

101st Meeting

27 March 2024

16.00 – 18.45

Meeting in Videoconference

Minutes

Doc. ESGAB/2024 (18)

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

The agenda was adopted without changes.

A.2 Minutes of the 100st meeting of 1 March 2024 - Discussion

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved subject to the written comments made by one Member that were communicated to the Board before the meeting.

A.3 Revision of the Rules of Procedures - Discussion

In advance of the meeting, the Secretariat circulated a working document containing proposals by the Chair and comments provided in writing by one Member to amend the Rules of Procedure (RoP). The Chair invited Members to have a preliminary discussion on the proposals, without taking a final decision on the amendments to be made.

The Member who had submitted some proposals in writing before the meeting explained them in detail.

Members discussed various proposed amendments to the Articles of the RoP.

The Deputy Director-General of Eurostat commented on the proposals made.

He commented that the purpose of the RoP is to describe in detail how the ESGAB operationalises its work in order to fulfil its mandate. As a matter of legal principle, the RoP cannot create obligations for other bodies such as the Commission notably with regard to the provision of resources.

A discussion followed on this matter with different views being expressed by various Members of the Board. Members noted inter alia that the Decision establishing ESGAB creates an obligation for the Commission and the Decision is being violated, as there are not adequate resources for the Board to fulfil its law given mandate. Relatively detailed discussion ensued, including on the human resources that are needed for the ESGAB secretariat in line with the ESGAB's understanding of what is done by the Commission for other bodies. The discussion on the specific point ended for the time being with the agreement that ESGAB will work on budgetary estimates and provide them to Eurostat.

A discussion also took place on a proposed RoP amendment aimed at avoiding conflicts of interest for Eurostat staff working in the ESGAB Secretariat and at the same time working for Eurostat to prepare Eurostat/Commission responses to ESGAB recommendations, views, approaches etc. According to Eurostat, such situations do not exist as the Secretariat does not have the expertise in all technical statistical areas to do so and one should be very careful with the proposed changes to the RoP. A discussion followed on the matter.

In the context of the above discussions on the RoP it was also brought up that concerning the observer role of Eurostat, ESGAB may listen to the views of Eurostat on the RoP but ESGAB will take the final decision.

The Chair thanked the participants for the discussions and invited them to send their suggestions after the meeting to the Secretariat who would consolidate all contributions. Discussion on the matter would continue at the next meeting.

A.4 Replacement of the Head of the Slovak National Statistical Office – Way forward

The Chair briefed the ESGAB on the actions he undertook on the case.

Regarding the letter sent by Eurostat to the Slovak Permanent Representative, the Deputy Director-General of Eurostat explained that as the Commission is the guardian of EU law (Regulation 223/2009), Eurostat will study Slovakia's reply when it arrives and analyse its compliance with EU law .

Members exchanged views on the case.

The Chair concluded that there would be further fact-finding steps and the issue would be further discussed within ESGAB in the period ahead.

A.5 Annual Report 2024 – Clustering of past recommendations

The Chair made a presentation with his proposals for the next ESGAB annual report, its content and the process of its preparation.. He provided his own preliminary assessment of the content of previous ESGAB reports and drew some conclusions for discussion within the Board in charting the way forward. He then presented a first proposal on various aspects of the production of the 2024 Annual Report.

Members commented on the assessment made and approach proposed by the Chair.

The Chair concluded by saying that he would review the discussions of the meeting and revert to the Board in the following week with a possible outline of the content of the 2024 Report and a proposal for the division of labour among Members. Members were invited to comment on the updated proposal of the Chair and also indicate where they could contribute.

A.6 Schedule of Meetings April – September 2024

Prior to the meeting, the Secretariat distributed the schedule of meetings until September 2024.

A.7 A.O.B.

N/A

List of participants

Members

Mr. Alfred Camilleri (Chair)

Mr. Andreas Georgiou

Mr. Pritt Potisepp

Mr. Maurizio Vichi

Observers

Mr. Gallo Gueye (Deputy Director-General of Eurostat)

Secretariat

Mr. Didier Lebrun

Mrs. Avis Benes

Excused

Mr. Juan Manuel Rodriguez Poo (Member)

Mrs. Kerstin Schneider (Member)

Mrs. Mariana Kotzeva (Director General of Eurostat)