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Support for the Final Evaluation of the European Statistical Programme 2013-2020

Final Report (D6)

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Support for the Final Evaluation of the European Statistical Programme 2013-2020

Final Report



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFS	Anti-fraud Strategy
API	Application Programming Interface
AWP	Annual work programme
CAFS	Commission Anti-fraud Strategy
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CGIC	Coordination Group on International Cooperation
CMFB	Committee on monetary, financial and balance of payments statistics
DG	Directorate-General
EBS	European Business Statistics
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
EEA	European Economic Area
EECCA	Easter Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia
EEEA	European Environmental Economic Accounts
EFS	European Fisheries Statistics
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
EQ	Evaluation Question
EQM	Evaluation Questions Matrix
ESAC	European Statistical Advisory Committee
ESCB	European System of Central Banks
ESF	European Statistical Forum
ESP	European Statistical Programme
ESGAB	European Statistical Governance Advisory Board
ESS	European Statistical System
ESSC	European Statistical System Committee
EU	European Union
EU-SILC	EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FRIBS	Framework Regulation Integrating Business Statistics
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IA	Impact Assessment
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
ISRP	International Service for Remunerations and Pensions
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
JRC	Joint Research Centre
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MAP	Multiannual Action Plan
MBP	Multi-Beneficiary Programme
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MS	Member State
NCB	National Central Bank
NSI	National Statistical Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONA	Other National Authorities
PC	Public Consultation
PMR	Planning, Monitoring and Reporting
RDG	Resource Directors Group
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDMX	Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SMP	Single Market Programme
SWD	Staff Working Document
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNSD	United Nations Statistical Division
UN-ICSC	UN International Civil Service Commission
USS	User Satisfaction Survey
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive summary

The **European Statistical Programme (ESP)** provides the framework for the development, production, and dissemination of European statistics for a period corresponding to that of the multiannual financial framework. The statistics produced within the framework of the ESP are indispensable for decision-making and for the measurement of the performance and impact of key policy initiatives within the EU such as the Investment Plan for Europe, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Agenda on Migration, or the Energy Union. The ESP is designed to provide quality statistical information in a timely manner. It serves the needs of the wide range of users of European statistics, including decision-makers, researchers, businesses, European citizens in general and non-EU international users. Together with the national statistical institutes and other national authorities responsible in each Member State, Eurostat has created a partnership collectively called the European Statistical System (ESS) for the development, production, and dissemination of European statistics. Regulation (EU) No 99/2013¹ established the ESP 2013-17, which Regulation (EU) 2017/1951² then extended to 2020. The total budget allocated for the implementation of the ESP 2013-2020 was EUR 489 million.

Key findings and conclusions

The European Statistical Programme 2013-2020 was largely relevant. The **objectives of the Programme, generally considered as appropriate, were aligned with the needs of statistical organisations within the ESS** throughout the period evaluated. Suitable mechanisms maintained the alignment with stakeholders' needs and the ESP adapted well to policy changes at EU level. The evaluation concluded that, in general, ESP activities were appropriate to deliver the objectives set in 2013 and revised in 2018. However, both producers and users identified persistent gaps in the Programme. The gaps identified by users largely fall outside of the Programme and they cannot be considered an implementation failure. Nevertheless, there was a missed opportunity to ensure additional mechanisms were in place to respond to the wide range of users' emerging needs. Users also referred to needs related to the adaptation to technological advances such as big data which became more prominent during the Programme, as reflected in the extension of the ESP.

The evaluation found that the ESP was **effective in delivering on the objectives set in the Regulation**. Under the Programme, Eurostat has provided high-quality statistics (including comparable statistics across all EU Member States and consistent time series) used by a wide range of users to, among other things, support the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the EU and Member States level. In addition, Eurostat has increased the availability of data and statistics. It also introduced, to a limited extent, efficiency gains in the production of its statistics by avoiding duplication of efforts and reducing burdens on Member States. The ESP was effective in rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly providing information on key aspects of the statistics in a clear and accessible manner through Eurostat's website and its publications. Timeliness and the completeness of European statistics, however, remained persistent weaknesses throughout the Programme. In addition, while Eurostat effectively developed and strengthened partnerships within and beyond the ESS, it missed an opportunity to form partnerships with private organisations and harness a potential to introduce new data sources and deliver more efficiency gains.

The ESP demonstrated **efficient use of both financial and human resources while delivering high-quality European statistics on demand for policy purposes**. Moreover, a higher productivity of statistics production was achieved during the period evaluated. Factors underpinning these developments were good governance, management, and monitoring mechanisms. The main challenges to achieving efficiency were growing costs of producing related to an increasing volume of statistics and the insufficient prioritisation process, despite the efforts to implement new methods of production to deliver efficiency gains.

The evaluation found that the ESP was **internally coherent, with no overlaps or inconsistencies identified between the objectives and among the activities listed within the Programme's** regulations and planning documents. Several governance bodies and advisory boards, whose role was to monitor, present and discuss options to improve the ESP, contributed to the maintenance of this internal coherence. The **external coherence of the Programme was**

¹ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013).

² Regulation (EU) 2017/1951 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2017 amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2020 (OJ L 284, 31.10.2017, p. 9).

ensured by the effective cooperation between Eurostat and EU bodies and agencies, as well as international organisations. Overall, despite some weaknesses, this cooperation resulted in synergies with the wider EU policy objectives and priorities and with international statistical activities. It also ensured the development of comparable and harmonised European statistics at the regional and international level.

Lastly, the evaluation confirmed the **EU added value of the ESP.** The Programme's main contribution was the harmonisation of European statistics to deliver high-quality comparable, comprehensive, and reliable statistics, providing them in a single location (one-stop shop). In the absence of the ESP, evidence-based policy making at EU level would not be possible and policy making at country level, based on comparative analysis of statistics across countries would be very difficult. Statistics provided by other institutions were used for different purposes and tended to complement Eurostat's offer. The Programme supported the strengthening of the laws of statistics and positioning statistical offices in governance structures of EU countries, establishing a clear roadmap for statistics production for producers, also in the candidate countries. Building on the EU's international leadership in the statistical field, the ESP contributed to the strengthening of the international statistical community and the efforts made to ensure the quality of statistics at the international level through cooperation between Eurostat and international organisations, such as the OECD or the WHO. Nonetheless, while harmonisation of statistics can be perceived as the main achievement of the ESP, it also remains a challenge requiring further work and effort. Stakeholders pointed out that more needed to be done to further enhance comparability, mainly in terms of harmonising methods of collecting data across Member States. They noted as well that the Programme included some burdensome procedures caused mainly by the institutional set up, the different legal acts, and a large partnership between the Member States, the EC and EFTA countries, making the implementation of the Programme quite complex.

In addition to the five evaluation criteria from the better regulation guidelines, Regulation (EU) 2017/1951 required to evaluate four specific points:

- a) As an **outcome of the reprioritisation and cost evaluation of statistical products**, the total production costs decreased slightly between 2013 and 2020. Yet, prioritisation remained a challenge throughout the ESP. The increase in data requests and the challenges in identifying statistics which would have become less relevant over time resulted in increased pressure on the resources of Member States (as statistics producers).
- b) The **actions taken by the ESS to reduce the production costs for Member States and to limit the overall burden stemming from the statistical projects and fields covered by the programme** were effective. Production cost and number of staff went down while the number of datasets increased. Yet, qualitative feedback highlighted limitations in terms of priority setting.
- c) The ESP contributed to **progress on rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly**, but there is scope for further improvement. The **provision of data on the Eurostat website** was key but how easy and user-friendly access to these data was differed depending on the category of users considered. While data and statistics were easily accessible to proficient users from the European Commission, access was more challenging for less experienced members of the public. The main weakness of the Eurostat website was its complexity, which led to difficulties in finding the right data and statistics.
- d) From 2013 to 2020, the ESP contributed to **the improvement of data availability, including on social economy activities and on the Europe 2020 indicators.** On social economy activities, the ESP made statistics on population and social conditions, as well as on migration more available. On the Europe 2020 indicators, Eurostat continuously provided comparable, reliable, and timely statistical information. Yet, there remained gaps in terms of territorial disaggregation of the primary social statistics used to compile the Europe 2020 indicators.

The evaluation

The external final evaluation of the ESP was carried out in 2020-2021. It evaluated the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and EU added value of the ESP, as well as the criteria defined by article 15 of the ESP Regulation, with a view to support Eurostat in the preparation of the final evaluation of the Programme and to make recommendations for future improvement. Even if this evaluation focused on the 2018-2020 period as 2013-2017 had already been covered by previous mid-term evaluations of the ESP, the conclusions of the evaluation cover the implementation period of the Programme in its entirety (2013-2020).

The evaluation was split into three complementary elements:

- **A programme assessment** covered the entire programme to the extent possible, based on an in-depth review of documentary sources complemented by an extensive consultation programme targeted ESP users and producers;
- **Thematic case studies** explored the extent to which data made available under the ESP have added value in specific policy domains: (1) European business statistics, (2) statistics on asylum and managed migration, (3) territorial statistics and (4) COVID-19. The case studies focused on the downstream impact of ESP activities by conducting a 'deep dive' of detailed outputs for institutional and non-institutional users;
- **Five country case studies**, covering Estonia, Germany, Poland, Spain, and Sweden, provided an overview of the statistical systems implemented at Member State level and of the dynamics at play in statistics production.

Résumé

Le **Programme statistique européen (PSE) définit le cadre du développement, de la production et de la diffusion des statistiques européennes**, pour une période correspondant à celle du cadre financier pluriannuel. Les statistiques produites dans le cadre du PSE sont indispensables à la prise de décision et à la mesure de la performance et de l'impact des initiatives politiques clés de l'Union européenne (UE), telles que le plan d'investissement pour l'Europe, le socle européen des droits sociaux, l'agenda européen en matière de migration ou l'Union de l'énergie. Le PSE est conçu pour mettre à disposition des informations statistiques de qualité en temps voulu. Il doit répondre aux besoins en statistiques européennes d'un large éventail d'utilisateurs, des décideurs politiques aux chercheurs, en passant par les entreprises, les citoyens européens en général et des utilisateurs internationaux (hors UE). En collaboration avec les instituts nationaux de statistique et autres autorités nationales responsables, dans chaque État membre, du développement, de la production et de la diffusion de statistiques européennes, Eurostat a créé un partenariat, le système statistique européen (SSE). C'est le Règlement (UE) No 99/2013³ qui a établi le PSE pour la période 2013-2017, prolongé par le Règlement (UE) 2017/1951⁴ jusqu'en 2020. Au total, le budget alloué à la mise en œuvre du PSE 2013-2020 était de EUR 489 million.

Constatations principales et conclusions

Dans son ensemble, le PSE 2013-2020 était pertinent. Ses **objectifs, considérés de manière générale comme appropriés, étaient alignés sur les besoins des autorités statistiques du SSE** tout au long de la période évaluée. Des mécanismes adéquats ont permis de maintenir cet alignement et d'adapter le PSE aux changements politiques au niveau de l'UE. L'évaluation conclut qu'en général, les activités du PSE étaient pertinentes pour atteindre les objectifs fixés en 2013 et révisés en 2018. Cependant, tant les producteurs que les utilisateurs ont identifié des insuffisances persistantes en termes de statistiques. Les insuffisances identifiées par les utilisateurs n'étaient toutefois, pour la plupart, pas couvertes par le Programme et ne peuvent donc pas être considérées comme un échec de sa mise en œuvre. Néanmoins, des mécanismes supplémentaires auraient pu être mis en place pour tenter de répondre aux besoins émergents des utilisateurs. Ces derniers ont également évoqué le besoin de s'adapter aux avancées technologiques telles que les mégadonnées, dont l'importance a grandi de 2013 à 2020, comme en témoigne l'extension du PSE.

L'évaluation révèle que le PSE a permis d'**atteindre les objectifs fixés dans le règlement de manière efficace**. Dans le cadre du Programme, Eurostat a mis à disposition des statistiques de haute qualité, comparables dans tous les États membres, y compris des séries chronologiques cohérentes. Un large éventail d'utilisateurs a utilisé ces statistiques pour, entre autres, étayer l'élaboration, le suivi et l'évaluation des politiques de l'UE et des États membres. En outre, Eurostat a accru le volume de données et statistiques disponibles. L'office statistique de l'UE a aussi permis, dans une moindre mesure, de réaliser des gains d'efficacité dans la production des statistiques en évitant la duplication des efforts et en réduisant la charge pesant sur les États membres. Le PSE a permis d'améliorer l'accès aux statistiques officielles en le rendant plus simple et en incluant des informations explicatives clés de manière claire et accessible sur le site Internet d'Eurostat et dans ses publications. L'actualité et l'exhaustivité des statistiques européennes sont toutefois restées des faiblesses tout au long du programme. En outre, alors qu'Eurostat a développé et renforcé ses partenariats au-delà du SSE, l'office statistique de l'UE n'a pas collaboré avec le secteur privé, ce qui représente une occasion manquée d'exploiter de potentielles nouvelles sources de données pouvant générer davantage de gains d'efficacité.

Le PSE a permis une **utilisation efficace des ressources financières et humaines tout en assurant des statistiques européennes de haute qualité répondant à la demande des politiques publiques**. De plus, il a permis d'améliorer la productivité dans la production de statistiques. Des facteurs tels que la bonne gouvernance, la gestion et les mécanismes de suivi ont également favorisé ces développements. En termes d'efficacité, les principaux défis étaient les coûts de production croissants liés au volume croissant de statistiques, ainsi qu'une hiérarchisation insuffisante, malgré des efforts pour mettre en œuvre de nouvelles méthodes de production générant des gains d'efficacité.

³ Règlement (UE) No 99/2013 du Parlement européen et du Conseil du 15 janvier 2013 relatif au programme statistique européen 2013-2017 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013).

⁴ Règlement (UE) 2017/1951 du Parlement européen et du Conseil du 25 octobre 2017 modifiant le règlement (UE) no 99/2013 relatif au programme statistique européen 2013-2017 pour le prolonger jusqu'en 2020 (OJ L 284, 31.10.2017).

L'évaluation a démontré la **cohérence interne du PSE. Ni duplications ni incohérences n'ont été identifiées entre les objectifs et les activités présentées dans les règlements et les documents de planification du Programme.** Plusieurs organes de gouvernance et conseils consultatifs, dont le rôle était de suivre, présenter et discuter des options d'amélioration du PSE, ont contribué au maintien de cette cohérence interne. En externe, c'est **la coopération entre Eurostat et les agences et autres organes de l'UE, ainsi qu'avec des organisations internationales qui a assuré la cohérence.** Dans l'ensemble, malgré quelques faiblesses, cette coopération s'est traduite par des synergies entre le Programme et les objectifs plus larges et priorités politiques de l'UE, mais également entre le Programme et les activités statistiques internationales. Le PSE a également assuré le développement de statistiques européennes comparables et harmonisées au niveau régional et international.

Enfin, l'évaluation a confirmé la **valeur ajoutée européenne du PSE.** La principale contribution du Programme a été l'harmonisation des statistiques européennes pour qu'elles soient de haute qualité, comparables, complètes et fiables, en les mettant à disposition à un seul endroit (guichet unique). Au niveau de l'UE, en l'absence du PSE, l'élaboration de politiques fondées sur des preuves ne serait pas possible. Au niveau des Etats membres, l'élaboration de politiques fondées sur une analyse comparative des statistiques entre les pays, serait très difficile. Les statistiques des autres institutions ont été utilisées à des fins différentes et avaient donc tendance à compléter l'offre d'Eurostat. Le PSE a également permis de soutenir le renforcement des lois sur les statistiques et le positionnement des offices statistiques dans les structures de gouvernance des pays de l'UE, en établissant une feuille de route claire pour la production de statistiques, également pour les pays candidats. S'appuyant sur la position internationale de l'UE dans le domaine statistique, le PSE a contribué au renforcement de la communauté statistique internationale et aux efforts déployés pour garantir la qualité des statistiques au niveau international grâce à la coopération entre Eurostat et des organisations internationales, telles que l'OCDE (Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Economique) ou l'OMS (Organisation Mondiale de la Santé). Néanmoins, si l'harmonisation des statistiques peut être perçue comme la principale réalisation du PSE, elle reste également un défi nécessitant davantage de travail et d'efforts. Les acteurs ont souligné qu'il fallait faire davantage pour continuer à améliorer la comparabilité, notamment en termes d'harmonisation des méthodes de collecte de données entre les États membres. Ils ont également noté que les procédures lourdes liées principalement à la configuration institutionnelle, aux différents actes juridiques et à un large partenariat entre les États membres, la Commission européenne et les pays de l'Association européenne de libre-échange (AELE), rendaient la mise en œuvre du Programme assez complexe.

En plus des cinq critères d'évaluation des lignes directrices pour une meilleure réglementation, le Règlement (UE) 2017/1951 exigeait d'évaluer les quatre points spécifiques suivants :

- a) Une légère diminution des coûts de production totaux entre 2013 et 2020 a **résulté de la redéfinition des priorités et de l'analyse des coûts des produits statistiques.** Néanmoins, la priorisation est restée un défi tout au long du PSE. L'augmentation des demandes de données et la difficulté d'identifier des statistiques qui seraient devenues moins pertinentes au fil du temps ont entraîné une pression accrue sur les ressources des États membres (en tant que producteurs de statistiques).
- b) Les **mesures prises par le SSE pour réduire les coûts de production pour les États membres et alléger la charge globale résultant des projets statistiques et des domaines couverts par le Programme** ont été efficaces. Les coûts de production et le nombre d'employés ont baissé tandis que le volume de statistiques a augmenté. Néanmoins, les données qualitatives ont mis en évidence des limites en termes de définition des priorités.
- c) Le PSE a contribué aux **progrès réalisés en vue de rendre l'accès aux statistiques officielles plus facile et plus adapté aux besoins des utilisateurs**, mais des améliorations sont encore possibles. **La fourniture de données sur le site internet d'Eurostat** a été centrale, mais la facilité d'accès à ces données différait selon la catégorie d'utilisateurs considérée. Alors que les données et les statistiques étaient facilement accessibles aux utilisateurs expérimentés de la Commission européenne, l'accès était plus difficile pour un public moins expérimenté. La principale faiblesse du site Internet d'Eurostat était sa complexité, qui entraînait des difficultés à trouver les bonnes données et statistiques.
- d) De 2013 à 2020, le PSE a contribué **aux progrès réalisés en vue d'améliorer la disponibilité des données, en particulier celles relatives aux activités d'économie sociale et aux indicateurs d'Europe 2020.** Concernant les données relatives aux activités d'économie sociale, le PSE a mis à disposition plus de statistiques sur la population et les conditions sociales, ainsi que sur les migrations. Concernant les indicateurs d'Europe 2020, Eurostat a assuré des informations statistiques comparables, fiables et actualisées de manière continue. Néanmoins, des manques persistaient en termes de désagrégation territoriale des statistiques sociales et des données utilisées pour consolider les indicateurs d'Europe 2020.

L'évaluation

L'évaluation finale externe du PSE a été réalisée en 2020-2021. Elle a évalué la pertinence, l'efficacité, l'efficience, la cohérence et la valeur ajoutée européenne du PSE, ainsi que les critères identifiés à l'article 15 du Règlement du PSE, en vue d'aider Eurostat dans la préparation de l'évaluation finale du Programme et de faire des recommandations pour le futur. Même si cette évaluation s'est en partie concentrée sur la période 2018-2020 étant donné que 2013-2017 avait déjà été couverte par les précédentes évaluations à mi-parcours du PSE, les conclusions de l'évaluation couvrent la période de mise en œuvre du Programme dans son intégralité (2013-2020).

L'évaluation a été établie sur trois éléments complémentaires :

Une évaluation générale du Programme a couvert l'ensemble du PSE dans la mesure du possible, sur la base d'un examen approfondi des sources documentaires complété par un vaste programme de consultation visant les utilisateurs et les producteurs de statistiques européennes.

Quatre études de cas thématiques ont exploré dans quelle mesure les données mises à disposition dans le cadre du PSE ont apporté une valeur ajoutée dans des domaines politiques spécifiques : (1) statistiques sur les entreprises européennes, (2) statistiques sur l'asile et la migration gérée, (3) statistiques territoriales et (4) COVID-19. Ces études de cas se sont concentrées sur l'impact en aval des activités de PSE en effectuant une « analyse approfondie » des résultats détaillés pour les utilisateurs institutionnels et non institutionnels.

Cinq études de cas pays ont donné un aperçu des systèmes statistiques mis en œuvre au niveau des États membres et de la dynamique en jeu dans la production de statistiques. L'échantillon couvrait l'Estonie, l'Allemagne, la Pologne, l'Espagne et la Suède.

1. Introduction

Tetra Tech International Development Sp. z o.o. (hereafter Tetra Tech⁵) prepared this Final Report, which constitutes the sixth and final deliverable (D6) of the study “**Support for the final evaluation of the European Statistical Programme 2013-2020**” (Service Contract nr. 2020.0215).

The study evaluated the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value of the ESP. It also addressed the four points raised by article 15 of the ESP Regulation and related to

- The outcome of the reprioritisation and cost evaluation of statistical products;
- The actions taken by the ESS to reduce the implementation and production costs for Member States and to limit the overall burden stemming from the statistical projects and fields covered by the Programme;
- The progress on rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly, including the provision of data on the Eurostat website;
- The progress on the improvement of data availability, including on social economy activities and on the Europe 2020 indicators.

In turn, the conclusions of the study supported Eurostat in the preparation of the final evaluation of the Programme and the formulation of recommendations for future improvement. Even if this evaluation focused on the 2018-2020 period as 2013-2017 had already been covered by previous mid-term evaluations of the ESP, the conclusions of the evaluation cover the implementation period of the Programme in its entirety (2013-2020).

As per the better regulation guidelines, the evaluation is structured by evaluation criterion. The team developed an Evaluation Questions Matrix (EQM, included in Annex 1 of this report) which operationalised the evaluation of each evaluation criterion by listing all relevant evaluation questions (EQs). In addition to the evaluation questions, the matrix includes the related sub-questions, judgement criteria and indicators for each question, and identifies relevant data sources. The evaluation relied on a mixed-method approach. The team collected relevant evidence from different sources, documentary sources and evidence from a wide range of stakeholders representing producers and users of statistics at international, EU and national level (including Member States as well as a sample of EFTA (European Free Trade Association) and candidate countries). Section 3 describes the approach and methodology, and the Stakeholder Consultation Synopsis Report submitted separately describes the consultation activities carried out and presents the analysis of the feedback collected.

In this report, the answers to the evaluation questions are presented by judgement criterion identified in the EQM. This allowed the evaluation team to systematically map all the data that have been collected and analyse these data. While drafting the answers to the questions, the evaluation team also mapped the indicators to document the logical steps taken to complete the analysis. The report addresses the feedback received from Eurostat and the Interservice Steering Group on the findings, conclusions and preliminary recommendations presented in the Draft Final Report (D5).

The report presents the background to the study, overview of the methodology, analysis and findings of the materials collected, as well as conclusions and recommendations. The discussion is structured by evaluation criterion. The report also contains the following annexes:

- Annex 1: Evaluation Question Matrix
- Annex 2: Desk research sources
- Annex 3: Draft country factsheets
- Annex 4: Case study report (submitted as a standalone document)

⁵ The evaluation team informed the Contracting Authority on 20 January 2021 that the rebranding from Coffey International Sp. z o.o. t/a Tetra Tech to Tetra Tech International Sp. z o.o. had been completed. The corresponding contract amendment was signed on 17 February 2021.

2. Background to the study

The European statistical programme (ESP) provides the framework for the development, production, and dissemination of European statistics for a period corresponding to that of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). The statistics produced within the framework of the ESP are indispensable for decision-making and for the measurement of the performance and impact of key policy initiatives within the EU such as the Investment Plan for Europe, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Agenda on Migration, or the Energy Union. The ESP is designed to provide quality statistical information in a timely manner. It serves the needs of the wide range of users of European statistics, including decision-makers, researchers, businesses, and European citizens in general. Together with the national statistical institutes and other national authorities responsible in each Member State, Eurostat has created a partnership collectively called the European Statistical System (ESS) for the development, production, and dissemination of European statistics.

Regulation (EU) No 99/2013⁶ established the ESP 2013-17, which Regulation (EU) 2017/1951⁷ then extended to 2020 to match the end of the MFF 2014-2020. These regulations defined Eurostat' and the ESS' objectives for the financial period 2013-2020, while the annual statistical work programmes further detailed them, including specific activities.

The total budget allocated for the implementation of the ESP 2013-2020 was EUR 489 million.

Eurostat

Eurostat is the statistical office of the EU, responsible for publishing high-quality Europe-wide statistics and indicators that enable comparisons between countries and regions. It is a directorate-general of the European Commission and Commission Decision (2012/504/EU) defines its role and responsibilities within the internal organisation of the Commission, as regards the development, production, and dissemination of statistics.⁸

The European Statistical System (ESS)

Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics⁹ established the ESS as the **partnership** between Eurostat and the national statistical institutes (NSIs) and other national authorities (ONAs) responsible in each Member State for developing, producing, and disseminating European statistics. This partnership also includes the European Economic Area (EEA) and EFTA countries. Member States and partner countries collect data and compile statistics for national and EU purposes. The ESS functions as a network in which Eurostat's role is to lead the way in harmonising statistics in close cooperation with the national statistical authorities. The ESS also coordinates its work with candidate countries and at EU level with other Commission services, agencies and the European Central Bank (ECB), as well as with international organisations, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), or the United Nations (UN).

Annex 3 presents a brief overview of the statistical systems of the five country case studies: Germany, Estonia, Poland, Spain, and Sweden. The aim of the factsheets is to provide contextual information on how the production of statistics is organised in the five Member States and who the main actors are.

⁶ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013).

⁷ Regulation (EU) 2017/1951 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2017 amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2020 (OJ L 284, 31.10.2017, p. 9).

⁸ Commission Decision of 17 September 2012 on Eurostat (2012/504/EU) (OJ L 251, 18.9.2012).

⁹ Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics and repealing Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1101/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the transmission of data subject to statistical confidentiality to the Statistical Office of the European Communities, Council Regulation (EC) No 322/97 on Community Statistics, and Council Decision 89/382/EEC, Euratom establishing a Committee on the Statistical Programmes of the European Communities (OJ L 87, 31.3.2009).

The heads of the NSIs make up the ESS Committee (ESSC), which the Director-General of Eurostat chairs. The ESSC provides guidance to the ESS to help develop, produce, and disseminate European statistics in line with the European Statistics Code of Practice.¹⁰

Other ESS governance bodies

The **European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB)** provides an independent overview of the ESS as regard the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice.¹¹ Its mission is to advise the European Commission 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 is composed of seven independent members with outstanding competence in the field of statistics.

The **European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC)** is another important committee involved in the development, production, and dissemination of European statistics.¹² This Committee's mission is to ensure that user requirements are considered in determining the strategic objectives of statistics in the ESS. It is composed of 24 members: twelve of them representing users of the civil society, social partners, scientific circles and eleven others being institutional users, such as the Council, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the ECB, as well as Eurostat's Director General.

Objectives of the ESP 2013-2020

The **general objective** of the ESP 2013-2020 is for the ESS "to continue to be the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe."¹³ In addition, the ESP has **four specific objectives**:

- **Objective 1:** to 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, territorial¹⁴ 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.
- **Objective 2:** to implement new methods of production of European statistics aiming at efficiency gains and quality improvements.
- **Objective 3:** to strengthen the partnerships within the ESS and beyond to further enhance its productivity and its leading role in official statistics worldwide.
- **Objective 4:** to 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.

For each ESP, the Commission must produce an intermediate progress report and a final evaluation, which the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) must review before their submission to the European Parliament and Council.¹⁵ The Commission produced intermediate evaluations covering the years 2013-2014¹⁶ and 2015-2017¹⁷, and a progress report¹⁸ on the implementation of the ESP, covering 2018 and the first half of 2019¹⁹. These reports concluded that:

¹⁰ Eurostat, European Statistics Code of Practice For the National Statistical Authorities and Eurostat (EU statistical authority), (16.11.2017), available here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4031688/8971242/KS-02-18-142-EN-N.pdf/e7f85f07-91db-4312-8118-f729c75878c7?t=1528447068000>.

¹¹ For more information, see at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-statistical-system/ess-governance-bodies/esgab>

¹² For more information, see at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-statistical-system/ess-governance-bodies/esac>

¹³ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013).

¹⁴ Word added in 2017, in Regulation (EU) 2017/1951.

¹⁵ Article 13 of Regulation No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics and repealing Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1101/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the transmission of data subject to statistical confidentiality to the Statistical Office of the European Communities, Council Regulation (EC) No 322/97 on Community Statistics, and Council Decision 89/382/EEC, Euratom establishing a Committee on the Statistical Programmes of the European Communities (OJ L 87, 31.3.2009).

¹⁶ European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the European Statistical Programme 2013-2017 (COM(2015) 309 final, 24.6.2015).

¹⁷ Commission Staff Working document on the second mid-term evaluation of the European statistical programme 2013-17.

¹⁸ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document on progress in the implementation of the European statistical programme 2013-2020 (SWD(2019) 423 final, 25.11.2019).

¹⁹ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document on progress in the implementation of the European statistical programme 2013-2020 (SWD(2019) 423 final, 25.11.2019).

- The delivery mechanism worked effectively.
 - The programme was run efficiently and was reaching its objectives.
 - The ESP provided clear EU added value thanks to the harmonised provision of comparable and high-quality data.
- However, the reports also showed the need to ensure adequate resourcing in the future for the modernisation of the statistical production processes. In addition, Eurostat needed to be able to respond to users' growing needs, especially concerning timeliness and coverage of new data for emerging policy needs, while becoming more agile and taking advantage of new technologies.

Box 1: ESP 2021-2027²⁰

The European Statistical Programme 2021-27 is part of Regulation (EU) 2021/690 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme, SMP).²¹ The decision to include the ESP in the single market reflects the fact that European statistics underpins the functioning of the internal market, and more generally that the continued provision of high-quality, comparable and reliable European statistics supports the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all Union policies. The Programme objectives re-emphasise the focus on evidence-based policy making:

Article 3.1(b)

One of the programme objectives is “to develop, produce and disseminate high-quality, comparable, timely and reliable European statistics which underpin the design, monitoring and evaluation of all Union policies and help citizens, policy makers, authorities, businesses, academia and the media to make informed decisions and to actively participate in the democratic process.”

Article 3.2(f)

The programme specific objectives also include “developing, producing, disseminating and communicating high-quality European statistics in line with the quality criteria laid down in Article 12(1) of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009, in a timely, impartial and cost-efficient manner, through a strengthened European Statistical System, referred to in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009, and enhanced partnerships within that system and with all relevant external parties, using multiple data sources, advanced data analytics methods, smart systems and digital technologies, and providing a national and, where possible, regional breakdown.”

Annex II of the new Regulation, which focuses on European statistics, divides the specific objectives into eight themes:

- Economic and Monetary Union, globalisation, and trade
- Internal market, innovation, and digital transformation
- Social dimension of Europe
- Sustainable development, natural resources, and environment
- Economic, social, and territorial cohesion
- Better communication of European statistics and their values by promoting it as a trustworthy source in tackling disinformation
- Reaping the benefits of data revolution and moving to trusted smart statistics
- Expanded partnerships and statistical cooperation

Annual programmes will continue to implement the multi-annual programme for the part on European statistics, setting more detailed objectives and outputs for each year. In addition, a Multiannual Action Plan (MAP) will become the backbone and reference for the formulation of the annual work programmes. The MAP will steer the annual execution of the multiannual work programme by defining the strategic ESS actions for the 2021-2027 period. An interim review, synchronised with the midterm evaluation of the Single Market Programme (SMP), will allow updating and reprioritising the actions included in the MAP to reflect new developments.

The MAP is structured according to the eight themes mentioned above. Headings six to eight are devoted to innovation, which is an important element of the MAP. In addition, the individual statistical domains also incorporate innovation elements.

²⁰ The new ESP falls outside of the scope of this evaluation, but this acknowledges the adoption of the new Programme under the new MFF.

²¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 99/2013, (EU) No 1287/2013, (EU) No 254/2014 and (EU) No 652/2014 (OJ L 153, 3.5.2021).

3. Overview of the methodological approach

The evaluation team designed and implemented a phased approach to the evaluation.

The **designing phase (task 1) resulted in the definition of the evaluation framework**. Building on a round of scoping interviews and an initial review of relatively high-level documents, the team furthered its understanding of the ESP, as well as the evaluation and its objectives. These preliminary data collection activities led to the development of the evaluation baseline (as presented in the inception report, deliverable D1) and the preparation of the Evaluation Questions Matrix (EQM). The EQM structured all subsequent tasks under this evaluation, both in terms of the data collection and in terms of data analysis. Key statistical terms applied in the European Statistical System (ESS) are defined in the Glossary of the European Statistics Code of Practice.²² In the report, the evaluation team often refers to the general terminology “data and statistics”, which is consistent with Eurostat’s mission statement.²³

The **data collection phase (task 2) was dedicated to compiling all relevant data (both primary and secondary) to inform the evaluation**. The evaluation team implemented a mixed-method approach. Data collection consisted of the following. First, the team carried out a comprehensive documentary review (see the reference list presented in Annex 2). The systematic review of all sources identified allowed to identify and collect all data with regard to the performance of the ESP between 2013 and 2020, to feed into the responses to the evaluation questions. Second, the evaluators designed and implemented a stakeholder consultation strategy. Consultation activities allowed to corroborate findings of the documentary review as well as to address any data gaps identified. The consultation strategy consisted of (1) targeted online surveys addressed to statistics users and producers, (2) a public consultation and (3) in-depth stakeholder interviews (all carried out remotely). The synopsis report (deliverable D4, submitted separately) provides a detailed description of the stakeholder consultation strategy, its implementation and its results. Overall, despite the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to consult all stakeholders remotely, the level of engagement achieved was high. The following table provides an overview of this engagement:

Table 1. Stakeholders engaged in consultation activities

Consultation tool	Stakeholder category	Number of stakeholders engaged
Producers		
Scoping interviews	Representatives of DG Eurostat	5
General interview programme	Representatives of DG Eurostat and ESS Governance bodies	11
	NSIs and ONAs from a sample of 5 Member States (MSs)	18
	Representatives of candidate and EFTA countries	4
Targeted survey	Sample of producers from targeted organisations	43
Public consultation	Self-selected sample of producers	30
Users		
Scoping interviews	Representatives of European Commission services	3
General interview programme	Representatives of European Commission services and other EU bodies	6
	Users from a sample of 5 MS	11
Targeted survey	Sample of users from targeted organisations	45
Public consultation	Self-selected sample of users	288
	Self-selected sample of users & producers ²⁴	84
Non-users, non-producers		
Public consultation	Self-selected sample	22

Source: Evaluation team’s consultation strategy

The evaluation team also structured part of the data collection efforts into thematic and country case studies. **Four thematic case studies** explored the extent to which data made available under the ESP have added value in specific policy domains (see Annex 4): (1) European business statistics, (2) statistics on asylum and managed migration, (3) territorial statistics and (4) COVID-19. The case studies focused on the downstream impact of ESP activities by conducting a ‘deep dive’ of detailed outputs for institutional and non-institutional users. The sample of topics reflected several criteria, namely the balance between economic, social and territorial fields, as well as the opportunity to engage

²² Available from: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4031688/9439112/Glossary/>

²³ “Our mission is to provide high-quality statistics and data on Europe.” See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/about/who-we-are>

²⁴ A share of PC respondents indicated they were both users and producers. The evaluation team reports on them in one of the categories to avoid double counting.

with a range of users. These case studies built on a documentary review of relevant sources and a programme of stakeholder interviews. In addition, the team carried out **five country case studies**. The sample covered Estonia, Germany, Poland, Spain and Sweden. These case studies built on interviews of officials responsible for the statistical work programme in the NSIs and in ONAs, and other stakeholders such as policy makers and regular professional users of the data at national level, and fed into the preparation of country factsheets (see Annex 3) providing an overview of the statistical systems implemented at Member State level and of the dynamics at play in statistics production.

The final two phases of the evaluation, **analysis (task 3) and judging (task 4), involved the systematic analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, mapping the data to the evaluation topics and questions, comparing the evidence collected through different tools and drawing conclusions**. They culminated in the formulation of practicable recommendations from the evaluation.

Figure 1: Three components of analysis



The conclusions and recommendations are strictly based on findings from the evaluation, providing founded judgements based on a solid and rigorous analysis using both quantitative and qualitative approaches as applicable. The answer to each EQ **includes the following elements**:

- interpretation and comprehension of the key terms of the EQs;
- indication of the judgement criteria allowing to answer the question as well as the quantitative analysis that is possible given the data available;
- validity of the quantitative and qualitative information used; and
- description of the evaluation methods used and an indication of their limitations.

In addition, each answer provides a detailed description of the **reasoning** followed in the analysis, also indicating the underlying hypotheses and validity limits of that reasoning.

Lastly, as the team delivered the evaluation, it faced a number of challenges to which it responded as follows:

1. The COVID-19 crisis prevented the team from undertaking face-to-face data collection activities. All activities took place remotely instead. This implied that the team deployed stronger and more targeted efforts to ensure a good response rates for the interviews to be conducted for the overall programme assessment, as well as the country and thematic case studies.
2. The scope of the evaluation means there have been numerous information and data sources processed. Several measures were implemented to avoid overload. These included: (i) a strict relevance test applied to data gathering to discard not strictly pertinent data; (ii) the accurate use of data already available in order to complement the primary data collection; and (iii) the use of a common template for gathering qualitative and quantitative information, following the evaluation questions and sub-questions, to allow easier processing. The preliminary mapping undertaken as part of the inception phase was instrumental for identifying relevant documents to map and the purpose they will serve. In addition, strong coordination with the evaluation manager at Eurostat was necessary to ensure that all relevant documentary sources, including those not publicly available yet, were made available to the evaluation team.
3. One of the main sources of data for the evaluation have been the perceptions and opinions of relevant stakeholders, including statistics users and producers. A consultation programme of this scale presents logistical and conceptual challenges. Our list of proposed stakeholders and related tools have been designed to achieve the best possible balance between interest groups and topics. We have designed different, tailored

survey tools with skip logic that directed stakeholders to relevant questions based on their profiles and familiarity with key elements of the ESP. Dissemination was a particular challenge, in the absence of a comprehensive list of users of statistics. We relied on the support provided by members of the Inter-service Steering Group on that aspect. In addition, stakeholder engagement with the consultation tools creates a self-selection bias: the sample of stakeholders who contributed to the evaluation is not statistically representative of the ESP stakeholders (for instance, the sample of users contributing to this evaluation did neither cover *all* users, nor a *representative sample* of users). Findings are only indicative of stakeholders' opinions and need to be considered with caution. Lastly, the findings are also caveated by the fact that stakeholders' feedback might have been subject to a bias, the interviewer effect (interviewees might give the responses they thought were desired by an interviewer) and conditioned by the self-selection of respondents contributing to online consultation tools, because the respondents and interviewees were aware that the study was carried out on behalf of Eurostat. The team mitigated this methodological challenge through the use and analysis of different sources of evidence, which fed into the answers to the evaluation questions, and caveated carefully the analysis.

4. Analysis and answers to the evaluation questions

4.1. Relevance

The ESP provided the framework for developing, producing, and disseminating European statistics, setting out the **objectives of the activities envisaged for 2013-2020**. It financed the development and maintenance of Eurostat's statistical infrastructure and of the ESS. As such, the assumption was that the objectives of the ESP should fulfil **Eurostat and the NSIs' and other national authorities' needs**, as producers of European statistics, while also serving the needs of a wide range of users of these statistics, as per its **Objective 1**.

The evaluation questions, presented below, therefore explored the relation between the objectives, and activities, of the programme and the needs of the ESS, and of stakeholders more generally. The following sections provide an evidence-based judgement of the extent to which the ESP 2013-2020 was relevant given the needs of the ESS and the suitability of the activities to deliver the objectives of the programme. The first evaluation question focuses on ESS stakeholders, namely producers of statistics, while the second evaluation question also covers users.

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions
EQ1: To what extent did ESP objectives reflect the needs of the ESS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent did ESP objectives correspond to the needs of statistical organisations within the ESS when it was set up in 2013? • To what extent did ESP objectives continue to meet the needs of statistical organisations within the ESS after its extension and redesign in 2018? • To what extent did reprioritisation exercises meet the identified needs at the time, especially regarding the 2018 extension? • What mechanisms are used to ensure the ESP objectives continue to meet statistical organisations' needs?
EQ2: To what extent were ESP activities appropriate to deliver the set objectives of the ESP?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent were ESP activities appropriate to deliver the objectives set in 2013? • To what extent do ESP activities continue to be appropriate to deliver the objectives revised in 2018 and to date? • What mechanisms were used to gather feedback from users? To what extent were these adequate and allowed for adjustment? • To what extent has the ESP flexibly adapted to technological advances (such as big data)?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON RELEVANCE

The evaluation team did not identify a mismatch between the objectives of the ESP 2013-2020 and stakeholders' needs and problems, although a considerable number of producers and users identified some gaps and limitations – some of which relate to new issues arising since the ESP was formulated. While the ESP allowed to implement appropriate activities to meet its objectives, the analysis showed that, these activities were not enough to deliver all the statistics users would wish, as confirmed by the gaps they identified. The gaps did not point to the ESP's failure to deliver what it was supposed to, as the thematic areas which stakeholders identified as missing were not included in the scope of the ESP. However, as the ESP's **Objective 1** was, and still is, to serve the needs of the wide range of users of European statistics, Eurostat needed to put in place appropriate activities to respond to emerging needs. The gaps showed that it did not always happen.

