives of NSIs not being partners of the ESSnet. For more details: [Steering group](#).

4. ESSnet evaluation - H. van der Ven (Eurostat)

The EGR was chosen as an up-to-date example for evaluating an ESSnet. Currently the ESSnet wants to continue its work after the end of the present Framework Partnership Agreement as results are satisfactory even if managing resources, milestones and deliverables proved to be not easy and co-ordination with other ESSnets was demanding. The evaluation compared the current situation with the objectives of the FPA from 2008 and analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the EGR ESSnet. Based on the analysis some conclusions and consideration about governance, cost effectiveness and manageability were presented. The presentation especially promoted the participative approach in the ESS and the manageable size (not more than 5 partners). Regarding governance a steering group monitors the work of the ESSnet EGR even if Eurostat finally decides. It was recommended that the project owner should have enough authority for taking strategic decisions even if a strong input by Eurostat is urgently needed. A good recipe for ESSnets would be 'thinking European', embedding work in the ESS strategy and thinking in terms of output and expected quality. For more details see: [Evaluation ESSnet](#).

5. How to sustain ESSnet projects results after their end: centres of knowledge, competences and expertise - V. van der Zande (Eurostat)

The last presentation in this session came back to the general idea of having a centre of knowledge and expertise. By the example of the ESSnet Data Warehousing and its essential elements Mr. Van der Zande showed what the "Centre" should be doing. Further to simply presenting the results in workshops or the ESSnet portal some activities are needed to ensure the sustainability of the results of the ESSnet after the project is completed. This includes the provision of ad-hoc support, consultancy and/or expert reports on the request of Member States. Such centres would be a dynamic and active response to the need for knowledge and expertise. In this response they would be a 'prolongation' of ESSnets that have already accomplished their development work. For more details see: [Centre of knowledge and expertise](#).

The final discussion mainly turned around the proposal to install a steering group for every ESSnet and the functions such a steering group might have. From the viewpoint of Eurostat steering groups could be useful for different reasons. They could push projects in the right direction, help balancing requirements, support continuous progress and contribute to the transferability of results. Eurostat explained that the steering group would have to evaluate the reports but as well would also have a supporting function. One could even reconsider the name 'steering group' as the group could not only have an advisory but also a deciding function, e.g. decisions in budget, and thus have both an executive and an advisory role, which could evolve over time. Eurostat offered to elaborate on this. One participant raised the point that a steering group might come at too late a stage when they are only designed for monitoring and assessment work.

Generally, the demand for sustainability of ESSnet results was stressed. Eurostat supported this demand with the aim of building up a new ESS Enterprise Architecture for official statistics. Additionally, it was stated that there is a need for new instruments and new solutions, which should be developed by ESSnets. In this respect, by building up a clear structure for ESSnets development costs for European statistics could be reduced. It was raised by a participant that integrating products at EU level would change the character of ESSnets significantly for the future and that therefore so called 'result centres' should only be used individually. On the other side, it was claimed that ESSnets should not only work in their subject matter area but support for developments in cross-cutting domains and conceptual development was found necessary.

Eurostat stated that alternatively to building up product and service oriented support centres an ESSnet workshop could be held twice a year or a Working Group on ESSnet could be founded. Eurostat concluded that the ESS needs a new mechanism to support and to ensure transferability of solutions.

10. Wrap-up of the event, general discussions, conclusions of the "rapporteur", closing of the workshop

Peter Schmidt tried to summarise the main conclusions and gave an overview on the issues discussed during the workshop:

In his view the workshop provided an excellent overview on ESSnets and showed the high dynamics of the ESS as well as the enormous engagement of many statisticians involved in the different projects. ESSnets are an important element of the ESS and

could be seen as the main research and development centre of the ESS. This alone together with the exchange of views for the future strategy and improvements of ESSnet proved the high value of the workshop, which should be held at least annually.

Regarding the future strategy for ESSnets the question of a bottom-up vs. top-down approach was raised. Should ESSnets follow a general strategy (and if so, which strategy, e. g. the vision, an enterprise architecture model) or specific demands in statistics? What should be the strategic orientation of ESSnets, are criteria clearly defined and accepted? In any case ESSnets should be embedded in the strategy of the ESS and follow its demands. From the view of NSIs the ESSnet strategy should be defined together in partnership and cope with the expectations of all partners. The role of ESSnets in the ESS organisation and the reporting structure should thus be clearly defined.

In this context, adjustments in monitoring and steering of ESSnets were discussed in several presentations. It became clear that projects in a certain size need some kind of steering and should not be left alone after signing the contract. It was felt quite impossible to define the work plan and time schedule completely in advance. How steering and monitoring could work and who should participate in steering groups or advisory boards needs to be discussed thoroughly and be decided in time. Regarding evaluation some ideas were raised in order to improve the process.

General questions raised during the workshop were the opening of ESSnets to the "global statistical system" (Non-European partners), to research institutes or to NSAs. Other questions were about the competition element in ESSnets (is there competition actually?), the necessity to analyse user demands (stocktaking) before starting an ESSnet or at the beginning of an ESSnet and the concern that ESSnets should not create new stove pipes.

Communication, collaboration and co-ordination inside and between ESSnets were the issues most mentioned during the workshop. Although the ESSnet portal has proved to be a very valuable information centre, the need for more communication is still obvious. Especially projects with references to similar contents should be co-ordinated better, at least be informed more in detail about work plans and results of parallel projects. Thematic workshops and strong support from Eurostat's project managers were two proposals of the discussions. For the inner ESSnet collaboration trust between the project partners is fundamental. Personal contacts and face-to-face meeting, even they were time consuming and cost intensive, are key factors for successful teamwork. Differences in language and working culture should not be neglected.

Another issue frequently mentioned from different ESSnet co-ordinators are the administrative tasks and the infrastructure of ESSnets. The improvements already reached, like workshops and support from Eurostat, were recognised. Nevertheless, formal procedures like the application process or the formal approval process for FPA and SGAs should be simplified as far as possible. Preparation of an ESSnet, managing resources, milestones and deliverables are great challenges for co-ordinators who often have to do this beside their regular work. Generally, the right balance between administrative and content tasks has to be in mind. One hint given in discussion and presentation was to look for the right size of projects (regarding partners and topics) in order to keep an ESSnet manageable.

Concerning the use of the ESSnet results many issues raised in the discussion dealt with sustainability. Establishing Centres of Competence and knowledge transfer were

proposed, but concepts have to be elaborated in the ESS. The transfer of ESSnet results and knowledge into EU Working Groups needs to be organised systematically.

Closing the workshop, Daniel Defays (Eurostat) concluded that there is a clear need for exchange of knowledge within the ESS based on innovation and research. Therefore it is necessary to build up a clear infrastructure and to choose a holistic approach. This will possibly imply a change from a solely bottom-up approach for ESSnets to a more top-down approach. Efforts must be focussed on the implementation of the new Enterprise Architecture for European statistics. Standardisation should be the main goal for the future, thus imposing an important focus on DIME. ESSnets should serve to test and (potentially) implement new methods and software. Before creating new ESSnets it should be clear that the expected results will be of use for others. The chain should go from starting ESSnets and accomplishing their work to a permanent implementation of their results. Steering Groups should deal with training, documentation and logistics. Eurostat will discuss the concerns mentioned in the Workshop with DIME. DIME should develop a new frame for ESSnet. Eurostat will then submit its further planning to ESSC.

All information about the workshop is achievable on the ESSnet-portal under the following link:

<http://www.essnet-portal.eu/meetings/essnet-workshops/koln-2011/workshop-programme>