

### **The European Statistics Code of Practice still awaits full implementation**

***Reliable official statistics are fundamental for sound policy-making. Their development, production and dissemination must be of high quality, which requires professional independence and sufficient resources. These key principles are at the heart of the European Statistics Code of Practice. However, the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) notes in its second annual report to the European Parliament and the Council that the implementation of the code has clearly slowed down.***

ESGAB's role is to provide an independent overview of the compliance with the code of practice in the European Statistical System and advise its members on measures to facilitate its implementation. In the words of Mr Johnny Åkerholm, the Chair: 'Recent events have shown that reputational risk in one country has a negative impact on the credibility of European official statistics as a whole. The trustworthiness of European statistics can be ensured by reinforcing the compliance with the code of practice. It is time to speed up that process.'

Three core principles of the code of practice — a self-regulatory instrument — were examined: professional independence, adequacy of resources and quality commitment. While ESGAB welcomes the efforts in the European Statistical System to comply with the principles of the code, it considers the progress too slow. Moreover, statistical needs are increasing at a time when national budget cuts put the development, production and dissemination of official statistics under unprecedented financial strain.

The report outlines 10 recommendations to improve compliance with the code's principles, highlighting the independent institutional setting and integrity of the top management. The professional independence of statistical authorities must be reinforced through the alignment of statistical legislation with the principles of the code of practice and the European statistics regulation ((EC) No 223/2009) and through greater transparency. More important still, the laws must not remain 'paper tigers' but also be implemented in practice. Coherent priority setting and a clear identification of resources for new statistical demands are seen as ways to preserve data quality.

In 2011 ESGAB will focus more on quality issues and assess its legal base in the event of cases where official statistics non-compliant with the code of practice in a single country could undermine the trustworthiness of the European Statistical System as a whole.

### **Further information**

The ESGAB 2010 report with a short executive summary is available on the ESGAB homepage (<http://ec.europa.eu/esgab/>).

### **Contact for media assistance**

To arrange an interview with the ESGAB Chair, Mr Johnny Åkerholm, please contact the ESGAB secretariat: Heli Lehtimäki ([estat-esgab@ec.europa.eu](mailto:estat-esgab@ec.europa.eu)), tel. +352 4301-36484.

### **About ESGAB**

The European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) was established by the European Parliament and the Council in 2008 to provide an independent overview of the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice in the European Statistical System. ESGAB's work aims at enhancing professional independence, integrity and accountability of the European Statistical System, key elements of the code of practice, as well as enhancing the quality of European statistics.

ESGAB consists of seven members. Its tasks include the preparation of an annual report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the code of practice insofar as it relates to the Commission (Eurostat) and the European Statistical System as a whole. ESGAB also advises the Commission (Eurostat) on appropriate measures to facilitate the process.

### **Key concepts**

The **European Statistics Code of Practice** is based on 15 principles. Governance and statistical authorities in the European Union commit themselves to adhering to the principles of the code covering the institutional environment, statistical processes and outputs. A set of indicators of good practice for each principle provides a reference for reviewing the implementation of the code.

Code of practice: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/quality/code\\_of\\_practice](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/quality/code_of_practice)

In all language versions: <http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/dsis/coded/library?l=/>

The **European Statistical System (ESS)**: the partnership between the Union statistical authority, which is the Commission (Eurostat), and the national statistical institutes and other national authorities responsible in each Member State for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics (see [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/about\\_eurostat/european\\_framework/ESS](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/about_eurostat/european_framework/ESS)).