In addition, needs related to the adaptation to technological advances such as big data became more prominent during the programme, as reflected in the extension of the ESP. This translated into specific activities, the results of which have the potential to provide solutions to some of the problems the ESS still faces in terms of resources and costs.

For statistics producers, the objectives of the Programme had been adequately identified and were based on their needs. Appropriate mechanisms ensured the objectives continued to meet statistical organisations' needs. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of producers also identified gaps. Besides, they pointed out the need to improve the prioritisation processes in terms of activities and outputs and to better consider time constraints and resource challenges in keeping up with Eurostat's demands and the requests for new statistics.

This tension between continuously increasing users' needs and limitations from producers in keeping up with new demands under an already ambitious Programme means a balance needs to be struck between producers' capacity and users' requests.

The logic of the Programme and the way objectives linked to each other was complicated and confusing and many stakeholders from the user category simply did not know about the overall architecture of the ESP and its specific objectives. However, this also reflected the fact that most users were interested in the statistics produced by Eurostat and not in the Programme conceived to deliver these statistics overall. The design of the objectives of the Programme at a general level makes them relevant if they are well articulated in the annual work programmes. While this approach allowed the ESP to adapt to broad policy changes and spell out the concrete activities in its annual programmes, it could benefit from defining the objectives more clearly. This could help to streamline its organisation in terms of specific and operational objectives as well as priorities, and further increase its relevance. The new ESP Multiannual Action Plan (MAP) 2021-2027 was designed to tackle this issue. It is intended as a bridge between the Single Market Programme (SMP), which covers European statistics for 2021-2027, and the annual work programmes. Its hierarchical structure includes the headings of the SMP, actions listed under each heading and MAP activities under each action, with an indicative timeline for development/implementation. In addition, the MAP is not a legally binding document. It can be updated more flexibly than the establishing Regulation and as appropriate to take new developments into account.

4.1.1. EQ1: To what extent did ESP objectives reflect the needs of the ESS?

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR THE EQ1:

The objectives of the ESP reflected the needs of the ESS to a great extent. The specific objectives corresponded to the needs of statistical organisations within the ESS when the Programme was set up in 2013 and continued to do so after its extension in 2018.

Mechanisms for feedback were embedded in the ESP and ensured the objectives continued to meet statistical organisations' needs. ESS stakeholders confirmed these were appropriate.

Nevertheless, while producers were generally satisfied with the objectives of the programme, 31% of them identified gaps in the ESP. Among these, some producers considered the provision of statistics in new or rapidly evolving policy areas was missing from the objectives. In addition, the findings point out the need to improve the prioritisation processes and the adaptation of the programme to crisis.

In fact, the formulation of the specific objectives was so generic that they could only be relevant. It is therefore important to look more into the details of the activities the Programme supported to deliver these objectives to confirm its relevance, which is the focus of evaluation question 2.

Coverage of the question

This question explores the extent to which the ESP objectives accurately captured the **needs of the ESS**, both when the Programme was set up, and when it was extended in 2018, but also at the time of the evaluation. The evaluation team primarily examined needs related to the development, production, and dissemination of European statistics.

Analysis of the evidence

Judgement criterion 1.1: ESP objectives and priorities corresponded to the identified needs and gaps of the European statistics sector in 2013

The **general objective** of the ESP 2013-2020 “to continue to be the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe”²⁵ meant that the ESP needed to be the “leading provider” at the time the Programme was designed. Yet, no documentary information confirmed this assumption. While users’ satisfaction with European statistics signalled *some* leadership in providing statistics on Europe in 2013²⁶, the Statistical programme 2014 stated “becoming the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe”²⁷ as a priority, implying that it was not already the case. Commenting on the general objective in its opinion on the draft ESP 2013-2017²⁸, ESAC supported Eurostat’s “ambition”²⁹ to be the primary source of European data fit for the purpose of a large range of users, confirming that it was not the case when the ESP was set up in 2013. While this does not alter the relevance of the general objective, it shows its lack of precision.

In terms of the Programme’s specific objectives, **Error! Reference source not found.** Table 2 shows the challenges that the ESS needed to address when the ESP was set up in 2013, as per ESAC’s Opinion. The table also summarises ESAC’s comments and the elements of Regulation (EU) No 99/2013³⁰ addressing these issues.

Table 2: ESP objectives and the challenges they address

Article 4 Objectives	Challenges	Action needed	ESAC’s comments
Bearing in mind the available resources both at national and Union level as well as the response burden, the following specific objectives shall be pursued in statistical actions undertaken for the implementation of the programme	Response burden for suppliers of data and financial stringency (both public and private)	Ensuring the reduction of response burden for providers and producers of statistical information, by more flexibility and streamlined, integrated statistical actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The costs in terms of response burden, and the benefits, in terms of future policy instruments, must be assessed. While spatial data is of increasing importance, providing these could impact on response burden and cost-benefit-analyses are therefore essential. While recognising that the reduction of response burden is one of the most important objectives, ESAC wishes to ensure that simplification does not result in a loss of quality in key areas of statistics.
Objective 1: provide statistical information, in a timely manner, to support the development, monitoring and evaluation of the policies of the Union	Resource constraints facing both national and European statistical agencies	Maximising the informed use of data that have been collected and processed at public cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anonymised sets of microdata should be prepared as a priority task and new legislation on access them should be considered. Statistical data that can be made available for further detailed analyses, should be collected as a matter of priority.

²⁵ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013).

²⁶ The Report on the Eurostat 2012 User Satisfaction Survey indicated that 58% of all respondents considered the level of overall quality of European statistics as good or very good, and another 23% as adequate. The support study for the ex-post evaluation of the Community Statistical Programme 2008-2012, which preceded the ESP 2013-2020, confirmed that users of EU statistics were overall satisfied and recognised Eurostat’s capacity to ensure a high-level quality in the production of statistics. In addition, Eurostat compared well with other producers of statistics as more than 68% of all respondents to the 2012 User Satisfaction Survey rated the quality of European statistics better than or equivalent to that of other producers. European Commission, Eurostat, *Report on the Eurostat 2012 User Satisfaction Survey*; CSIL, Centre for Industrial Studies (Milan) and DevStat, Servicio de consultoría estadística S.L. (Valencia), *Support for ex-post evaluation of the Community Statistical Programme 2008-2012 – Final report* (20.8.2013).

²⁷ European Statistical System, *Statistical programme 2014*, p.2, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/ess/about-us/statistical-programmes>

²⁸ European Statistical Advisory Committee, *Opinion on the draft European Statistical Programme 2013-2017* (23.5.2011).

²⁹ P.9.

³⁰ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013), art. 4.

Article 4 Objectives	Challenges	Action needed	ESAC's comments
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress is needed to support improved access to (anonymised, confidential) microdata and more timely access to macro-data. Developments to increase the integration of data are also to be encouraged to maximise their value, as are improved electronic search tools to enable users to find and exploit existing data. • It is of the utmost importance to ensure that users have access to these macro-data and the use of administrative data sometimes precludes this. • Strong user-producer relationships should be fostered to promote the widest possible informed use of data that have been collected at public expense. • Mention should be made as to how better timeliness will be achieved.
Objective 2: implement new methods of production of European statistics aiming at efficiency gains and quality improvements	Resource constraints facing both national and European statistical agencies	Increasing efficiency through greater use of technology and the exploitation of data collected for other purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to make efficiency savings differs across Member States in part because of the maturity of their statistical systems, which are at different stages in reaping such benefits.
Objective 3: strengthen the partnership within the ESS and beyond to further enhance its productivity and its leading role in official statistics worldwide	Resource constraints facing both national and European statistical agencies	Sharing developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the advantages of the ESS is that Member States can share information to enable them to learn from one another. This should be encouraged and might be extended to the sharing of development activities to reduce the costs of new research. • Suggested cooperation and partnerships: other agencies, independent research institutes and the academic community, OECD (regarding migration).
Objective 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	Resource constraints facing both national and European statistical agencies	Prioritising statistical activities, and thus reducing the portfolio of statistical work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European-level priority setting should consider the need for Member States' statistical systems to continue to meet their own (sometimes differing) national priorities with enough resources. • Consistency, coherence, and comparability, as well as harmonised methodology and enhanced international comparability, are of utmost importance. Mention should be made as to how better comparability will be achieved.

Source: Evaluation team's compilation

Feedback received from the stakeholders consulted for this evaluation generally confirmed that the specific objectives of the ESP addressed the needs of the ESS in 2013. Most producers who responded to the targeted survey, assessed the four specific objectives of the ESP as relevant to a great or to a moderate extent:

- **Objective 1** – 86%
- **Objective 2** – 82%

- **Objective 3** – 71%
- **Objective 4** – 73%

In terms of priorities, Article 6 of the ESP Regulation, on statistical priority-setting, reflected ESAC's **need for prioritising statistical activities**, potentially limiting any extension of the scope of the Programme due to new statistical initiatives. Prioritisation should contribute to the reduction of costs and burdens for new statistical requirements by reducing statistical requirements in existing domains of European statistics, in close cooperation with the Member States.

Most stakeholders interviewed highlighted that the objectives and priorities of the ESP were all relevant and well designed. They also confirmed that the ESP specific objectives were aligned with the needs of the ESS. Member States' statistical strategies were often based on ESP objectives, so there was a close link between them. Interviewees from the NSIs considered that **Objective 4** specifically responded to their needs as they were facing numerous requirements and demands. Representatives from candidate countries confirmed that the objectives of the ESP in general were well designed, also reflecting the needs of the statistical organisations outside the ESS.

Judgement criterion 1.1 (subsequent): ESP objectives and priorities corresponded to the identified needs and gaps of the European statistics sector in 2018, when the ESP was extended and revised

The general objective of the ESP remained unchanged after its extension and redesign in 2018, and there was only one amendment to the specific objectives, with the addition of the word 'territorial' to **Objective 1**.

The impact assessment for the extension of the Programme concluded that the **timeliness** of some statistics urgently needed to improve to provide the information needed for the European Semester exercise.³¹ While it meant that **Objective 1**, which includes the provision of statistical information, in a timely manner, was still relevant, it also meant that Eurostat had not made progress towards addressing this need in some areas up to the extension in 2018.

Nonetheless, the stakeholder consultation did not highlight any mismatch between the objectives and priorities of the ESP and the needs and gaps of the European statistics sector in 2018 when the programme was extended and revised (indicator 1.1.1). Producers indicated that the objectives of the ESP had continued to meet their needs.

The only amendment to the objectives of the ESP, the addition of the word *territorial* to **Objective 1**, did not seem particularly relevant to the stakeholders consulted as part of the case study on the territorial dimension of statistics (see Annex 4). Indeed, Eurostat had been working on this dimension before 2018. Stakeholders considered it to reflect a high-level ambition rather than a concrete objective of the Programme, as it echoed the Commission's better regulation agenda for evidence- and place-based policies.

Reprioritisation exercises did not translate into changes to the objectives in 2018, when the ESP was extended and revised. The only amendment to the **specific objectives** did not come as a significant example of a reflection of ESS stakeholders' needs either.

Judgement criterion 1.1 (subsequent): ESP objectives and priorities correspond to the identified needs and gaps of the European statistics sector at the time of the evaluation

While over half of the producers who responded to the targeted producer survey (55%) indicated that they did not see gaps that the objectives of the ESP did not cover, a considerable share (31%) did. 46% also indicated they did not see gaps in terms of future needs compared to 27% who did. Perceived gaps included the provision of statistics in new³² or rapidly evolving policy areas.³³

The targeted producer survey also revealed limitations, including time constraints, challenges in keeping up with Eurostat's demands and the requests for new statistics, being an addition to an already **demanding ESP**. They also felt the need to strengthen partnerships in the ESS, that Eurostat could coordinate NSIs' work more closely, as it did during the COVID-19 crisis. Insufficient coverage of access to privately held data was another limitation identified.

³¹ European Commission (2016), Commission Staff Working Document – Executive summary of the Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-2020, (SWD(2016) 287 final 7.9.2016).

³² Such as statistics needed to support the implementation of the EU's Green Deal.

³³ Such as migration.

In addition, even though the Statistical work programme 2013³⁴ built on Eurostat's 2010 strategy-driven priority-setting mechanism, and a stronger and more assertive approach to priority-setting and simplification was to be put in place from 2013 onwards, prioritisation was a persistent issue throughout the Programme. To tackle this issue, Eurostat developed a new priority-setting mechanism and started piloting it in 2020.

According to representatives of producers from the Member States interviewed, the objectives were and remained relevant partly because of their generic wording. These interviewees mentioned a lack of detail in the design of the Programme, which did not make it possible to assess its relevance without looking at the annual work programmes and activities. NSI representatives suggested that defining more concrete objectives could have supported monitoring and evaluation, by providing measurable indicators.

Judgement criterion 1.2: Mechanisms for feedback and input from ESS stakeholders existed and were perceived as appropriate

The ESP relied on a “feedback loop” and input from ESS stakeholders. It consisted of the “partnership approach”, namely the ongoing discussion between the EU and Member States, which ensured the consideration of different perspectives. As a result, ESS stakeholders found the balance in the steering and development of the ESP was right.

Consultation mechanisms were therefore part of the ESP, and ESS stakeholders confirmed their adequacy to ensure that the objectives of the ESP remained relevant (indicator 1.2.1). ESS stakeholders consulted broadly perceived these mechanisms as appropriate.

4.1.2. EQ2: To what extent were ESP activities appropriate to deliver the set objectives of the ESP?

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR THE EQ2:

ESP activities were generally appropriate to deliver the objectives set in 2013. All stakeholders who were aware of the objectives of the Programme confirmed the appropriateness of ESP activities to deliver them. While users were generally satisfied with the statistical outputs of the Programme, they also identified some gaps, for example the need for more granular data and statistics at regional level or further broken down by sociodemographic attributes. Statistics producers, however, felt that increasing demands did not always consider their resources constraints, and better prioritisation mechanisms were needed.

Technological advances, such as big data, may make it possible to include more activities, serving users' needs without increasing the burden on producers. While Eurostat started work to adapt to these, results are yet to be seen and some challenges persist, for instance, in terms of data protection.

Having a general programme, established by a legal act, implied a series of mechanisms for identifying needs and developing activities accordingly within the ESS. The annual work programmes allowed to adapt and adjust the implementation of the ESP. The User Satisfaction Survey was not the most adequate tool to gather feedback from users, due to the self-selection bias, which could explain why the sample of users consulted for this evaluation were not aware of it. Other mechanisms to gather users' feedback nonetheless existed, such as daily contacts or questions coming into Eurostat user support services, as well as comments left on social media. Yet, this informal feedback could only support adjustment to a limited extent. Thus, adjustments of the ESP activities tended to come mainly from consultation of the ESS.

Coverage of the question

The second evaluation question related to relevance focused on the practical implementation of the Programme and on the statistical activities planned and delivered under the ESP. Examining these practical aspects was important to complete the assessment of the relevance of the Programme and the way it responded to stakeholders' needs more broadly. Even if users were not familiar with the Programme's exact scope and the specific wording of its objectives, the evaluation team relied on their opinion of, and satisfaction with, the statistics produced under the ESP to assess the relevance of the activities.

³⁴ Eurostat, *European Statistical Programme – Annual Statistical Work Programme 2013*.

Analysis of the evidence

Judgement criterion 2.1: ESP activities were the appropriate tools in 2013 to deliver the set objectives

In its opinion on the draft ESP 2013-2017³⁵, ESAC indicated that **the ESP fully recognised the need to satisfy demands for ongoing and new statistical activities** but highlighted that **the ESS would continue facing severe resource constraints**, reflecting producers' concerns. As mentioned in Table 2 above, ESAC considered it was essential to prioritise statistical activities.³⁶ *Article 6* of Regulation (EU) No 99/2013³⁷ on **statistical priority-setting** stated that when putting forward new actions or introducing major revisions of existing statistics, the Commission should duly justify such actions or revisions and provide information with Member States' input on response burden and production costs in accordance with *Article 14(3)* of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009. ESS stakeholders interviewed confirmed that the "partnership approach" (mentioned above) ensured the balance in developing the activities of the ESP was right (indicator 2.1.1). ESP activities also incorporated sunset clauses, to regularly review the need for their continuation. This was necessary to release funding for new developments and essential to ensure that the ESS remained relevant to deliver on the objectives. In addition, eight out of ten producers who responded to the targeted survey confirmed ESP activities were appropriate to deliver the four specific objectives either to a great or to a moderate extent. Given that the objectives of the ESP were formulated at a general level, all NSIs' activities related to the production of European statistics fell within the scope of the Programme. While they did not consider this as negative, as it depended on how the activities were spelled out in the annual work programmes, they did feel that there was a lack of prioritisation to make sure that resources were available to meet new demands.

The Annex to Regulation (EU) No 99/2013³⁸ split the specific objectives into three different priority areas³⁹, each of which incorporated more detailed operational objectives. To support the implementation of the ESP, annual work programmes set detailed objectives and outputs for each year. Interviewees mentioned that the annual work programmes allowed to adapt and adjust the ESP. The first was the Statistical work programme 2013, which played an important role in starting the work towards achieving the specific objectives of the ESP. It provided a detailed description of planned activities under each objective establishing a clearer link between the two. This presentation made it straightforward to confirm that the activities were appropriate to deliver the objectives. Yet, it was different in subsequent annual work programmes and there was not always a detailed description of planned activities under each objective (and therefore no clear link between the two):

- The Statistical work programme 2014 presented the activities in Part III: ESP objectives and legal references of AWP 2014.
- The Statistical work programme 2015 gave a description of the activities in Part II: List of outputs of AWP 2015.
- The Statistical work programmes 2017⁴⁰ and 2018 presented activities in their Part II.
- The Statistical work programme 2019 presented the activities in Annex 3: List of activities and outputs.
- The Statistical work programme 2020 described activities in a general way, and presented grants to NSIs as activities, which was not the case in the other work programmes.

This inconsistency in presenting activities made it difficult to judge whether they were appropriate to deliver the objectives they were expected to serve. While the format of the annual statistical programmes changed, Eurostat continuously registered the links between the activities and the objectives in their database for Planning, Monitoring and Reporting (PMR). Yet, the numbering of the objectives and their grouping under the three different priority areas was also confusing and made it hard to follow the link between activities and objectives. The first and second midterm evaluations of the ESP already highlighted this difficulty to correctly link activities to the objectives. The intermediate progress report on the implementation of the ESP 2013-2017 included a recommendation to link activities to their

³⁵ European Statistical Advisory Committee, *Opinion on the draft European Statistical Programme 2013-2017* (23.5.2011).

³⁶ European Statistical Advisory Committee, *Opinion on the draft European Statistical Programme 2013-2017* (23.5.2011).

³⁷ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013), art. 6.

³⁸ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013).

³⁹ 'Statistical outputs' covers specific objectives 1 and 4; 'Production methods of European statistics' covers specific objective 2; 'Partnership' covers specific objective 3.

⁴⁰ The Statistical work programme 2016 was not available for the evaluation. The different links on the ESS website indicated that "The requested resource could not be found." (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/ess/-/the-european-statistics-annual-work-programme-2016>). Eurostat only shared the Management Plan 2016, Annex 3.

indicators⁴¹, which Eurostat subsequently implemented in PMR. However, the latter and the way the activities linked to their indicators remained a complex system, which did not support transparency.

Judgement criterion 2.1 (subsequent): ESP activities continued to be the appropriate tools to deliver the set objectives in 2018 when the ESP was extended and revised

In 2016, the impact assessment for the extension of the Programme⁴² concluded that at the time, in terms of ESP activities, there was a need to address several **statistical gaps** to support EU policies. In addition, the need for statistics arising from the Juncker Commission's ten political priorities⁴³ and from the increasing complexity of European society was **challenging the relevance of ESP activities** (indicator 2.1.1).

The impact assessment concluded that an amended programme including **new statistical outputs** in line with the Juncker Commission's ten political priorities was needed.⁴⁴ Accordingly, the amendment needed to be complemented by investment in the statistical infrastructure and new sources of statistics, with an increased budget. This option offered the best chance of ESP activities delivering the objectives of the ESP, considering all requirements, obligations, and constraints in the production and delivery of European statistics.⁴⁵ Regulation (EU) 2017/1951 reflected this and part I on **Statistical Outputs** was amended in line with the ten political priorities. The additional funding was important to meet one of the biggest needs of statistical organisations within the ESS, namely financial resources, and to deliver on the set objectives of the Programme.⁴⁶ The ESS Committee had repeatedly called for increased investment and ESAC had emphasised the need for appropriate funding. The European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) had also raised concerns about insufficient investment.⁴⁷

In addition, the extension of the Programme constituted an opportunity to make adaptations and reflect the **new orientations, in line with the ESS Vision 2020**⁴⁸, and to complement the ongoing prioritisation.⁴⁹ It indeed sought to implement concrete elements of the ESS Vision 2020 through ESP activities. Producers interviewed agreed that the extension was necessary to integrate the Vision 2020 targets.

In addition, according to the impact assessment⁵⁰, although national statistical systems had made a significant effort to modernise their production methods with the support of the ESP 2013-2017, the then statistical infrastructure was still **not flexible enough** to deliver new statistics when needed, while also limiting the associated cost and administrative burden.

Judgement criterion 2.1 (subsequent): ESP activities continued to be the appropriate tools to deliver the set objectives at the time of the evaluation

To assess whether ESP activities continued to be the appropriate tools to deliver the set objectives at the time of the evaluation, we mainly looked at their statistical outputs and whether they served the needs of the wide range of users.

⁴¹ 3. **Rec. 2.3. All the outputs of Eurostat's activities in the planning and monitoring system should be linked not only to the ESP objectives but also to their indicators.** The annual monitoring of the result of Eurostat's activities and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme are largely based on the outputs registered in the system for planning and monitoring. Currently the activities are linked to the ESP objectives. Linking the outputs to the ESP indicators would have the double advantage of easing the future evaluations and of allowing monitoring automatically each year if all the indicators of the ESP are being fulfilled or if some have been neglected. European Commission, *Background information for the intermediate progress report on the implementation of the ESP 2013-2017*, p.26.

⁴² European Commission (2016), Commission Staff Working Document – Executive summary of the Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-2020, (SWD(2016) 287 final, 7.9.2016).

⁴³ European Parliament, The Juncker Commission's ten priorities – An end-of-term assessment (PE 637.943, 05.2019).

⁴⁴ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document – Executive summary of the Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-2020, (SWD(2016) 287 final, 7.9.2016).

⁴⁵ "Option 2c".

⁴⁶ The budget increase for statistics at Union level sought to support the changes to the programme and the efficiency work of the ESS through large scale projects, structural leverage effects and economies of scale.

⁴⁷ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document – Executive summary of the Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-2020, (SWD(2016) 287 final, 7.9.2016).

⁴⁸ The ESS Committee adopted the ESS Vision 2020 in May 2014, as an ambitious modernisation programme.

⁴⁹ Regulation (EU) 2017/1951 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2017 amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2020 (OJ L 284, 31.10.2017).

⁵⁰ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document – Executive summary of the Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-2020 (SWD(2016) 287 final, 7.9.2016).

In terms of statistical gaps at the time of the evaluation, users who responded to the targeted survey generally indicated that they would like Eurostat to collect and publish more statistics within its existing statistical themes (64% agreed with the statement while 20% of the respondents were unsure and 16% found the collection and publication of more statistics unnecessary) (indicator 2.1.1). Respondents highlighted the need for a more detailed and granular breakdown of different types of statistics at regional level and but also data and statistics subdivided into more detailed sociodemographic attributes. Institutional users interviewed also identified needs that ESP activities did not meet, and which negatively impacted the usefulness of European statistics for informing policies. For instance, they also mentioned the need for more granularity of the statistics and data, such as having a gender breakdown and providing data at NUTS3 instead of NUTS2 level. The case study on the territorial dimension of statistics carried out for this evaluation corroborated this feedback, as stakeholders mentioned the constant need for more disaggregation. Interviewees also mentioned issues of growing interest to better serve the current Commission's priority, such as the mainstreaming of environment in all statistical data to support the implementation of the European Green Deal. In addition, respondents to the targeted user survey perceived the following statistical areas as requiring more development: circular economy, agricultural data relating to rural areas, urban mobility, modal transport breakdowns and logistics areas. Interviewees also mentioned topics not covered (and already formulated as data requests to Eurostat), such as statistics on passenger mobility, or trade in services. Producers, however, were less eager to extend the datasets. 43% of them indicated that they would not like Eurostat to collect and publish more statistics, while 26% said they would. Producers pointed out the need for Eurostat to keep a balance between demand for statistics and their (limited) capacity and the increased burden new statistics could create for them.

Nevertheless, all users contributing to the targeted survey found that European statistics were appropriate for their purpose of usage, either to a great extent (89%) or to a moderate extent (11%), indirectly confirming the relevance of the ESP activities. The Public Consultation also confirmed this with more than eight out of ten respondents indicated that European statistics were relevant to their role or sector, either to a great extent (53%) or to a moderate extent (31%). In specific policy areas, the case studies on business and managed migration statistics the evaluation team delivered also confirmed this assessment as both sets of statistics fitted within the objectives of the ESP and reflected the needs of the ESS.

In addition, interviewees from other European Commission DGs indicated that the commitment to better and evidence-based policymaking created a need for structured statistical production efforts and for high-quality and comparable statistics across Member States, and confirmed that ESP activities were appropriate to deliver on this need and have continued to do so until today.

Yet, respondents from the European Commission emphasised that the ESP lacked flexibility. Any change to the scope of the programme required a change in the EU legislation, which was a lengthy process. This implied that statistics that were reliable, timely and comprehensive at the same time could often not meet rapidly emerging needs. For example, stakeholders' feedback suggested that the COVID-19 outbreak did not activate any specific mechanisms embedded in the ESP to address the challenges appearing for European statistics. ESP activities were neither referred to nor used to shape the response to COVID-19. The response was based on informal problems and needs, which formal ESP procedures did not support.

Judgement criterion 2.2: Mechanisms for feedback and input by users existed and were perceived as appropriate

Bilateral hearings between Eurostat and European Commission's thematic DGs were organised regularly to channel the feedback from a key user group throughout the period evaluated. The hearings provided the opportunity to maintain the inventory of the statistical data produced by other DGs and Agencies (to avoid duplication). They also offered the possibility to DGs to feed back on their needs, including new statistics requests, to Eurostat and for the different parties to discuss the overall balance within the Programme (see also judgement criteria 3.10 and 10.2).

Throughout the period evaluated, to measure the degree to which Eurostat met its obligations towards its users, it carried out a general User Satisfaction Survey (USS) – and continues to do so to date. All users registered on Eurostat's website receive an invitation to take part in the USS. Eurostat held the first survey of this kind in 2007, repeated it in 2009, and then yearly between 2011 and 2020, apart from 2018. For 2013-2017, before the implementation of the

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)⁵¹, the number of respondents to the USS varied from 3 038 in 2016 to 4 839 in 2014, with an average of 4 032, and for 2019-2020 from 1 009 in 2019 to 1 842 in 2020⁵². There was a downward shift due to the GDPR requirements, which constrained the use of private data previously collected. The yearly USS helped Eurostat to ensure that the design of the Programme was appropriate, by implementing improvement actions as a follow-up on the feedback received.⁵³

In addition to the USS, Eurostat carried out specific usability testing and used feedback gathered through daily contacts or questions coming into their user support services, as well as comments left on social media. These mechanisms gathered feedback from general users to potentially adjust the tools and make the Programme more relevant to users beyond EU institutions.

In addition, as part of the ESS Vision 2020⁵⁴, it was planned to engage proactively in a regular dialogue with users to understand their needs more deeply. The ESS' strategic alliances with both public and private partners would help to respond flexibly to users' needs. Eurostat recognised that different user groups have different needs and planned to address this diversity by offering the right information in the right way. Eurostat would respond to the need to provide **policy makers** with reliable, comparable, and timely statistics to execute economic and financial policy and strive to be a **respected partner** and a **leader** for driving innovations and progress **in the global statistical community**. For example, Eurostat engaged with:

- Data journalists, through a workshop that allowed them to express their needs, which the ESS then discussed to draft a specific outreach strategy⁵⁵.
- Researchers, through a multidisciplinary workshop⁵⁶ that also allowed them to express their needs, especially for microdata, which Eurostat addressed with a microdata communication kit⁵⁷.
- Teachers, through a workshop that also allowed them to express their needs and input to a communication kit for use in the classroom consisting of a set of didactic videos on European statistics⁵⁸.

Eurostat also co-organised the 2014, 2016 and 2018 Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders (CESS) to bring together producers and users of statistics to discuss users' needs, like in 2016 in Budapest⁵⁹ for instance.

Interviews with candidate countries confirmed that work linked to the ESS Vision 2020 had resulted in strengthening partnerships in some areas, for example around business registers. They planned to consult with businesses to identify their data needs and if requested develop and provide tailor-made analysis and services facilitating a comparison (benchmarking) with competitors in the same line of industry.

Even though the documentary analysis showed that mechanisms for feedback and input by users existed, most of the users interviewed were not familiar with these and therefore could not assess them. Yet, this is based on a limited sample of users with different relations to Eurostat, which is therefore not representative. If the number of respondents to the USS did indicate that the mechanisms for feedback and input by users worked, they were only appropriate to some extent as there was a self-selection bias due to the need to be a registered user or a main contact of the Eurostat's units for being explicitly invited to participate although the survey was open to everybody. This highlights that the USS might not reach a significant number of informal users who did not register in Eurostat's website. This shows some limitations, but the fact that Eurostat gathered feedback through other means at its disposal also indicated that mechanisms for feedback and input by users existed and were to some extent appropriate. Yet, the evaluation team could not conclude on whether they were *perceived* as appropriate as most of the users interviewed were not familiar with these (indicator 2.2.1).

⁵¹ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (OJ L 119, 4.5.2016).

⁵² European Commission, *Report on the Eurostat 2020 User Satisfaction Survey*.

⁵³ European Commission, *Follow-up of suggestions for improvements coming from the Eurostat user satisfaction survey*.

⁵⁴ ESS Vision 2020's section 3.1 Identifying user needs and cooperation with stakeholders.

⁵⁵ Eurostat, Strategy to reach out and engage with Data Journalists (PO/2016-12/A2 – 94 ESTAT, 2018), available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/system/files/datajournalistoutreachstrategy.pdf>

⁵⁶ European Commission, European Statistics in Support of Researchers, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/esisor_en

⁵⁷ Including a slide deck and a user guide. European Commission, European microdata at your fingertips – How to access microdata in two steps (2020), available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/system/files/eurostat_accessmicrodata.pdf; European Commission, How to use the Microdata Access Workflow Tool, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/DIGICOM/Microdata-Access-Tool-User-Guide_en

⁵⁸ Eurostat, Education corner > For teachers and students, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/help/education-corner/teachers-and-students>

⁵⁹ Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders, Budapest, 20-21 October 2016.

Judgement criterion 2.3: New technologies and statistical methods have been considered in programme planning exercises

Producers who responded to the targeted survey confirmed the flexibility of the ESP to adapt to technological advances (indicator 2.3.1). Most of them indicated that the Programme was effective in adapting to increasing data security risks (55% effective or very effective), harmonising statistics across countries (79%), using big data (58%) and advances in data visualisation (72%). Yet, national producers interviewed pointed out to a lack of strategy to access and integrate privately held data.

The ESS Vision 2020 mentioned several challenges the ESS faced in relation to new technologies and statistical methods, and accompanying needs, including:

- The data revolution – The ever-increasing availability of data was a trend of strategic relevance for official statistics. There was a need to assess and interpret the meaning of these data in an intelligent and interactive fashion.
- New metrics – A new and complex reality has emerged from globalisation, which official statistics should capture. Important phenomena in society asked for new statistical products, all of which went beyond the addition of separate national results. In addition to the global and European level, there was a growing need to develop statistics with increasing geographical detail to support national and regional policymaking.

The extension of the Programme recognised several of these challenges, as well as opportunities:

- The ever-increasing availability of data from private and public providers offered the potential to improve the timeliness and relevance of official statistics as well as to reduce response burden.
- With globalisation, a complex reality emerged that had to be captured by official statistics and raised methodological challenges.

To face these challenges, and the continued constraints on resources, the ESS would gradually implement strategic goals defined in the ESS Vision 2020, building upon a holistic approach to deliver quality and efficiency gains:

- Using both traditional surveys and other sources, including administrative data, geospatial and, where possible, big data to deliver statistical products and services
- Getting access to new data sources, creating methods, and finding suitable technology to use such data sources to produce European statistics in a reliable way
- Improving the efficiency of statistical production by further intensifying the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and methodologies, but also by sharing tools, data, services, and resources where appropriate and duly justified
- Implementing a dissemination and communication strategy for European statistics, flexible enough to adapt to emerging technologies, giving guidance in a world of data revolution, and serving as a reliable pillar of democracy.

The extension of the ESP was supposed to have an impact in terms of being able to produce data more quickly, which was essential for meeting users' fundamental needs. This could happen through the better exploitation of new technologies and statistical methods, including 'big data', as the ESS was supposed to further modernise and make greater use of these new types of sources. The measures set out in the proposed programme extension included the reengineering of statistical production and the better use of administrative data and 'big data', to simplify procedures and reduce the administrative burden, thus benefiting businesses and individuals.

The ESP allowed investment in projects launched in response to new challenges faced by European statistics, implementing the ESS Vision 2020, strengthening the European statistical infrastructure and making better use of 'big data' and shared infrastructure. As EU funding was provided based on co-financing, a higher budget for the ESP at EU level also implied higher budgetary costs for the NSIs. Development projects would also often require highly skilled expertise.

Under the ESP 2013-2020, Eurostat developed a variety of data visualisation tools to better meet users' needs. These tools presented data from different statistical themes in a way as attractive and understandable as possible for everyone to explore. Eurostat's tools used for the dissemination of statistics (indicator 2.3.2) included:

- Visualisation tools, such as the European statistical recovery dashboard, themes in the spotlight, etc.⁶⁰;

⁶⁰ For the full list, see Eurostat, *Tools*, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/help/first-visit/tools>

- My Region mobile app;
- Extraction tools, such as the data browser and explorer;
- The ESS' experimental statistics hub⁶¹ provided a dissemination vector for experimental statistics on different topics, including COVID-19. Among examples are COVID-19 labour effects across the income distribution⁶² specifically, or quarterly data on registrations and bankruptcies, which can provide critical information on the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶³

Mechanisms to adapt to new technologies and statistical methods existed under the ESP in the form of pilot projects for example, but Member States participated on a voluntary basis. Yet, this clearly shows that programme planning exercises considered new technologies and statistical methods.

4.2. Effectiveness

The analysis of effectiveness considers how successful the activities of the ESP have been in achieving or progressing towards the Objectives of the ESP 2013-2020. The evaluation forms an opinion on the progress made to date and the role of the Programme in delivering the observed changes, looking for evidence of whether or how these changes are linked to the Programme.⁶⁴

The evaluation questions, presented below, explore the relation between the objectives and activities of the Programme and provide an evidence-based judgement of the extent to which the ESP 2013-2020 objectives were successfully achieved. When the objectives (general, specific or operational) were not achieved or on track, an assessment is made of the extent to which progress has fallen short of the target and what factors have influenced why an activity/objective was (partially) unsuccessful or not yet achieved.

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions
EQ 3: To what extent were the objectives of the ESP 2013-2020 fulfilled?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent was the ESP successful in providing timely statistical information (Obj. 1)? Was this delivery consistent (Obj. 4)? • To what extent was ESP data used in the development, monitoring and evaluation of EU policies? Is there evidence that the ESP contributed to improving policy making (at EU / MS level)? Is there evidence that the ESP contributed to other purposes? • To what extent did the ESP increase the availability of data, including social economy activities and on the Europe 2020 indicators? • To what extent was the ESP successful in introducing efficiency gains in the production of European statistics (Obj. 2) and avoiding duplication of effort (Obj. 1)? • To what extent was the ESP successful in introducing quality improvements in the production of European statistics (Obj. 2)? • How effective was the ESP in strengthening partnerships within and beyond the ESS (Obj.3)? • Which factors prevented or reduced the impact of ESP activities? How could these be overcome?
EQ 4: To what extent did the ESP make progress on rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were effective feedback mechanisms in place to identify accessibility issues and improvements? • Did users find the Eurostat dissemination channels (including the website) easy to use? • Were users provided with sufficient information about key aspects of the data?
EQ 5: Did ESP activity resulted in wider economic, social or environmental impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there evidence that the ESP contributed to wider social, economic or environmental impacts?

⁶¹ Eurostat, ESS – Experimental statistics hub, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/experimental-statistics/overview/ess>

⁶² Eurostat, COVID-19 labour effects across the income distribution. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=COVID-19_labour_effects_across_the_income_distribution&stable=0

⁶³ Eurostat, Experimental statistics > Quarterly registrations and bankruptcies, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/experimental-statistics/quarterly-registrations-and-bankruptcies>

⁶⁴ Better regulation guidelines, Chapter VI Guidelines on evaluation (including fitness checks), available: [BR-GL-Chapter 6-Evaluation \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/better-regulation/guidelines)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluation findings show that the ESP was effective in delivering on its objectives despite remaining weaknesses in relation to the timeliness and the completeness of European statistics. Between 2013 and 2020, Eurostat has provided high-quality statistics which have been used by a wide range of users for a wide range of purposes including to support the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the EU and Member States level. In that period, the ESP has also increased the availability of its data and statistics and, to a more limited extent, introduced efficiency gains in the production of its statistics by avoiding duplications of efforts and reducing burdens on Member States.

In addition, Eurostat also effectively developed and strengthened partnerships with its members within the ESS as well as with partners beyond the ESS, in particular international organisations. However, the lack of partnerships with private organisations has negatively impacted the effectiveness of ESP activities by limiting its ability to introduce new data sources such as big data. This is a missed opportunity to produce more and new statistics and, in the longer term, potentially reduce the burden on Member States. This limitation is nonetheless expected to be addressed in the next Programme.

Beyond the achievements of its objectives, the ESP was also effective in rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly between 2013 and 2020. During that period, information on key aspects of the statistics was provided in a clear and accessible manner through Eurostat's website and its dedicated publications.

Overall, the ESP has been an effective programme and has met the objectives set in its regulations.

4.2.1. EQ3: To what extent were the objectives of the ESP 2013-2020 fulfilled?

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR THE EQ3:

The findings show that the objectives of the ESP 2013-2020 have been fulfilled. Users and producers provided positive feedback as to the high-quality of the statistics produced by Eurostat (**Objective 1**). However, and despite somewhat positive feedback, timeliness and completeness are areas in need of further improvements to address new and changing policy needs. European statistics are being used by policy makers (more at the EU level than at Member States level, in particular at the local and regional levels) and are important to support the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies (**Objective 1**). Statistics are serving the needs of a wide range of users, including researchers and journalists (**Objective 1**).

Overall, ESP activities resulted in a net increase in available statistics and data in a cost-effective manner without unnecessary duplication of efforts. However, while ESP activities have resulted in efficiency gains in the production of European statistics, these gains were seen as limited by stakeholders, especially in the realm of reducing administrative burden. The lack of use of private data such as big data was highlighted as a particularly important issue while noting that action plans for the next iteration of the Programme sought to address this issue (**Objective 2**). Furthermore, while users were very satisfied with the quality of the European statistics being produced, they did not consider that this quality had significantly improved nor that it had improved across all statistical themes (**Objective 2**).

Lastly, the increase in and strengthening of existing partnerships was positively assessed by all stakeholders who noted the positive impact the ESP activities have had in increasing the comparability of European statistics and increasing cooperation and coordination within and beyond the ESS (**Objective 3**). Stakeholders noted, however, that data gaps, timeliness, lack of use of big data and the increase of fake information were prevalent factors preventing or reducing the impact of ESP activities and as such, issues that needed to be addressed.

Coverage of the question

This question on the effectiveness of the ESP assesses the extent to which its **general objective** has been achieved. This objective was broken down into three priority areas which were themselves further split into the four **specific objectives**. Eurostat's Annual Reports present the progress made against these objectives. This evaluation question was broken down into judgement criteria drawing on and providing information on key aspects of these objectives over the implementation period of the ESP between 2013-2017 and its extension to 2020.

Analysis of the evidence

The judgement criteria related to key features of European statistics, the different usages made of European statistics and the extent to which the ESP delivered against its objectives. The evaluation team also identified factors which influenced the way the Programme worked.

