

# ESGAB Annual Report 2019

## Executive summary and recommendations

After the in-depth analysis of the future challenges of the European statistical system (ESS) carried out with the 2018 report, this year's ESGAB annual report explores the issue of governance in the ESS by examining two important functions that play a central role in ensuring full implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP): the supervision of national statistical systems (NSSs) and the involvement of users in the work of national statistical institutes (NSIs) and other national authorities (ONAs).

In particular, Section 1.1 of the report discusses the way in which ESGAB-like governance functions are carried out in EU Member States to ensure compliance with the CoP, while Section 1.2 presents an overview of the national user councils (NUCs), bodies that focus on helping the NSSs respond to requests from the broad community of users of statistics.

This report benefited from the results of the first seminar ever organised by ESGAB, which brought together representatives of the NSIs of the EU Members States and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland), as well as representatives of ESGAB-like governance bodies in France, Greece, Italy, Malta and Switzerland. It also benefited from a survey carried out by the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) on national user councils, opening the way to further collaboration between these advisory bodies.

Section 1 closes with a section on the challenges for the 2021 population and housing census, a major statistical exercise for the whole of the ESS that takes place every 10 years. In line with the fast-changing pace of today's world, the census procedure is also going through a process of great transformation. ESGAB analyses these new challenges and explores the ways in which Eurostat and the ESS could respond to them.

Section 2 of the report focuses on the progress made by Eurostat and the ESS as a whole as regards the implementation of previous ESGAB recommendations, and by Member States on the implementation of the improvement actions emanating from the 2013-2015 round of peer reviews. As usual, some recommendations to improve the compliance of the ESS with the code of practice are presented.

### 2019 recommendations

**2019/1** — The mission of all bodies in charge of overseeing the functioning of national statistical systems should be made explicit in national legislation, so that their roles are strengthened and their actions facilitated by their being recognised as key interlocutors within the NSI-government relationship.

**2019/2** — Due to the importance of an appropriate governance structure to prevent problems and fully implement the CoP, governance issues should feature prominently in the next round of peer reviews, not least in the context of the communication strategy accompanying the peer review procedure.

**2019/3** — The round of peer reviews to be launched in 2020 should produce systematic evidence on how the governance within each Member State achieves effective implementation and compliance with the CoP.

**2019/4** — Due to the importance of an effective dialogue with users to implement Principle 11 of the CoP (Relevance)<sup>1</sup>, based on adequate ways of connecting with different categories of users, the ESS should discuss how to strengthen such dialogue at both European and national levels.

**2019/5** — Eurostat, in cooperation with the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC), should prepare an overview of national user councils and promote the establishment of these bodies in states where they do not currently exist or the extension of their scope, as necessary.

**2019/6** — In view of the increasing risks of third-party dissemination of non-validated or ‘fake’ information, ESGAB recommends to Eurostat and the NSIs to design appropriate actions of communication and outreach to citizens to highlight the trustworthiness of official statistics.

**2019/7** — As an effective implementation of census guidelines at national level is also particularly important to enhance trust in official statistics, ESGAB recommends to Eurostat and the NSIs to pay special attention to the governance of the 2021 population and housing census. In particular, NSIs should, with Eurostat support, strengthen their coordination role in relation to ONAs and local authorities throughout the whole process.

**2019/8** — Given the growing use of administrative sources in census operations, the ESS should ensure the clarity and consistency of the definitions used in the next round of the population and housing census with those used in the past and with the statistical concepts used worldwide, with particular attention to those concerning social topics (employment, unemployment, etc.) and migration flows.

**2019/9** — ESGAB recommends that a comprehensive strategy of communication and dialogue with users in relation to the 2021 population and housing census be developed at national and European level.

**2019/10** — The members of the ESS should begin preparations for the 2031 population and housing census as soon as possible, taking into account the lessons learned from the 2021 round. In this perspective, the possibility of developing a continuous population census within the EU should be explored, in light of the growing mobility of people within Europe and the expected trends in international migration.

**2019/11** — ESGAB recommends that, when preparing the final report on the 2013-2015 peer-review exercise at the end of 2020, Eurostat presents an in-depth analysis of the whole exercise and in particular of the implementation of improvement actions, with categorisation of the different actions, risks identified and successes achieved.

**2019/12** — ESGAB calls on Eurostat, in collaboration with NSIs and potentially with other directorates-general of the Commission, to be proactive in ensuring progress with implementation of the peer-review recommendations whose implementation depends on actions to be pursued at governmental level.

**2019/13** — As one of the outcomes of the next round of peer reviews, Eurostat should produce a mapping and an assessment of the different risks of non-compliance with each of the principles of the CoP.

**2019/14** — ESGAB recommends full transparency of the peer-review process, encouraging Member States and Eurostat to promote awareness of the methodology and to associate representatives of users at different stages of the process.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 2