

100th Meeting

1 March 2024

16.00 – 18.00

Meeting in Videoconference

Minutes

Doc. ESGAB/2024(14)

A.1 Welcome by the Chair - Adoption of the agenda

The Chair welcomed the Members and presented the agenda.

The agenda was approved without changes.

The Board reviewed the practice of production and publication of the minutes of the ESGAB meetings and there was agreement that going forward the minutes should be published regularly and soon after the meetings have taken place.

A.2 Feedback from Eurostat on recent and future developments in the ESS (t.b.c)

The Director General of Eurostat referred to the topics discussed at last ESSC meeting of 8 and 9 February 2024. She offered to distribute the agenda of future ESSC meetings to ESGAB for it to select topics for discussion at the following meetings that are relevant for ESGAB. At its February meeting, the ESSC discussed the draft report on the last round of Peer Reviews, which will be submitted to the Parliament and the Council; the ESS strategy for European environmental-economic accounts 2024-2029; increasing the timeliness of European statistics on social protection; the preparation of DGINS conference 2024 and the UN Statistical Commission; some comitology items; and the ESS contribution to the common European Data spaces.

Moreover, the Director General of Eurostat informed that the Eurobarometer Survey on awareness and trust in Eurostat had been completed and the report released on 28 February. She expressed the view that the results show that trust in Eurostat and statistics it disseminates is high. The survey also included questions about the interest in using data in general and on how to find data in different communication channels. The results will be used to inform future Eurostat dissemination and communication strategy. In this context, ESGAB was invited to make its own analysis of the Eurobarometer results and provide relevant advice to Eurostat and the ESS.

The Director General of Eurostat expressed her satisfaction that the negotiations of the European Parliament and the Council on the Commission proposal for revision of Regulation (EC) 223/2009 on European statistics had come to a successful end and that a provisional political deal was reached on 1 February 2024.

The Director General of Eurostat explained that Mr. Schubert, former Chair of ESGAB, presented the 2023 ESGAB Annual report to the ESSC during its meeting on 8 and 9 February 2024.

A.3 ESGAB Annual Report 2023 - Letter of Commissioner Gentiloni

The Chair informed the Members that Commissioner Gentiloni wrote to him to acknowledge receipt of the 2023 ESGAB Annual report. The Chair added he was invited to present the report at the EFC – Sub-Committee on Statistics on 14 March. The Secretariat is liaising with the European Parliament for a presentation of the report at the ECON Committee.

The Chair suggested that the timeframe for the preparation and adoption of the annual report be changed already this year, so that the report would be finalised in October and be available

to be considered already in November in the EFC Sub-Committee on Statistics and then in the EFC. This change would allow the report to be considered in the ECOFIN Council conclusions on the statistical package and would synchronise the cycle for the preparation of the ESGAB Annual report with the cycle for the adoption of the statistical package. To achieve this, ESGAB would produce a bridge report in 2024 and a full report from 2025. The Members agreed with the suggested approach.

A.4 Replacement of the Head of the Slovak National Statistical Office

At the invitation of the Chair, the Director General of Eurostat informed ESGAB that the head of the Slovak National Statistical Office had been replaced after one and a half years in office and that a new head had been appointed by the Slovak Government on 7 February 2024. The Eurostat Director General addressed a letter to the Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the EU on 14 February 2024, to seek (i) clarifications on the circumstances surrounding the Slovak government's decision and (ii) information about the compliance of the amended law with the requirements set in Regulation (EC) 223/2009 on European statistics regarding conditions for safeguarding professional independence.

Members exchanged views on the matter and suggested several options for further action on the part of ESGAB in order to fully clarify the matter and assess if there are issues regarding the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice. The issue would be discussed further in the next meeting of ESGAB.

In this context, the Chair noted the lack of both human and financial resources to carry out its work and mandate, including on such issues as the one concerning Slovakia. This dearth of resources, according to the Chair, is affecting the functional independence of ESGAB.

A.5 Monitoring of ESGAB Recommendations from the Annual Report 2021

Eurostat has provided an update of the status of the recommendations pertaining to the Annual Report for the year 2021. Members agreed to review the document provided by Eurostat in more detail.

A.6 Timeline for the production and release of the Annual Report

The Chair explained that ESGAB had made recommendations every year since 2009 and that the annual reports did not follow up on these recommendations and their implementation. The Chair's proposal was to take stock of these recommendations and information on the follow-up on these recommendations and to produce a report on the implementation of these recommendations in 2024 as a bridging report. ESGAB would also evaluate and report on its own work. From the next report onwards, ESGAB would align itself with the reporting requirements of the Statistical Package by starting to prepare its 2025 report from next November.

Members agreed with the Chair's proposal.

Members discussed the revision of the Code of a Practice as a possible topic for a future ESGAB report.

A.7 Review of the Rules of Procedure

The Chair explained that he would like to start a review of the Rules of Procedure. He asked Members to review the current procedures and report back to ESGAB on necessary changes.

A.8 Possible theme/s for the next report

This item was covered under Item A.6 above.

A.9 Resources for ESGAB

This item was covered under Item A.4 above.

A.10 Meetings 2024

The Chair proposed that a routine monthly meeting be organised and suggested that proposals for future meetings, including physical meetings, be circulated.

A.11 A.O.B.

The Chair and the new Members gave some information about their professional backgrounds.

The Chair closed the meeting.

List of participants

Members

Mr. Alfred Camilleri (Chair)

Mr. Andreas Georgiou

Mr. Pritt Potisepp

Mr. Juan Manuel Rodriguez Poo

Mrs. Kerstin Schneider

Mr. Maurizio Vichi.

Observers

Mrs. Mariana Kotzeva (Director General of Eurostat)

Secretariat

Mr. Didier Lebrun

Mrs. Avis Benes