Judgement criterion 3.1: Users expressed satisfaction as to the timeliness and completeness of statistics

When regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 established the European Statistical Programme for the period 2013-17, among its four **specific objectives**, Objective 1 was to provide statistical information, in a **timely manner**.⁶⁵ This reflected a particular concern, also highlighted in the ESS Vision 2020.⁶⁶ The 2016 Commission's impact assessment related to the proposal to extend the ESP 2013-2017 to the period 2018-2020 reaffirmed that timeliness remained a challenge.⁶⁷ In 2017, the European Statistical System Committee highlighted similar findings,⁶⁸ and in 2019 the Commission staff working document on progress in the implementation of the ESP 2013-2020, noted that despite improvement in a number of statistical domains, timeliness remained an area where work was ongoing and needed.⁶⁹ This continuous issue of timeliness is also reflected in Eurostat's User Satisfaction Surveys⁷⁰ (USS) conducted between 2013 and 2019. In that timeframe, only half of users (results fluctuating between 51% and 54%) have rated the timeliness of European statistics as being either "Very good" or "Good" for their purposes. A higher satisfaction rate (63%) was registered in the last USS in 2020 following changes in the methodology (the scale of the survey was changed from a numerical one to a textual one to avoid errors).⁷¹ Nonetheless, as in previous years, respondents to the 2020 USS continued to request for Eurostat to further enhance the quality of statistics by improving timeliness. Similarly, interviews conducted with users and producers of statistics, including stakeholders at the Commission, have highlighted timeliness as an issue needing to be addressed. However, interviewees also acknowledged that quality official statistics required more time to be produced and verified and that there was therefore a trade-off between timeliness and other quality dimensions. Lastly, the timeliness of statistics also fluctuated among domains/statistical themes. Asylum and managed migration statistics were seen by users as timely for their purpose and as meeting their needs while territorial statistics were less positively assessed by users with interviewees mentioning the time gap between the publication of national and regional statistics as an issue.

However, while timeliness was identified as a challenge, improvements in that regard were also highlighted. For instance, 51% of respondents to the public consultation stated that "the ESP had been successful in improving the production of European statistics in regard to timeliness and punctuality" to a great extent, 28% to a moderate extent and only 5% to a lesser extent.⁷² Similarly, 82% of respondents to the targeted user survey thought that the ESP was successful in improving the timeliness and punctuality (extent to which the statistics were available in time for the needs of the users) of European statistics.⁷³ Interviewees also noted that timeliness had improved in the last years, especially with regard to European economic indicators and the publication of a statistics' calendar, which allowed to meet the demands of the European Commission's DGs and the ECB. While not mentioned explicitly by interviewees and respondents, flash estimates⁷⁴ such as of income inequality and poverty indicators⁷⁵ or GDP growth⁷⁶ may have played a key role in that regard by providing timelier data that can be used in preliminary discussions and analysis until the final data is made available. Progress reported against the ESP objectives confirmed these perceptions. Indeed, the percentage of outputs achieved or on target for strategic objective 1 (timeliness) has consistently increased since 2016 with a peak in 2019 in parallel to a reduced number of outputs being cancelled, not fully achieved, or revised⁷⁷ (see Figure 2: Eurostat's activities contributing to the Management Plan's outputs by year (2014 -2020) for objective 1 Figure 2) (indicator 3.1.1). The difference in the number of outputs between 2014-2015 and 2016-2019 is due to administrative changes enacted to reduce the complexity and specificity of indicators. It does not reflect a reduced number of activities.

⁶⁵ Timeliness reflects the length of time between the availability of the statistics and the event or phenomenon they describe

⁶⁶ European Commission, 2014, ESS Vision 2020, Building the future of European Statistics

⁶⁷ SWD(2016) 288 final, Commission Staff Working Document Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-20

⁶⁸ ESS priorities beyond 2020, Position paper of the European Statistical System Committee adopted on 16 November 2017.

⁶⁹ European Commission, SWD (2019) 423 final, Commission Staff Working Document on progress in the implementation of the European statistical programme 2013-2020.

⁷⁰ EUROSTAT, 2020, Report on the Eurostat 2020 User Satisfaction Survey.

⁷¹ There was a peak of 63.2% in 2020 however, this data cannot be compared with data from 2013-2019 as there was a change in methodology in the USS. In 2019, respondents could rate the data quality on a scale "1" to "5", with clearly indicated that "1" was equivalent to "very good", "2" to "good" and so on until "5" to "very poor". In 2020 the scale of the questions was directly a textual one "very good", "good", "adequate", "poor" and "very poor" and not a numeric one.

⁷² 28% to a moderate extent, 5% to a lesser extent and 12% don't know

⁷³ 20% of which "to a great extent" 18% "don't know" and 0 "not at all" although 22% "to a small extent".

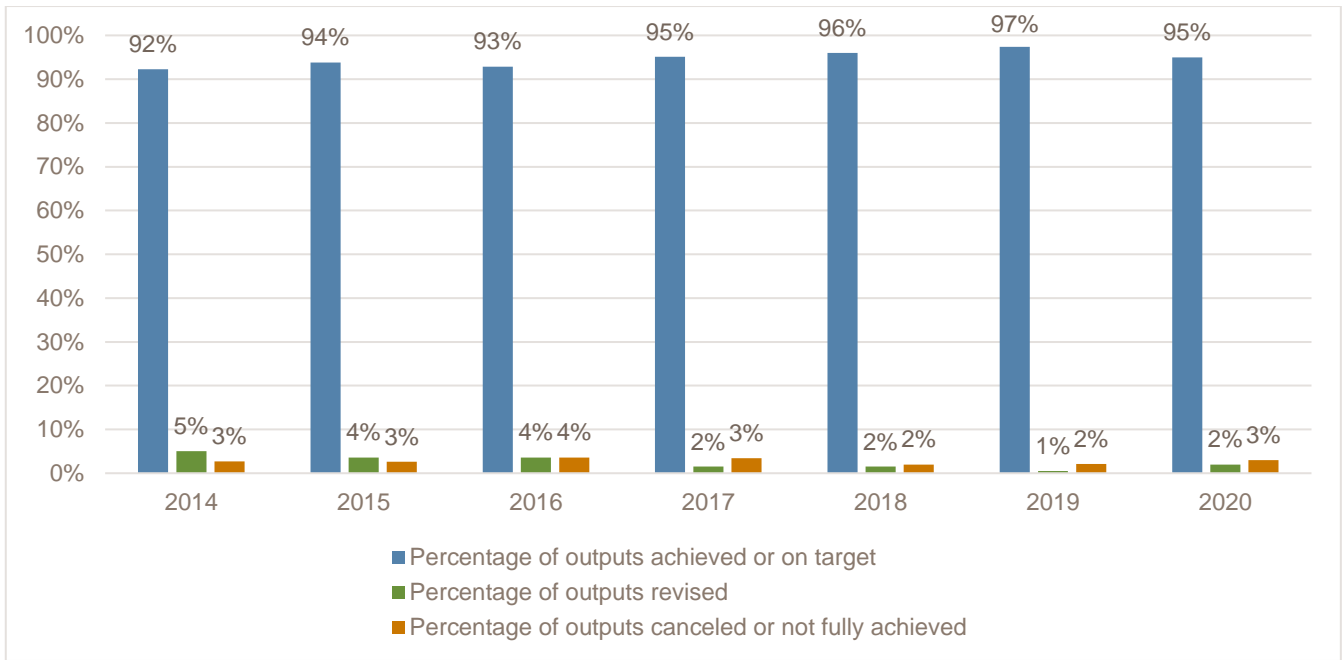
⁷⁴ A flash estimate is an early estimate for an economic variable of interest over the most recent reference period and is normally calculated on the basis of a statistical or econometric model. See Eurostat, Glossary, available at: [Glossary:Flash estimate - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

⁷⁵ Eurostat, 2020, Flash estimates of income inequalities and poverty indicators for 2019 (FE 2019) Experimental results

⁷⁶ Eurostat, 2016, Compilation of European annual and quarterly accounts including flash estimates

⁷⁷ In 2020, the classification does not say anymore outputs "not fully achieved" but presenting "difficulties".

Figure 2: Eurostat’s activities contributing to the Management Plan’s outputs by year (2014 -2020) for objective 1⁷⁸



Source: Data from Eurostat Annual Activity Reports 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. (*) for the year 2014 and 2015, objective 1 and 4 are combined

Regarding the completeness of statistics, based on the USS⁷⁹, between 2013 and 2019 only half of users (results fluctuating between 49% and 52%) rated the overall completeness of European statistics as being either “Very good” or “Good” for their purposes with a peak at 62% in 2020. This suggested a relatively low user satisfaction with strong variance between domains such as a 20% gap in perception of completeness between the “economy and finance” and the “regional statistics” domain (respectively the highest and lowest rated domain). This issue was also raised during interviews with users who highlighted gaps, particularly when data for certain countries was not available. They also noted inconsistencies in how data was collected for different countries. Unlike users, respondents to the targeted producer survey were more moderated in their feedback, judging the availability of statistical data as adequate. However, they also noted that the availability of European statistics was limited by the rules of confidentiality and that enhancement of the visibility of such statistics was necessary. In contrast, the producers interviewed assessed the availability of data as being very good. The interviewees indicated that there was a right balance between timeliness and availability of data. Similarly, users at the European Commission highlighted the statistics provided under the ESP as being comprehensive, comparable, and reliable. Overall and despite conflicting feedback, these findings suggest that the completeness of data availability could be improved and streamlined across all domains (indicator 3.1.2).

Judgement criterion 3.2: European statistics and data were downloaded and used by a range of stakeholders for a range of purposes

Serving the needs of a wide range of users remained a specific objective (objective 1) of the Programme throughout the period under evaluation.⁸⁰ Building on the Regulation applicable between 2013 and 2017, the ESP 2018-2020 extended this objective, highlighting the increasing demands for European statistics as a key reason for the extension period. The extension noted that the **public and media needed statistics** for an accurate picture of contemporary society and to evaluate the performance of policies and politicians, and that European statistics were an invaluable source of information for academic researchers interested in social and economic developments in Europe.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Data from Eurostat Annual Activity Reports 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020

⁷⁹ EUROSTAT, 2020, Report on the Eurostat 2020 User Satisfaction Survey.

⁸⁰ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17

⁸¹ Impact assessment concerning the proposal to extend the European statistical programme (ESP) 2013-2017 to the period 2018-2020

According to the 2020 USS, 39% of the respondents identified themselves as advanced users⁸², 35% as intermediate users⁸³ and 26% as light users⁸⁴. Due to the entry into force of Regulation 2018/1725 on personal data protection in the EU institutions, the number of users who could be contacted changed from 2019 onwards, which resulted in a change in the distribution of respondents. In previous years, for instance in 2017, a higher proportion of intermediate users was registered (54%) and a lower proportion of light users (16%) and advanced users (31%). Similarly, while in 2020 45% of respondents identified as “students, academics and private users”, 13% as “business”, 25% as “government”, 15% as “EU and international organisations” and 2% as “others”, in previous USSs, a higher proportion of “business” users (24%) was recorded and a lower proportion of “EU and international organisations users” (7%). This analysis of the distribution of respondents by user group suggested that European statistics were indeed downloaded and used by a range of stakeholders with a significantly higher proportion of students, academics and private users compared to other categories of users.

Web analytics confirmed that European statistics are downloaded and used for a range of purposes (indicator 3.2.1). The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) measuring the achievement of strategic objective 1 was the number of data extractions made by external users from Eurostat reference databases (Eurobase and Comext) via Eurostat’s website. This indicator measured the extent to which European statistics were downloaded and therefore used by stakeholders. Between 2014 and 2020, data extraction greatly increased from 6 813 297 extractions to 21 480 000 (+315%). While not an indicator for the strategic objective 1, the increase in distinct IP addresses consulting European statistics also served as a useful indication of the increasing number of users using European statistics. Similarly, between 2014 and 2020, the number of distinct IP addresses increased from 3 441 157 visits to 4 366 397 (+26%)⁸⁵. In contrast to these increases, the number of requests submitted for microdata decreased from 2019 to 2020, which was likely caused by the crisis situation (see table below). One interviewee complained about limiting access to microdata to recognised research entities and highlighted it as a missed opportunity for the ESP – but this is a legal obligation the European Commission has to comply with.⁸⁶ Across the three reporting years (2018-2020), microdata requests of EU Statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) were included in 35% of the requests made and EU Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) was included in 72% of the requests. This suggested a significant disparity in the usage of microdata between domains (similarly, usage also differs considerably between domains).

Table 3: Microdata Request 2018-2020

	EU-SILC	EU-LFS	ECH P	CIS	SES	AES	EHIS	CVTS	CSIS	MMD	ERF T	HBS	TUS	Requests number
2018	252	179	48	42	48	11	29	6	16	3	3	28	N/A	433*
2019	276	183	45	47	46	30	43	15	16	8	9	49	N/A	462*
2020	229	183	39	43	44	27	31	18	18	5	5	41	22	404*

(*) in one request researcher may choose several datasets.

Source: Data shared by Eurostat⁸⁷

European statistics users were asked in the 2019 USS to indicate the purpose of their interest in using European statistics. Among the responses available, “monitoring or formulating policy” (32%) and “general background information” (23%) were the most commonly reported purposes with the former being used by advanced and institutional users while the latter was primarily used by light users.⁸⁸ “Preparing legislation”, “Monitoring or formulating policy”, “Research” and “Re-dissemination of statistical data” got combined shares of “essential” and “important” exceeding 80%. Other purposes included “market analysis”, “economic forecasting”, “media use” and “decision making in business”. Looking at the importance of European statistics, more than three quarters of participants (77%) indicated them to be either “essential” or “important” for their work. One third of users stated they used European statistics in their

⁸² Advanced user: e.g. use the database to mainly obtain raw data and adjust table and data to their needs; draw their own conclusions based on specific data for their job; download data very frequently (even daily); have a high statistical literacy and computer proficiency

⁸³ Intermediate user: e.g. look for raw data / predefined tables or work with existing data visualisations and ready-to-use interpretations in publications/reports to support work, for personal interest (e.g. to verify data in news articles) or to get a basic understanding of what is available for future reference; use Eurostat data on a weekly to monthly basis; have a medium statistical literacy and computer proficiency.

⁸⁴ Light user: e.g. use data visualisations, graphs and statistical articles which are easy to read to get interpreted data; use data to support opinions in discussions, share data on social media, use data in class or want to explore what is available out of curiosity; visit the Eurostat website on a weekly to less than monthly basis; medium to low statistical literacy and computer proficiency.

⁸⁵ Data retrieved from folders received from EUROSTAT (Folder 3: Supporting Document; Sub-folder: Website monitoring reports)

⁸⁶ The access to microdata is limited on the basis of the Regulation 557/2013.

⁸⁷ Data retrieved from folders received from EUROSTAT (Folder 3: Supporting Document; Sub-folder: Microdata access)

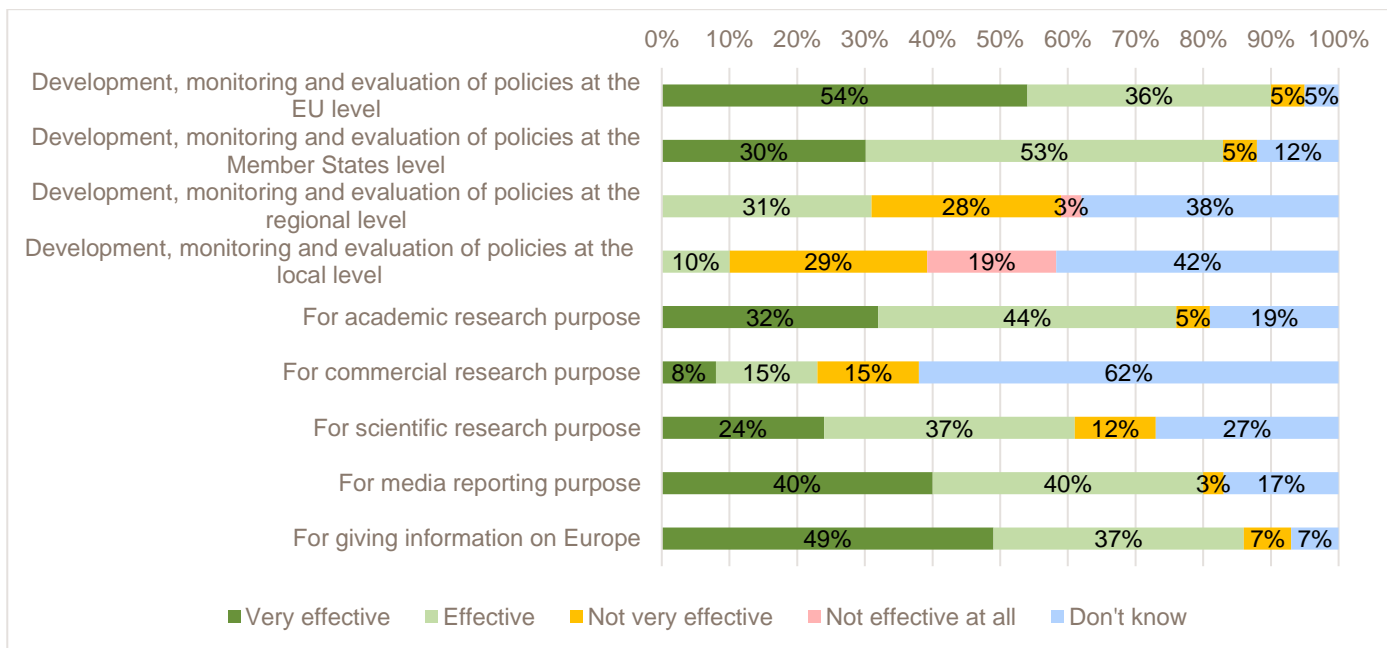
⁸⁸ EUROSTAT, 2019, Report on the Eurostat 2019 User Satisfaction Survey.

daily or weekly activities, one third on a monthly basis and one third at other intervals. These findings indicated that European statistics were used for a wide range of different purposes and considered by most users as essential or important.

To complement the USS, the evaluation team produced a targeted user survey asking respondents about the usefulness of European statistics for nine areas of practice (indicator 3.2.2). Answers to this question were varied. Six areas of practice (development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the EU level, development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the Member States level, academic research, scientific research, media reporting, giving information on Europe) received a positive assessment (higher than 60%) combining the “effective” and “very effective” responses. In contrast, respondents found the remaining three areas of practice either not very effective or, more noticeable, were unsure about their effectiveness. In the case of commercial research purposes, the proportion of those respondents indicating they did not know reached 62%, for development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the local level this proportion was 41% and for development, monitoring and evaluating of policies at the regional level it was 38%. However, this higher proportion of “don’t know” could be due to users not being able to express themselves on area which they are not familiar with and may therefore not be an indication of a lack of usefulness. For instance, only commercial research stakeholders can correctly assess the usefulness of European statistics for commercial research purposes while other users would not know.

Objective 1 of the ESP included the need for European statistics to serve a “wide range of users of European statistics, including other decision-makers, researchers, businesses and European citizens in general”. Overall, the findings suggested that this component of the objective has been achieved and European statistics are increasingly downloaded and used by a range of stakeholders for a range of purposes.

Figure 3: In your opinion, how useful is European statistics for the:



Source: Targeted user survey developed by the team

Judgement criterion 3.3: Eurostat data were used in journalistic and research activity

According to the targeted user survey (carried out in the framework of this evaluation), 9% of respondents indicated using European statistics for “academic/research” purpose.⁸⁹ Similarly, 12% of the USS respondents indicated using European statistics for “research” purpose which was the fourth main purpose selected while 1% indicated using the statistics for “Media use”. This suggested that, while European statistics were used in journalistic and research activities,

⁸⁹ EUROSTAT, 2019, Report on the Eurostat 2019 User Satisfaction Survey

media use was less prevalent among users completing the survey. This was further corroborated by the analysis of Eurostat's impact on the web.⁹⁰

Eurostat's impact on the web was based on the number of mentions of Eurostat in seven languages: English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Swedish (indicator 4.2.1).⁹¹ A mention may be an article written by a journalist of the Financial Times, an academic paper published, or a post on the personal blog of a student. Between 2018 and 2020, the total number of mentions decreased by 6% (from 390 207 to 365 340) which would indicate a decrease in the use of European statistics for online purposes and could indicate a decrease in the use of European statistics for journalistic and research activities. However, Eurostat signalled that such decrease could be caused by an increased number of websites which are blocking the access to paid content by automated tools, like the one Eurostat uses to measure the total number of mentions. This 6% decrease is nonetheless relevant considering that the number of users of European statistics and the number of extractions both significantly increased in the same period as indicated in the above judgement criterion.

European statistics were used in journalistic and research activities as per the objective 1. However, it was not the main use of these statistics. Additionally, based on Eurostat's impact on the web, this utilisation has steadily decreased in the lifetime of the ESP. It should be noted however, that this measurement may be flawed due to mechanisms blocking Eurostat automated tool. Lastly, the multiplier nature of journalistic work should also be highlighted. Journalists who use and mention European statistics in their publications increase the reach of these statistics to a wider audience.

Judgement criterion 3.4: Statistics were used by EU policy makers to inform policy making and decisions

The reformulation of objective 1 in the Programme extension stressed that decision-makers – at EU level (but also in Member States, in local governments and in business, see judgement criterion 3.5) – needed European statistics **“to prepare, apply, monitor and assess all EU policies”**.⁹² Similarly, the Eurostat Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 highlighted Eurostat's continuing contribution to the achievement of the overall objectives of the European Commission by providing high-quality statistics needed for the “development, monitoring and evaluation of the policies of the European Union”.⁹³

The findings from the USS, the targeted user survey and public consultation suggested that European statistics were indeed used by policy makers to inform policy making and decisions. In the 2019 USS⁹⁴, the most common purpose identified by users of European statistics was “monitoring or formulating policy” (32%). Additionally, “Preparing legislation” and “Monitoring or formulating policy” got a combined share of 87% of participants indicating them to be “essential” or “important” for their work which indicates that these statistics were not only used but users deemed them critical. Similarly, 64% of respondents to the public consultation considered European statistics useful to a great extent in informing and monitoring policy and decision-making in Europe and 26% to a moderate extent, with the importance of statistics for decision making in Europe highlighted as one of the main reasons for European statistics. While both the USS 2019 and the public consultation regrouped the feedback on the usefulness of statistics for both EU and Member States' policy makers, the evaluation team carried out a targeted user survey which further broke down this distinction asking respondents about the usefulness of European statistics at the EU level and Member States level (see Figure 4 below). Results were very positive, 54% of respondents found them to be “very effective” and 36% “effective” in the “development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the EU level” (combined 90%).

Interviews with users from the Commission confirmed this perception. They systematically mentioned the comprehensiveness, comparability and reliability of the data provided under the ESP and the value of this data for EU policy work. For instance, the European Statistical Recovery Dashboard for tracking recovery from COVID-19 was highlighted by policy makers in several DGs as important to “inform and support policy makers” and to “respond quickly to emerging needs”. Regional data were also reported as being heavily used for policy planning, especially in the policy area of regional development and similarly, migration statistics were reported by DG Migration and Home affairs as important for informing the EU migration policy and to inform policy briefs and legislative proposals. However, and despite an overall positive assessment, interviewees also identified some statistical needs that were not met under the ESP and which negatively impacted policy makers' ability to inform policy making. For instance, the need for more

⁹⁰ Data retrieved from folders received from EUROSTAT (Folder 3: Supporting Document; Sub-folder: Web impact of Eurostat)

⁹¹ This indicator informs both a judgement criterion in EQ 4 and a judgement criterion in EQ3. This is why this indicator is numbered 4.2.2.

⁹² Regulation 2017/1951 of 25 October 2017 amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2020

⁹³ Eurostat, Strategic Plan 2016-2020

⁹⁴ Eurostat, 2019, Report on the Eurostat 2019 User Satisfaction Survey

granularity of the statistics produced was mentioned such as providing data at NUTS3 instead of NUTS2 and having gender breakdown. Additional needs mentioned included topics not covered (and already formulated as data requests to Eurostat), such as statistics on passenger mobility, trade in services, and issues of growing interest to better serve the current European Commission's priority (e.g. mainstreaming of environment in all statistical data to support the implementation of the EU's Green Deal). An additional issue identified by interviewees was the lack of timeliness of the data for rapid policy needs. Both issues of timeliness and data gap were also identified in the 2018 impact assessment as being a continuous challenge for the design and monitoring of new EU policies (e.g. globalisation, digitalisation of the economy, security, etc.).

However, and despite these identified challenges, the findings suggested that to a great extent, statistics were used by EU policy makers to inform policy making and decisions and were considered important in that regard. This evidence indicated that the component of objective 1 "to support the development, monitoring and evaluation of the policies of the Union properly reflecting priorities ... and serving the needs of the wide range of users of European statistics, including other decision-makers" was achieved.

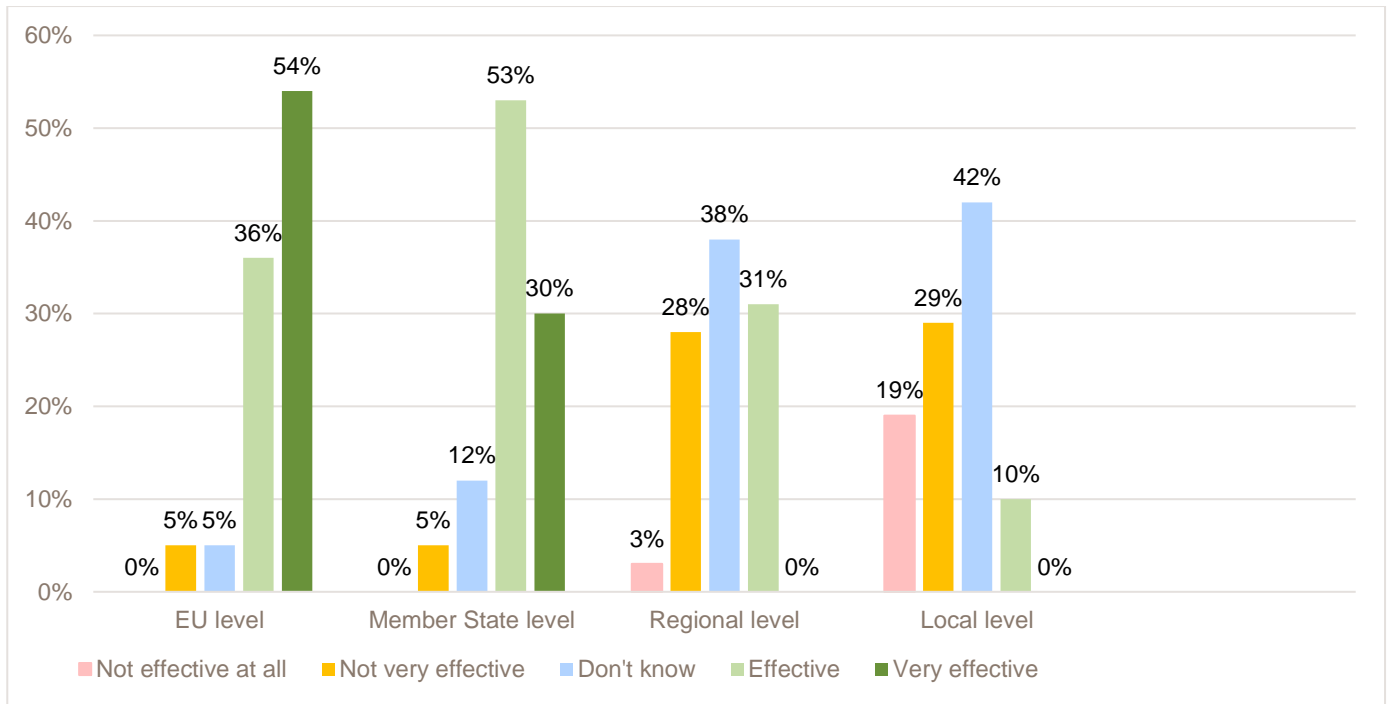
Judgement criterion 3.5: Data were being used by MSs policy makers to inform policy making and decisions

The findings outlined in judgement criterion 3.4 suggested that overall, European statistics were used by policy makers at both the EU and Member States level. Further breakdown of the data by contributors highlighted that among the respondents to the public consultation, 81% of respondents from public authorities with a national scope of work considered European statistics relevant to inform and monitor public policy which suggested that statistics were used by Member States' policy makers.

When asked about the usefulness of European statistics in the targeted user survey, 30% of respondents found them to be "very effective" and 52% "effective" in the "development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the Member State level". This represented a combined 80% of respondents, a share which was yet lower than the combined 90% at the EU level (54% "very effective" and 36% "effective"). The higher combined share of positive responses and the significantly higher percentage of "very effective" responses suggested that European statistics were perceived as more useful for the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the EU level than at Member States level. Further breakdown at the regional and local level revealed that none of the respondents found European statistics "very effective" for the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the regional and local level. Additionally, 31% found them "effective" at the regional level and only 10% at the local level (see Figure 4 below). This could be linked to the insufficient disaggregation of statistics at local level (interviews provided anecdotal evidence of this weakness). This suggested that while European statistics were useful for Member States at the national level for the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies, their usefulness – despite remaining high – decreased for Member States at the regional and local level.

Overall, the evidence suggested that Member State policy makers use European statistics to inform policy making and decision making. However, they do so to a lesser extent than EU policy makers and at a greater extent at the national level than at the regional and local level.

Figure 4: In your opinion, how useful is Eurostat for the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at:



Source: Targeted user survey carried out by the evaluation team.

Judgement criterion 3.6: ESP activities resulted in a net increase of available data; users considered newly available data sources to be useful

When asked in the targeted producer survey about the availability of European statistics, more than three quarters of respondents indicated there had been an increase in the availability of data to a great (37%) and to a moderate extent (44%). Similarly, in the targeted user survey, respondents were asked about the evolution of the statistics in terms of the quantity of statistics available in relation to the nine Eurostat statistical themes.⁹⁵ Overall, for most themes, respondents were unsure – apart for general and regional statistics (44%) and economy and finance (45%) where the highest proportion of respondents found that there had been an increase in quantity. A noticeable share of respondents to the PC (43%) also reported an increase in the availability of data related to population and social conditions. This was further corroborated by stakeholders interviewed as part of the asylum and managed migration case study. Disregarding those who were unsure and taking into account the fact that less than 20% of respondents for each theme answered negatively, the findings suggested that overall and especially for those themes identified, ESP activities resulted in a net increase of available statistics. Interviews conducted with users and producers of European statistics confirmed this point. They assessed positively the availability of statistics and indicated that they had noticed an improvement in that respect. Similarly, interviewees from EFTA and candidate countries noted the constant development of the statistics on offer to users and the increased availability of macro statistics and environmental statistics.

The table below shows the quantity of statistics and long-time series published by Eurostat. Statistical coverage is calculated as the number of (statistical) indicators, sub-indicators and all their breakdowns included in Eurobase (the Eurostat dissemination database) not taking into account those differing only because of the time dimension. The table thus demonstrates the increasing amount of data made available by Eurostat over the years (indicator 3.6.1) which is reflected in the growth in the number of time series produced has evidence by Table 4. While the data includes long time series breaks/re-definitions of existing statistical products, we can assume, based on the increase in statistical coverage, that the number of time series produced has also continued to grow.

⁹⁵ (i) General and regional statistics, (ii) economy and finance, (iii) population and social conditions, (iv) industry, trade and services, (v) agriculture, forestry and fisheries, (vi) international trade, (vii) transport, (viii) environment and energy, (ix) science, technology and digital society

Table 4: Statistical Coverage in millions of statistics⁹⁶

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020
Statistical coverage	328	366	423	446
Long time-series	35	42	50	55

Source: Data shared by Eurostat⁹⁷

Respondents to the targeted user survey were also asked about the usefulness of European statistics for nine areas of practice (see figure 3 above and its analysis under judgement criterion 3.2). Answers for this question were varied which suggests that, while, overall, the increased availability of statistics was considered useful, this increase was noticeably more relevant for some areas of practices than for others, namely, for the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the EU level; for giving information on Europe; and for media reporting purposes. Stakeholders interviewed as part of the territorial case study similarly noted that despite improvements in terms of the availability of territorial disaggregation, there were still large gaps, particularly in terms of social statistics which were mentioned by most interviewees.

The evidence suggested that ESP activities have resulted in a net increase of data made available by Eurostat. Overall, users considered this to be useful; however, there was some uncertainty around that assertion and notable divergences among the different statistical domains and their usefulness for different practice areas, with some domains deemed more useful than others.

Judgement criterion 3.7: ESS stakeholders and/or users considered ESP activity to have increased the efficiency of European statistics production

The specific objective 2 of the ESP 2013-2017 was to implement “**new methods of production of European statistics aiming at efficiency gains**.”⁹⁸ As this objective relates to efficiency, a detailed answer to this judgement criterion has been provided under the judgement criterion 6.4 below. Overall, both the qualitative and quantitative evidence collected suggest that ESP activities have, to a limited extent, resulted in efficiency gains by increasing the methods of production of European statistics while reducing administrative burdens. The strengthening of partnerships, the use of administrative data and the implementation of framework statistics were considered as particularly noteworthy in that respect. The lack of use of big data was the main drawback and area for further improvement identified by stakeholders consulted who, while acknowledging efficiency gains implemented by the ESP, noted that more innovative solutions and sources should be used to increase the efficiency of European statistics production.

Judgement criterion 3.8: ESS stakeholders considered ESP activity to have avoided or prevented duplication of effort on the part of stakeholders

As laid down in its Strategic Plan 2016-2020, Eurostat sought to provide high-quality statistics needed for the development, monitoring and evaluation of the policies of the European Union in a “**cost effective manner without unnecessary duplication of effort**”.⁹⁹ This was achieved through the sharing of knowledge and best practices across Member States and the development of new technologies, common tools and collaborative networks in the ESS with a view of “taking advantage of possible synergies and avoiding duplication of effort”.¹⁰⁰ This was in line with the ESS Vision 2020 and its mission as stated in the European Statistics Code of Practice¹⁰¹ and stemmed from the belief that efforts to modernise and streamline statistical production can best be initiated with a harmonised approach at the EU level. To that effect, Eurostat produces European statistics in partnership with the Member States based on shared statistical standards, methods, procedures, practices, and tools (indicator 3.8.1).

Respondents to the targeted producer survey were asked to rank the extent to which the ESP had been successful in introducing efficiency gains in the production of statistics by reducing duplication of effort. Respondents indicated that to a moderate extent (51%) and to a great extent (19%) the ESP had been successful in reducing duplication of effort, in comparison to 12% that indicated it was done to a small extent and 7% that considered that this was not at all

⁹⁶ Data retrieved from folders received from EUROSTAT (Folder 3: Supporting Document; Sub-folder: Website monitoring reports)

⁹⁷ Data retrieved from folders received from EUROSTAT (Folder 3: Supporting Document; Sub-folder: Website monitoring reports)

⁹⁸ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17

⁹⁹ Eurostat, 2016, Strategic Plan 2016-2020

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem

¹⁰¹ Eurostat, 2017, European Statistics Code of Practice, revised edition 2017.

achieved. This suggests that ESP activities have in large part prevented the duplication of efforts on the part of the producers (indicator 3.8.1).

Additionally, stakeholders within the Commission highlighted the ongoing dialogue between Eurostat and thematic DGs on the “inventory of other statistics” as being effective at preventing overlap and duplication of efforts. This was one of the objectives of the yearly consolidation of the inventory of all statistical data produced by all DGs. There was also a strong consensus among these users as to the importance of the ESP’s contribution to the definition and harmonisation of production methods and methodologies which was seen as key to the production of reliable and comparable data. Eurostat’s interviewees also highlighted the European Commission’s participation in discussions in international partnerships regarding efforts to limit the response burden for MSs which are statistics producers for different international organisations by avoiding the duplication of statistics production and identifying existing sources that can be re-used.

Overall, ESS stakeholders considered that ESP activities had largely prevented duplication of efforts on the part of the stakeholders.

Judgement criterion 3.9: ESS stakeholders and/or users considered ESP activity to have increased the quality of European statistics production

As mentioned above, the specific objective 2 of ESP 2013-2017 was to implement “**new methods of production of European statistics aiming at (...) quality improvements**”. The indicator on timeliness (3.1.2) already informed this objective (to the extent that timeliness is one of the characteristics of quality statistics) with the findings suggesting that the perception of timeliness has remained relatively constant between 2013-2019. Additionally, the percentage of users that rated as “very good” or “good” the overall quality of European statistics evidenced further this objective as it measured the user’s perception of the achievement of the specific objective “to provide quality statistics”. According to the USS findings, the percentage of users who rated as “very good” or “good” the overall quality of European statistics remained constant between 2013 and 2019 (fluctuating between 57% and 60%) and increased considerably in 2020 with 72%. Notwithstanding the data from 2020, which due to methodological changes in the collection method might not be comparable to previous years (but which could hint at the fact that the results of the previous years were underestimated),¹⁰² the findings show that while users positively assessed the overall data quality of the statistics produced by Eurostat, users’ perception of the quality of European statistics did not significantly increase between 2013 and 2019 (indicator 3.9.1). This suggests that quality of statistics did not significantly improve over the lifetime of the ESP nor improved in line with the expectation of the users

Similar findings were reported in the targeted user survey where respondents were asked to judge the overall quality of nine of Eurostat’s statistical themes.¹⁰³ Overall, respondents found that all themes were of either high or moderate quality. Half or more of respondents found that the environment and energy (63%), industry, trade and services (62%), international trade (56%), transport (54%), science, technology and digital society themes (50%) were of moderate quality. Similarly, the highest proportion of respondents shared the same opinion about the general and regional statistics (49%), economy and finance (45%), population and social conditions (46%) and agriculture, forestry and fisheries (43%) themes. Less than 25% of respondents found the themes to have some quality, low quality, or no quality at all. However, when asked about the evolution of the data in terms of the quality of the statistics available, for most themes, respondents were unsure except for economy and finance where 58% of respondents reported having noticed an evolution of the data in terms of the quality of the statistics available and 39% of respondents for population and social conditions. For the remaining themes, more than half of respondents were unsure if an evolution in terms of quality could be observed. In line with the findings of the USS, this suggested that while users were satisfied with the high-quality of the European statistics being produced, they did not consider that this quality had significantly increased and that the increase which had taken place was not visible across all statistical themes.

Producers, users, European Commission services and EU bodies, as well as EFTA and candidate countries’ stakeholders interviewed all emphasised the high-quality of the statistics produced by Eurostat. Additionally, and in contrast to the surveys’ findings, interviewees were positive about the progress which had been made in regard to the

¹⁰² Until 2019, respondents could rate the data quality on a scale “1” to “5”, with clearly indicated that “1” was equivalent to “very good”, “2” to “good” and so on until “5” to “very poor”. When analysing the answers to the USS 2019, some comments seemed not to correspond to the marks. A few users were giving bad marks but expressing good comments, as if they had inverted the scale by mistake. To avoid possible errors, in 2020 the scale of the questions was directly a textual one “very good”, “good”, “adequate”, “poor” and “very poor” and not a numeric one.

¹⁰³ (i) general and regional statistics, (ii) economy and finance, (iii) population and social conditions, (iv) industry, trade and services, (v) agriculture, forestry and fisheries, (vi) international trade, (vii) transport, (viii) environment and energy, (ix) science, technology and digital society.

quality of European statistics production. Producers highlighted the improvement made since 2018 while EFTA and candidate countries pointed out the improvements provided through the ESP activities such as the revision of the Code of Practice, peer review processes and recommendations to national statistical systems.

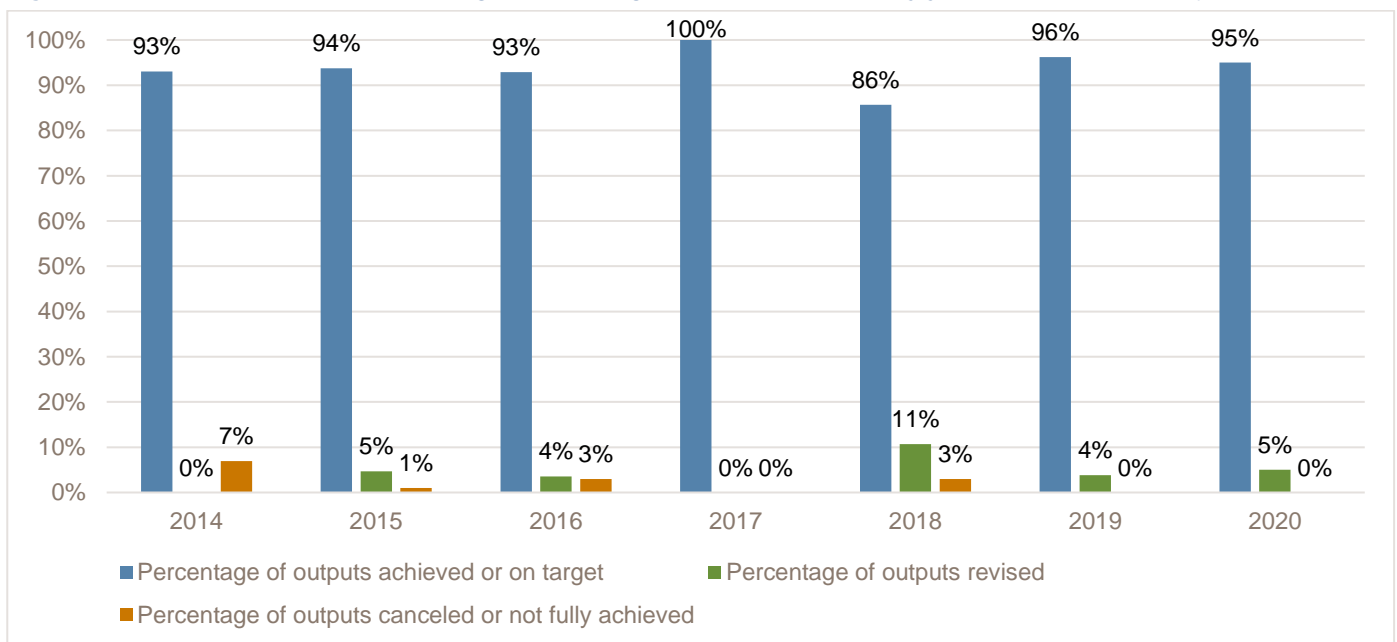
Overall, the findings suggested that the ESS stakeholders and users did not consider that ESP activities had led to a significant increase in the quality of the European statistics produced by Eurostat. However, the quality was assessed by all stakeholders as being high which would mean that there was little room for improvement and would therefore suggest that the marginal increase witnessed represents an improvement.

Judgement criterion 3.10: ESP activity strengthened existing partnerships or developed new ones

The ESS is the partnership between the statistical authority of the Union, which is the Commission (Eurostat), and the national statistical institutes and other national authorities (NSIs and ONAs) responsible in each Member State for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics. This Partnership also includes the EEA and EFTA countries¹⁰⁴. Specific objective 3 of the ESP was to “strengthen the partnership within the ESS and beyond in order to further enhance its productivity and its leading role in official statistics worldwide.” It aimed to support the production and quality of statistics by improving the cooperation within the ESS and with other international organisations and countries outside the EU.¹⁰⁵

Progress made against this objective was reported on in Eurostat Annual Activity Reports. An analysis of their evolution over the lifetime of the ESP evidenced that the percentage of outputs achieved or on target for strategic objective 3 (strengthen partnerships within the ESS and beyond) has been high since 2014 in parallel to a low number of outputs being cancelled, not fully achieved, or revised¹⁰⁶ (see figure 5 below). This analysis suggests that ESP activities have been successful in strengthening existing partnerships. The difference in the number of outputs between 2014-2015 and 2016-2019 is due to administrative changes enacted to reduce the complexity and specificity of indicators.

Figure 5: Eurostat’s activities contributing to the Management Plan’s outputs by year (2014 -2020) for objective 3¹⁰⁷



Source: Data from Eurostat Annual Activity Reports 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Additionally, according to Eurostat’s Strategic Plan 2016-2020, the Key Performance Indicator informing Specific objective 3 was the “Percentage of users that rated as "Very good" or "Good" the comparability of European statistics among regions and countries” during the period evaluated. It related to the achievement of the specific objective 3 to the extent that the comparability of the European statistics was one of the important expected results of the partnership

¹⁰⁴ European Statistical System, 2020, Website available at: [About ESS - ESS \(europa.eu\)](http://About ESS - ESS (europa.eu))

¹⁰⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4375449/2019Second+mid-term+evaluation+of+the+ESP+2013-2017/67718171-9743-4359-85fc-39129b3f8a2e>

¹⁰⁶ In 2020, the classification does not say anymore outputs “not fully achieved” but presenting “difficulties”.

¹⁰⁷ Data from Eurostat Annual Activity Reports 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020

within the ESS. According to USS the percentage of respondents viewing the comparability of European statistics as either “very good” or “good” progressively increased between 2014 (50%) and 2019 (53%) with a jump in 2020 to 58% which needed to be caveated due to methodology changes in that reporting year. Nonetheless, this increase suggested that ESP activities have increased the comparability of European statistics and, in turn, that existing partnerships were strengthened and/or new partnerships developed. This was confirmed in the interviews with users who highlighted the close and intense cooperation with Eurostat.

Member States’ producers reported an increase and strengthening of partnerships and an overall good cooperation across the ESS. In the case of the COVID-19 crisis, it was noted that meetings and exchanges had increased sharing of good practices and new methods. Examples of elements that worked well under the partnerships’ objective and which were highlighted by interviewees were the working groups and taskforces as well as meetings between Eurostat’s Director and the directors of the NSIs and the annual hearings organised bilaterally between Eurostat and thematic DGs. It was noted that there was a strong sense of common purpose among Director Generals. However, in the targeted producer survey open questions, respondents raised, among other issues, the need for partnerships to be strengthened, especially in the domain of data sharing and in dealing with complex global events. They also highlighted that it would be relevant for Eurostat to coordinate more closely the work carried out by the NSIs, as was done at the time of the COVID-19 crisis.

EFTA and candidate country stakeholders interviewed also noted the strengthening of partnerships taking place within the ESS, highlighting in particular the positive work of the Vision 2020 programme in that regard such as in the area of business registers and their inclusion in the ESP. Similarly, stakeholders at the European Commission positively highlighted the alignment of EU candidate countries with the ESS stressing that the work programme of these countries was closely aligned with Eurostat’s annual work programme. Additionally, most legal acts in the field of statistics were incorporated into the Administrative Agreements signed between Eurostat and these EFTA countries and the latter were eligible for Eurostat grants as well as to participate in the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) and therefore influence legislation and initiatives.¹⁰⁸ Eurostat cooperated closely with **international organisations** to align their methodologies, to agree on definitions for individual statistical indicators and to validate and exchange data. Eurostat currently has Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) signed with four organisations (OECD, ECB, UN International Civil Service Commission (UN ICSC) and International Service for Remunerations and Pensions (ISRPP)) and Administrative Arrangements (AA) with five organisations (EFTA, UNESCO, the UN Statistical Division (UNSD), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and OECD).¹⁰⁹ Stakeholders interviewed among these organisations were overwhelmingly positive about their partnerships with Eurostat, highlighting a close and fruitful collaboration.

Additionally, according to the 2019 final audit report on the effectiveness of Eurostat’s cooperation with external stakeholders, this cooperation has had “a significant impact on the implementation of the ESP”.¹¹⁰ In particular, the audit welcomed the clear division of responsibilities and the well-established cooperation arrangements that have been formally agreed between Eurostat and the ECB aimed at achieving an efficient exchange of data and preventing conflicting requests being sent to MSs from Eurostat and the ECB. Similarly, the system for joint data collection with the OECD, World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for statistical indicators in the areas of education and health statistics was highlighted as a positive development. However, despite an overall positive assessment, the audit also highlighted some challenges. For instance, Eurostat had no complete overview, specific objectives and priorities for cooperation activities; Eurostat did not apply consistent criteria when establishing formal cooperation arrangements; and some cooperation arrangements had not been updated to reflect the then working practices. The audit highlighted that these issues may lead to incoherent practices/arrangements within Eurostat, sub-optimal use of its resources, ineffective planning of activities and ultimately to the non-achievement of the cooperation objectives. Corrective actions were undertaken in 2019 and 2020 including the development of a strategy for international cooperation, the revision of internal guidance on administrative arrangements, and the preparation of formal agreements to be signed with external stakeholders such as with the OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).¹¹¹

Eurostat also cooperates with **third countries** based on regional and thematic priorities to exchange information and practices that help to address global challenges, such as trade and digitalisation. For instance, in the reporting period, Eurostat has strengthened cooperation with Africa under the EU priority area “Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable

¹⁰⁸ EFTA, 2021, Website available at: [EFTA: A partner in European statistics | European Free Trade Association](#)

¹⁰⁹ Eurostat, Cooperation with international organisations.

¹¹⁰ Commission Staff Working Document, 2019, Internal audit engagements finalised by the Internal Audit Service in 2018.

¹¹¹ Eurostat, 2021, Eurostat action plan referring to the “Audit on effectiveness of DG ESTAT’s cooperation with external stakeholders”, IAS.C.3-2018-DG ESTAT-001

Investment and Jobs”¹¹² and the UN 2030 Agenda¹¹³. Eurostat also supported the promotion, training and dissemination of statistical tools on the continent, in particular ERETES, an IT tool combining a methodological guidance and a powerful IT solution designed to support developing countries to compile national accounts.¹¹⁴

In the context of establishing a quality framework for big data, as first stipulated by ESGAB Recommendation 2017/4, Eurostat has, in the context of the ESS Vision 2020 BIGD project worked on developing methodology and practices for dealing with **privately held data** and has produced a report on data-quality aspects of big data. For instance, in 2019, a cooperation project between Eurostat and a Mobile Network Operator (MNO) was completed to gather reference data in support of methodological development. Similarly, the ESSnet on Big Data II (launched by BIGD) made considerable progress in elaborating a reference methodological framework for the problem of spatial density estimation.¹¹⁵ However, and despite these developments, stakeholders among Member States and the European Commission stressed that access to privately held data was insufficiently covered and that more needed to be done in that regard. This was further corroborated by ESGAB annual reports, which since its Recommendation 2017/4, has repeatedly urged Eurostat to further engage with the private sector by establishing partnerships to enhance cooperation and collaboration and reduce the burden on respondents by making use of new data sources.¹¹⁶ It is worth highlighting that in its strategy plan 2020-2024 Eurostat foresees a stronger partnership with the private sector to improve data production processes. For instance, Eurostat plans to produce spatio-temporal official statistics using mobile network data as well as statistics based on web intelligence. Eurostat also plans to deploy trusted smart surveys and to produce official statistics using data from smart devices (e.g. on agriculture, energy, and transport).¹¹⁷ Overall, the increase in and strengthening of existing partnerships was positively assessed by all stakeholders (indicator 3.10.1) who noted the positive impact it has had in increasing the comparability of European statistics and increasing cooperation and coordination within and beyond the ESS.

Judgement criterion 3.11: Stakeholders identified factors that prevented or reduced the impact of ESP activity

Producers of statistics stressed the need for more innovative solutions and sources to be used, such as **big data** based on **privately produced data**, for instance on electricity usage, credit cards, mobile data, etc. It was noted that the use of this type of information depended on the legal framework of each country and that there was a sense of a missed opportunity to develop this further under the ESP 2013-2020. Producers suggested that despite potential quality issues, using new data sources held by private-sector organisations would increase the availability of data as well as reduce the burden on producers. It was thus suggested that more effort in this regard should be made in the future.

However, the 2016 impact assessment of the proposal to extend the European statistical programme 2013-2017 to the period 2018-2020 noted that the **capabilities and skills** to effectively explore this type of data are still missing, which delays their integration into the system. Similarly, while the ESS Vision 2020 acknowledged that new data sources (such as big data) offered a unique potential for statistics, it also noted that this potential could not be reaped by statisticians on their own, due to the multidisciplinary character of big data (indicator 3.11.1).

Problems with **timeliness** reduced the impact and use of the statistics being produced by Eurostat. However, respondents and interviewees acknowledged that timely statistics were often dependent on external factors, namely Member States’ capacity to provide statistics in a timely manner. For instance, the asylum and managed migration statistics are collected on a monthly and quarterly basis with Member States having two months to deliver the data. Member States with very good automated systems provided the data in the space of a few days while others provided data at the two months deadline. Eurostat is dependent on this data to produce its statistics. The timelier the data provided by Member States, the timelier the statistics produced by Eurostat. Interviewees also acknowledged that quality official statistics necessitated time to be produced and verified based on the data provide by Member States and that there was a trade-off between quality and timeliness. An additional challenge noted by Eurostat with regard to the production of timely statistics came from the fact that the EU’s legislative cycle was relatively long: any change to the ESP legal basis related to (e.g.) a new data request might take a long time before it is approved.

¹¹² Commission, 2018, Communication on a new Africa – Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs: Taking our partnership for investment and jobs to the next level

¹¹³ UN General Assembly, 2015, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, [United Nations Official Document](#)

¹¹⁴ Eurostat, Cooperation with international organisations.

¹¹⁵ Eurostat, 2019, Annual Activity Report.

¹¹⁶ ESGAB Annual Reports, 2017 2018, 2019 and 2020

¹¹⁷ Eurostat, 2020, Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Users at the European Commission and EU agencies identified the need for **more granularity of the data**. Interviewees also noted that some **data needs** were not being met under the ESP as evidenced by existing data requests (e.g. statistics on passenger mobility, trade in services) and issues of growing interest, including to better serve the current European Commission's priority (e.g. mainstreaming of environment in all statistical data to support the implementation of the EU's Green Deal). One interviewee also flagged that the impossibility to get access to **microdata** was a missed opportunity for the ESP. Microdata can only be accessed for scientific purposes by a recognised research entity however microdata would be useful for users wishing to aggregate information and produce statistics not covered by Eurostat.¹¹⁸ Not rendering access to this data thus impacted the completeness of the available information provided through the ESP.

Stakeholders from Eurostat noted that the **modernisation** objective of statistics production with the aim of increasing efficiency was considered challenging and complex. There was a consensus recognising that a lot of work was done but also that there were gaps and delays in the operationalisation with much remaining to be done. Interviewees from Eurostat mentioned that it was the most challenging objective because it demanded to work hand in hand with all Member States, among which there were major differences. They also noted that modernisation required an investment upfront which Member States may be reluctant to pay and which has impacted ESP's ability to deliver efficiency gains to reduce burden on the Member States in the medium-term. The impact of COVID-19 is likely to produce financial restraint on the EU and Member States' budget dedicated to the production of statistics and will as a result, further delay the modernisation objective of statistics production.

An additional factor which limited the impact of the ESP was the increasing risks of **third-party dissemination of non-validated or fake information**. The 2018 Impact Assessment of the ESP¹¹⁹ warned about the risk of policy makers using these unvalidated statistics to inform policies which could lead to errors and unsubstantiated findings. In response, the ESGAB recommended in its 2019 report that Eurostat and the NSIs designed appropriate actions of communication and outreach to highlight the trustworthiness of official statistics.¹²⁰ In the same vein, ESAC recommended advancing statistical literacy at all educational levels and improving citizens' statistical literacy, including that of non-users, to promote the value of official statistics. ESAC's opinion on the priorities for the post-2020 ESP noted that while there had been efforts to promote statistical literacy (see judgement criterion 5.1 for an overview of the statistical literacy activities), more could be done to measure the impact and the outcomes of the initiatives taken – "A regular measurement of the level of statistical literacy in the EU among various user groups in a standard and comparable way would be very helpful."¹²¹ ESAC opinion on the 2021 annual work programme¹²² echoed this statistical literacy challenge and emphasised the need to further promote the statistical literacy of the general public, by proposing a stronger relationship with the media and increasing software and statistics produced by Eurostat and NSIs that were useful to educators, based on modern ways of communication that could give quantitative information on national and local phenomena.

4.2.2. EQ4: To what extent did the ESP make progress on rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly?

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR THE EQ4:

The findings of the analysis of the evidence show that, overall, the ESP had made progress in rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly.

Positive feedback was received regarding Eurostat's communication's channels, namely its website and publications, highlighting that they had been very effective in responding to input and that employees at Eurostat had been friendly and helpful. However, weaknesses were also identified regarding the complexity of the website leading to difficulties in finding the right data as well as the lack of access to metadata which remained an issue for some users.

¹¹⁸ Eurostat, Microdata, Website available at : [Overview - Access to microdata - Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

¹¹⁹ European Commission (2016), Commission Staff Working Document – Executive summary of the Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-2020, 7.9.2016 SWD(2016) 287 final

¹²⁰ ESCAB, 2019, 11th Annual Report by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board.

¹²¹ ESAC, 2018, Opinion on the Priorities for the post-2020 European Statistical Programme

¹²² ESAC, 2020, Opinion on the draft 2021 Annual Work Programme.

Nonetheless, users were overall satisfied with the dissemination methods used by Eurostat with relevant information deemed to be available in a clear and accessible manner by the majority of respondents and interviewees.

Coverage of the questions

This evaluation question assesses the effectiveness of the ESP in delivering easily accessible statistics in a user-friendly way that corresponds to the users' expectations.

Analysis of the evidence

To answer this evaluation question, the study team defined a set of judgement criteria drawing on and providing information on the progress made by the ESP. The judgement criteria related to key features of Eurostat's communication and dissemination channels (including the website), the feedback mechanisms in place, and the availability of information on key aspect of the data.

Judgement criterion 4.1: Effective processes were in place to monitor and receive feedback about data accessibility

In the European Statistics Code of Practice, the notions of accessibility and clarity are combined in a single principle. It states that "European statistics should be presented in a clear and understandable form, released in a suitable and convenient manner, available and accessible on an impartial basis with supporting metadata and guidance".¹²³ According to the ESS handbook for quality and metadata reports (2020 edition) user feedback is the best way to assess the accessibility and clarity of European statistics To monitor feedback from its users, Eurostat carried out several general User Satisfaction Surveys throughout the period under evaluation (indicator 4.1.1). The objective of these surveys was to measure the degree to which Eurostat met its obligation towards its users. It was designed to obtain a better knowledge about users, their needs and satisfaction with the services and statistics provided by Eurostat, including in terms of data accessibility. The first survey of this kind was held in 2007 and then repeated in 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2020. In addition, inputs and feedback were also received through daily contacts in the form of questions coming into user support, comments left on social media as well as a staff feedback mechanism. These fed into the revision and creation of (new) communication materials. When asked in the public consultation about Eurostat's communication channels, more than half of the respondents (53%) found that these channels have been to a great extent effective in responding to their feedback and input, while 35% found this to be true to a moderate extent. Only 2% of respondents ranked this to a small extent and 9% did not know. The same question was asked in the targeted user survey with similar results, namely 31% of respondents agreed that the statement was true to a great extent with an additional 42% agreeing to a moderate extent. Only 7% of respondents found that the information provided was sufficient to a small extent and 2% that it was insufficient. In addition, 18% did not know. However, when asked during interviews, most users were not familiar with the feedback mechanisms and could not provide their opinions about them. Producers, on the other hand, provided positive feedback on Eurostat communication channels, highlighting that they had been very effective in responding to input and that employees at Eurostat had been friendly and helpful.

The USSs were the main mechanism through which users could provide feedback on data accessibility in a standardised form. Eurostat also offered the possibility for users to provide additional feedbacks through its social media platform and its user support service. While this did not represent an extensive process to monitor and receive feedback, especially since the user satisfaction survey was not conducted on a yearly basis¹²⁴, both users and producers were satisfied with the effectiveness processes in place. However, as most users were not familiar with the feedback mechanisms, it would suggest that these mechanisms are not used often.

Judgement criterion 4.2: Relevant information (e.g. new releases, data quality standards) was available in a clear and accessible manner

The main way to access European statistics was through its website, which provided users with free access to its databases and all its communication and publications in portable document format (PDF). These are listed in the box on the next page.

¹²³Eurostat, 2017, European Statistics Code of Practice For the National Statistical Authorities and Eurostat (EU statistical authority)

¹²⁴ The USS was not conducted in 2018

The website is updated daily and gives access to the latest and most comprehensive statistical information available on the EU, its Member States, EFTA countries, as well as acceding and candidate countries. It also provided access to a narrower range of statistics covering non-members, for example, potential candidates and other neighbours, as well as other major economies, such as Japan and the United States.¹²⁵ Those that registered (free of charge) could receive tailor-made e-mail alerts providing information on new publications as soon as they were online and had access to enhanced functionalities within databases (for example, the ability to save data queries and make bulk downloads). Journalists could obtain, on the day of publication, news releases or weekly release calendar by e-mail in German, English, or French. Data could be downloaded from the Data explorer in various formats (XLS, CSV, HTML, PC AXIS, SPSS, TSV and PDF).¹²⁶ Similarly, Eurostat's dissemination unit also created different profiles for users to ensure that they receive tailored communication packages which fit their needs and thus improved the clarity and accessibility of the information produced and communicated by Eurostat. Adding modern ways of communication, Eurostat has also been active on social media, with its three corporate social media accounts: on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Box 2: Communication and publication programmes

Eurostat's main communication and publication programmes

- **Statistical books** provide statistical data and analysis covering a broad range of topics. Among these books, Eurostat produces a few flagship publications (paper or digital) every year addressing themes highly relevant for stakeholders. Digital publications are interactive products containing short texts, dynamic infographics, maps, videos, graphs, photos, etc.
- **Manuals and guidelines** describe methodologies, guidelines and standards which are actually applied in the European Statistical System (ESS).
- **Statistical working papers** present on-going statistical methodological developments and applied statistical studies.
- **Statistical reports** are quality reports or other papers introducing new or experimental data in one statistical area.
- **Compact guides** are leaflets promoting statistical information available in a specific domain

Users interviewed provided positive feedback on the publications listed in Box 2 with the publication "Statistics explained" being referred to several times as well written and useful. Statistics were overall highlighted as being well presented for different types of users and accessible not only via tables, but also via Application Programming Interface (API) which was an added value. Different elements, such as detailed metadata with descriptions, sources, methods were also deemed useful and easily accessible via links. This confirmed the added value of the many new electronic and interactive publications, visualisation tools, mobile apps and tools offered for data extraction developed and added to the Eurostat website since the beginning of the ESP. These tools present data from different statistical themes in an attractive and accessible way for stakeholders to explore and can be easily accessed on [Eurostat website](#).

However, some limitations in that regard were revealed in the USS (indicator 4.2.1). On average, in 2019, only 45% found metadata sufficient for their purposes (48% partially sufficient and 7% not sufficient). This was 9 percentage points less than in 2016 and suggested that Eurostat did not provide metadata in line with some users' expectations. Additionally, while some users reaffirmed in their comments that metadata were clear, complete, and better than those of other data providers, others found them not easy to access, not clear enough, too long or too technical. The main suggested improvements included to provide some more basic metadata, easy to understand and in plain language for non-specialists, to provide metadata at more detailed level and for all indicators, and to give clearer and more complete definitions of all codes. Other respondents wished to get more information on the production of statistics and the used methodology, and to understand more easily the differences among countries. They also noted that metadata should be consistent over time and among different statistics, and always updated in case of changes in the methodology.

In both the targeted producer and targeted user surveys, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which Eurostat was providing sufficient information regarding the following:

- Sources of the data, its reliability and integrity: More than half of respondents (52%) of the targeted producer survey answered that provided sufficient information with regard to the sources of the data and its reliability and

¹²⁵ Eurostat, Accessing European Statistics – Available at: [Accessing European statistics - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹²⁶ Eurostat, Accessing European Statistics – Available at: [Accessing European statistics - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](#)

integrity to a great extent, with an additional 36% agreeing that this was done to a moderate extent. The targeted user survey reported similar findings to the targeted producer survey, with 48% of respondents replying “to a great extent” and 39% to “a moderate extent”.

- **Data Quality Standards:** Producers found that, to a great extent (45%) and a moderate extent (38%), Eurostat was providing sufficient information about the data quality standard. While positive, users were, however, less enthusiastic with 36% replying “to a great extent” and 48% to a “moderate extent”.
- **Method of data collection:** Producers found that, to a great extent (40%) and to a moderate extent (43%), the information provided was sufficient in terms of the method of data collection, while the share of users was lower with 34% for both.

This suggested that both producers and users found relevant information on the data produced by Eurostat to be available in a clear and accessible manner, with producers being slightly more positive in their feedback than the users. This difference could be due to data being deemed more difficult to understand for non-specialist as mentioned in the USS open responses.

Overall, and despite the weaknesses identified, notably with metadata, the findings suggested that relevant information was provided by Eurostat through various publication and communication channels in a clear and accessible manner.

Judgement criterion 4.3: Users expressed satisfaction with dissemination and communication methods used by Eurostat

Eurostat’s website is its main dissemination and communication tool. To gather feedback from users and assess its ease of use, from 2011 to 2015, and in 2020, the USS included a question asking whether it was easy to access European Statistics on the Eurostat website. In 2020, 55% of respondents answered “yes”, 34% answered partially and only 3% answered “no”. Additionally, an improvement can be noted between the number of respondents that answered yes in 2013 (49%) and in 2020 (55%). Overall, this suggested that users were satisfied with the easiness in accessing and understanding European statistics and that improvements were made in that regard (indicator 4.3.1).

Users who responded that it was partly or not easy to find data on the Eurostat website highlighted two main problems:

- 1) the difficulty to find the data they were looking for, especially because they judged that the search function did not work well, an issue which was echoed in all interviews conducted with users. They indicated they often used Google search to find statistics on Eurostat website, which was more effective than Eurostat search option. According to them the latter often provided misleading and unsatisfactory search results.
- 2) The complexity of the structure of the website and of the data tree. For those users, finding the right data was not intuitive, might require many clicks and some said it was easier to find them by using Google or other common search engines than the functionality offered by the website. Additionally, some respondents considered the names of themes and datasets unclear and navigating the website seemed to be especially difficult for new or occasional users. Some respondents also mentioned the necessity to have the website, or at least a glossary, in more languages, and a few said that even when a language other than English was used, like German, it was just in the opening pages while the rest was only in English. The necessity to improve the API and the user interface, data being not up to date and changes in the structure were other problems that were mentioned.

Similar to the USS, most respondents of the targeted user survey found that Eurostat’s dissemination channels were to a great and moderate extent easy to use and effective, a finding which was shared by the users interviewed who also highlighted that improvements had been made in the access to the data through the website and to its user-friendliness. Nonetheless, areas for further improvements were also highlighted. Respondents felt that further development of visualisation and mapping tools including subnational level statistics was necessary. Further users felt that the new system lagged compared to other international organisations systems like the OECD. Lastly, respondents also suggested that Eurostat could help the user to build web queries that could be more easily interpreted by tools like Powerquery as the JSON and SDMX formats were too complicated for end-users.

Producers, were also pleased overall with Eurostat dissemination channels, highlighting that Eurostat visualisation tools and topical messages on COVID-19 issues were effective and useful. Respondents, however, felt that Eurostat communication channels could have more “user-friendly databases”. Suggestions included improving the IT system

and dissemination (e.g. speed, layout). Respondents also noted that statistics were released with a producer's approach and not a user's approach, which affected how the general public used Eurostat's channels. To increase the public use, producers felt that Eurostat's channels could be enhanced with additional pages that would tackle current economic issues with data series (and their simplified metadata). As a result, this could increase communication and dissemination of currently existing statistical products and make Eurostat's work more visible.

While stakeholders at the European Commission acknowledged that, for their own use, ESP communication and visualisation were good, they also recognised that access to these tools might be more challenging for beginners and intermediate users. As proficient users, European Commission services all praised the different tools available (providing examples related to the website, the database, the metadata and the different publications prepared by Eurostat (both general publications and publications with a thematic focus) despite minor issues (with the launch of a new browser, bookmarks from the old one were not transferred; also some changes in the definition / methodologies had an impact on the data presented in the database and these changes were not flagged enough: one needed to look for the information on possible changes).

Overall users were satisfied with the dissemination and communication methods used by Eurostat with the proficient users being most satisfied among users. Some areas needing improvement – in particular the difficulty in finding data and the complexity of the website.

4.2.3. EQ5: Did ESP activity result in wider economic, social, or environmental impacts?

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR THE EQ5:

Despite some social, economic and environmental impacts identified by stakeholders (training and innovation as well as a regional impact), interviewees were for the most part not in a position to assess or provide examples of the wider impacts which could be attributed in part or in full to ESP activities. Similarly, the desk review did not uncover any information in that regard beyond the various statistical literacy initiatives. As a result, there was limited evidence to assess the extent to which the ESP activities may have had a wider impact.

Coverage of the questions

This evaluation question assesses the extent to which ESP activities resulted in wider economic, social or environmental impact. The judgement criterion structured the discussion on these impacts by drawing examples from the stakeholder consultations and case studies.

Analysis of the evidence

To answer this evaluation question, the study team focused on the results of ESP activities and the impact of European statistics beyond the intended overall and detailed objectives. Additionally, and in contrast to the other evaluation questions, this question focused on the long-term impacts, looking beyond the lifetime of the Programme. In so doing, it assessed ESP activities through a different lens which sought to provide additional, contextual information as well as an alternate perspective.

Judgement criterion 5.1: Examples of wider social, economic, or environmental impact were identified by stakeholders and attributed in part or in full to ESP activity

Beyond its contribution to evidence-based policy making, stakeholders at Eurostat highlighted that the ESP had had a **wider social impact**. This relates to training and skills and the diffusion of innovation. For example, the creation of the European Master in Official Statistics (EMOS) to strengthen the collaboration within academia and producers of official statistics and help develop a professional network.¹²⁷ Similarly, interviews mentioned the development of the Trusted Smart Statistics¹²⁸ hubs on web intelligence, where all NSIs are provided with the opportunity to explore web as a data source, and can use algorithms and coding for free to illustrate the wider social impact of Eurostat activities. Additionally, Eurostat also provides an 'Education Corner' page on its website where teachers can look for material to be used in the

¹²⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-statistical-system/emos>

¹²⁸ The Trusted Smart Statistics initiative is set out in the *Bucharest Memorandum on Official Statistics in a Datafield Society (Trusted Smart Statistics)*. This DGINS memorandum (<https://europa.eu/Gw87JQ>) was adopted by the ESSC of 12 October 2018 (<https://europa.eu/IFM84Vv>).

classroom when teaching statistics but also geography, social science, etc. It can also be used directly by students for an easier understanding of statistics. The tools include videos, interactive publications and visualisations, as well as virtual reality games. Stakeholders in the European Commission have highlighted these literacy initiatives as important capacity building tools which contribute to the social impact of the ESP.

The case studies also evidenced the social impact of European statistics. For instance, asylum and managed migration statistics were reported as having a social impact linked to the integration of refugees into the host communities which impacted on issues beyond migration, ranging from health and housing to employment. Similarly, the wide range of statistics and data published by Eurostat in its European Statistical Recovery Dashboard as part of its response to the COVID-19 crisis has a wider impact by providing a baseline against which the impact of the crisis can be measured. In so doing, it supports the analysis of the evolution of the crisis and the definition and coordination of any relevant EU recovery policies and activities in the realm of the **economy**, society and work, population and health as well as agriculture, energy, transport and tourism (for each of these topics and more, the dashboard provides an overview of COVID-19 related indicators and their analysis). Similarly, migration statistics have a regional impact on Member States' economy by supporting decision-makers and contributing to the formulation of policies in domains such as those impacted by seasonal workers and the secondary movements of migrants. More broadly, European statistics have a crucial impact on the long-term economy of the EU as Eurostat is responsible for providing the data used by DG Economic and Financial affairs for reporting on the excessive deficit procedure.

European statistics such as the European Environmental Economic Accounts (EEEA) which sets out the environmental goods and services sector's share of the overall economy and the amount of production and consumption of natural resources and energy also have an **environmental impact**. Despite limitations in terms of the relevance of certain modules and the timeliness of the data, the EEEA represents an important source to monitor and evaluate environmental policies such as the Environment Action Programme and progress towards achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.¹²⁹ Additionally, while interviewees provided no concrete examples of the wider environmental impact of European statistics, anecdotal evidence such as the link between agriculture statistics and the environmental policies and the use of European statistics to measure environmental issues within the Agenda 2030 goals suggest that European statistics have a wider environmental impact.

4.3. Efficiency

Under the efficiency criterion, the evaluation focused on the costs of producing European statistics as well as the trends of these costs and the burden on the NSIs and ONAs. Three general issues were designed to find out if the ESP has been run efficiently. The first issue related to whether the Programme ensured the best use of available resources both financial and human. The second concentrated on the costs and burden involved in producing European statistics in the ESS and how they have evolved. The third issue was to search how efficient the ESP process was for reporting and monitoring.

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions
<p>EQ 6: To what extent were ESP resources used efficiently to achieve the desired results?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What were the processes in place to collect information on costs and benefits across ESP activities and to what extent did they inform programme decisions and operations? ● What were the systems in place to monitor and optimise the use of resources? ● How effective were anti-fraud measures and processes in place to prevent misallocation of ESP funds? ● To what extent was the ESP successful in introducing efficiency gains in statistics production?
<p>EQ7: To what extent were ESP activities successful in limiting the administrative burdens for ESS stakeholders, including Member States and data providers (respondents)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What steps were taken to analyse the administrative burdens for NSIs and statistics producers? ● What steps were taken to reduce the administrative burdens for NSIs and statistics producers? How effective were they? ● To what extent did the ESP provide benefits for Member States and other data providers relative to the costs of delivering these results? What national factors affected this balance?

¹²⁹ European Court of Auditors, 2019 Special Report, European Environmental Economic Accounts: usefulness for policy makers can be improved

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions
EQ 8: Was the management / organisation of the ESP as a whole conducive to supporting efficient delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective were systems in place to review the efficiency and performance of the ESP? • How effective were Eurostat governance mechanisms at monitoring the efficient use of resources?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON EFFICIENCY

The analysis of the evidence obtained from official documents and from stakeholder consultation suggests that the Programme has been generally efficient. The ESP demonstrated efficient use of both financial and human resources while delivering high-quality European statistics on demand for policy purposes. Moreover, a higher productivity of statistics production was achieved during the period evaluated. Factors underpinning these developments were good governance, management and monitoring mechanisms.

However, there were concerns regarding the costs and burdens on Member States. The main challenges to achieving efficiency were growing costs of production related to an increasing volume of statistics; and the administrative burden placed on data providers and statistics producers. The response to this challenge was covered by the ESP's **Objective 2**, aiming at achieving efficiency gains by implementing new methods of production of European statistics. Several initiatives were undertaken to achieve this objective. Among them, the most important were activities within the ESS Vision 2020, modernising business statistics resulting in the European Business Statistics Regulation and strengthening partnerships within the ESS.

4.3.1. EQ6: To what extent were ESP resources used efficiently to achieve the desired results?

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR THE EQ6:

The evidence from official documents, interviews and the public consultation confirmed the efficient use of resources while implementing the ESP 2013-2020. The growing volume of statistics versus the stable or diminishing number of Eurostat staff proved increasing productivity. The same pattern of change was observed at the ESS level. Interviewees and respondents to the targeted surveys had generally a positive opinion on the efficient use of resources in the production of European statistics, although the users were less able to comment on these issues. In spite of a generally positive outlook, stakeholders mentioned challenges and tensions from growing demand for new statistics and initiatives, while the available human and financial resources at the Member States level remained unchanged.

Coverage of the question

The evaluation question assessed the efficiency of the resources used while implementing the ESP 2013-2020 and its objectives. Resources are understood as budgets to produce European statistics, human resources involved in statistical production and capacities of the ESS, both of Member States and Eurostat. The assessment of efficiency is largely based on desk research and consultation with producers as users were less familiar with costs and burdens of the production of statistics and collection of data.

Analysis of the evidence

Judgement criterion 6.1: Sufficient information about costs and benefits across ESP activities was available and used to inform programme decisions and operations

In the targeted producer survey, respondents were asked to assess the benefit to cost ratio of the ESP. Most respondents (55%) assessed the benefit to cost ratio to be proportionate and a further 7% assessed it as very proportionate. Much fewer respondents (5%) assessed the ratio as disproportionate. Assessment of the benefit / cost ratio turned out to be difficult for producers, since one third of them (33%) were not able to answer this question. Not all producers were involved in management issues. This indicates a lack of consistent and accurate information available at MS level to be able to assess the true cost / benefit ratios of ESP activities (indicator 6.1.1).

Producers were also asked to indicate the extent to which the ESP had been successful in introducing efficiency gains in the production of statistics by: (i) reducing duplication of effort and (ii) reducing administrative burdens. Respondents

indicated that to a moderate extent (51%) and to a great extent (19%) the ESP had been successful in reducing duplication of effort, in comparison to 12% that indicated it was done to a small extent and 7% that considered that this was not at all achieved. With regard to reducing administrative burdens, respondents considered that the ESP had been successful in introducing efficiency gains to a moderate extent and to a small extent in equal measure (31%), but more respondents found that the ESP had been successful to a great extent (17%) than not at all (12%), with a further 10% indicating that they did not know.

Respondents of the targeted user survey were asked to assess the benefit to cost ratio of the ESP, to which more than half of respondents (57%) shared they did not know. In addition, 11% assessed it as very proportionate and 29% as proportionate. Most respondents did not submit many suggestions on how to improve this benefit to cost ratio in the future. A few responses proposed to increase automation and reduce bureaucracy.

Evidence gathered from the open-ended questions in the targeted producer survey suggested that efficiency gains in the production of European statistics could be achieved through reducing administrative burdens and duplication of effort. Some respondents felt that the elimination of unused data and of the collection of irrelevant data was necessary. However, when asked to indicate less important statistical fields that could be deleted from the Programme, respondents did not consider any fields as less important. Rather, most respondents shared the belief that the number of fields should only increase as every statistical dataset was important. Users suggested the implementation of a more automated data validation process. Respondents also shared that gains could stem from exchange of good practices between countries.

Judgement criterion 6.2: Measures and processes in place to monitor and optimise the efficient use of resources were effective

To measure the costs Eurostat launched three projects in the ESS: (1) a cost assessment survey on producing official statistics in the ESS (including NSIs, regional offices, ONAs, national central banks (NCBs)); (2) a survey on the cost of European statistics (by products) in the ESS (including NSIs, regional offices, ONAs, NCBs); and (3) sharing best practices in the area of cost accounting within the ESS (indicator 6.2.1).¹³⁰

The information on the survey results on producing official statistics in the ESS (1) are presented in Table 8 below (under judgement criterion 6.4). The cost remained stable around EUR 3 billion in current prices between 2013 and 2020, which means it was diminishing in real terms. A similar conclusion was derived from the cost analysis of European statistics (by products) in the ESS (2). The analysis covered 26 products in the first phase and 27 products in the second phase concentrated on costs related to the ESP only (costs on national statistics were excluded). The information gathered on costs of statistical products aimed to assess the relative demand on resources of different statistical products and to provide input for setting priorities. Sharing best practices in cost accounting was aimed to apply common principles for the cost collection surveys. The initiative on sharing best practices in the area of cost accounting (3) sought to improve 23 common guiding principles for the cost collection surveys and identifying common items, for example, a time recording system; a nomenclature of statistical activities (projects/products); definition of cost centres as well as accounting systems (IT programme) linking different cost items such human and financial resources to activities.

Also relevant to judgement criterion 6.2, the evaluation found that a significant way to optimise the efficient use of resources in the production of statistics is to establish framework regulations. The Framework Regulation on Business Statistics (FRIBS) with its final outcome as European Business Statistics Regulation (EBS) adopted in November 2019 bringing all statistics in the business sector under a common legal framework, showed that the principle of 'collect once, use many times' has been followed and the risk of double counting or inconsistency has been significantly reduced. This flagship EBS regulation was adopted after a long process of consultations, negotiations, seminars, and discussions. It was assessed by the interviewed stakeholders in the study as an investment significantly diminishing burden on data providers and statistics producers.

¹³⁰ Commission staff working document on the second mid-term evaluation of the European statistical programme 2013-17, 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4375449/2019Second+mid-term+evaluation+of+the+ESP+2013-2017/67718171-9743-4359-85fc-39129b3f8a2e>

Judgement criterion 6.3: Anti-fraud measures and processes in place were effective

In line with the 2011 Commission Anti-fraud Strategy (CAFS), Eurostat adopted in 2013 an anti-fraud strategy valid for the years 2014-2017. Following a commitment in its Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, Eurostat decided to develop and implement an updated strategy for the years 2018-2020, following the updated methodology and guidance issued by OLAF.¹³¹ The overall objective of Eurostat's AFS was to provide assurance that risks related to management of financial transactions and control environment were adequately managed taking into account their cost-effectiveness. The specific objectives were:

- **Objective 1:** To strengthen Eurostat's anti-fraud capacities and awareness as part of the Commission anti-fraud culture;
- **Objective 2:** Further strengthen and integrate IT tools and functionalities to enhance fraud prevention;
- **Objective 3:** Keeping Eurostat Anti-fraud Strategy relevant.

The strategy included an action plan with ten actions, with accompanying key monitoring indicators for the actions. The strategy also presented the means and resources made available to tackle fraud, even if the risks, given the budget and nature of Eurostat's activities, were considered low. Resources included Units and staff allocated to anti-fraud tasks; IT tools and specific procedures and networks.

In 2019, a revised CAF was adopted and OLAF requested all European Commission services to evaluate their strategies along the following criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and coherence. The internal evaluation of Eurostat's AFS showed positive results. It showed that all ten action plans had been effectively implemented by the end of 2019 in an efficient way, without requiring extra resources. The Strategy was consistent with other strategies and actions put in place by Eurostat. The assessment of relevance concluded however, that to keep its alignment and contribute to the achievement of the priority objectives set by the Commission, it was necessary to update Eurostat's AFS and its action plan.

The results of the implemented control strategy had regularly reported to Eurostat management and incorporated in the Annual Activity Reports. The 2020 AAR reported that there were no pending investigations opened by OLAF from previous years, nor was any potential fraud-related case reported to OLAF (indicator 6.3.1).

Judgement criterion 6.4: ESP operations spending was efficient

To assess the efficiency of the ESP operations spending, the evaluation has examined the following elements:

- The ESP budget for the years 2013-2020 and its execution rate;
- Eurostat's human resources productivity;
- The expenditure on other contributions;
- The costs of Member States in the production of official statistics.

The execution rate of the ESP budget showed whether available financial resources were spent as planned throughout the period under study to provide an indication of whether the Programme achieved the desired results. The efficient spending on ESP operations was accompanied by an analysis of the productivity of human resources available for the production of European statistics, to assess whether more statistics were delivered to users in the context of a reduction in the number of staff. The other aspect presented under this judgement criterion were expenditures in external partnerships. This mobilisation of additional funding provides an example of the Programme efficiency as they showed how they brought improvements to statistical production beyond the ESS. Finally, monitoring the costs of Member States in the production of official statistics, a part of which contributed to the ESP, also gave an indication on efficiency in the spending throughout the period evaluated.

¹³¹ Eurostat Anti-Fraud Strategy 2018-2020

The first element assessed was the **budget for the ESP**. The budget consisted of the regular budget being made available by the European Commission decisions and additional sources, mainly EFTA contribution. Additional sources used for non-ESP activities of Eurostat are also available.

As per Table 5 below, both mid-term evaluations of the ESP 2013-2020 covering the sub-periods 2013-2014 and 2015-2017 concluded with a very positive assessment of ESP financial efficiency. The first mid-term evaluation concluded that “Eurostat has made efficient use of its resources, both financial and human”.¹³² The second mid-term evaluation contained a similar statement: “the financial implementation shows great efficiency”.¹³³

Table 5: The ESP budget commitment appropriation, budget allocated/committed and execution rate 2013-2017

ESP years	Budget allocated (incl. EFTA contribution) EUR	Budget committed EUR	Execution rate
2013	53 318 941	49 279 720	92.42%
2014	54 604 310	53 705 697	98.35%
2015	56 145 388	55 917 047	99.59%
2016	57 611 370	57 386 305	99.61%
2017	59 033 709	58 535 683	99.16%

Source: Information provided by Eurostat

The third sub-period of the ESP 2018-2020 demonstrated similarly very high financial efficiency according to the execution rates based on 2018 and 2019 execution rates (Table 6). The high level of this rate shows efficient implementation of the allocated the ESP budget (indicator 6.4.2).

Table 6: The ESP budget commitment appropriation, budget allocated/committed and execution rate 2018-2020

ESP years	Budget allocated (incl. EFTA contribution) EUR	Budget committed EUR	Execution rate
2018	59 514 393	59 423 120	99.85%
2019	73 495 158	73 468 081	99.96%
2020	75 359 750	75 359 750	100.00%

Sources: Financing decisions 2018, 2019, 2020 and information provided by Eurostat

Representatives from different units and bodies at Eurostat interviewed for this study indicated that the budget available for the Programme was sufficient. They also emphasised that the planning was realistic in relation to the budget available. It seemed all considered that the management of the ESP was conducive to an efficient delivery as interviewees could not think of any counter examples (indicator 6.4.1).

Human resources at Eurostat working on European statistics have not increased during the implementation of the ESP 2013-2020 programme. In fact, at the end of 2020 the number of FTE (full time equivalent) staff decreased by 7% (52 persons) as compared to 2013. During the period 2013-2020 the number of the annual datasets published by Eurostat increased by 18%. The growth of statistical production accompanied by a decreasing number of human

¹³² <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4375449/Report+to+EP+and+Council+on+the+implementation+of+the+ESP+2013-2017+%28Intermediate%29/969ef4c1-7e6d-49b1-8168-02dd80bc280d>

¹³³ Commission staff working document on the second mid-term evaluation of the European statistical programme 2013-17, 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4375449/2019Second+mid-term+evaluation+of+the+ESP+2013-2017/67718171-9743-4359-85fc-39129b3f8a2e>

resources means an increase in statistics productivity of Eurostat staff. Datasets published by Eurostat could be considered as an approximation of statistics production. Growth of statistics production by 18% versus a decrease of human resources by 7% suggests a productivity growth by more than 20%, which means efficient use of human resources (indicator 6.4.3). The table below presents a time series of human resources and number of published datasets. The number of the published datasets per Eurostat member staff grew by 26% from 5.8 in 2013 to 7.3 in 2020.

Table 7: Number of Eurostat staff and published datasets at the end of each year 2013-2020

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Eurostat staff (FTE) as of 31 December	791	789	796	778	751	741	734	739
Number of published datasets	4 596	4 674	4 902	5 065	5 396	5 227 ¹³⁴	5 239	5 405
Number of datasets per Eurostat staff	5.8	5.9	6.2	6.5	7.2	7.1	7.1	7.3

Source: Information provided by Eurostat

Eurostat officials expressed reservations as to the appropriateness of the level of staffing within Eurostat for the management of the Programme. The staffing policy meant that there was pressure on existing staff and no flexibility to manage new features of the Programme (the only possibility was then to stop dealing with another dimension of the Programme to reallocate human resources to any new feature). Eurostat also faced recruitment challenges to attract and retain skilled staff. These challenges related to human resources also existed at MS level, with interviewees emphasising that some NSIs were critically understaffed (which might have in turn consequences in terms of their capacity to deliver quality statistics against the set objectives).

The efficiency of the ESP was strengthened by the access to **additional financial resources**. There was, and still is, a very good cooperation with thematic DGs of the European Commission, which had led to the mobilisation of specific budget lines. For instance, a DG could fund a particular dataset through “subdelegated credits” to the ESP (this raised however the question of how this dataset would be managed in the absence of additional human resources). The funding of the partnerships with candidate countries and third countries provided another example. These partnerships fell under EU development cooperation, and were covered by a contribution from the IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) and the Pan-African Programme (under the Development Cooperation Instrument).¹³⁵

The financial resources invested in developing statistics beyond the ESS showed an efficient allocation of funding to partnerships in the long term. They have also been considered efficient by the stakeholders interviewed as the assistance received derived in improvement of statistics production in these countries.

Finally, Member States contribute to the ESP from their own budgets as well as in-kind, in the form of produced datasets as well as costs associated with the production of statistics. As explained under judgement criterion 6.2, Eurostat launched a survey on the **cost assessment** of producing official statistics in the ESS including **NSIs, regional offices, ONAs and national central banks**. The top-down approach survey aimed to collect information on costs (in current prices) and human resources (in FTEs) for the years 2012-2016. The information collected showed the cost decreased

¹³⁴ The decrease between 2017 and 2018 was due to the implementation of the new datasets in National Accounts in 2017, following the new European System of Accounts (Version 2010) legislation, while keeping those following the previous European System of Accounts (Version 1995). The datasets following the previous legislation were removed at the beginning of 2018.

¹³⁵ Partnerships with Neighbourhood countries, the EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia) region and African countries were for instance funded as follows:

- The Statistics Through Eastern Partnership regional statistical Programme from the ENI (European Neighbourhood Instrument) amounted to EUR 4 725 500 for 34 months (with an extension by 9-12 months under preparation) for the Eastern Partnership. Eurostat had also a few service contracts in the EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia) region, to cover global assessments, peer reviews and sector assessments; training courses; support for the EU’s statistical legislation and standards; and the organisation of high-level seminars.
- The service contract for the Southern Neighbourhood, *MEDSTAT V*, amounting to EUR 4 000 000 will be contracted in 2021. It is covered under the ENI. Eurostat also had service contracts on training courses and on seminars, workshops and working groups for the Southern Neighbourhood region (each above EUR 300 000).
- On the *Pan African Programme*, the first Programme PAS 1 was originally for 42 months. It has been extended three times (overall 64 months) and amounts to EUR 7.8 million. The second programme, PAS 2, will not start before 2022.

by around 4% over 2012-2016. FTEs decrease on country level was reported by around 3%.¹³⁶ Costs estimation for 2017 and 2020 showed a continued slight decrease of costs in real terms. The table below shows estimates of both costs and FTE staff on the ESS level.

Table 8: Costs estimates and FTEs

	2013	2017	2020*
Costs in EUR bn, current prices	3.1	2.8	3.0
Staff working in official statistics in the ESS, in 1000 FTEs	49.2	43.1	42.5

*Provisional. Source: 2nd mid-term evaluation report and information provided by Eurostat

The survey showed a relatively stable level in nominal terms of producing official statistics in the ESS and diminishing costs in real terms under the entire period of the evaluation. At the same time, staff working in official statistics has decreased by 6.7 FTEs. These estimated figures show that the burden on the resources of European statistics was diminishing at an annual pace of 3 to 4%.

At MS level, interviewees commented on the appropriateness of the budget available for the production of statistics. This has remained a concern since the adoption of the ESP. Back then, the EU had just gone through the 2008 economic and financial crisis which put a lot of pressure on national budgets. To the extent that statistical programmes were not necessarily the most high-profile spending programme for any national government, the pressure to fund statistical production was even higher. Interviewees all agreed that a similar situation would likely happen in the near future because of the COVID-19 crisis: with the extent of the rescue packages mobilised at national level, it was very likely that programmes which are less politically visible might face severe cuts. The future in that respect appeared very uncertain.

Interviewees also noted that Member States often lacked capacity and human resources to deal with their statistical production as well as the international cooperation with Eurostat and that an increasing number of statistics were requested. In addition to the difficulties of finding additional financial resources, there were also some gaps in terms of staff training and capabilities to consider.

Overall, and even if it was difficult to assess production costs, these remained a concern for the ESP and a variable to watch to ensure the continued acceptability of the Programme. This was also why the work done on the harmonisation of the methods and modernisation under the Programme was critical for the ESP: it contributed to enhancing its efficiency. Modernisation at EU level (compared to individual MS level) translated into economies of scale and this focus overall delivered efficiency gains (even if modernisation might require an investment up front). Lastly, the “partnership approach” implemented, namely the ongoing discussion between the EU and MS, was also a mechanism that ensured different perspectives were taken into consideration and stakeholders found the right balance in the steering and development of the ESP.

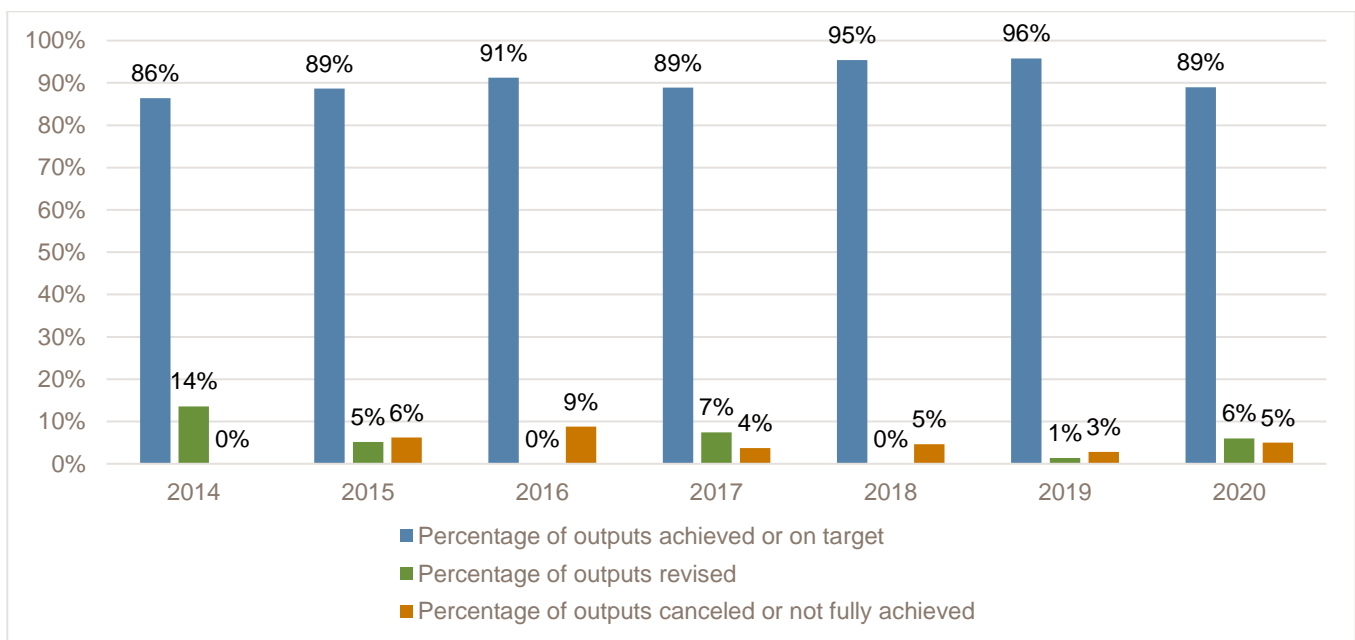
ESP operations spending was efficient on both Eurostat and ESS levels. More statistics were produced with less human resources. Overall, and even if it was difficult to assess production costs, these remained a concern for the ESP and a variable to watch to ensure the continued acceptability of the Programme. This was also why the work done on the harmonisation of the methods and modernisation under the Programme was critical for the ESP: it contributed to enhancing its efficiency. Modernisation at EU level (compared to individual MS level) translated into economies of scale and this focus overall delivered efficiency gains (even if modernisation might require an investment upfront). Lastly, the “partnership approach” implemented, namely the ongoing discussion between the EU and Member States, was also a mechanism that ensured different perspectives were taken into consideration and stakeholders found the right balance in the steering and development of the ESP.

¹³⁶ Commission staff working document on the second mid-term evaluation of the European statistical programme 2013-17, 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4375449/2019Second+mid-term+evaluation+of+the+ESP+2013-2017/67718171-9743-4359-85fc-39129b3f8a2e>

Judgement criterion 6.5: The ESP was successful in introducing efficiency gains in statistics production

The specific **Objective 2** of ESP 2013-2020 was to implement “**new methods of production of European statistics aiming at efficiency gains.**”¹³⁷ Progress made against this objective was reported on in Eurostat Annual Activity Reports. An analysis of their evolution over the lifetime of the ESP evidenced that the percentage of outputs achieved or on target for strategic objective 2 (new methods of production) has significantly increased since 2014 in parallel to a reduced number of outputs being cancelled, not fully achieved, or revised¹³⁸ (See Figure 6). This suggested that the ESP activities dedicated to increasing the methods of production of European statistics, and therefore their efficiency, have increasingly been met (indicator 6.5.1). As stated in Annex 2 of the 2020 Eurostat Annual activity report, the relatively lower percentage registered in 2020 (90%) was because a few of the new projects encountered some delays. While the bulk of the work was done, not all outputs could be finalised due to COVID-19 or the complexity of the projects. It is the case for example for the impact assessment of European fisheries statistics (EFS) or the data releases on the collaborative economy. The difference in the number of outputs between 2014-2015 and 2016-2019 is due to administrative changes enacted to reduce the complexity and specificity of indicators.

Figure 6: Eurostat’s activities contributing to the Management Plan’s outputs by year (2014 -2020) for objective 2¹³⁹



Source: Data from Eurostat Annual Activity Reports 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

In order to further assess the extent to which this objective was achieved, the evaluation team conducted a targeted producer survey asking respondents to rank the extent to which the ESP had been successful in introducing efficiency gains in the production of statistics by reducing administrative burdens. Respondents indicated that, to a moderate extent (31%) and to a great extent (17%), the ESP had been successful. In comparison, 31% indicated it was done to a small extent and 12% considered that this was not at all achieved. A further 10% indicated that they did not know (indicator 3.7.1). This suggests that while ESP activities may have resulted in efficiency gains in the production of European statistics by reducing administrative burdens, stakeholders had mixed view on the effect of these measures. Additional evidence gathered from the open-ended questions suggested that efficiency gains in the production of European statistics could be further improved through the elimination of unused data, the modernisation of collection and transmission processes such as with the implementation of a more automated data validation process, and the exchange of good practices between countries. The needs related to efficiency gains are likely to remain topical for the foreseeable future as we can anticipate further pressure on the budget allocated to the production of statistics as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and the related need for additional data.

¹³⁷ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17

¹³⁸ In 2020, the classification does not say anymore outputs “not fully achieved” but presenting “difficulties”.

¹³⁹ Data from Eurostat Annual Activity Reports 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020

Efficiency gains in the production of statistics were also mentioned during the interviews with producers in particular with regard to the increased use of administrative and register data, estimation methods, and the application of microdata exchanges. Stakeholders also noted important improvements in the provision of European statistics, for example the implementation of framework statistics that streamlined and harmonised the compilation, transmission, and dissemination of European statistics across the Member States. These efficiency gains which closely related to the strengthening of partnerships within and beyond the ESS were highlighted as particularly noteworthy by producers of asylum and managed migration statistics from other EU institutions and agencies as well as by user and producers from international organisations. However, some interviewees noted that these efficiency gains in recent years had tended to focus on the provision of European statistics, while the data collection tended to be the costliest part of producing statistics for Member States. Additionally, interviewees also highlighted that more innovative solutions and sources should be used to increase the efficiency of European statistics production, such as big data based on privately produced data. It was noted that the use of this type of information depended at the moment on the legal framework of each country and that there was a sense of a missed opportunity to develop this further under the ESP 2013-2020. However, the feedback was mixed in that regard with some interviewees expressing concerns about the quality of big data and pointing to the need for an in-depth analysis of any new sources before it is used. Both the challenges and opportunity associated with this new data were also noted during interviews with Eurostat (indicator 3.7.1).

Overall, these findings suggested that while efficiency gains were introduced and acknowledged, these effects of these gains remained limited from the point of view of producers.

4.3.2. EQ7: To what extent were ESP activities successful in limiting the administrative burdens for ESS stakeholders, including Member States and data providers (respondents)?

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR EQ7:

The feedback provided by the statistics producers on the cost-efficiency balance of the ESP was mixed. Although several measures undertaken within the ESP 2013-2020 to limit the burden on Member States and data providers were successfully implemented, the challenge resulting from growing demand for statistics versus limited resources was often highlighted. Assessing the costs of producing official statistics in the ESS and the burden on NSIs and statistical respondents was a difficult task for the majority of the participants of the interviews, targeted surveys and public consultation. The only exception was Eurostat staff who were able to present the spending of budgets provided by the Commission.

Coverage of the question

The main topics of this question are administrative burdens on the NSIs and ONAs and how burdens on statistical data were managed by producers and providers. The assessment of the success of the ESP in limiting administrative burdens is largely based on the results of the consultation activities with statistics producers.

Analysis of the evidence

Judgement criterion 7.1: Measures and processes in place to analyse administrative burdens for NSIs, statistics producers and data providers were effective

There was a concern expressed by statistics producers that the pressure for increased quality, consistency, timeliness and availability often led to burden caused by the number of statistics produced and that increasing requirements may exceed their resources. The burden on statistics producers should not exceed their capacities, which was not always the case.

Interviewees highlighted that the Member States varied in size, and therefore the NSIs varied significantly in capacity. However, all had to produce the same obligatory statistics. Treating all countries equally created a greater burden on smaller MSs. The interviewees suggested that more flexibility was needed to diminish burden. For instance, if particular statistics were not relevant to a particular Member State, it should be excluded. Some indicators could only be relevant for a group of countries. Some data could be collected on a voluntary basis.

Progress made with the framework regulations and the Vision 2020 Programme only partly solved the cost reduction issue. Drivers of production costs included new demands as an effective system for priority setting has been missing until the end of the Programme, especially for identifying statistics which would have become less relevant over time. Eurostat had been conducting an annual priority-setting exercise, in consultation with users and producers of statistics. For the new ESP 2021-2027, these, included a review of statistical requirements in existing domains of European statistics with the intention of reducing costs for MSs (indicator 7.1.1). In February 2020, the annual priority-setting exercise was replaced by a new priority-setting mechanism adopted by the ESSC and a pilot review for climate change related statistics was put in place.¹⁴⁰

Interviewees from candidate countries also noted that they felt a somewhat heavy administrative burden to meet the requirements from Eurostat, not only in relation to the peer review process and the recommendations, which were difficult for them, but also other administrative procedures and questionnaires they needed to complete as candidates. The most important reasons were insufficient financial and human resources. For example, one interviewee highlighted that one of the most important conclusions of the peer review process in the country was that they did not have enough staff and that they needed to improve both the number of staff and financing. Having this as a conclusion of the process helped in the negotiation with the government to secure more resources.

Another interviewee noted that the investment in their own IT solutions and also cooperation with Eurostat in the use of administrative sources led to some efficiency improvement. These released some staff that had been given new assignments as a result. Candidate countries mentioned that through the financial support of IPA multi-beneficiary programmes (MBP), they had supported projects to improve efficiency, timeliness, and methodologies. The European Statistical Training Programme had also been important for them as well as peer reviews, which turned out to be valuable and challenging.

Smaller Member States experienced more challenges in dealing with administrative burdens than larger countries. Funds available for experimental statistics partly contributed to limiting the burden. Processes to analyse administrative burdens for NSIs were partly effective from the stakeholders' point of view.

Judgement criterion 7.2: Measures undertaken to reduce administrative burdens for NSIs, statistics producers and data providers resulted in an improved cost-benefit balance

For a majority of statistics producers consulted within the evaluation, the topic of efficiency versus NSIs' limited capacity (normally fixed annual budgets within their governments) to deal with increasing demands for statistics was the most important one. It is important to note that the emphasis in their responses tended to be much more on production costs than administrative burdens, which is the focus of the judgement criterion 7.2. Nonetheless, the points raised have been summarised to explain the MSs' point of view on the burdens of the Programme, both administrative and financial. The stakeholders consulted highlighted that the demand for timely and high-quality statistics was constantly increasing, including the demand at EU level. They also assessed that the mechanisms within the ESP did not help to address these problems. They pointed out that the NSIs already worked at their maximum capacity and therefore any additional requests for statistics were challenging for them. Some interviewees highlighted that the institutional users of statistics, both national and on the EU level, should be more aware of the burden in terms of the production costs of statistics.

Stakeholders referred to several approaches that were implemented to diminish the burden (indicator 7.2.1). The most meaningful were the introduction of new methods and tools of data collection such as more intensive use of administrative data and registers, more sampling surveys, online data transmission or webscraping. Another approach was the development of experimental statistics with promising perspectives, for example the use of big data as additional data source. Efforts were also made to increase the interoperability of data and metadata exchange via the use of standards (SDMX, SIMS) and the improvements to the IT infrastructure for data exchange. Stakeholders highlighted several solutions to reduce the burdens in business statistics, such as microdata exchange in intra-EU trade statistics (achieved by various ESS Vision 2020 components – including the SIMSTAT, REDESIGN and ESDEN projects – and the subsequent deployment initiatives) and in the European system of interoperable business registers (developed by the ESS Vision 2020 ESBRS project).

The management and governance mechanisms of the ESP were generally considered efficient. Statistics producers considered that there was good coordination with and good communication from Eurostat.

¹⁴⁰ ESSC 2020/42/3/EN, Priority-setting in the ESS (42nd Meeting of the European Statistical System Committee, February 2020)

Several interviewees mentioned a “one in, one out” approach to statistical surveys as a critical review of new tasks was generally missing and impact on additional resources were not enough explored. It was noted that Eurostat’s monitoring of the use of resources could be more effective as it often underestimated the burden and costs that new regulations had on producers. However, some interviewees also acknowledged the difficulty of introducing the “one in, one out” approach in practice, which had also been considered at country level but never successfully implemented.

Among other areas for improvements, it was also mentioned that the number of documents provided by Eurostat tended to be high and sometimes it was not easy to follow what changes had been made to the different iterations. The number of meetings tended to be high, but the observed move to online meetings triggered by COVID-19 might be something to continue in the future as to a certain extent they reduce the burden for Member States.

The issue of introducing efficiency gains by eliminating the duplication of efforts in statistics production was mentioned in the “Effectiveness” section above while describing judgement criterion 3.8. In the same section, under judgement criterion 3.11, according to stakeholders’ opinions, increasing efficiency was considered as challenging and complex and still required investments.

Cost reduction was more important to the NSIs than administrative burden reduction. Efficiency gains were due to new methods of data collection.

Judgement criterion 7.3: NSIs, Member States and other data providers considered the benefits of ESP to outweigh the administrative burdens they face

All interviewees appreciated benefits connected with participation in the Programme. Closer partnership, exchange of experience and best practices between NSIs helped the members of the ESS to find better solutions for statistics production. Therefore, the benefits of participating in the Programme outweighed the costs and burdens (indicator 7.3.1). The benefits and added value of the ESP are presented and discussed in **Section 4.5**.

4.3.3. EQ8: Was the management / organisation of the ESP as a whole conducive to supporting efficient delivery

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR EQ8:

The management and organisation of the ESP 2013-2020 is efficient in light of official documents and opinions obtained from interviews with stakeholders and the results of the public consultation. With growing demand for new statistics, several measures were taken to diminish the burden on data providers and statistics producers, especially under the ESS Vision 2020 Programme.

Coverage of the question

This evaluation question focuses on the organisation, governance, management and financial issues of the ESP and discussed whether it leads to the efficient delivery of statistics and efficient use of resources. For this reason, opinions of statistics producers and providers on both Member States and Eurostat levels were more relevant than the opinions of users. The latter had not much to conclude about organisational aspects of the ESP. Views on the efficiency of the ESP were more limited in the group of interviewees of European Commission services and the EU institutions because EU bodies were not aware of the specifics on production costs of statistics for Member States. Efficiency of statistical production is consistently present in the EU regulations and other official EU documents.

Analysis of the evidence

Judgement criterion 8.1: Effective systems were in place to review ESP performance and identify risks to efficient use of resources

The Regulation (EC) No 99/2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17 makes several references to efficiency and the efficient use of resources in the production of European Statistics. Under **Objective 2**, the ESP aims at achieving efficiency gains and quality improvements in its statistical actions. Cost effectiveness is also mentioned contextually throughout the Regulation. Article 6 on statistical priority-setting states that the Commission shall, in the preparation of the annual work programmes referred to in Article 9, ensure effective priority-setting and an annual review

of, and report on, statistical priorities. Accordingly, the annual work programmes would thereby aim to ensure that European statistics could be produced within the available resources at the national and the Union level. Prioritisation aimed to contribute to the reduction of costs and burdens for new statistical requirements by reducing statistical requirements in existing domains of European statistics and would need to be pursued in close cooperation with the Member States. The Commission would ensure the development and implementation of instruments to annually review the priorities of statistical activities in order to contribute to the reduction of costs and burdens on data providers and producers of statistics.

The ESS Vision 2020 programme was founded on a clear need agreed by all the members of the ESS to modernise the production of European statistics to ensure that the ESS remains competitive in the future. One of the five outlined priorities was the promotion of efficient and robust statistical processes. The overall financial cost of the ESS Vision 2020 amounted to 43 EUR million (2 EUR million MSs co-financing), lower than the initial projection of EUR 55 million.¹⁴¹ Eurostat Strategic Plan 2016-2020 on human resource management established targets on the following indicators: percentage of female representation in middle management, percentage of staff who feel that the Commission cares about their well-being, staff engagement index, efficient organisation fully adapted to business needs: percentage of staff on temporary allocations. All those indicators were achieved as reported in the Monitoring activities 2020 spreadsheet. Due to staff shortages some reports were delayed, for example, quality report on energy prices.

While, under judgement criterion 6.3, the productivity of human resources was clearly demonstrated, the staff reductions at Eurostat posed a risk to the efficient use of resources as there was pressure on existing staff and no flexibility to manage new features of the Programme. Views on the efficiency of the ESP were more limited in the group of interviewees from European Commission services and the EU institutions because EU bodies were not aware of the specifics on production costs of statistics for Member States.

These challenges related to human resources also existed at MS level, with interviewees emphasising that some NSIs were critically understaffed (which might have in turn consequences in terms of their capacity to deliver against the set objectives). The efficiency of the ESP was also strengthened by the financial leverage existing at different levels. There was a very good cooperation with thematic DGs of the European Commission which had led to the mobilisation of specific budget lines.

The financial management of the ESP was led confidently and did not create risks. Several risks in human management appeared on both Eurostat and Member States levels. These risks were solved by reallocation of staff and recruitment efforts (indicator 8.1.1).

Judgement criterion 8.2: Stakeholders involved in the governance of the ESP and Eurostat had sufficient access to information to monitor the efficiency of resource use

In the Annual Activity Reports Eurostat presents, inter alia, a synthetic information on resources use. In the annex 6 to the AAR 2020, the Relevant Control Systems for budget implementation (RCSs) on grants and procurements was presented. It contains two stages for grants and four stages for procurements. In the case of grants, there are three substages in the ex ante stage (programming, evaluation and selection of proposals; contracting; monitoring the execution) and ex post controls stage (indicator 8.2.1). In the case of procurement, all stages have their main control objectives.

The information included in the Annual Activity Reports proved that Eurostat's operational budget implemented the ESP in line with the multi-annual framework and in accordance with the Financial Regulation. The adequate set of controls, both internal and external, related to Eurostat's financial transactions was applied which resulted in a positive assessment as far as efficiency was concerned. Audit observations on budget implementation were also positive.

4.4. Coherence

This section focuses on the internal and external coherence of the ESP. The internal coherence of a programme is determined by looking at how the various components of that programme operate together to achieve the programme

¹⁴¹ ESS Vision 2020 final report

intended objectives. The external coherence of a programme relates to the extent to which the programme activities are aligned with other EU and international partners' activities.

The evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions analyse where and how the Programme objectives and activities worked internally and externally in a coherent manner (e.g. to achieve common objectives or as complementary actions) and points to areas where there are tensions (e.g. overlaps or duplications).

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions
EQ9: To what extent did ESP activities and objectives contribute to the internal coherence of the ESS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the activities and objectives of the ESP set out in the Regulations and programme planning internally coherent? • At the national and international level, were processes to ensure the coherence of statistical data identifiable and deemed fit-for purpose?
EQ10: To what extent did ESP activities complement / contradict / overlap with wider EU activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were ESP activities and data aligned with the needs of overarching EU strategies and objectives? were there opportunities for further alignment? • Were the statistics delivered throughout the ESP flexible to respond to new strategic priorities? • How effectively did Eurostat coordinate with other EU bodies?
EQ11: To what extent were ESP activities coherent with the activities of international statistics organisations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effectively did Eurostat coordinate with international partners (e.g. OECD) on the development of international concepts, classifications, methods and other standards?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON COHERENCE

No overlaps or inconsistencies were identified at the programme level between the objectives and among the activities listed within the regulations and planning documents of the ESP (**internal coherence**). The desk review showed that the ESP was internally coherent. The evaluation identified various governance bodies and advisory boards with a coherence mandate. The existence and work of these groups and the outputs they produced in the form of reports and recommendations revealed that they had contributed to the internal coherence of the ESP by ensuring that its activities were in line with its objectives. This was further corroborated by interviewees involved in the production of European statistics who highlighted the internal coherence of the ESP.

Eurostat effectively cooperated with EU bodies and agencies, as well as international organisations. This cooperation resulted in the **external coherence** of the ESP by ensuring synergies with the wider EU objectives and needs and with international statistical activities. It also ensured the development of comparable and harmonised European statistics at the regional and international level. However, and despite positive feedback, some weaknesses impacting on the external coherence of the ESP were identified: 1) the lack of flexibility and timeliness of European statistics to respond to emerging needs (because this might cause a misalignment with other EU strategies); 2) the burden on Member States when replying to individual DG requests for statistics; and 3) the need to further formalise and update the cooperation agreements between Eurostat and international organisations (corrective actions in that regard were undertaken in 2019 and 2020).

Overall, the evaluation findings suggested that the ESP was internally and externally coherent and that its activities and objectives contributed to the internal and external coherence of the ESS.

4.4.1. EQ9: To what extent did ESP activities and objectives contribute to the internal coherence of the ESS?

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR EQ9:

All evidence collected pointed at the absence of duplication or overlap between the objectives and activities of the ESP. There were several governance bodies and advisory boards whose role was to monitor, present and discuss options to improve the ESP, including to strengthen its coherence. The existence and work of these groups and the output they produced in the form of reports and recommendations suggested that they had contributed to the internal coherence of the ESP by ensuring that its activities were in line with its objectives. This confirmed that processes were in place to monitor and enable the coherence of internal ESS activities. The stakeholders consulted did consider that ESP activities had promoted internal coherence and had not negatively impacted internal coherence, while they were also able to identify concrete examples of synergies. ESP activities and objectives overall contributed to the internal coherence of the ESS.

Coverage of the question

This evaluation question assesses the extent to which ESP activities and objectives contributed to the Programme's internal coherence. Internal coherence is understood for the purpose of this evaluation question as the correspondence between the different objectives and activities of the ESP. The judgement criteria in this section discuss the extent to which the ESP exploited synergies and ensured that there were no overlaps or inconsistencies **at the programme level** between the objectives and among the activities listed within the regulations and planning documents of the ESP.

Analysis of the evidence

Judgement criterion 9.1: Activities and objectives set out in the Regulations and internal planning documents were internally coherent

The mid-term evaluation of the ESP, covering 2015-2017, was completed in 2018 with the result indicating that the ESP was **internally coherent**.¹⁴² Similarly, the desk review conducted as part of this final evaluation identified **no coherence issues (overlap, contradiction, duplication)** between the objectives and the activities of the ESP.

Both the ESP and Eurostat had the same **general objective** to be the leading provider of high-quality statistics in Europe and the same **specific objectives** (although objectives 1 and 4 were merged at the Commission level after 2016 but not at the programme level). The objectives of Eurostat were identical to the objective of the ESP and as a result, the objectives of Eurostat and of the ESP were automatically coherent.

The ESP had three priority areas set out in the regulations. The first, Statistical outputs, dealt with statistics production. It defined the European statistics that would be produced or developed by the ESS. The second priority, Production methods of European statistics, supported the production by improving the way statistics were produced, their quality and the way they were disseminated. The third, Partnership, supported the production and quality of the statistics by improving the cooperation within the ESS and with other international organisations and non-EU countries.

The definition of the catalogue of statistical products (priority area 1) was essential for the ESP to be relevant for EU policies, and for Eurostat to remain the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe. Similarly, priority areas 2 and 3 contributed to Eurostat's leading position as a provider of high-quality statistics on Europe by supporting the improvement of the quality and comparability of its statistics and its responsiveness to new needs. The Programme's priority areas and the activities that fell within them were therefore coherent internally and coherent with the Commission objectives.

The Programme priority areas were divided into 23 detailed objectives. A set of 'Programme indicators' were used to report on these objectives in the programme statements. Each detailed objective was informed by one or several accomplishment indicators. The indicators were used to inform the monitoring of outputs, an overview of which was provided in the annual work programmes. This detailed structure ensured that there was no overlap between the

¹⁴² Commission, Commission staff working document on the second mid-term evaluation of the European statistical programme 2013-17

different activities undertaken under the Programme (indicator 9.1.1). and thus, ensured coherence between the Programme's activities and related objectives.

Overall, activities and objectives set out in the Regulations and internal planning documents were internally coherent and Eurostat took steps to ensure that there was no overlap or duplication through monitoring bodies such as ESAC and ESGAB (see judgement criterion 9.2). This was further confirmed by interviewees during the stakeholder consultations.

Judgement criterion 9.2: Effective processes were in place to monitor and enable the coherence of internal ESP activities

The cornerstone of the quality framework of European statistics was the Code of Practice which set the standards for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. It defined 16 key principles for the institutional environment under which the EU and the national statistical authorities operated, for the statistical processes and outputs. A set of indicators (84) of best practices and standards for each of the 16 principles provided a reference to review the implementation of the Code, and hence, increase the transparency and coherence of the ESS. The implementation of the quality framework in the European Statistical System was monitored through ESS peer reviews which covered all the Member States of the EU and EFTA countries as well as Eurostat.¹⁴³

In addition, a number of governance bodies provided strategic direction to the ESS and monitored its activities. They included a wide range of relevant stakeholders, meeting in different formats to discuss various issues related to the activities of the ESS. In so doing, and through the discussions that followed and the position papers and reports published, these governance bodies and the outputs they produced had the potential to contribute to the internal coherence of the ESP by ensuring the correspondence between its activities and its objectives (indicator 9.2.1). These bodies were:

- The **European Statistical System Committee (ESSC)** was established to "provide professional guidance to the ESS for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics".¹⁴⁴ The ESSC was chaired by Eurostat and composed of the representatives of Member States' NSIs. EFTA Member States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) as well as representatives of the EFTA Statistical Office participated as observers. International organisations might also participate in the meetings of the ESSC as observers. As the main governance body of the ESS, the ESSC reviewed the annual work programmes of the ESP, its proposed development and priorities, and discussed any issues arising from the establishment or implementation of the Programme. Given its involvement in the comitology procedure, this body also voted on draft implementing acts by the Commission in the field of statistics.
- The **Directors General of the National Statistical Institutes (DGINS)** Conference was held once a year to discuss a topic of strategic nature (e.g. globalisation) related to the statistical programme and methods and processes for the production of European statistics.
- The **Partnership Group**, composed of Directors General of the NSIs of the ESS aimed to further develop the ESS at the highest level, notably through ensuring its effective functioning.¹⁴⁵

In addition to these groups, the ESS governance included advisory bodies which monitored, reported and advised on the activities of the ESS. In so doing, they also contributed to ensuring the internal coherence and political relevance of ESS activities:

- The **European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB)** monitored and provided an independent overview of the European Statistical System as regard the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice. It was composed of seven independent members with outstanding competence in the field of statistics. The ESGAB also prepared an annual report to the European Parliament and the Council including an assessment of the implementation of the Code of Practice in the ESS as a whole. It advised on appropriate measures to facilitate the Code's implementation, on its communication and its possible updates. This was done with a view to promote the consistent and coherent implementation of the Code of Practice.
- The **European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC)** represented a wide range of users, respondents and other stakeholders of European Statistics as well as institutional users. It had 24 members and its role was to ensure

¹⁴³ Eurostat, 2021, Code of Practice, Available online: [European Statistics Code of Practice - Quality - Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

¹⁴⁴ Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics

¹⁴⁵ Eurostat, Partnerships, Website available at: [Partnership Group - European Statistical System \(ESS\) - Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&plugin=1)

that users' requirements as well as the response burden on information providers and producers were taken into account in developing the Statistical Programme. It monitored and delivered its opinion on the Multiannual Statistical Programme, addressing in particular its relevance in relation to the requirements of European integration. It also provided 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 Eurostat.

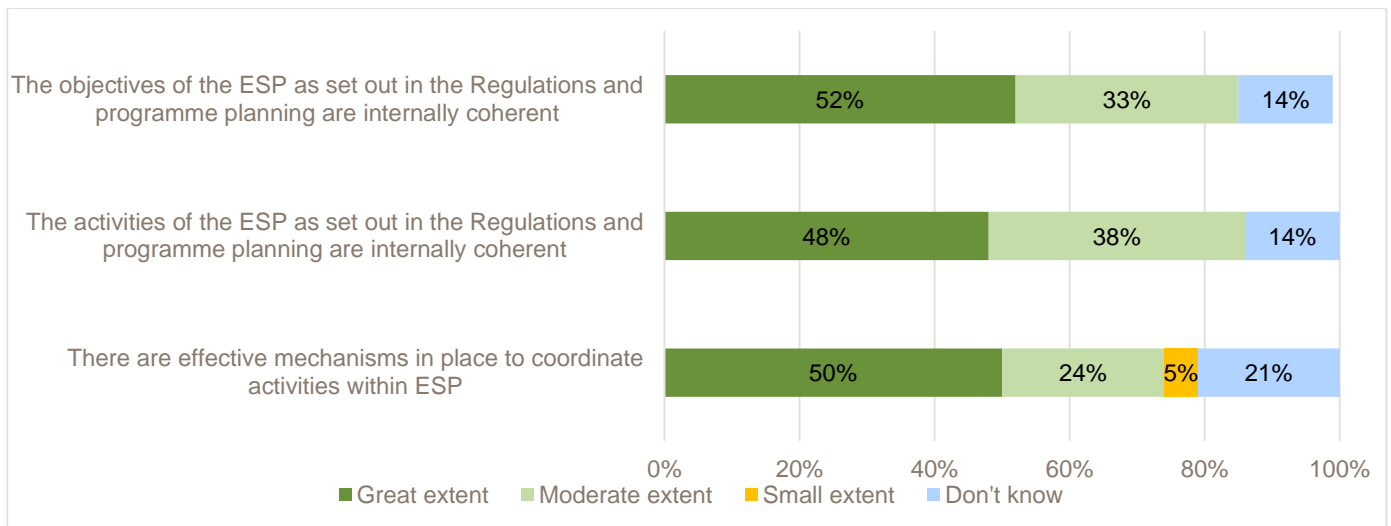
The existence of these governing bodies suggested that there were processes in place to monitor and enable the internal coherence of the ESP activities (including the implementation of these activities) and ensure a coherent steering of the ESS. Additionally, both ESGAB and ESAC provided a valuable independent and external input to keep the Programme coherent and focused, and to ensure its relevance for users. European Commission stakeholders also noted that the governance bodies created a sense of partnership, trust and cooperation among the ESS members (ESSC, DGINS and PG) and strengthened the independence of official statistics (ESGAB, ESAC). It was not possible to determine the extent to which the abovementioned bodies were effective in enabling the internal coherence of the ESP based on desk research and stakeholder consultation. However, there was a general consensus that existing mechanisms were contributing to the observed coherence of the Programme. Additionally, the evidence collected for criterion 3.10 demonstrated that the ESS partnership and the work of its governance bodies were indeed effective and resulted in strong cooperation and joint outputs coherent with the ESP.

Judgement criterion 9.3: Stakeholders involved in the production of European statistics considered that ESP activities promoted internal coherence and/or did not negatively impact internal coherence

To confirm the potential for internal coherence of the design of the ESP (see previous judgement criterion), the evaluation team collected feedback from stakeholders involved in the production of European statistics on whether: (i) the objectives of the ESP as set out in the Regulations and programme planning were internally coherent, (ii) the activities of the ESP as set out in the Regulations and programme planning were internally coherent, (iii) there were effective mechanisms in place to coordinate activities within ESP (Figure 7 below). Overall, the largest share of respondents agreed with the statements to a great extent and to a moderate extent in relation to the Programme's objectives (85%), the existence of effective coordination mechanisms (74%) and the Programme's activities (86%). This suggested that stakeholders involved in the production of European statistics considered that ESP activities promoted internal coherence (indicator 9.3.1). Noticeably, no respondents disagreed with any of the statements which shows that stakeholders did not consider that ESP activities negatively impacted internal coherence.

In a follow-up open-ended question to the targeted producer survey, respondents were asked to provide examples of synergies between the objectives and activities of the ESP. Overall, respondents felt that all objectives of the Programme were generally coherent, and they were benefiting from internal synergies. For example, respondents felt that strengthening the partnerships within the ESS enabled exchanges of knowledge and experiences leading to joint development of new methods and their implementation. In turn, new methods potentially led to improved timeliness and scope of European statistics: this was an example of complementarities between different ESP objectives and of how different ESP objectives could complement each other. Respondents also shared their views on overlaps, duplications or contradictions between the different objectives and activities of the ESP. They pointed out that the production of a wide range of high-quality and timely statistics to serve the needs of the widest range of different users was contradictory with the prioritisation principle. Similarly, the prioritisation principle was not coherently implemented (prioritisation was insufficient as there were new requests for data but no reductions on topics already covered to maintain the balance of the Programme). As prioritisation was essential for achieving flexibility of the System (necessary for adjusting to data requirements for new policies), respondents felt that the distinction between statistical information for different usages should be considered. Despite these identified issues, overall, stakeholders involved in the production of European statistics considered the activities under the Programme to be internally coherent (indicator 9.3.2).

Figure 7: Internal coherence of the Programme



Source: Targeted producer survey developed by the evaluation team.

Overall, stakeholders involved in the production of European statistics considered that ESP activities promoted internal coherence and synergies and that they had not negatively impacted the internal coherence of the Programme.

4.4.1. EQ10: To what extent did ESP activities complement / contradict / overlap with wider EU activity?

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR EQ10:

The evaluation found that the activities of the ESP and the statistics produced by Eurostat were actively aligned with the overarching needs, strategies, and priorities of the EU. Effective mechanisms were established to monitor and ensure the continued ability of the ESP to respond to these needs and to coordinate the work done by other European Commission DGs. Overall, and despite a lack of flexibility to respond to new needs in a timely fashion, European statistics contributed to the achievement of the objectives of the European Commission by providing high-quality statistics needed for policy making. However, while Eurostat coordinated effectively with other EU bodies to ensure the external coherence of the ESP, the increased requests for statistics from individual DGs increased the burden on Member States which suggested the need for Eurostat to take on a greater coordination role in that regard.

Coverage of the question

This evaluation question assessed the extent to which the ESP was coherent with wider EU activity. External coherence is understood for the purpose of this evaluation question as the correspondence between the activities of the ESP and those of other statistical authorities within the EU. The judgement criteria in this section assessed the extent to which the ESP exploited synergies and ensured that there was no overlap or inconsistency at the **EU level** between the activities of the ESP and those of the EU and its bodies.

Analysis of the evidence

To answer this evaluation question, the evaluation team produced a set of judgement criteria drawing on and providing information on the external coherence of ESP activities and objectives. The judgement criteria related to key features of ESP activities with regard to the overarching needs of the EU and the flexibility of the ESP to coordinate effectively with other EU bodies and respond to new EU strategic priorities.

Judgement criterion 10.1: ESP activities and data were actively aligned and/or not in contradiction with overarching EU strategies and objectives

Strong external coherence characterised the ESP throughout the period under evaluation. This was first reflected in the alignment between the ESP and overarching EU political objectives. Both mid-term evaluations of the ESP concluded that there was a high level of demand for official European statistics, and that the **ESP objectives corresponded to**

the EU's needs (indicator 10.1.2).¹⁴⁶ Similarly, the Eurostat Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 highlighted the importance of Eurostat's role in **contributing to the achievement of the overall objectives of the Commission** by providing high-quality statistics needed for the "development, monitoring and evaluation of the policies of the European Union".¹⁴⁷ It demonstrated its continuous planned role in that regard and provided extensive examples of relevant European statistics corresponding to the European Commission's ten general objectives/priorities.¹⁴⁸ For instance, the sustainable development indicators informed the priorities defined in "A Stronger Global Actor"; statistics on asylum and migration informed "Towards a new policy on migration"; statistics on health and safety at work informed "An Area of Justice and Fundamental Rights"; etc. Similarly, an overview of the 14 priority areas informing the strategic objectives of the ESP highlighted the correspondence between the Juncker priority areas and the sub-priority areas of the ESP. This, in turn, reflected the complementarities between the ESP and wider EU objectives.

Stakeholders at the European Commission services and EU bodies interviewed as part of the programme assessment as well as the case studies supported this conclusion and noted that the ESP was indeed aligned with the European Commission's policy priorities.

However, findings from the impact assessment of the proposal to extend the European statistical programme 2013-2017 to the period 2018-2020 suggested that, despite being aligned, there were opportunities for further alignment with regard to the availability of statistics for the design and monitoring of new EU policies. This issue was tied to the timeliness and the lack of flexibility or reaction time of the ESP to respond to emerging priority areas and was also raised by EU and Member States stakeholders during interviews. Similarly, while statistics producers noted that the ESP had adapted to new policy needs and the European Union's strategies and objectives, interviewees also stressed that the ESP was less capable of responding to sudden changes or events or the pace of certain technological developments and digitalisation (indicator 10.1.1).

Overall, despite the potential for improvement in some areas, the activities of the ESP and the statistics produced by Eurostat were actively aligned with the overarching EU needs, strategies and objectives.

Judgement criterion 10.2: Effective mechanisms were in place to monitor and respond to wider EU strategies and priorities

Besides the question of the alignment with wider EU objectives, external coherence also required a certain level of coordination between the ESP and the work done by other European Commission DGs to meet statistical needs. In addition to collecting Member States statistics, since 2013, Eurostat has maintained an inventory of the statistical data produced by other DGs and Agencies. Throughout the period evaluated, the update and validation of the Inventory was performed by statistical correspondents yearly. It included the statistical data collected by the different DGs, plans for future collections and indicated if the data could be reused by other DGs. Eurostat checked the completeness of the information provided by the DGs and based on a conversation with the DGs (bilateral hearings), decided which kind of coordination or cooperation was needed.

During these hearings, **DGs could address requests for additional statistics needed for upcoming EU policy proposals**. Eurostat then integrated the information of these hearings into its annual planning processes and could collect voluntary data from Member States to address DGs' needs. Thus, through its cooperative mechanisms with other DGs, the ESP was aligned and could complement (upcoming) EU strategies and priorities. Between 2015 and 2017, 55 bilateral hearings took place between Eurostat and other DGs.¹⁴⁹ The ratio between the requests approved, the requests to investigate and the requests refused was approximately 5:1:1.¹⁵⁰ During the 2018-2020 period, an additional 47 bilateral hearings took place between Eurostat and the other DGs.¹⁵¹ The ratio between the requests

¹⁴⁶ Eurostat conducted two mid-term evaluations of the current ESP. The first one covered the implementation of the programme in the years 2013 and 2014 plus relevant progress accomplished in 2015. The second mid-term evaluation started at the end of 2017 to support the impact assessment of the post-2020 ESP. It was conducted back-to-back with the impact assessment and it covered the years 2015, 2016 and 2017.

¹⁴⁷ Eurostat, Strategic Plan 2016-2020

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem

¹⁴⁹ In 2015: DG CLIMA, DG AGRI, DG COMP, DG CNECT, DG ENER, DG FISMA, DG JUST, DG MOVE, DG ECFIN, DG NEAR, DG RTD, DG TRADE, DG HOME, DG REGIO, DG EMPL, DG EPSC, DG SANTE and DG ENV (18)

In 2016: DG CLIMA, DG AGRI, DG COMP, DG CNECT, DG ENER, DG MOVE, DG EAC, DG ECFIN, DG ENER, DG TRADE, DG SANTE, DG JRC, DG HOME, DG REGIO, DG GROW, DG EMPL and DG EPSC (17)

In 2017: DG CLIMA, DG AGRI, DG CNECT, DG ENER, DG FISMA, DG JUST, DG MOVE, DG EAC, DG NEAR, DG TRADE, DG SANTE, DG JRC, DG REGIO, DG GROW, DG ECFIN, DG RTD, DG EMPL, DG ENV, DG HOME and DG MARE (20).

¹⁵⁰ 2nd Interim Evaluation of the ESP

¹⁵¹ In 2018: DG AGRI, DG CLIMA, DG CNECT, DG ECFIN, DG EMP, DG ENER, DG ENV, DG FISMA DG GROW, DG HOME, JRC, DG JUST, DG MARE, DG MOVE, DG REGIO, DG SANTE, DG TRADE. (17)

approved, the requests to investigate and the requests refused was approximately 3:1:1. The analysis of these hearings showed that, between 2015 and 2020, Eurostat considered most DG requests for data and the main requests to be feasible (indicator 10.2.2). The second mid-term evaluation (started at the end of 2017 to support the impact assessment of the post-2020 ESP) supported this evidence, highlighting that “Eurostat consulted every year the other DGs of the European Commission and could in a majority of cases, accommodate their requests”.¹⁵² Eurostat was not able to meet some of the requests due to confidentiality restrictions, lack of legal basis, lack of resources or the expected negative impact on data quality.

Interviews conducted with stakeholders from DGs positively assessed the usefulness of these hearings, acknowledging the value of the voluntary collection mechanisms in collecting statistics to respond to emerging EU strategies and priorities. However, as previously highlighted, issues of timeliness and data gaps were hindering factors in the support provided to the design and monitoring of new EU policies. This issue was tied to the lack of flexibility or reaction time of the ESP to respond to emerging priority areas and was also raised by EU and Member States stakeholders during interviews (indicator 10.2.1).

Despite a reported lack of flexibility, Eurostat, through its coordination and cooperation with other Directorate Generals, was able to effectively monitor and respond to wider EU strategies and priorities.

Judgement criterion 10.3: EU stakeholders considered that Eurostat coordinated effectively with other EU bodies

Eurostat established a network of statistical correspondents in the DGs and created and coordinated an inventory catalogue on statistics produced across the European Commission. Interviewees from all DGs sampled highlighted the important coordination work undertaken on statistics to ensure that, within the European Commission, there was no duplication of the data produced. This was one of the objectives of the yearly consolidation of the inventory of all statistical data produced by all DGs, as well as the continued discussion between Eurostat and European Commission services on statistics needs, production and methods (incl. through the network of statistical correspondents, the directors group meetings and working groups, and the annual hearings organised bilaterally between Eurostat and thematic DGs). Despite this overall positive assessment, respondents to the targeted producer survey felt that Eurostat should have carried out more exchanges with the other EU bodies, particularly so as to coordinate the ESS when the other Directorates-General of the Commission prepared non-statistical regulations, which required additional data and therefore increased the burden on NSIs. Similarly, producers interviewed at Member State level also noted that there had been an increasing number of requests for statistics from different DGs with DGs not always recognising the cost and burden of producing statistics. This would suggest a potential for Eurostat to take on an increased role in coordinating data requests among EU bodies to ensure complementarity and reduce the burden on Member States (two out of the six DGs’ (other than Eurostat) representatives interviewed indicated going directly to MSs to ask for particular data not provided through the ESP) (indicator 10.3.1).

The producers of European statistics interviewed considered coordination of Eurostat with Member States and other EU bodies to be very effective. They highlighted that although documents were distributed sometimes a bit late ahead of the meetings between Eurostat and the Member States, key results were communicated very quickly. Similarly, the majority of respondents to the targeted producer survey agreed – to a moderate extent (37%) and to a great extent (21%) – that there were effective mechanisms in place to coordinate with other EU bodies (mechanisms as mentioned above). On this issue, 19% of respondents agreed with the statement to a small extent and 23% indicated that they did not know (see figure 8).

Beyond the European Commission, Eurostat also cooperated and coordinated with other EU bodies and agencies. For instance, in the realm of asylum and managed migration statistics, Eurostat cooperated with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) on the development of a common methodology and classification methods in order to harmonise European statistics and reduce the burden on Member States. Stakeholders interviewed within Eurostat and in both agencies as part of the case study on asylum and managed

In 2019: DG MARE, DG AGRI, DG CLIMA, DG CNECT, DG ENER, DG FISMA, DG GROW, DG ENV, DG MOVE, DG HOME, DG NEAR, DG REGIO, DG TRADE (13)]

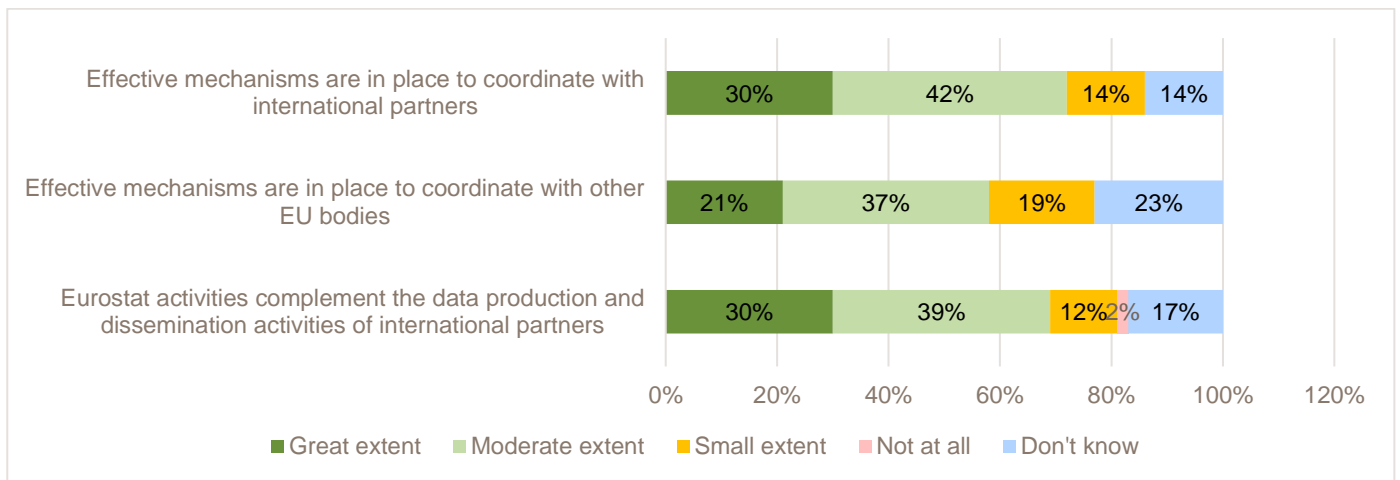
In 2020: DG CLIMA; DG CONNECT; DG EAC; DG ENER; DG ENV; DG FISMA; DG HOME; DG JUST; DG MARE; DG MOVE; DG NEAR; DG REGIO; DG RTD; DG SANTE; DG TAXUD; DG TRADE (16)

¹⁵² Eurostat, Impact Assessment establishing the Programme for single market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, and European statistics and repealing Regulations (EU) No 99/2013, (EU) No 1287/2013, (EU) No 254/2014, (EU) No 258/2014, (EU) No 652/2014 and (EU) No 2017/826

migration were very positive in relation to both the level and the nature of the cooperation. Similarly, Eurostat also cooperated with other EU institutions such as the European Committee of the Regions,¹⁵³ and the European Central Bank (ECB). The “excellent cooperation” was mentioned by a representative of the ECB during a Live panel discussion on Lessons Learned from COVID-19 - Short-term Data Requirements for Long-term Decision-making.¹⁵⁴ The ESS and the European system of central banks (ESCB) also cooperated closely through the Committee on Monetary, Financial and Balance of Payments Statistics (CMFB)¹⁵⁵, as well as through the European Statistical Forum (ESF). The CMFB, composed of senior representatives of the national central banks, NSIs, the ECB and Eurostat, was set up by the Council of the European Union in 1991 and provided a platform to support the operational cooperation between the two statistical pillars, particularly in statistical areas in which they have shared responsibilities, such as the production of national accounts and balance of payments statistics (indicator 10.3.1).

Overall, the findings suggested that EU stakeholders considered that **Eurostat coordinated effectively with other EU bodies**, however the issue of additional burden on Member States was raised as a weakness with regard to the DGs’ individual requests for statistics addressed to the Member States.

Figure 8: External coherence



Source: Targeted producer survey developed by the evaluation team.

4.4.2. EQ11: To what extent were ESP activities coherent with the activities of international statistics organisations?

OVERALL FINDINGS FOR EQ11:

ESP activities were found to be coherent with the activities of international statistical organisations Eurostat effectively coordinated with on the development of international concepts, classifications, methods, and other standards. This cooperation took place through a range of mechanisms both at a high level (Directorate General) and at a working level (Unit 01 and other relevant units) in both bilateral and multilateral settings. It resulted in increased complementarity of the statistics produced by Eurostat and by these international organisations and led to increased comparability of European statistics.

Coverage of the question

This evaluation question assessed the extent to which ESP activities and objectives contributed to the external coherence of the ESS with the activities of other international statistics organisations. External coherence is understood

¹⁵³ See Territorial Impact Assessment: the State of the Cities and Regions in the COVID-19 crisis, <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/TIA-COVID19.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ German Presidency of the Council Working Party on Statistics; November 2020; Lessons Learned from COVID-19 – Short-term Data Requirements for Long-term Decision-making

¹⁵⁵ The CMFB was established by Council Decision in 1991. The original Council Decision 91/115/EEC was replaced on 13 November 2006 by Council Decision 2006/856/EC (OJ, L 332, 30.11.2006, p. 21).

for the purpose of this evaluation question as the correspondence between the objectives of the ESP and those of other statistical authorities. The judgement criteria in this section discuss the extent to which the ESP exploited synergies and ensured that there were no overlap or inconsistencies between the activities of **international statistical organisations** and those of the ESP.

Analysis of the evidence

To answer this evaluation question, a set of judgement criteria provide evidence on the coherence of ESP activities and objectives, with those of international statistics organisations. The judgement criteria related to key features of the ESP activities regarding cooperation with international partners on the development of international concepts, classifications, methods, and other standards.

Judgement criterion 11.1: Effective mechanisms were in place to coordinate with international partners

Article 5.3 of the Regulation on the ESP 2013-2017 provides that together with NSIs, Eurostat “shall cooperate with statistical bodies at international level in order to promote the use of international concepts, classifications, methods and other standards, in particular, with a view to ensuring more coherence and better comparability at a global level.” Accordingly, Eurostat participated in task forces, expert groups, and decision-making bodies of international organisations through bilateral (e.g. UNSD and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)) and multilateral settings (e.g. UN global statistical Commission) and sponsor initiatives such as the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) initiative which provide standards for the exchange of statistical information. Eurostat’s cooperation strategy with international partners was outlined in its “International Cooperation Strategy” document which provided thematic and regional direction and outlined the mechanisms in place to coordinate with international partners.¹⁵⁶ Among these, at the highest level, Eurostat’s Director-General and Deputy Director-General provided leadership and guidance in international cooperation and represented the European Commission in international fora. Eurostat Unit 01 coordinated the international cooperation activities, including participation in meetings, conferences, events and visits to Eurostat. It prepared and monitored bilateral administrative arrangements with international organisations and managed grants to international organisations and selected projects for capacity building. The unit followed developments in international cooperation and provided inputs to the Director-General and Deputy Director-General in preparing strategic documents and meetings in the area of international cooperation. Unit 01 also provided a secretariat for the coordination group on international cooperation (CGIC), chaired by the Deputy Director-General.¹⁵⁷ At a working level, units within Eurostat also cooperated with units in relevant international organisations. For instance, Eurostat unit F2 on population and migration statistics was invited to relevant UNHCR’s workshop and meetings.

Eurostat and its international partners cooperated to align their methodologies, agree on definitions for individual statistical indicators and validate and exchange data. The aim of this cooperation was to reduce the burden on the Member States and to enable comparability of the statistics produced. Eurostat currently has Memoranda of Understanding signed with four organisations (OECD, ECB, UN ICSC and ISRP) and Administrative Arrangements (AA) with four organisations (UNESCO, UNSD, FAO and OECD) (indicator 11.1.1). As developed in judgement criterion 3.10, Eurostat’s cooperation with external stakeholders has had a significant impact on the implementation of the European Statistical programme (ESP)¹⁵⁸(indicator 11.1.2). However, a number of challenges negatively impacted this cooperation. Corrective actions were undertaken in 2019 and 2020 to address the identified issues.¹⁵⁹

Beyond the desk review, the concept of Eurostat’s external coherence with international partners was also investigated through the targeted producer survey by asking participants to rate the extent to which they agreed that effective mechanisms were in place to coordinate with international partners, and the extent to which Eurostat activities complemented the statistics production and dissemination activity of international partners (Figure 8 above). Respondents agreed to a moderate extent (42%) and to a great extent (30%) that there were effective mechanisms in place to coordinate with international partners (with 14% indicating that this only happened to a small extent and 14% that they did not know). There was, however, slightly less agreement in terms of the complementarity between Eurostat’s activities and international partners’ statistics production and dissemination activities. In this case, 39% of respondents agreed with the statement to a moderate extent, and 30% did so to a great extent. In contrast, 12% considered there was complementarity to a small extent and 2% not at all, with a further 17% indicating they did not

¹⁵⁶ Eurostat, Eurostat International Cooperation Strategy

¹⁵⁷ Eurostat, Eurostat International Cooperation Strategy

¹⁵⁸ Commission Staff Working Document, 2019, Internal audit engagements finalised by the Internal Audit Service in 2018.

¹⁵⁹ Eurostat, 2021, Eurostat action plan referring to the “Audit on effectiveness of DG ESTAT’s cooperation with external stakeholders”, IAS.C.3-2018-DG ESTAT-001

know. These findings suggested an overall positive feedback regarding the external coherence of the Programme and the existence of effective mechanisms to coordinate with international partners (indicator 11.1.2).

Similarly, producers of European statistics interviewed as part of the programme assessment considered Eurostat's coordination with international partners to be generally coherent and effective. They also noted that this coordination had improved over the last years. Although there were still some overlaps between Eurostat and international organisations requirements, it was noted that there were many initiatives with the objective of getting more coherent concepts that have been effective at preventing the duplication of work, in particular between Eurostat and the OECD. As an example, it was mentioned that in the area of energy statistics, through coordination with the OECD, the questionnaire for measuring energy consumption had become similar for both organisations. Similar developments were noted as taking place in other areas like environmental statistics and migration. For instance, Eurostat coordinated with the United Nations Statistical Division to collect statistics on migration through one common questionnaire with Eurostat as the focal point for the coordination, collection, and validation of the data.

Overall, the evidence from the desk review and from stakeholders' feedback (received both through the surveys and the interviewees) confirmed that effective mechanisms were in place to coordinate with international partners. These mechanisms ensured the external coherence of the ESP activities with those of international organisations by contributing to the harmonisation and comparability of European statistics through enhanced coordination.

Judgement criterion 11.2: International partners considered that Eurostat activities complemented and/or were not in contradiction with their own statistics production and dissemination activities

International partners interviewed as part of the programme assessment found the Programme externally coherent but were unable to assess these questions in detail with the exception of one interviewee from the EFTA and candidate countries stakeholder group. This one interviewee highlighted Eurostat's participation in international platforms and meetings as an important activity in avoiding duplication of efforts and overlap.

Interviews conducted with international organisations at case study level provided similar positive feedback. In the realm of migration, the UNSD highlighted having a very long-standing and good cooperation with Eurostat which involved the exchange of data as well as personnel and contributed to the overall external coherence of their activities by ensuring their complementarity. For instance, the UNSD highlighted working on a joint project together with Eurostat to improve the collection and transmission of all data on population estimates and migration through enhanced timeliness and automation of the collection processes. Additionally, the UNSD and Eurostat cooperated when collecting data from Member States with Eurostat acting as a focal point, merging its and UNSD's questionnaire together and liaising with Member States to reduce the burden on them. Through these collaborative projects and exchanges, Eurostat's activities were well regarded and perceived as complementing the work of its international partners (indicator 11.2.1).

Similarly, in the realm of education and health statistics, Eurostat, together with the OECD, WHO and UNESCO developed a system for joint data collections for statistical indicators. This enabled Eurostat and its international partners to optimise the collection of data from the Member States, apply common concepts and definitions, and avoid duplication of efforts.¹⁶⁰ Eurostat was also seen as a valued member by international organisations in international fora where its collaborative attitude and activities received positive feedback from interviewees. In addition, the statistics produced by Eurostat were seen as reliable and were widely used to complement and even validate the statistics collected by other organisations which further evidenced the complementarity between Eurostat's and international partners' activities and its statistics.

Overall, international partners considered that Eurostat activities complemented their own statistics data production and activities. No weaknesses, contradiction or areas for improvements were identified by stakeholders.

4.5. EU added value

The EU added value criterion looks at the value resulting from the ESP that is additional to the value that would have resulted from similar activities only carried out at national level or by individual Member States. In many ways, the evaluation of EU added value brings together the findings of the other criteria described above. There is particularly a strong link between the EU added value and relevance, which both assess whether an EU intervention (in this case the

¹⁶⁰ Final audit report on effectiveness of Eurostat's cooperation with external stakeholders, January 2019

ESP) continues to be justified at the EU level.¹⁶¹ The EU added value criterion is linked to the principle of subsidiarity, that the EU should only act when it can achieve better results than the Member States acting alone. Our analysis of the criterion focused both on the added value of the ESP to users and producers of European statistics. The analysis was structured by one evaluation question presented on the next page.

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions
EQ 12: What was the EU added value of the ESP?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the ESP contribute to increased comparability of national statistics? • Were European statistics preferred to other competing international statistical datasets? • Did the ESP contribute to reduced time lag between reference period and publication data of statistics? • Did the ESP enhance the pool of resources available for production and development of new statistics at MS level? • Could the production of European statistics be successfully achieved at the MS level?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON EU ADDED VALUE

The evidence collected confirmed the EU added value of the ESP. It suggested that the Programme's main added value was the contribution to the harmonisation of European statistics to deliver comparable statistics, provide them in a single location and support evidence-based policy making at EU and national level. The ESP delivered harmonisation across the EU and produced high-quality, comprehensive, and reliable statistics across the Member States. It made it possible to consolidate statistics and to deliver comparable data across all Member States.

The existence of the European Union entailed a need for pan-European statistical services with the primary objective of providing comparable statistics from across Member States. In the absence of the ESP, evidence-based policy making at EU level and policy making at country level, based on comparative analysis of statistics across countries, would be very difficult (due to potential inconsistencies in the evidence). Thus, without the ESP, it would not have been possible to have comprehensive, high-quality and reliable statistics across Member States to support the European Commission's policy making objectives. While harmonisation of statistics can be perceived as the main achievement of the ESP, it also remains a challenge requiring further work and effort.

Users from EU institutions, from MSs and also from candidate countries confirmed the EU added value of providing European statistics in a single online location (one-stop shop). Statistics provided by other institutions were used for different purposes, and there was complementarity rather than competition between Eurostat and other international statistical sources.

The ESP did not only give visibility at MS level but also at international level to statistics and their importance to support evidence-based decision making. The Programme supported the strengthening of the laws of statistics and positioning statistical offices in governance structures of countries. This was supported by the Second round of peer reviews, which was implemented during the lifetime of the Programme (2013-2015)¹⁶² and led to issuing a number of legal and other recommendations for the Member States.

The Programme also established a clear roadmap for statistics production for producers, including candidate countries. The ESP also contributed to the strengthening of the international statistical community and the efforts made to ensure the quality of statistics at the international level through cooperation between Eurostat and international organisations, such as the OECD or the WHO. Eurostat provides leadership in the field of statistics to Member States, candidate countries but to some extent also to international organisations. The ESP supported and led cooperation, knowledge sharing and the exchange of best practices between the NSIs, third countries and other international actors. This political leverage, and the EU's leadership in this field, would not have been possible without the existence of a programme at EU level.

4.5.1. EQ12: What was the EU added value of the ESP?

Coverage of the question

The analysis of the EU added value of the European Statistical Programme was broken down into judgement criteria providing information on whether European statistics are the preferred sources of information for the users and the

¹⁶¹ Better regulation guidelines, TOOL #47. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/file_import/better-regulation-toolbox-47_en_0.pdf, pp. 351, 353.

¹⁶² See reports presenting the outcomes for each country review and the improvement actions in response to the recommendations: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/peer-reviews>

advantages of having a “one-stop shop” for harmonised and validated European statistics. It also included elements of counterfactual analysis of what would happen in the absence of the ESP.

Analysis of the evidence

Judgement criterion 12.1: Users of statistics considered the ESP to be the preferred source of information when they compared indicators across MSs

The findings suggested that the comparability of statistics across Member States was one of the key reasons for using European statistics and that no other source could provide these statistics in a similar manner and scale (indicator 12.1.1).

Users from the European Commission DGs highlighted that the ESP made statistics available and contributed to the transparency objective on a wide range of issues. Without the ESP, it would not have been possible to have comprehensive, high-quality and reliable statistics across Member States to support the European Commission’s policy making objectives. Even when users mentioned they were using other statistics, they emphasised that European statistics remained their preferred source of information because the scope of the statistics matched exactly the Commission’s (strategic) objectives and covered all MSs (as the primary constituency of EU policy making).

Individual users at Member-State level agreed with the statement of this judgment criterion. They indicated that **there was clear EU added value in Eurostat’s work and this mainly related to ensuring the comparability of statistics from the Member States and providing them in a single online location**. More advanced users acknowledged the improvement in the comparability of data and harmonisation of surveys across Member States. However, they also pointed out that there was still more to do to further enhance comparability, mainly in terms of harmonising methods of collecting data across Member States. They provided several examples of where further harmonisation is desirable, for instance the employment rate, which in some countries included women providing childcare while it did not in others.

Producers also shared this opinion. There was a consensus among them acknowledging that the ESP provided clear added value in the harmonisation of definitions and in the compilation of comparable high-quality statistics for the EU. This could not be done without the ESP.

Finally, stakeholder feedback also suggested that some users (e.g. journalists) tend to trust Eurostat more than they trust the NSIs and they may not be aware that Eurostat published statistics provided by the NSIs. Eurostat is indeed a trusted source of information, as confirmed by the User Satisfaction Survey. For instance, in 2020, as in previous years, responses were overwhelmingly positive, with 96% of users stating they trusted European statistics greatly or tended to trust them. Only 2% said they did not trust statistics and 2% had no opinion.¹⁶³

Judgement criterion 12.2: Individual and institutional users’ stated preference for European statistics over other international statistics / datasets

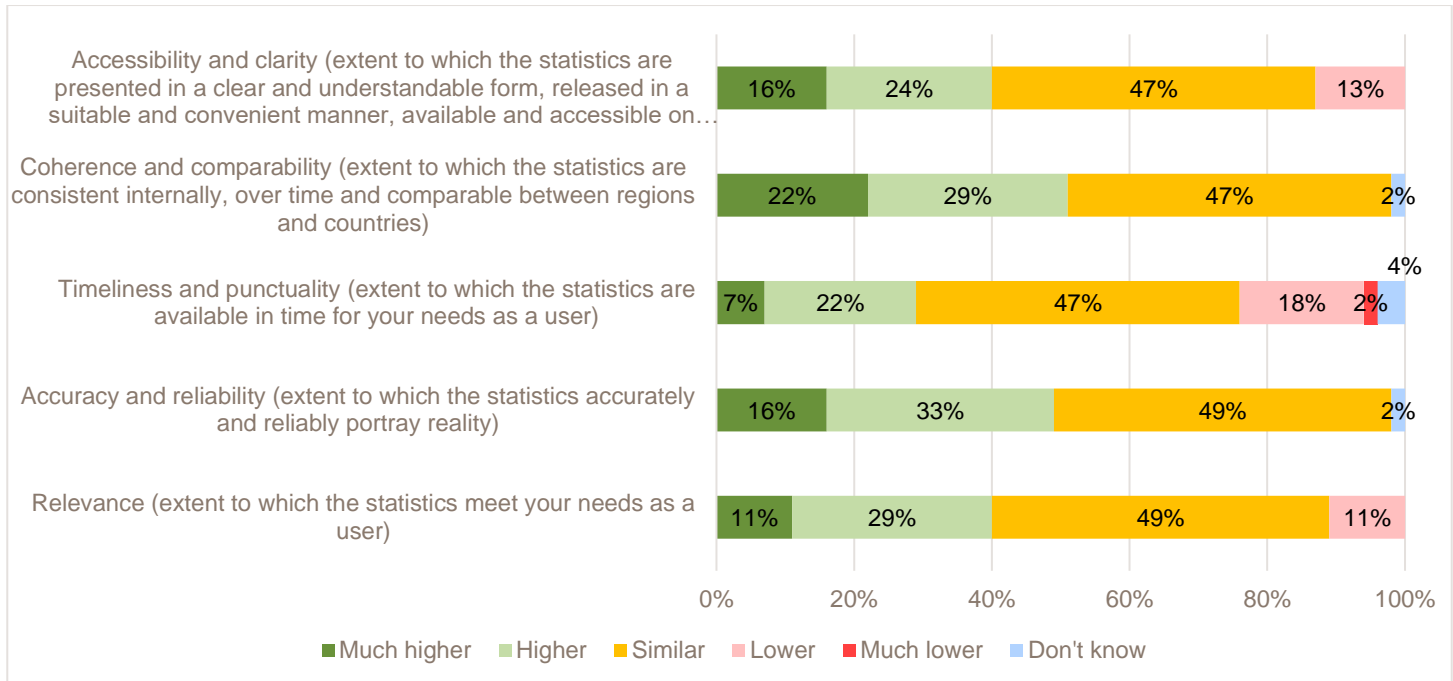
Users from the EU level confirmed their preference for European statistics over other international statistics / datasets (indicator 12.2.1). There was a consensus that European statistics were the most relevant and of the highest quality with regard to EU policy-making needs. Users from the Member States provided slightly different feedback. Although for all of them European statistics (and national statistics of their respective countries) **were the main source of statistical information, they indicated that they used other international sources for other purposes**. These other purposes included comparisons with non-EU countries, the search for more innovative indicators (they mentioned mainly World Bank, OECD), or for some more sector-specific statistics (for instance health-related statistics of ECDC or some economic statistics provided by the ECB). The asylum and managed migration case study further highlighted that European statistics were used by both EU agencies and international organisations as part of their internal verification process to assess the quality and the margin of error on the statistics collected in-house.

Most respondents to the targeted survey for users (77%) indicated they used other international sources of statistics. Evidence gathered in the open-ended question suggested that other international sources used were predominantly the OECD, World Bank, other DGs in the European Commission, IMF, FAO, UN-Statistics (as well as national statistical services). The public consultation provided similar results, with 62% of users indicating the use of other international sources to obtain statistics and pointed out to the same sources mentioned above.

¹⁶³ Report on the Eurostat 2020 User Satisfaction Survey

Through the online consultation activities, respondents were not asked about their *preferred* source but assessed the quality of European statistics in comparison to the other international sources according to five principles. Overall, almost half of the respondents across five domains reported that the quality of European statistics and other international sources were similar. Between 29-51% considered the quality of European statistics higher or much higher. The respondents' assessment for each of the five principles is presented in the figure below.

Figure 9: In your opinion, how does the quality of European statistics compare to other international sources of data that you use



Source: Targeted user survey developed by the team

In the public consultation, respondents provided slightly more positive feedback. They tended to select a neutral answer (that the quality of European statistics is similar to other sources: 38%-42% per different principle) or positive answers (that the quality of European statistics is higher or much higher: 34%-50%). Users tended to rank coherence and comparability as well as accuracy and reliability relatively better, and timeliness relatively worse. Opinions on the comparability of national statistics among countries and regions drawn from the Eurostat User Satisfaction Survey were also generally positive. Statistical comparability achieved the best score as compared to other characteristics in the 2019 survey.¹⁶⁴

The analysis suggested that there was a *complementarity* rather *competition* between the ESP and other international sources.

Judgement criterion 12.3: There was a recognised advantage of having a “one stop shop” for harmonised and validated European statistics

This judgement criterion complements the first criterion related to the ESP being the preferred source of information for comparisons across Member States. Throughout the period evaluated, the main perceived advantage of the ESP was to allow for cross country comparative analyses, which the harmonisation and comparability of statistics made possible.

In the targeted survey, most producers agreed that the ESP contributed to a great (63%) or moderate (26%) extent to increased comparability of national statistics. Only 4% of respondents shared that that the ESP either contributed to a small extent (2%) or not at all (2%). As mentioned, in interviews, users further highlighted that the main added value of the ESP was to ensure the comparability of statistics and data from the Member States and to provide them in a single online location. But some interviewees also highlighted that there was still more to do to further improve comparability, mainly in terms of harmonising methods of collecting data across Member States.

¹⁶⁴ REPORT ON THE EUROSTAT 2019 USER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Feedback from the European Commission DGs suggested that **there was EU added value in a “one-stop shop” for harmonised and validated European statistics** (indicator 12.3.1). The ESP constituted a central mechanism for all things related to statistics in the EU. Thereby, it decreased the transaction costs for its stakeholders while making available all the necessary data and tools. The ESP was based on the existence of a “one-stop shop”, which facilitated exchanges on the topic. It has been supported by a continuous dialogue within the statistical community (EU and MS level) which enabled progress, dissemination of good practices and tackling specific data needs. The existence of this central mechanism also reduced transaction costs for Commission services which would not be in a position to engage with each MS bilaterally, while giving more weight to Commission’s data needs against the possible resistance of MSs as statistics providers.

Finally, the **existence of a “one-stop shop” was also important for candidate countries**. For this group of countries, increasing the comparability and harmonisation with European statistics had been one of their main goals in their strategies and collaboration through the ESP was instrumental to modernise their statistical systems. Interviewees considered that the same progress and benefits would not have been achieved in the absence of the ESP. They noted however that the Programme included some burdensome procedures that were caused by the institutional set up, the different legal acts, and a large partnership between the Member States, the European Commission and EFTA countries, making the implementation of the Programme quite complex.

Judgement criterion 12.4: What would happen in the absence of ESP?

In the absence of the ESP, evidence-based policy making at EU level and policy making at country level, based on comparative analysis of statistics across countries, would be very difficult (due to potential inconsistencies in the evidence) (indicator 12.4.1).

In addition to the points discussed above, when asked in the targeted survey about the extent to which the ESP enhanced the pool of resources available for the production and development of new statistics at Member State level, almost three out of four respondents agreed to a great (44%) or to a moderate (28%) extent that it did. The Programme was considered very useful to drive the production of statistics, provide a strong legal framework for Member States and allow for sharing best practices and mutual learning between the Member States. Producers also highlighted the usefulness of Eurostat’s grant scheme. Grants were provided for visualisation, education activities and the fight against fake news. In the absence of the ESP the access to these resources would not be possible. NSIs would not have access to methodological support or financial project-based support from Eurostat. Sharing best practices and mutual learning would be more challenging without the coordinating role of Eurostat.

The evidence suggests that it would be challenging, in the absence of the ESP, to ensure the current level of quality, harmonisation and comparability of European Statistics. The study therefore confirmed EU statistical production requires the implementation of a harmonised methodology and the definition of common outputs, which can only be fully achieved by way of EU action. Delivering the same results, through MSs’ individual action, without the overarching and coordinating role of the ESP and Eurostat would have been extremely challenging, if not impossible.

As also highlighted in the thematic case study covering the modernisation of business statistics, the production of statistics that are harmonised and comparable across Member States cannot be achieved at the national level only. Introducing common definitions and validation procedures on business statistics on data sent to Eurostat leads to better data quality and eliminates time consuming exchange of explanations between the NSIs and Eurostat. Exchange of microdata between Member States also creates an added value.

The case study on territorial statistics provided similar findings: the ESP enabled Eurostat to harmonise the methods and standards Member States use to collect and compile statistics resulting in comparable and high-quality European statistics, and in particular harmonise the classification, updated every three years to define regions in a comparable manner. Recently the actions at EU level supported the response of the statistical community to the COVID-19 pandemic by providing methodological support to statisticians and creating a European dashboard with recovery indicators. A dedicated webpage “COVID-19: SUPPORT FOR STATISTICIANS”¹⁶⁵ was added to Eurostat’s website on 1 June 2020, compiling new methodological guidelines (as of March 2021, the webpage consisted of 30 guidelines and methodological notes), which aimed to ensure the consistency of data collection processes related to reporting about the pandemic.

¹⁶⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/metadata/covid-19-support-for-statisticians>

Such overarching and coordinating role included the clarification provided by Eurostat to MSs on various national accounting issues in relation to past or future operations and Eurostat's advice on the existing guidelines.¹⁶⁶ The ESP enabled Eurostat's leading role in many areas, for instance in piloting new methods of data production (based on big data pilots) in collaborative network of Eurostat and the NSIs.¹⁶⁷ As already highlighted above, without the ESP, it would not have been possible to consolidate comprehensive, comparable high-quality and reliable statistics across Member States to support the European Commission's policy making objectives.

Lastly, and from a forward-looking perspective, new challenges have come with new data sources. To frame the use of these data sources to ensure quality, reliability but also the protection of personal data requires to set up the proper legal framework and address any possible legal barriers. Stakeholders expected that this would be more effectively done at EU level than at national level, especially for sources which were in essence pan-European.

4.6. Evaluation of the points raised in the Article 15 of the ESP Regulation

In addition to the five evaluation criteria defined in the better regulation guidelines, the final evaluation of the ESP also looked at the specific requests mentioned in points (a) to (d) of Article 15 of the amended Regulation. This section provides an assessment of the following topics:

- The outcome of the reprioritisation and cost evaluation of statistical products;
- The actions taken by the ESS to reduce the implementation and production costs for Member States and to limit the overall burden stemming from the statistical projects and fields covered by the Programme;
- The progress on rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly, including the provision of data on the Eurostat website; and
- The progress on the improvement of data availability, including on social economy activities and on the Europe 2020 indicators.

4.6.1. The outcome of the reprioritisation and cost evaluation of statistical products

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Despite improvements, prioritisation remained a challenge throughout the Programme resulting in increased pressure on Member States' resources. This was due in large part to the increase in the number of data requests and the lack of identification of statistics that would have become less relevant over time. The assessment of costs for Member States showed that the total costs of producing statistics decreased slightly between 2013-2020 as did the number of FTEs – although producers met an increasing number of statistics requests.

Article 6 of Regulation (EU) No 99/2013¹⁶⁸ on statistical priority-setting stated that when putting forward new actions or introducing major revisions of existing statistics, the European Commission should duly justify such actions or revisions and provide information with Member States' inputs on response burden and production costs in accordance with Article 14(3) of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009¹⁶⁹. Similarly, Article 15 of the amended ESP regulation explicitly stated that the final evaluation report of the programme should evaluate "the outcome of the reprioritisation and cost evaluation of statistical products".¹⁷⁰

In addition to the above-mentioned legal requirements, the ESS Resource Directors Group (RDG), which has also been leading the work on cost assessments, has consistently stressed the importance of being able to prioritise and correctly assess the costs of statistical production.¹⁷¹ The May 2017 ESSC meeting welcomed the ongoing work in this area,

¹⁶⁶ Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the quality of fiscal data reported by Member States in 2015

¹⁶⁷ Working programme statement, DB 2018

¹⁶⁸ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013), art. 6.

¹⁶⁹ Regulation (EU) 2015/759 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics

¹⁷⁰ Regulation (EU) 2017/1951 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2017 amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2020

¹⁷¹ 965th Directors' Meeting of 13.09.2017, Preliminary results of the cost assessment survey of production of statistics and of the cost analysis of European statistics (by products) in the ESS

especially in the context of future priority-setting, and asked to step up the efforts. Similarly, ESAC's opinion on the draft ESP 2013-2017¹⁷² had highlighted the importance of prioritisation and simplification, topics which the following ESAC reports reiterated. For instance, in its 2016 Opinion¹⁷³, ESAC recommended a better balance between economic and social domains and in its 2017 Opinion¹⁷⁴, ESAC recommended more explicit reference to the actions planned in 2018 in relation to the cost-benefit analysis of products and an assessment of costs of European statistics. The importance of the reprioritisation exercise and cost assessment projects was also stressed in ESGAB Recommendations. For instance, in its 2016 Annual Report, ESGAB recommended that "ESS countries should ensure that they contribute to the projects under way to develop and improve data on the costs of statistical production at a national level and for specific European statistical products, and that they facilitate this information-gathering from their internal cost accounting systems".¹⁷⁵

As evidenced in the above, reprioritisation and cost evaluation of statistical products were important elements of the ESP throughout the period evaluated. The activities and outcomes of the Programme with regard to these elements were therefore an important indicator and thus examined in more detail below.

Reprioritisation of statistical product

Between 2013 and 2020, as part of the preparation of the work programme and in line with the ESS Vision 2020, Eurostat conducted priority-setting exercises in consultation with users and producers of statistics. For the new ESP 2021-2027, these included a review of statistical requirements in existing domains of European statistics with the intention of reducing costs for Member States. Eurostat also organised several high-level meetings¹⁷⁶ between several directors general from NSIs and DGs from European Commission services on an irregular basis and annual bilateral hearings at NSI Directors' level with the policy DGs of the European Commission¹⁷⁷. The main objective of the hearings was to follow-up and agree on concrete areas for collaboration regarding statistics, including possible financing for Eurostat/ESP activities in relation to policy needs. The hearings covered planned political initiatives with implications for European statistics, planned data collections of the DG and the possible identification of synergies and areas for deeper cooperation. In addition, Eurostat ensured priority-setting through evaluations and consultations with relevant stakeholders including the ESAC who provided opinions on the draft annual work programmes. In February 2020, the annual priority-setting exercises were replaced by a new priority-setting mechanism adopted by the ESSC and a pilot review for climate change related statistics was put in place.¹⁷⁸

Despite these developments, prioritisation remained a persistent issue throughout the Programme. In particular, producers highlighted the need to further improve the prioritisation processes in terms of activities and outputs and to better consider time constraints and resource challenges in keeping up with Eurostat's demands and the requests for new statistics. Several producers also considered that the provision of statistics in new or rapidly evolving policy areas was missing from the objectives and that there was a need to improve the agility of the Programme to adapt and better respond to crises. As prioritisation was essential to deliver a flexible system (necessary for adjusting to data requirements for new policies), producers felt that the distinction between statistical information for different usages should be considered in order to align data requirement according to policy needs. This would create greater awareness of which data/statistics was no longer needed and thus reduce the cost and burden on producers. Indeed, producers noted that there was an increase in new data requests but no reduction on topics already covered, which was contrary to the prioritisation principle. In particular, several producers mentioned the need to develop a "one in, one out" approach to statistical surveys as a critical review of new tasks was generally missing and the impact on additional resources was not explored enough. It was thus noted that Eurostat's monitoring of the use of resources could be more effective as it often underestimated the burden and costs that new regulations had on producers. These findings were consistent with the conclusions of the 69th Meeting of the Partnership Group which highlighted that, in the past, new demands for statistics were not offset by cutbacks on existing production, nor were they accompanied by a corresponding increase in resources.¹⁷⁹ The report further noted that the resources of many NSIs had been reduced as part of general cuts in

¹⁷² European Statistical Advisory Committee, *Opinion on the draft European Statistical Programme 2013-2017* (23.5.2011).

¹⁷³ ESAC, 2016, Opinion on the draft strategic priorities of the European statistics Annual Work Programme 2017

¹⁷⁴ ESAC, 2017, Opinion on the draft strategic priorities of the European statistics Annual Work Programme 2018

¹⁷⁵ ESCAB, 2016, Eighth Annual Report by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice by Eurostat and the European Statistical System as a whole

¹⁷⁶ 1040th Directors' Meeting of 21.01.2020, Proposal for simplifying the two ESS cost surveys: Cost assessment survey of production of official statistics and Cost analysis of European Statistics (by products)

¹⁷⁷ DGs hearings 2013-2020

¹⁷⁸ ESSC 2020/42/3/EN, Priority-setting in the ESS (42nd Meeting of the European Statistical System Committee, February 2020)

¹⁷⁹ 69th Meeting of the European Statistical System Committee Partner Group ESS priority-setting, September 2018

the public sector and it was therefore important to reduce the gap between statistics requirements and resources – both via additional resources and via improved priority-setting and efficiency. This is an issue which has been ongoing, and which was already highlighted in the ESS Priority-setting document for the Partnership Group meeting on the 23rd of March 2018. The report noted that past initiatives taken in response to this discussion had been unable to address the issue.

However, it is worth highlighting that when asked to indicate statistical fields that could be deleted from the Programme because they had become less relevant over time, respondents to the targeted user survey did not consider any fields as less relevant. Rather, most respondents shared the belief that the number of fields should only increase as every statistical dataset was important. Additionally, several producers also acknowledged the difficulty of introducing the “one in, one out” approach in practice, which had also been considered at country level but never successfully implemented.

Cost evaluation of statistical product

The cost of producing European statistics includes both the costs and the human resources involved in statistical production, both at the Member States’ level and at Eurostat’s level. To measure these costs, Eurostat conducted two separate surveys:

- (1) Cost assessment survey on producing official statistics in the ESS (including NSIs, regional offices, ONAs, national central banks (NCBs)). The survey collected information on the production of national and European statistics (national cost layer includes, for example, costs incurred by data providers in relation to data collection which are not requested (or the data collection part not needed on such a detailed level) by Eurostat).
- (2) Survey on the cost of European statistics (by products) in the ESS (including NSIs, regional offices, ONAs, NCBs) which collects cost information on the European cost layer only.

Both surveys recorded information on the total costs (sum of direct and indirect costs) and on FTEs of permanent staff.

The **cost assessment survey of the production of official statistics in the ESS** was first launched in 2015 following discussions held by a group of Directors General of NSIs and Eurostat in the so called “Vienna meeting”. The survey sought to provide the means to better assess the resources used for the production of official statistics (by NSIs, ONAs, regional offices, and NCBs) and the funding trends in the ESS. The surveys were conducted in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2020 and information on costs and FTEs for the years 2012-2017 was collected and ESS aggregates compiled. Overall, participation of NSIs in the survey was very high with all but one country (Switzerland) contributing to the four different rounds. In contrast, participation of the NCBs was very low (only Croatia contributed, and Belgium partially contributed).¹⁸⁰ Despite these limitations, the analysis of the cost assessment survey showed that the cost of producing official statistics decreased by 4% during the lifetime of the ESP (from EUR 3.1 billion in 2013 to EUR 3 billion in 2020) and by 14% in terms of FTEs (from 49 200 FTEs in 2013 to 42 500 FTEs in 2020.) Taking into account the 15% increase in the number of datasets published by Eurostat, the data suggest that official statistics have been produced more efficiently, namely, more statistics being produced despite decreasing costs and number of staff.

Table 9: Cost of production of official statistics in the ESS, staff working in official statistics in the ESS and number of published datasets in Eurostat

	2013	2017	2020
Costs in EUR bn, current prices	3.1	2.8	3.0
Staff working in official statistics in the ESS, in 1000 FTEs	49.2	43.1	42.5
Number of published datasets	4 596	5 396	5 405

Source: 981st Directors’ Meeting, Cost assessment survey on the production of official statistics in the ESS; Information provided by Eurostat

The **cost assessment survey of European statistics (by products) in the ESS** was first launched in 2015 as a pilot project. It sought to assess the relative demand on resources of different statistical products and to provide input for setting priorities. The aim was to get a full and harmonised view on the financial and human resources for the production of each statistical product. However, due to missing contributions from NSIs and NCBs in particular, it was not possible to calculate an ESS aggregate and as a result, only a preliminary aggregate of available country data (including Eurostat’s internal costs) was compiled. Production units have however been able to use the information collected

¹⁸⁰ 981st Directors’ Meeting, Cost assessment survey on the production of official statistics in the ESS

through this cost collection, for example, for evaluation reports presented to the EP and Council, thus avoiding separate cost assessments by individual units and additional burden on countries.

Besides the value of collecting cost information in the ESS and contribution to the priority-setting, both cost assessment surveys contributed to enhancing the cost-accounting systems in several countries and contributed to a better cooperation between NSIs and regional offices and ONAs (because of the requirement to include them in the cost calculations).¹⁸¹ The main limitations of the cost information collected in both cost assessments remain the difficulties to include NCBs (only five countries included the NCB part) and the coverage of ONAs (four countries did not cover the ONA part at all). Collecting the corresponding information proved to be a challenge, especially for countries with many ONAs and regional offices.

4.6.2. The actions taken by the ESS to reduce the production costs for Member States and to limit the overall burden stemming from the statistical projects and fields covered by the programme

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The quantitative data shows that production cost and number of staff went down while the number of datasets being produced increased. This is evidence that the actions taken by the ESS to reduce the production costs for Member States and to limit the overall burden stemming from the statistical projects and fields covered by the programme have been effective. However qualitative feedback provided a more nuanced perspective, highlighting limitations in terms of priority setting and the identification of statistics which would have become less relevant over time. In addition, concerns regarding the diminishing budget and number of staff, coupled with the reported increasing number of requests for new statistics, suggested that issues of production cost and burden may emerge in the future.

Article 6 of Regulation (EU) No 99/2013¹⁸² on statistical priority-setting sought to contribute to the reduction of costs and burdens by reducing statistical requirements in existing domains of European statistics in accordance with Article 14(3) of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009.¹⁸³ Similarly, Article 15 of the amended ESP regulation explicitly stated that the final evaluation report of the programme should evaluate “the actions taken by the ESS to reduce the implementation and production costs for Member States and to limit the overall burden stemming from the statistical projects and fields covered by the programme.”¹⁸⁴

In line with these legal requirements, Eurostat put in place measures and processes to monitor and optimise the efficient use of resources. These included the two cost assessment surveys of producing official statistics in the ESS which were discussed and examined in the previous section 4.6.1 above, as well as a mechanism for the sharing of best practices in the area of cost accounting within the ESS which sought to improve common guiding principles for the cost collection surveys and identify common elements. In addition, the EU adopted framework regulations to reduce the implementation and production costs for Member States by optimising the efficient use of resources in the production of statistics. For instance, the Framework Regulation on Business Statistics (FRIBS) with its final outcome as European Business Statistics Regulation (EBS) adopted in November 2019 brought all statistics in the business sector under a common legal framework. It showed that the principle of “collect once, use many times” has been followed and that the risk of double counting or inconsistency had been significantly reduced.¹⁸⁵ The stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation assessed the flagship EBS regulation as significantly diminishing burden on data providers and producers

¹⁸¹ The two ESS cost assessments are based on total costs. The usefulness of having information on new/changed statistics, based on marginal costs, is currently discussed in the PG in the context of the new priority-setting mechanism, therefore in the future countries might be invited to submit cost information on two different concepts. Information extracted from the cost analysis of European statistics (by products) might be used in the context of the future reviews of topics/statistical domains

¹⁸² Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013), art. 6.

¹⁸³ Regulation (EU) 2017/1951 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2017 amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2020

¹⁸⁴ Regulation (EU) 2015/759 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics

¹⁸⁵ Regulation (EU) 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2019 on European business statistics, repealing 10 legal acts in the field of business statistics

of statistics. Lastly, modernisation initiatives at the EU level were also positively assessed as actions that translated into economies of scale and delivered efficiency gains in terms of production costs.

Overall and as highlighted in Table 9 above, the actions described above were effective in limiting production cost and reducing burden. Namely, the cost of producing official statistics and the number of staff in the ESS have both decreased throughout the entire period evaluated while the number of datasets being produced has increased. The data thus suggest that the burden on the resources of European statistics has diminished at an annual pace of 3 to 4%. However, both Eurostat and NSI officials have expressed reservations as to the appropriateness of the level of staffing which is perceived as jeopardising their capacity to deliver quality statistics against the set objectives. Similarly, Member States highlighted their concerns with regard to the diminishing budget for the production of statistics in particular in light of the COVID-19 crisis and probable future budget cuts.

Additionally, as reported in section 4.6.1, most producers consulted during the evaluation noted that the demand for timely and high-quality statistics was constantly increasing, including the demand at EU level. They also assessed that the mechanisms within the ESP did not help to address these problems. They pointed out that the NSIs already worked at their maximum capacity and therefore any additional requests for statistics were challenging for them. Some interviewees highlighted that the institutional users of statistics, both at the national and on the EU level, should be more aware of the burden in terms of the production costs of statistics. Drivers of production costs included new demands and the difficulty to implement an effective system for priority setting as discussed in section 4.6.1.

4.6.3. The progress on rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly, including the provision of data on the Eurostat website

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The ESP contributed to progress on rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly, but there was still scope for further improvement. The provision of data on the Eurostat website was key but how easy and user-friendly access to these data was differed depending on the category of users. While data and statistics were easily accessible to proficient users from the Commission, access was more challenging for less experienced users from the general public. Despite progress linked to easy retrievability and convertibility of statistical data for practical use, including through graphs and maps, the main weakness of the Eurostat website was its complexity, which led to difficulties in finding the right data and statistics. Alternatively, dedicated publications provided data in a clear and accessible manner.

Between 2013 and 2020, the ESP contributed to progress on rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly. During that period, Eurostat enhanced the user-friendliness of European statistics by facilitating access to official statistics. Eurostat paid special attention to easy retrievability and convertibility of statistical data for practical use, including through graphs and maps. Many new electronic and interactive publications, visualisation tools, mobile apps and tools offered for data extraction have been developed and added to the Eurostat website. Eurostat has also been active on social media, with its three corporate social media accounts: on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). The Eurostat website and dedicated publications provided data in a generally clear and accessible manner. The different tools presented data from different statistical themes in an attractive format. Most respondents and interviewees considered that relevant official statistics were easily accessible. Stakeholders consulted provided positive feedback on the Eurostat website, and other communication channels, namely its publications. They highlighted that Eurostat had been effective in responding to their inputs and that staff were friendly and helpful. Overall, users were satisfied with Eurostat's dissemination methods, with the proficient users being most satisfied. Indeed, while Commission officials consulted acknowledged that, for their own use, access to data was relatively easy, they also recognised that access to official statistics may be more challenging for beginners and intermediate users. As proficient users, Commission services all praised the different tools available to access data. They provided examples related to the Eurostat website, the databases, the metadata, and the different publications that Eurostat prepared, both general and thematic. Only minor issues came with the launch of the new browser, as bookmarks were not transferred from the old one. Some changes in the definition/methodologies also had an impact on the data provided in the database, and Eurostat did not flag these enough. So, one needed to look for the information on possible changes.

The findings also pointed to weaknesses of the Eurostat website in terms of its complexity, which did not necessarily render access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly. This complexity led to difficulties in finding the right data. For example, the case study on the territorial dimension of statistics showed that even though users noted an

improvement of the Eurostat website and appreciated the change of the interface, they indicated that, in terms of usability, many clicks were needed to get to the territorial dimension of statistics. It was fine to use if interested in a thematic area, but it was not possible to only show all NUTS 3 level data for instance. In cases where one could not work with approximations, it would have been helpful to be able to see all the data that were available. This could be possible through a different filtering process. In addition, the lack of access to metadata remained an issue for some users. Respondents to the targeted survey felt that Eurostat could have more “user-friendly databases”. Suggestions included improving the IT system and dissemination, in terms of speed and layout for example. They also noted that the release of official statistics followed a producer as opposed to a user approach, which affected how the public used Eurostat’s channels. To increase public use, producers felt that Eurostat could enhance its communication channels with additional pages that would tackle current economic issues with data series (and their simplified metadata). This could render access to existing official statistics even easier and more user-friendly and make Eurostat’s work more visible.

4.6.4. The progress on the improvement of data availability, including on social economy activities and on the Europe 2020 indicators

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

From 2013 to 2020, the ESP included activities to develop new statistics and contributed to improving data availability, including on social economy activities and on the Europe 2020 indicators. On social economy activities, data and statistics on population and social conditions, as well as on migration, became more available, including an increased disaggregation by migratory status. Despite these improvements, there remained large gaps in terms of territorial disaggregation of social statistics. On the Europe 2020 indicators, Eurostat continuously provided comparable, reliable, and timely statistical information, and work continued for the development and production of these indicators throughout the Programme. Europe 2020 indicators are only available at the EU and country levels because there is no territorial disaggregation of the targets set – but some of the data used for these indicators are in some cases available at regional level. The Europe 2020 indicators set – used to monitor the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs for the 2010-2020 decade – had been yearly updated and available until 2021. As the Europe 2020 strategy approached the end of its life cycle and since the EU aggregate (28 countries including the United Kingdom), for which the Europe 2020 targets were set, no longer exists in official statistics, Europe 2020 indicators will be removed from the Eurobase online database and archived. However, all five areas covered by the Europe 2020 indicators remain part of the EU SDG indicator set and will continue to be updated under the heading of “[Sustainable development indicators](#)”.

The findings suggest that overall and especially for identified themes¹⁸⁶, ESP activities resulted in an improvement of data availability.¹⁸⁷ Users and producers of European statistics interviewed confirmed this point. They assessed data availability positively and noticed an improvement in that respect. Similarly, interviewees from EFTA and candidate countries noted the constant development of the data available to users and the increased availability of macroeconomic and environmental statistics specifically.

Social economy activities

43% of the respondents to the public consultation specifically reported an improvement of data availability on population and social conditions. Stakeholders interviewed as part of the asylum and managed migration case study further corroborated this. They were satisfied with the improvement of data availability on social (migration-related) activities and the increased disaggregation by migratory status.

Nevertheless, stakeholders interviewed as part of the territorial case study noted that, despite improvements in terms of availability of a territorial disaggregation, there remained large gaps in terms of social statistics.

¹⁸⁶ Industry, trade, and services; environment and energy; international trade; transport; science, technology, and digital society; general and regional statistics; economy and finance; population and social conditions; agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.

¹⁸⁷ Disregarding those who were unsure and considering that less than 20% of respondents for each theme answered negatively.

Europe 2020 indicators

The 2015 Audit on the support by Eurostat to the Europe 2020 strategy and the new Commission priorities aimed to assess whether Eurostat had put in place an efficient and effective process to provide up-to-date statistical data, included in the areas covered by the Europe 2020 strategy, to help to monitor progress towards the related targets.¹⁸⁸ The audit's main recommendation was about other statistics (not Eurostat's) used by the DGs to demonstrate progress made in achieving Europe 2020 targets. This suggests that progress on the improvement of data availability on the Europe 2020 indicators was not an issue.¹⁸⁹

The 2013-2019 Annual Activity Reports all indicated that Eurostat continuously provided comparable, reliable, and timely statistical information supporting the monitoring of progress towards an evidence-based implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy.¹⁹⁰ In 2013-2020, these data were notably available in the flagship publication "Smarter, greener, more inclusive? Indicators to support the Europe 2020 strategy".¹⁹¹ Throughout the 2013-2020 Programme, Eurostat made progress on improving data availability as work continued for the development and production of high-quality indicators for Europe 2020.

- In 2014, major achievements concerned, among others, the essential input for the European Semester including the production of the statistical annex of the Alert Mechanism report for the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure, the further development of the resource efficiency scoreboard and indicators for Education and Training 2020.
- In 2015, Eurostat reached major achievements regarding Europe 2020 around sectoral or regional statistics. Eurostat released data on structural trends in agriculture in different formats based on the Farm Structure Survey 2013. Eurostat also further analysed data from the LUCAS Survey of 2012, particularly with respect to quality aspects, and continued to disseminate revised data. Eurostat also made available timely Europe 2020 indicators on education and life-long learning.
- In 2016, Eurostat updated the headline target indicators for Europe 2020 related to sectoral statistics with new data and disseminated them through its online database. The flexible dashboard and other interactive visual tools of the Europe 2020 dedicated section on Eurostat's website also included these new data.
- In 2019, the provision of additional breakdowns and the revision of the methodology and compilation techniques further improved the quality of the Europe 2020 indicators: a new child deprivation indicator was produced; revised inequality indicators were approved; the 'Low work intensity' indicator was revised; the timeliness of social data was improved; a news release on early results of material deprivation indicators was published.

The case studies carried out in the framework of this evaluation confirmed the data availability of the Europe 2020 indicators. Stakeholders interviewed on business statistics stated that Eurostat provided extensive indicator sets to contribute to Europe 2020, namely R&D-oriented data. Asylum and managed migration data also included migrants' integration statistics, which were part of the regional labour market indicator. These statistics were broken down by region and degree of urbanisation and looked at activity rate, employment and unemployment rate. In turn, they supported monitoring of the employment rate headline target indicator for Europe 2020. Eurostat regularly published *some* of the data used for Europe 2020 indicators at regional level, in its regional yearbook. Statistics with a territorial dimension supported a wide range of policy measures of the Europe 2020 strategy, such as urban renewal, increasing education opportunities, crime prevention, social inclusion or environmental protection.¹⁹² At the same time, the formulation of some indicators made it difficult to make them available at regional level (for example, focusing on narrow age groups or measuring the consumption of renewable energy at the regional or territorial level is not feasible). Yet, in its Opinion on Work Programme 2016, ESAC indicated that the revision of Europe 2020 indicators should reflect the need for better regional statistics to allow monitoring of the implementation of the strategy.

¹⁸⁸ Commission Staff Working Document – Annual Internal Audit Report for 2015 Summary of the engagements finalised by the IAS within the 2015 audit plan Accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and Council Annual Report on internal audits carried out in 2015 (Article 99(5) of the Financial Regulation) (SWD/2016/0322 final, 30.9.2016).

¹⁸⁹ The entire audit is not publicly available.

¹⁹⁰ European Commission, 2013/2014/2015/2016/2017/2018/2019 Annual Activity Report – Eurostat.

¹⁹¹ Eurostat, Smarter, greener, more inclusive? Indicators to support the Europe 2020 Strategy – 2013/2014/2015/2016/2017/2018/2019 edition.

¹⁹² Eurostat, *Eurostat regional yearbook 2018 edition*, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/9210140/KS-HA-18-001-EN-N.pdf>.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Overarching conclusions

The findings of the evaluation show that the European Statistical Programme 2013-2020 was largely relevant. The **objectives of the Programme, generally considered as appropriate, were aligned with the needs of statistical organisations** within the ESS throughout the period evaluated. Suitable mechanisms maintained the alignment with stakeholders' needs and the ESP adapted well to policy changes at EU level. The evaluation concluded that, in general, ESP activities were appropriate to deliver the objectives set in 2013 and revised in 2018.

However, both producers and users identified persistent gaps in the Programme. The gaps identified by users largely fall outside of the ESP and they cannot be considered an implementation failure. Nevertheless, there was a missed opportunity to ensure additional mechanisms were in place to respond to the wide range of users' emerging needs as per **Objective 1**. Users also referred to needs related to the adaptation to technological advances such as big data which became more prominent during the Programme, as reflected in the extension of the ESP. This translated into specific activities, the results of which have the potential to provide solutions to some of the problems the ESS still faces in terms of resources and costs. Statistics producers also identified some gaps but, most of all, they expressed concern for having to deal with additional demand and the requests for new statistics with limited resources. They also highlighted the need to improve the prioritisation processes to manage production costs better.

The evaluation found that the ESP was **effective in delivering on the objectives set** in the Regulation. Under the Programme, Eurostat has provided high-quality statistics (including comparable statistics across all EU Member States and consistent time series) used by a wide range of users to, among other things, support the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies at the EU and Member States level. In addition, Eurostat has increased the availability of data and statistics. It also introduced, to a limited extent, efficiency gains in the production of its statistics by avoiding duplication of efforts and reducing burdens on Member States. The ESP was effective in rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly providing information on key aspects of the statistics in a clear and accessible manner through Eurostat's website and its publications.

Timeliness and the completeness of European statistics, however, remained persistent weaknesses throughout the Programme. In addition, while Eurostat effectively developed and strengthened partnerships within and beyond the ESS, it missed an opportunity to form partnerships with private organisations. This has negatively impacted the effectiveness of ESP activities by limiting its ability to introduce new data sources such as big data to produce more and new statistics and, in the longer term, potentially reduce the burden on Member States. This limitation is nonetheless expected to be addressed in the next Programme.

The ESP demonstrated **efficient use of both financial and human resources while delivering high-quality European statistics on demand for policy purposes**. Moreover, a higher productivity of statistics production was achieved during the period evaluated. Factors underpinning these developments were good governance, management and monitoring mechanisms.

The main challenges to achieving efficiency were growing production costs related to an increasing volume of statistics; and the administrative burden placed on data providers and statistics producers. The response to this challenge was covered by the ESP's **Objective 2**, aiming at achieving efficiency gains by implementing new methods of production of European statistics. Several initiatives were undertaken to achieve this objective. Among them, the most important were activities within the ESS Vision 2020, modernising business statistics resulting in the European Business Statistics Regulation and strengthening partnerships within the ESS. As mentioned above, more remained to be done to improve prioritisation processes and identify statistics which have become less relevant over time.

The evaluation found that the ESP was **internally coherent, with no overlaps or inconsistencies identified between the objectives and among the activities** listed within the Programme's regulations and planning documents. Several governance bodies and advisory boards, whose role was to monitor, present and discuss options to improve the ESP, contributed to the maintenance of this internal coherence.

The **external coherence of the Programme was ensured by the effective cooperation between Eurostat and EU bodies and agencies, as well as international organisations**. This cooperation resulted in synergies with the wider

EU policy objectives and priorities and with international statistical activities. It also ensured the development of comparable and harmonised European statistics at the regional and international level. Some weaknesses impacting on the external coherence of the ESP were identified. One of these weaknesses was the lack of flexibility and timeliness of European statistics to respond to emerging needs. The second was that the increased requests for statistics from individual DGs increased the burden on Member States. This suggested the need for Eurostat to take on a greater coordination role in that regard. The third was the need to further formalise and update the cooperation agreements between Eurostat and international organisations.

Finally, the evaluation confirmed the **EU added value of the ESP**. The Programme's main contribution was the harmonisation of European statistics to deliver high-quality comparable, comprehensive, and reliable statistics, providing them in a single location (one-stop shop). In the absence of the ESP, evidence-based policy making at EU level would not be possible and policy making at country level, based on comparative analysis of statistics across countries would be very difficult. Statistics provided by other institutions were used for different purposes and tended to complement Eurostat's offer. The Programme supported the strengthening of the laws of statistics and positioning of statistical offices in governance structures of EU countries, establishing a clear roadmap for statistics production for producers, also in the candidate countries. The ESP contributed to the strengthening of the international statistical community and the efforts made to ensure the quality of statistics at the international level through cooperation between Eurostat and international organisations, such as the OECD or the WHO.

Nonetheless, while harmonisation of statistics can be perceived as the main achievement of the ESP, it also remains a challenge requiring further work and effort. Stakeholders pointed out that more needed to be done to further enhance comparability, mainly in terms of harmonising methods of collecting data across Member States. They noted as well that the Programme included some burdensome procedures caused mainly by the institutional set up, the different legal acts, and a large partnership between the Member States, the EC and EFTA countries, making the implementation of the Programme quite complex.

5.2. Recommendations

The evaluation conclusions highlight areas for improvement of the ESP. This section presents a set of practicable recommendations, addressed to specific stakeholder categories as relevant. These recommendations also take into consideration the choices made in the new ESP as foreseen under the new MFF. The discussion below explains when areas for improvement identified by this evaluation are addressed by new features of the 2021-2027 ESP.

The evaluation of the relevance of the ESP identified the flexibility of the Programme as a challenge. Based on multiannual decision-making cycles, and the necessary agreement between the European Commission and the co-legislators, the ESP lacks flexibility to respond to new topics. The new ESP aims to address this challenge. While the legal basis, the new SMP Regulation, provides a high-level frame / definition, a Multiannual Action Plan (MAP) defines the strategic ESS actions for the 2021-2027 period and annual programmes will continue to implement the multiannual programme for the part on European statistics, setting more operational details of the ESP. The difference in the legal acts used adds flexibility to the system as the European Commission will be in a position to revise more easily action plans than the establishing Regulation.

Recommendation 1: in the new Multiannual Financial Framework, the ESP is integrated in the Single Market Programme (SMP). The establishing Regulation defines the overarching objectives of the Programmes while the Multiannual Action Plan is intended as a bridge between the SMP and the annual work programmes, operationalising the overarching objectives in a more flexible way. Eurostat to review to what extent the new architecture has added flexibility to the system and to what extent stakeholders have made use of this added flexibility in the interim review of the ESP, synchronised with the midterm evaluation of the Single Market Programme (SMP).

Recommendation 2: As innovation is a very important element of the MAP, Eurostat should develop a coherent innovation strategy incorporating the innovation elements of the MAP. The next steps should build on the lessons learned from the pilots implemented under the previous MFF and focus on the sustained production of the most promising innovation. Innovation, new methods and new data sources are expected to further strengthen the ESP's potential to deliver high-quality statistics, in a timely manner, while delivering efficiency gains. In addition, new data sources, register-based data and big data could support a more efficient production of more territorial granularity in

statistics. Otherwise, it might not be possible to reconcile the demand for more territorial granularity and the demand for prioritisation.

Recommendation 3: Eurostat to follow up on the final report of the expert group on facilitating the use of new data sources for official statistics to focus work on the different areas that will be recommended in this report. Eurostat has set up an expert group bringing together independent experts to discuss effective and sustainable access to data collected and held in the private sector for producing official statistics, also in the light of the new emerging roles of statistical offices in the data-driven society and economy.¹⁹³ The expert group's mandate is to:

1. review the implications for official statistics of the general policy developments with regard to access to privately held data;
2. reflect openly on how these policy developments could be further extended or complemented through developments related to access to privately held data specifically for statistical purposes, also in the context of the new emerging roles of statistical offices in the new data-driven society and economy;
3. examine issues related to specific data sources, issues of transversal character or statistical application domains;
4. produce recommendations for policy initiatives specific to the statistical domain, including recommendations to be reflected in general statistical legislation, possibly as part of an overall effort to modernise the framework governing European statistics, and/or sector specific statistical legislation;
5. produce operational guidance on how to apply or adapt the revised principles on Business-to-Government (B2G) data sharing when data are used for statistical purposes.

Eurostat should closely follow-up the activities of the Commission related to the European data strategy, specifically the proposals for legislation related to business to government data sharing. Based on the expert group's final report and the activities of the European Commission, Eurostat should elaborate an action plan aiming at ensuring access to and use of privately data for the purposes of official statistics.

The evaluation identified progress were possible in the field of communication and visualisation, as developed in the next three recommendations

Recommendation 4: Eurostat to update the search engine of its website to improve its navigability, even for occasional users. There was a consensus on the fact that the search engine was not as user friendly as tools more commonly used by all user categories. It would be helpful to review this tool based on the feedback from the different user profiles created by Eurostat to address the challenges. In addition, Eurostat should improve the accessibility of metadata. A distinction between basic metadata, easy to understand, highlighting key features of the statistics and data, and in plain language for non-specialists, and extensive metadata for more specialist user profiles would support a more informed use of statistics.

Recommendation 5: Eurostat to improve the user-friendliness of the database tree and the overview of the statistics available.

Recommendation 6: Eurostat to develop more visualisation tools, including tools that allow to create visuals combining different databases together on the website.

The evaluation of the efficiency of the ESP highlights the continued tensions between the need to provide (new) statistics to meet users' requests and the costs borne by statistics producers. In addition to the recommendations 2, 3 and 10, which are expected to also deliver efficiency gains, the evaluation team recommends the following:

Recommendation 7: Eurostat to continue raising awareness on production costs within the ESS and on the cost-benefit analysis of the ESP. Communication on production costs is critical to ensure that (1) users are aware of the financial constraints involved in statistics production and (2) ESP stakeholders are aware of the cost-benefit analysis of European statistics. It is critical that MSs share information about their production costs to make the analysis of the production costs and their drivers possible. Since the production systems are very diverse, Eurostat cannot estimate production costs without MSs' strong engagement.

¹⁹³ [Expert Group on facilitating the use of new data sources for official statistics | CROS \(europa.eu\)](#)

Recommendation 8: Eurostat to follow up on the lessons learned from the new approach to prioritisation by the interim review of the new ESP. The review should confirm whether the new approach delivered on the objective to ensure the continued relevance of the statistics produced while decreasing the burden on producers.

Recommendation 9: Eurostat to take a stronger role in the coordination of new statistics requests introduced by European Commission DGs. Combined with the strengthened prioritisation mechanism, the moderation of any new request would help prevent any duplication while maintaining a reasonable balance between needs and production costs.

Recommendation 10: Eurostat to promote the integration of statistical issues and/or the provision of technical assistance in the statistical field in partnerships with third countries, building on the successes of existing collaboration with candidate countries and potential candidates notably, and in partnerships with international organisations. This might also be applicable to the future partnership between the EU and the United Kingdom. The EU added value created by the ESP could be higher if statistical issues were streamlined more in the EU international relations.

6. Annexes

6.1. Annex 1: Evaluation Question Matrix

Evaluation questions	Sub-questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data sources / methods
Relevance: Are the activities supported under the different objectives of the ESP relevant to meeting the needs of users / producers and to supporting the policy priorities of the EU?				
EQ1: To what extent did ESP objectives reflect the needs of the ESS?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did ESP objectives correspond to the needs of statistical organisations within the ESS when it was set up in 2013? To what extent did the ESP objectives continue to meet the needs of statistical organisations within the ESS after its extension and redesign in 2018? To what extent did reprioritisation exercises meet the identified needs at the time, especially regarding the 2018 extension? What mechanisms were used to ensure the ESP objectives continue to meet statistical organisations' needs? 	<p>1.1. ESP objectives and priorities corresponded to the identified needs and gaps of the European statistics sector and to their evolution</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> In 2013 in 2018 when the ESP was extended and revised currently <p>1.2. Mechanisms for feedback and input by ESS stakeholders existed and were perceived as appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder assessment of adequacy of ESP design to identify and reflect ESS needs and their evolution (1.1.1) Stakeholder assessment of adequacy of consultation mechanisms to ensure ESP objectives remain relevant (1.2.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey of producers Interviews with NSIs Interviews with EU stakeholders Interviews with representatives of selected Member States Public Consultation Document review including review of published statistical data and description of stakeholder consultation mechanisms
EQ2: To what extent were ESP activities appropriate to deliver the set objectives of the ESP?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent were ESP activities appropriate to deliver the objectives set in 2013? To what extent did ESP activities continue to be appropriate to deliver the objectives revised in 2018 and to date? What mechanisms were used to gather feedback from users? To what extent were these adequate and allow for adjustment? To what extent did the ESP flexibly adapt to technological advances (e.g. big data)? 	<p>2.1. ESP activities continued to be expected to be the appropriate tools to deliver the set objectives (2013, 2018, today)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> In 2013 in 2018 when the ESP was extended and revised currently <p>2.2. Mechanisms for feedback and input by users existed and were perceived as appropriate</p> <p>2.3. New technologies and statistical methods were considered in programme planning exercises</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder assessment of appropriateness of ESP activities to deliver the objectives of the ESP and their evolution (2.1.1) Stakeholder assessment of adequacy of consultation mechanisms to ensure ESP activities remain relevant (2.2.1) Stakeholder assessment of the flexibility of ESP to adapt to technological advances (2.3.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of media and user satisfaction surveys Document review Survey of institutional users Interviews with user stakeholders Interviews with ESS stakeholders Interviews with representatives of selected Member States Public Consultation Case studies
Effectiveness: How effectively is the ESP delivering against its objectives?				
EQ 3: To what extent were the objectives of the ESP 2013-2020 fulfilled?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the ESP successful in providing timely statistical information (Obj. 1)? Was this delivery consistent (Obj. 4)? To what extent were ESP data used in the development, monitoring and evaluation of EU policies? Was there evidence that the ESP contributed to improving policy making (at EU / 	<p>3.1 Users expressed satisfaction as to the timeliness and completeness of data availability</p> <p>3.2 Eurostat data was downloaded and used by a range of stakeholders for a range of purposes</p> <p>3.3 Eurostat data were used in journalistic and research activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of objectives met or in progress (3.1.1) User assessment of timeliness, completeness, quality etc. of datasets as expressed in User Satisfaction Surveys (3.1.2) Web analytics (3.2.1): 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of administrative data and KPIs (including Eurostat Quality Reports) and programme output mapping Document review Review of media and user satisfaction surveys

	<p>MS level)? Was there evidence that the ESP contributed to other purposes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent did the ESP increase the availability of data, including social economy activities and on the Europe 2020 indicators? • To what extent was the ESP successful in introducing efficiency gains in the production of European statistics (Obj. 2) and avoiding duplication of effort (Obj. 1)? • To what extent was the ESP successful in introducing quality improvements in the production of European statistics (Obj. 2)? • How effective was the ESP in strengthening partnerships within and beyond the ESS (Obj.3)? • Which factors prevented or reduced the impact of ESP activities? How could these be overcome? 	<p>3.4 Data were used by EU policy makers to inform policy making and decisions</p> <p>3.5 Data were being used by MSs' policy makers to inform policy making and decisions</p> <p>3.6 ESP activities resulted in a net increase of available data; users considered newly available data sources to be useful</p> <p>3.7 ESS stakeholders and/or users considered ESP activity to have increased the efficiency of European statistics production</p> <p>3.8 ESS stakeholders considered ESP activity to have avoided or prevented duplication of effort on the part of stakeholders</p> <p>3.9 ESS stakeholders and/or users considered ESP activity to have increased the quality of European statistics production</p> <p>3.10 ESP activity strengthened existing partnerships or developed new ones</p> <p>3.11 Stakeholders identified factors that have prevented or reduced the impact of ESP activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in number of website hits over time • Change in requests for microdata over time • Change in requests for data extraction of time • Change in frequency and nature of mention of Eurostat online • Stakeholder assessment of effectiveness of ESP in meeting user needs (3.2.2 and 3.9.1) • Net increase in the number of statistical datasets and long time-series (3.6.1) • Stakeholder assessment of the impact of ESP on quality and efficiency (3.7.1; 3.8.1 and 3.9.1) • Increased or more in-depth activity taking place with partners within and beyond the ESS (3.8.2) • Stakeholder assessment of the impact of the ESP on strengthening partnerships (3.10.1) • Stakeholder assessment of barriers to current or increased effectiveness of ESP activity (3.11.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of institutional users • Survey of producers • Interviews with all stakeholder groups • Public Consultation • Case studies
<p>EQ 4: To what extent did the ESP make progress on rendering access to official statistics easier and more user-friendly?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were effective feedback mechanisms in place to identify accessibility issues and improvements? • Did users find the Eurostat dissemination channels (including the website) easy to use? • Were users provided with sufficient information about key aspects of the data? 	<p>4.1 Effective processes were in place to monitor and receive feedback about data accessibility</p> <p>4.2 Relevant information (e.g. new releases, data quality standards) was available in a clear and accessible manner</p> <p>4.3 Users expressed satisfaction with dissemination and communication methods used by Eurostat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the processes in place to monitor and receive feedback about data accessibility (4.1.1) • User assessment of user-friendliness of Eurostat communication channels as expressed in User Satisfaction Surveys or through other channels (4.2.1) • Change in the number of web impact and positive/negative mentions (4.2.1) • Fulfilment of objectives relating to improving communication and dissemination (4.3.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document (web) review • Review of administrative data and KPIs • Review of media, user satisfaction surveys and web impact • Survey of institutional users • Public Consultation
<p>EQ 5: Did ESP activity result in wider economic, social or environmental impacts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there evidence that the ESP contributed to wider social, economic or environmental impacts? 	<p>5.1 Examples of wider social, economic or environmental impact were identified by stakeholders and attributed in part or in full to ESP activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of impact drawn from document review • Stakeholder reports of wider impact resulting from ESP activity (5.1.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • All stakeholder interviews • Case studies

Efficiency: How efficient is the use of ESP resources?				
EQ 6: To what extent were ESP resources used efficiently to achieve the desired results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the processes in place to collect information on costs and benefits across ESP activities and to what extent did they inform programme decisions and operations? • What were the systems in place to monitor and optimise the use of resources? • How effective were anti-fraud measures and processes in place to prevent misallocation of ESP funds? • To what extent was the ESP successful in introducing efficiency gains in statistics production? • 	<p>6.1 Sufficient information about costs and benefits across ESP activities was available and used to inform programme decisions and operations</p> <p>6.2 Measures and processes in place to monitor and optimise the efficient use of resources were effective</p> <p>6.3 Anti-fraud measures and processes in place were effective</p> <p>6.4 ESP operations spending was efficient</p> <p>6.5 The ESP was successful in introducing efficiency gains in statistics production</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder assessment of the availability of information on costs and how that feeds into programme decisions and operations (6.1.1) • Existence of measures to monitor and optimise efficient use of resources (6.2.1) • Reported cases of fraud (6.3.1) • Stakeholder assessment of ESP operations efficiency (6.4.1) • Relative output of Eurostat products to budget increase/decrease (6.4.2) • Relative output of Eurostat products to number of staff (6.4.3) • Stakeholder assessment of the impact of ESP on quality and efficiency (6.5.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of administrative data, including cost analysis and evaluation outputs • Document review • Interviews with Eurostat staff • Interviews with NSIs and ESS stakeholders • Case studies • Public Consultation
EQ7: To what extent were ESP activities successful in limiting the administrative burdens for ESS stakeholders, including Member States and data providers (respondents)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What steps were taken to analyse the administrative burdens for NSIs and statistics producers? • What steps were taken to reduce the administrative burdens for NSIs and statistics producers? How effective were they? • To what extent did the ESP provide benefits for Member States and other data providers relative to the costs of delivering these results? • What national factors affected this balance? 	<p>7.1 Measures and processes in place to analyse administrative burdens for NSIs and statistics producers were effective</p> <p>7.2 Measures undertaken to reduce administrative burdens for NSIs and statistics producers resulted in an improved cost-benefit balance</p> <p>7.3 NSIs and Member States considered the benefits of ESP to outweigh the administrative burdens they face</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of measures to monitor and analyse administrative burdens for NSIs and statistics producers (7.1.1) • Stakeholder assessment of efficiency of measures to monitor and reduce administrative burdens (7.2.1) • Stakeholder assessment of benefits of ESP activities relative to their administrative burdens (7.3.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of administrative data, including cost analysis and evaluation outputs • Interviews with Eurostat staff • Interviews with NSIs and ESS stakeholders • Interviews with user groups (e.g. business) • Survey of producers • Case studies
EQ 8: Was the management / organisation of the ESP as a whole conducive to supporting efficient delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective were systems in place to review the efficiency and performance of the ESP? • How effective were Eurostat governance mechanisms at monitoring the efficient use of resources? 	<p>8.1 Effective systems were in place to review ESP performance and identify risks to efficient use of resources</p> <p>8.2 Stakeholders involved in the governance of the ESP and Eurostat had sufficient access to information to monitor the efficiency of resource use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder assessment of the effectiveness of governance systems (8.1.1) • Official opinions provided by EU institutions and governance stakeholders on ESP/Eurostat operations (8.2.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews with Eurostat staff • Interviews with ESS governance stakeholders
Coherence: Is the ESP considered to be coherent?				
EQ9: To what extent did ESP activities and objectives contribute to the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the activities and objectives of the ESP set out in the Regulations and programme planning internally coherent? 	<p>9.1 Activities and objectives set out in the Regulations and internal planning documents were internally coherent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No coherence issues (overlap, duplication, contradiction) identified from document review during the evaluation period (9.1.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review • Interviews with Eurostat staff

<p>internal coherence of the ESS?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the national and international level, were processes to ensure the coherence of statistical data identifiable and deemed fit-for purpose? 	<p>9.2 Effective processes were in place to monitor and enable the coherence of internal ESS activities</p> <p>9.3 Stakeholders involved in the production of European statistics considered that ESP activities promoted internal coherence and/or did not negatively impact internal coherence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of suitable coherence mechanisms (9.2.1) Stakeholder assessment of the effectiveness of the coherence mechanisms (9.3.1) Stakeholder assessment of the overall internal coherence of the ESS (9.3.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with NSIs and ESS stakeholders Survey of producers Case studies
<p>EQ10: To what extent do ESP activities complement / contradict / overlap with wider EU activity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are ESP activities and data aligned with the needs of overarching EU strategies and objectives? Are there opportunities for further alignment? Are the statistics delivered throughout the ESP flexible to respond to new strategic priorities? How effectively does Eurostat coordinate with other EU bodies? 	<p>10.1 ESP activities and data are actively aligned and/or not in contradiction with overarching EU strategies and objectives</p> <p>10.2 Effective mechanisms are in place to monitor and respond to wider EU strategies and priorities</p> <p>10.3 EU stakeholders consider that Eurostat coordinates effectively with other EU bodies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder assessment of effectiveness of coordination with EU bodies (10.1.1) No coherence issues identified from document review during the evaluation period (10.1.2) Identification of suitable coherence mechanisms (10.2.1) Number and rate of fulfilment of DG-driven data requests (10.2.2) Stakeholder assessment of alignment of ESP activities and data with EU priorities (indicator 10.3.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews with Eurostat staff Interviews with ESS stakeholders Interviews with EU stakeholders Case studies
<p>EQ11: To what extent are ESP activities coherent with the activities of international statistics organisations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effectively does Eurostat coordinate with international partners (e.g. OECD) on the development of international concepts, classifications, methods and other standards? 	<p>11.1 Effective mechanisms are in place to coordinate with international partners</p> <p>11.2 International partners consider that Eurostat activities complement and/or are not in contradiction with their own statistics production and dissemination activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of suitable coherence mechanisms (11.1.1) No coherence issues identified from document review during the evaluation period (11.1.2) Stakeholder assessment of effectiveness of coordination with international partners (11.2.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Interviews with Eurostat staff Interviews with international organisations Case studies Public Consultation
<p>EU Added Value: what is the EU added value of the ESP?</p>				
<p>EQ 12: What is the EU added value of the ESP?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the ESP contribute to increased comparability of national statistics? Are ESP statistics preferred to other competing international statistical datasets? Does the ESP contribute to reduced time lag between reference period and publication data of statistics? Does the ESP enhance the pool of resources available for production and development of new statistics at MS level? 	<p>12.1 Users of data consider ESP to be the preferred source of information when they compare indicators across MSs</p> <p>12.2 Individual and institutional users' stated preference for Eurostat data over other international datasets</p> <p>12.3 There is a recognised advantage of having a "one stop shop" for harmonised and validated European statistics</p> <p>12.4 What would happen in the absence of ESP?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of surveyed and interviewed users prefer ESP data over other sources when comparing MS level statistical indicators (12.1.1) Majority of surveyed and interviewed users prefer ESP data over other competing international datasets (12.2.1) Majority of surveyed and interviewed users confirm the advantage of having "one stop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey of producers Survey of institutional users Case studies Interviews with NSIs and ESS stakeholders Public Consultation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the production of European Statistics be successfully achieved at the MS level? 		<p>shop" for harmonised and validated European statistics (12.3.1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders qualitative answers to the counterfactual on the absence of ESP (12.4.1) 	
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6.2. Annex 2: Desk research sources

Title of the document and/or file name	Mapping against evaluation questions and case studies
Regulations	
Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics	All criteria
Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17	EQ1, EQ3, EQ5, EQ7, EQ8, EQ12
Regulation (EU) 2015/759 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics	Efficiency - preamble (4) and 11 Effectiveness - amended article 13(1)
Regulation (EU) 2017/1951 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2017 amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European Statistical Programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2020	All criteria
Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation)	Relevance
Regulation (EU) 2019/2152 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2019 on European business statistics, repealing 10 legal acts in the field of business statistics	Business statistics case study
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Business Statistics amending Regulation (EC) No 184/2005 and repealing 10 legal acts in the field of business statistics	Business statistics case study
Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 99/2013, (EU) No 1287/2013, (EU) No 254/2014 and (EU) No 652/2014	Potential linkages of the future programme between all evaluation criteria
Accompanying documents	
Commission Staff Working Document Executive Summary of the Impact Assessment (Impact Assessment 2016)	SWDs cover all EQs
Commission Staff Working Document Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17, by extending it to 2018-20 (Impact Assessment 2016)	SWDs cover all EQs Managed migration statistics
Commission Staff Working Document Impact Assessment (Impact Assessment 2018)	All criteria
Regulatory Scrutiny Board opinion, Impact Assessment-MFF Programme/Single Market for the period 2021-2027	EQ12
Commission Implementing Decision of 6.5.2021 on the financing of the Programme for Single Market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium sized enterprises, and European Statistics and the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2024, and its annex V: "2021 Work Programme of the Single Market Programme – European Statistics", C(2021)3046 final	Potential linkages between the future programme to all evaluation criteria
Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Business Statistics amending Regulation (EC) No 184/2005 and repealing 10 legal acts in the field of business statistics	Business statistics case study
Programme statements	
Programme statements DB2015, DB2016, DB2017, DB2018	All criteria
Draft General Budget of the European Union for the financial year 2020, working document Part I: Programme statement of operational expenditure	All criteria

Title of the document and/or file name	Mapping against evaluation questions and case studies
Legal Documents	
Legal documentation	EQ3, EQ10
Regulation (EC) No 295/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2008 concerning structural business statistics	Business statistics case study
European Statistical System Vision (ESS Vision)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESS Vision 2020, Document presented at the 21st meeting of the European Statistical System Committee • Reports on European Statistical System Vision 2020 Projects • ESS Vision and ESSnets (Business cases, Portfolios, Presentations, Assessments) • Partnership Group's Task Force "Implementation of the ESS Vision 2020" • ESS Vision 2020 Power Point Presentations • ESS Strategic Communication during the COVID-19 crisis • Report survey on communication practices related to the use of new data sources in the ESS • Project-End Report ESS Enterprise Architecture Framework • Digital communication, User analytics and Innovative products (DIGICOM) • Project-End Report: ESS.VIP REDESIGN • Project-End Report: ESS.VIP SIMSTAT 78th Meeting of the Partnership Group (videoconference 10-11 December 2020), Doc PG 2020/78/4.2 Outcomes of the ESS Vision 2020 	EQ1 - EQ5 EQ7 - EQ9 EQ12 COVID-19 case study
Strategic Plans	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eurostat Strategic Plan 2016-2020 • Eurostat Strategic Plans 2020-2024 	EQ1, EQ2, EQ 4 EQ6 - EQ10 EQ12
Antifraud strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eurostat Antifraud Strategy 2018-2020 • Evaluation of the current Eurostat Anti-Fraud Strategy 2018-2020 	EQ6
Directors' Seminars	
Conclusions of the Directors' Seminar, Mondorf, 8-10 October 2015	EQ2, EQ4, EQ8, EQ12
Conclusions of the Directors' Seminar, Bourglinster, 15 April 2016	EQ8, EQ10
Directors' General Seminar on ESS priorities beyond 2020, 23-24 March 2017	EQ2, EQ3
Eurostat International Cooperation Strategy, 2020	EQ9, EQ11
Opinions of the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC)	
Opinion on the draft European Statistical Programme 2013-2017 – 23 May 2011	EQ1, EQ3 Business statistics case study Social statistics on asylum and managed migration case study
Opinion on Work Programme 2013 – Advice on strategic priorities for the draft Annual Work Programme 2013 and on priority-setting for the European Statistical System	EQ1, EQ3, EQ10
Opinion on Work Programme 2014 – Advice on strategic priorities for the draft Annual Work Programme 2014 and on priority-setting for the European Statistical System – 29 March 2013	EQ1, EQ3, EQ4
Opinion on Work Programme 2015 – Advice on the strategic priorities for the draft Annual Work Programme 2015 –	EQ1, EQ2, EQ7
Opinion on Work Programme 2016 – Advice on the strategic priorities for the draft Annual Work Programme 2016	EQ1-EQ4, EQ7 Social statistics on asylum and managed migration case study Territorial statistics case study

Title of the document and/or file name	Mapping against evaluation questions and case studies
Opinion on migration statistics – 23 November 2015	Social statistics on asylum and managed migration case study
Opinion on the proposed Framework Regulation for European Statistics on Persons and Households Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS) – 3 December 2015	Effectiveness
Opinion on the Annual 2017 Work Programme – 1 March 2016	EQ2, EQ3, EQ8, EQ9 Social statistics on asylum and managed migration case study Territorial statistics case study
Opinion on the draft strategic priorities of the European statistics Annual Work Programme 2018 – 10 March 2017	EQ3- EQ5, EQ7, EQ9 Territorial statistics case study
Opinion on a pre-final draft "EU SDG indicator set" - 22 March 2017	EQ3
Annex – ESAC recommendations for an improved indicator setting for <i>European action for sustainability translating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)</i>	EQ3, EQ4, EQ9 Territorial statistics case study
Opinion on the Final Report of the Expert Group on Quality-of-Life Indicators - 27 July 2017	EQ1, EQ12 Territorial statistics case study
Opinion on the Priorities for the post-2020 European Statistical Programme - 15 February 2018	EQ1, EQ3, EQ10
Opinion on the Draft Strategic Priorities for the European Statistics Annual Work Programme 2019 - 28 February 2018	EQ1, EQ3, EQ10, EQ12
Opinion on the Draft Strategic Priorities for the European Statistics Annual Work Programme 2020 - 11 February 2019	EQ1 Social statistics on asylum and managed migration case study Territorial statistics case study
Opinion on the draft 2021 Annual Work Programme - 26 May 2020	EQ1 COVID-19 case study
Annual Statistical Work Programmes (referred to as Annual Work Programmes – AWP)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical Programme 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 • Annual work programmes 2018-2020 	EQ2, EQ7, EQ9, EQ10 Business Statistics case study
Management Plans	
Management Plans 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2020	EQ8
Midterm review of the Management Plan 2017	EQ1, EQ3, EQ7
Management Plan 2018, 2019	EQ2-EQ4, EQ6, EQ8:
Critical Projects	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors Seminar 2013, Project Management: The situation of critical projects • Directors Seminar 2014, Project Management: The situation of critical projects • Annual Work Programme 2015 – Annex 6: Critical projects • Critical projects that will end in 2013, 2014 • Critical projects that will continue in 2015 • Directors Seminar (Project Management: The situation of critical projects 2015) • Directors Seminar (Project Management: The situation of critical projects 2016) 	EQ8
European Statistical System supporting documents	
Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System, Version 2.0	Relevance

Title of the document and/or file name	Mapping against evaluation questions and case studies
European Statistical System handbook for quality and metadata reports, 2020 edition	Relevance and Coherence
The European Statistics Code of Practice, revised edition 2017	Coherence
Dissemination	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing European statistics, from Statistics Explained, 2014 • Eurostat tools implemented in 2013-2014 • Eurostat statistical products and dissemination • New Dissemination Tools • Monitoring report For July/August/ September/October/November 2020 On Eurostat Digital Dissemination • Strategy to reach out and engage with Data Journalists 	EQ2, EQ4
Annual Activity Reports	
Annual Activity Reports 2013- 2020	EQ1, EQ3, EQ6, EQ7, EQ8
Annexes to the Annual Activity Report	EQ6, EQ7, EQ8
News releases	
European Statistical Recovery Dashboard To track the economic and social recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, 17 December 2020	EQ10 COVID-19 case study
ESGAB annual reports	
2015: Seventh annual report by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice by Eurostat and the European Statistical System as a whole	EQ3
2016: Eighth Annual Report by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice by Eurostat and the European Statistical System as a whole	EQ2, EQ3, EQ8:
2017: Ninth Annual Report by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice by Eurostat and the European Statistical System as a whole	EQ3, EQ8:
ESGAB Annual Report 2017: Executive summary and recommendations	Same as above
2018: Tenth Annual Report by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice by Eurostat and the European Statistical System as a whole	EQ10
2019: Eleventh annual report by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice by Eurostat and the European Statistical System as a whole	EQ2, EQ8, EQ9, EQ12
ESS Committee	
46th meeting of the ESS Committee on the ESS Multiannual Action Plan 2021-2027 (ESSC 2021/46/3/EN, including annex)	All criteria
Previous evaluations of the European Statistical Programmes	
Support for ex-post evaluation of the Community Statistical Programme 2008-2012, 2013	Relevance
Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the European Statistical Programme 2013-2017, 2015 (first midterm evaluation)	EQ2, EQ6, EQ9, EQ10, EQ1
Background information for the intermediate progress report on the implementation of the ESP 2013-2017	Relevance
Commission Staff Working Documents ('SWD')	
Commission staff working document on the second mid-term evaluation of the European statistical programme 2013-17, 2018 (second mid-term evaluation)	EQ1-3, EQ6-10, EQ12

Title of the document and/or file name	Mapping against evaluation questions and case studies
Commission Staff Working Document on progress in the implementation of the European statistical programme 2013-2020 (progress report 2019)	All criteria
Overview of the Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation Frameworks for the MFF 2014-2020 Programmes Accompanying the document Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the evaluation of the Union's finances based on the results achieved	EQ3
Costs of Products	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost assessment survey on the production of official statistics in the ESS • Preliminary results of the cost assessment survey of production of statistics and of the cost analysis of European statistics (by products) in the ESS • Cost assessment survey on the production of official statistics in the ESS, 2018 • Cost assessment survey on the production of official statistics in the ESS 2019 	EQ6, EQ7
Burden Reports 2012-2017	
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 716/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2007 on Community statistics on the structure and activity of foreign affiliates	EQ11, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on implementation of the Regulation (EC) No 453/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quarterly statistics on Community job vacancies	EQ3, EQ12 Business statistics case study
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1445/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007 establishing common rules for the provision of basic information on Purchasing Power Parities and for their calculation and dissemination	EQ11, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Decision No 1297/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on a Programme for the Modernisation of European Enterprise and Trade Statistics (MEETS)	EQ11, EQ12 Business statistics case study
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of the Regulation (EC) No 295/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning structural business statistics	EQ11, EQ12 Business statistics case study
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Decision No 1608/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on science and technology statistics	EQ6, EQ7, EQ11, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council concerning short-term statistics as required by Council Regulation (EC) No 1165/98 of 19 May 1998	EQ6, EQ7, EQ11, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 762/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 on the submission by Member States of statistics on aquaculture and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 788/96	EQ3, EQ7
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 177/2008 of 20 February 2008 establishing a common framework for business registers for statistical purposes and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 2186/93	EQ3, EQ6, EQ7 Business statistics case study
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 January 2012 on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods by road	EQ3, EQ7, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 450/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the labour cost index (LCI)	EQ3, EQ4, EQ5
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 577/98 on the organisation of the labour force sample survey in the Community	EQ3, EQ6

Title of the document and/or file name	Mapping against evaluation questions and case studies
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 on Community statistics on migration and international protection	EQ3, EQ10, EQ12 Social statistics on asylum and managed migration case study
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on implicit liabilities with potential impact on public budgets	EQ3
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 691/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European environmental economic accounts	EQ3, EQ6, EQ10
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on implementation of Regulation (EC) No 453/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on quarterly statistics on Community job vacancies	EQ3 Business statistics case study
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1921/2006 on the submission of statistical data on landings of fishery products in Member States	EQ3, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the quality of fiscal data reported by Member States in 2015	EQ3, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning European statistics on tourism	EQ3, EQ5, EQ7, EQ9, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on statistics compiled pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 2150/2002 on waste statistics and their quality	EQ3, EQ7, EQ10, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 762/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 on the submission by Member States of statistics on aquaculture and repealing Council Regulation (EC) 788/96 (2)	EQ3, EQ7, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 70/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 January 2012 on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of goods by road	EQ3, EQ7, EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 450/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the labour cost index (LCI)	EQ3-EQ5
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1185/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2009 concerning statistics on pesticides	EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the quality of fiscal data reported by Member States in 2016	EQ3-EQ12
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council concerning short-term statistics as required by Council Regulation (EC) No 1165/98 of 19 May 1998	EQ3, EQ4, EQ6, EQ7, EQ11, EQ12: Business statistics case study
Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the implementation of the Regulation (EC) No 295/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning structural business statistics	EQ3, EQ12 Business statistics case study
Final report on the Intrastat administrative burden - "Analysis of the cost-benefit and administrative burden reduction potential of options for redesign of Intrastat" A Word document compiles the costs and burden sections extracted from all the reports	EQ7
Audit reports	
Final audit report on effectiveness of DG ESTAT's cooperation with external stakeholders, January 2019	EQ10, EQ11
ECA, Reporting on sustainability: A stock take of EU Institutions and Agencies, June 2019	EQ3, EQ10
Final audit report on Eurostat's quality management of statistical processes, November 2019	EQ3

Title of the document and/or file name	Mapping against evaluation questions and case studies
ECA, Wind and solar power for electricity generation: significant action needed if EU targets to be met, 2019	EQ3
ECA, Special Report NO 16, European Environmental Economic Accounts: usefulness for policy makers can be improved, 2019	EQ3
ECA, Sustainable use of plant protection products: limited progress in measuring and reducing risks, 2020	EQ12
ECA, Special Report 20: Combating child poverty – Better targeting of Commission support required, 2020	EQ3
Eurostat, 2021, Eurostat action plan referring to the "Audit on effectiveness of DG ESTAT's cooperation with external stakeholders", IAS.C.3-2018-DG ESTAT-001	EQ3
ESTAT Response to COVID	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Statistical System's response to COVID-19 • COVID-19 labour effects across the income distribution 	EQ2, EQ5, EQ10
EU Budget for Results	
The performance of the EU budget in context	EQ3, EQ10
Financials	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgetary Implementation and Financial Implementation 2013; Grant awarded 2013-2014 • Budgetary Execution 1st Quarter 2017 (Operational Credits) • Budgetary Execution 1st Quarter 2017 (Administrative appropriations) • COMMISSION DECISION on the Adoption of the work programme and financing decision for 2017 for the implementation of the European statistical programme 2013-17 • COMMISSION DECISION on the Adoption of the work programme and financing decision for 2018 for the implementation of the European statistical programme 2013-2020 • COMMISSION DECISION on the financing of the European Statistical Programme 2013-2020 and the adoption of the work programme for 2019 • ESTAT (2013-2020) Work programme containing the actions to be financed and the budget breakdown for 2018 for grants, for procurement, for others. • ESTAT (2013-2020) Article 1 The work programme, Article 2 Union contribution, Article 3 Flexibility clause, Article 4 	EQ6
HR	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Relocation and Employees Number 2014 • Eurostat Total Employees until 2020 	EQ 6, EQ8
Inventory of Statistics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Techniques and Technologies for Statistics 2019 Conference • Inventory 2019 	EQ2, EQ10
Meetings of the European Statistical System Committee	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26th Meeting of the European Statistical System Committee (Item 1 of the agenda ESS Vision 2020 Smart Statistics & Big Data Roadmap Work Programme Objective 11) • 36th Meeting of the European Statistical System Committee (Item 1 of the agenda ESS Vision 2020 Smart Statistics & Big Data Roadmap Work Programme Objective 11) • 42nd Meeting of the European Statistical System Committee (Item 3 of the agenda Priority-setting in the ESS) • 44th Meeting of the European Statistical System Committee (Item 8 of the agenda Priority-setting in the ESS: pilot review) • 69th Meeting of the European Statistical System Committee Partner Group ESS priority-setting 	EQ2, EQ 3, EQ7, EQ10
Memoranda of Understanding	
Existing cooperation agreements (Administrative Arrangements (AA) / MoUs) with external stakeholders - International organisations (internal document)	Effectiveness Coherence

Title of the document and/or file name	Mapping against evaluation questions and case studies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memoranda of Understandings (DG AGRI, DG CLIMA, DG ESTAT, DG RTD, DG TRADE, JRC, DG REGIO) • Memorandum of understandings 2018-2019 	EQ10
Memorandum of understanding between Eurostat and the Directorate General for Agriculture and rural development in the area of statistics, 18/01/2019	Territorial statistics case study
DG HOME, 15/07/2019	Social statistics on asylum and managed migration case study
Administrative arrangement between Eurostat, the statistical Authority of the European Union and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations on Cooperation in the field of Statistics,	EQ9, EQ11
Protocol for co-operation between Eurostat and the OECD in the area of National Accounts – Specification of agreed data exchange and data validation arrangements, 2013	EQ9, EQ11
Microdata requests	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microdata 2013, 2014 • EU Microdata requests • EU Microdata requests • European microdata at your fingertips – How to access microdata in two steps (2020) • How to use the Microdata Access Workflow Tool 	Relevance, EQ4
Monitoring of activities per objective	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of activities per objectives 2013-2014 • Monitoring of activities per objectives 2018-2020 	EQ1-EQ3, EQ8, EQ11
Monitoring Reports to EP and Council	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Reports to EP and Council • Report from the commission to the EP and the council on the implementation of Decision No 1297/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on a Programme for the Modernisation of European Enterprise and Trade Statistics (MEETS) • Power from Statistics: data, information and knowledge GUIDANCE REPORT • Power from Statistics – delivering the evidence of tomorrow report on the conference and the final phase of the initiative 	EQ1-EQ5, EQ 12 Business statistics case study
Negative Priorities	
Implementation of Negative Priorities 2014, 2015, 2016	EQ6, EQ7
Reflection Papers	
Reflection Papers 2015	Reflection Papers by Top EU officials have no reference to the ESS. The only excel file describes how recommendation of peer review are managed
Merging statistics and geospatial information, 2019 edition	Territorial statistics case study
Results of DGs Hearings	
Results of sample (45) of DGs hearings 2013-2020	Relevance Coherence

Title of the document and/or file name	Mapping against evaluation questions and case studies
Minutes Hearing DG SANTE/DG ESTAT 26 October 2020	Relevance Coherence COVID-19 case study
Final minutes of the hearing between DG ESTAT and DG CNECT, 26 October 2020	Relevance Coherence
Targeted Stakeholder Consultations	
Target Stakeholder Consultations	EQ1, EQ2, EQ7, EQ10
User Support	
User Support 2012- 2020	EQ2-EQ4
User Satisfaction Survey	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction Survey Results • Reports on the Eurostat 2012-2020 User Satisfaction Survey • Follow-up of suggestions for improvements coming from the Eurostat user satisfaction survey • 	EQ2-EQ4, EQ8
Web Impact of Eurostat (Analysis, Data and Reports)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eurostat's impact on the web 2020 • Annual Negative Mentions 2018-2020 • Annual Positive and Negative Mentions 2018-2020 • Web Impact of Eurostat 2013 -2014 • Web Monitoring Reports 2012 – 2014 • Web Impact of Eurostat 2015-2017 • Web Monitoring Reports 2015 – 2016 • Web Impact 2018-2020 • Website reports 2018, 2019, 2020 	EQ2-EQ4, EQ 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of Eurostat on the web: English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Swedish, Period: 1-30 November 2020 • Impact of Eurostat on the web: English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Swedish, Period: 1-31 December 2020 	EQ3, EQ12
EUROSTAT Social Media Monthly Report, December 2020	EQ2-EQ4
Metadata handler	
"Super Viewer" access rights to all domains in the ESS-MH	EQ1, EQ4, EQ11, EQ12
Other	
Recent developments in the ESS	EQ1-EQ3, EQ8, EQ10, EQ12 COVID-19 case study
Eurostat, Glossary, Website available at: Glossary: Flash estimate - Statistics Explained (europa.eu)	Effectiveness
Eurostat, 2016, Compilation of European annual and quarterly accounts including flash estimates	Effectiveness
Eurostat, 2020, Flash estimates of income inequalities and poverty indicators for 2019 (FE 2019) Experimental results	Effectiveness
European Court of Auditors, 2019 Special Report, European Environmental Economic Accounts: usefulness for policy makers can be improved	Effectiveness (EQ5)
European Parliament, The Juncker Commission's ten priorities – An end-of-term assessment	Relevance

Title of the document and/or file name	Mapping against evaluation questions and case studies
ESS – Experimental statistics hub	Relevance
European Committee of the Regions, Integration of Geographic and Statistical data for better EU policymaking	Case study on territorial dimension of statistics

6.3. Annex 3: Draft country factsheets

Statistical authorities

Germany



NSI	Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis)
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ONAs	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Deutsche Bundesbank2. Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs3. Federal Ministry of Education and Research4. Federal Employment Agency5. Institute for Employment Research6. Federal Office for Migration and Refugees7. Federal Criminal Police Office8. Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control9. Federal Motor Transport Authority10. German Environment Agency11. Robert-Koch-Institute12. Federal Office for Agriculture and Food13. Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety14. Thünen Institute15. Julius-Kühn Institute16. Baden-Württemberg Statistical Office17. Bavarian Statistical Office18. Office for Statistics Berlin-Brandenburg19. Bremen Statistical Office20. Statistical Office for Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein (Statistical Office North)21. Hesse Statistical Office22. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Statistical Office23. Statistical Office of Lower Saxony24. Information and Technology North Rhine-Westphalia25. Rhineland Palatinate Statistical Office26. Saarland Statistical Office27. Free State of Saxony Statistical Office28. Saxony-Anhalt Statistical Office29. Thuringia Statistical Office30. Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy
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The statistical system

The National Statistical System in Germany is largely decentralised, following the federal structure of the country. The main producers of official statistics are the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Destatis) and the 14 Statistical Offices of the Länder (states).

Destatis is a federal authority of Germany. It is a part of the Federal Ministry of the Interior of the Federal Republic of Germany. It has about 2,400 persons employed (as of June 2020), who gather, collect, process, present and analyse statistical information in Wiesbaden (head office), Bonn and Berlin. Destatis was founded in 1953. It is headed by a President and Vice-President and nine Departments (A to I) are responsible for different tasks.

Destatis' mission is to provide and disseminate statistical information, which is objective, independent, of high-quality and publicly available. Access to the information provided by Destatis is free and its production is publicly financed. The organisation also provides custom-made data material on a chargeable basis. Destatis tasks also include the provision of European statistics. In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics Destatis is responsible for coordinating activities of national agencies contributing to European statistics and acts as the sole contact point for Eurostat.

Following the German principle of legality, federal statistics are, as a rule, governed by federal laws. However, the Länder generally execute federal laws in their own right (according to Article 83 of the Basic Law). The statistical offices of the Länder are administratively and financially independent of the Federation and not subject to directions from Destatis or the federal ministries. Some of the Länder have set up joint offices so that not every Land has its own statistical authority. As a result, there are 14 statistical Länder offices instead of 16 (one per Land). The statistical offices of the Länder are responsible for producing about two thirds of the statistics (251) and their processing up to the respective Land result. Just over one third of the statistics (130) are centrally produced by the Federal Statistical Office. In this context, Destatis ensures that the federal statistics are free of overlaps and are produced according to uniform methods and on schedule by: preparing the individual statistics methodologically and technically, developing and coordinating the programme of federal statistics, and compiling and publishing the federal results.

As of June 2020, the federal statistical programme comprised 381 sets of statistics: 317 of these sets (80%) are based on surveys. Just over half of these 317 surveys are primary surveys, that is, the statistical offices of the Länder or the Federal Statistical Office collect the data originally for the respective set of statistics. For the remaining surveys, the statistical offices compile data for the respective statistics that were originally collected for other, non-statistical purposes (secondary survey). Calculations account for 58 of the 381 sets (15%). They are evaluations of data collected for other purposes; this is done, for example, in national accounts. The remaining six sets are registers.

Sources

Destatis: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Home/inhalt.html>

Destatis. 2020. Your Benefit. Our Mission: https://www.destatis.de/EN/About-Us/Goals-Strategy/YourBenefit_OurMission_2020.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

ESS Germany: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/ess/germany/news>

Description of the German Statistical System: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4372828/DE-description.pdf/443916f8-e119-45d0-a04c-bafe2666c834>

Estonia



Statistical authorities

NSI	Statistics Estonia
ONA	Bank of Estonia

The statistical system

Statistics Estonia (SE) is a government agency under the administration of the Ministry of Finance. While SE can trace its origins back to the establishment of the State Statistical Central Bureau of the Republic of Estonia in 1921, the national statistical institute was founded in the early 1990's. It is a relatively small office with just 350 full-time equivalents employed

SE main task is to provide the public institutions, business and research spheres, international organisations and individuals with reliable and objective information service on economic, demographic, social and environmental situation and trends in Estonia. Official statistics produced by SE comply with international classifications and methods and follow the principles of impartiality, reliability, relevancy, profitability, confidentiality and transparency. The Official Statistics Act (OSA), passed on 10 June 2010, guides the production of statistics in Estonia. The OSA was updated to closely link it to European statistical law as it explicitly states that official statistics must be produced "according to the statistical principles and quality criteria prescribed in Regulation (EC) 223/2009". The Act also gives SE the right of access to administrative data for statistical purposes held not only by public authorities but also to administrative type data held by privative entities. SE can also influence the structure and development of administrative data to make them more amenable to use for statistical purposes. The law also requires that administrative data must be used to the maximum extent in producing official statistics. Finally, the law provides for a Statistical Council and the preparation of, and reporting on, a rolling 5-year-Statistical Programme that is updated annually.

Besides SE and according to the OSA, the Bank of Estonia (Eesti Pank) is the only other primary statistical agency in the country. It compiles and publishes Estonia's national balance of payments, and collects and discloses statistics that are necessary for it to execute its responsibilities according to the Eesti Pank Act. The statistics compiled by Eesti Pank are also an input in the statistics compiled by Eurostat and the European Central Bank.

The Statistics Department consists of three divisions: the Financial Sector Statistics Division, which produces statistics for the financial sector and compiles the quarterly financial accounts for the economy; the External Sector Statistics Division, which compiles the monthly and quarterly balance of payments and the quarterly international investment position and external debt indicators, and distributes general economic statistics to the European Central Bank and other international organisations; and the Data Management and Collection Division, which conducts statistical surveys, manages and develops the registries required for statistics work, supplies data to the European Central Bank's securities database and manages the quality of the data. The official dissemination channel for Eesti Pank statistics is the statistics section of the bank's website.

Sources

Statistics Estonia: <https://www.stat.ee/en/statistics-estonia/about-us>

Eesti Pank: <https://www.eestipank.ee/en/statistics> and <https://www.eestipank.ee/en/statistics-department>

ESS Estonia: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/ess/estonia/news>



Statistical authorities

NSI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística
ONAs	<p>Subdirectorato General for Analysis, Coordination and Statistics (Under-Secretariat for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)</p> <p>Subdirectorato General for Statistics and Studies (General Technical Secretariat for Education and Vocational Training; Ministry of Education and Vocational Training)</p> <p>Directorate General for Insurance and Pension Funds (State Secretariat for Economy and Business Support; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation)</p> <p>Subdirectorato General for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (Directorate General for Research Planning, General Secretariat for Research. Ministry of Science and Innovation)</p> <p>State Secretariat Energy and Mines (Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge)</p> <p>Permanent Observatory on Immigration (General Secretariat for Objectives and Policies for Inclusion and Social Security; Ministry for inclusion, Social Security and Migration)</p> <p>Subdirectorato General for Statistics and Employment and Social Analysis (State Secretariat for Employment and Social Economy; Ministry of Labor and Social Economy)</p> <p>Subdirectorato General for Economic Studies and Statistics (Directorate General for Economic Planning and Budgets; UnderSecretariat for Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda; Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda)</p> <p>Ports of Spain (Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda)</p> <p>National Accountability Bureau (General Comptroller of the State Administration (IGAE); Undersecretariat of Finance. Ministry of Finance)</p> <p>Customs and Excise Taxes Department - Subdirectorato General for Planning, Statistics and Coordination (Tax Agency; State Secretariat for Finance; Ministry of Finance)</p> <p>Directorate General for Traffic (Undersecretariat for Home Affairs; Ministry for Home Affairs)</p> <p>Government Office against Gender-based Violence (State Secretariat for Equality and against Gender-based Violence; Ministry for Equality).</p> <p>Subdirectorato General for Health Information (Directorate-General for Public Health, Quality and Innovation; General Secretariat for Health; Ministry of Health)</p>

The statistical system

The Instituto Nacional de Estadística (National Statistics Institute, INE) is a legally independent institution assigned to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation. It is governed by Law 12/1989 of 9 May on the Public Statistical Function, which regulates Statistics activity that is the exclusive competence of the State, and by the Statute approved by Royal Decree 508/2001 of 11 May.

According to the law, INE is responsible for large scale statistical operations such as demographic and economic censuses, national accounts, demographic and social statistics, economic and social indicators, compilation of the Electoral Census and coordination and management of the Municipal Register. The law also attributes to INE the following functions: formulation of the National Statistical Plan with the collaboration of Ministerial Departments and the Bank of Spain; the proposal of common regulations on concepts, statistical units, classifications and codes; and relations on statistics with specialised International Institutions and in particular, with Eurostat. In Spain, there are other

collegiate bodies with significant competences in statistical matters INE in which INE play an important role. These are the Higher Statistics Council, the Interministerial Statistics Commission and the Interterritorial Statistics Committee.

Given the administrative organisation of Spain, there are multiple statistical systems, one for each of the 17 Autonomous Communities with their respective legal standards based on the Autonomy Statutes in each region, the statistical laws and statistical plans. As the statistical authority at national level, INE can collaborate with each of the statistical systems of the Autonomous Communities to prevent duplications and to reduce the workload of the informants. The law indicates that "the statistical service of the State and the Autonomous Communities will establish the forms of cooperation appropriate in each moment in order to take the most advantage of the information available and to prevent unnecessary duplication of the operations of collection of data or others". The Interterritorial Statistics Committee, which is attended by representatives at national level and of the statistical offices of the Autonomous Communities, is a permanent official body in charge of overseeing the coordination, cooperation and standardisation of statistical matters between the State and the regions. The Committee is presided over by the President of INE and a vice-president elected by a majority of representatives of the Autonomous Communities.

Sources

INE: <https://www.ine.es>

Statistical organisation in Spain: https://www.ine.es/en/normativa/leyes/orga_estad_espa_en.pdf

ESS Spain: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/ess/spain/news>

Poland



Statistical authorities

NSI	Statistics Poland – GUS
ONAs	Ministry of Finance Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Ministry of the Interior and Administration Ministry of Justice Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy Polish Financial Supervision Authority Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation

The statistical system

The system of official statistics in Poland functions on the basis of the Law on official statistics of 29 June 1995 (as amended). Its regulations, regarding official statistics, fully comply with international and European standards. It has as objective to provide reliable, objective and systematic information on the economic, demographic and social situation and the environment to the state and public administration bodies, to and entities of the national economy and society as a whole. The Polish system of official statistics is formed by:

- The Central Statistical Office -GUS- and the subordinate statistical offices at regional level;
- Other central bodies of the State administration.

In addition to the law of 1995, the order by the Polish Prime Minister of 10 September 1999 regulates the forms of announcing and disseminating statistical information.

As at the end of December 2016, Statistics Poland employed 885 staff members.

Sources

Statistics Poland: <https://stat.gov.pl/en/>

The Polish system of official statistics: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4372828/PL-description.pdf/d35f8a02-4f21-46ca-bd0a-af3b1c3a6f73>

ESS Poland: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/ess/poland/news>

Sweden



Statistical authorities

NSI	Statistics Sweden
ONAs	National Board of Health and Welfare Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention Swedish National Mediation Office Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management National Board of Agriculture Swedish Chemicals Agency Swedish Energy Agency Swedish Environmental Protection Agency Swedish Financial Supervisory Authority Swedish Forest Agency Swedish National Agency for Education Swedish Higher Education Authority Swedish National Financial Management Authority Swedish Work Environment Authority Transport Analysis Public Health Agency of Sweden Swedish Migration Agency Swedish Police

The statistical system

Statistics Sweden is tasked with being the national statistical institute, as defined by Regulation (EC) 223/2009. It is responsible for the development, production and dissemination of official statistics and for other government statistics. The organisation coordinates the system for the official statistics in Sweden. Statistics Sweden is located in Solna and Örebro, and has about 1,300 employees, of whom roughly 100 are field interviewers and collect information for surveys around the country. In total, operations amount to over one billion kronor annually, of which half is from government appropriations. Statistics Sweden's operations are governed by its directive, laws and ordinances, as well as the annual appropriation directions. The ministry responsible for official statistics and for Statistics Sweden is the Ministry of Finance.

At the end of 2020, the agency had 11 departments, one of them being a unified data collection department established that year. It also has a collection department, four subject area departments, a communications department, a department for the development of processes and methods, an IT department. In addition, there are an HR department, an administrative department, and the Director General's Office. There is also a Management Group, an advisory organ to the Director General which consists of the management of the agency (Director General and Deputy Director General) and the directors for each of the departments.

The agency performs appropriation-funded operations to produce official statistics of good quality. The official statistics are regulated according to the Official Statistics Act (2001:99) and the Official Statistics Ordinance (2001:100). According to this legal framework, official statistics are to be available for the purposes of public information, investigative activities and research; they are to be objective and made available to the public. The official statistics are divided into 22 subject areas and 113 statistics areas. The government has appointed around twenty additional government agencies to be responsible for official statistics within their respective areas.

Statistics Sweden also performs fee-financed operations (commissioned operations) that make up nearly 50% of the agency's total turnover. From an organisational point of view, they are integrated into the agency's appropriations-financed operations.

Sources

Statistics Sweden: <https://www.scb.se/en/>

Annual Report 2020: https://www.scb.se/contentassets/e6e3bb34eaa84f7b9e2244283c4cc8b0/2020_in_review.pdf

ESS Sweden: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/ess/sweden/news>

