



53rd ESGAB meeting

**Wednesday 17 January 2018 and
Thursday 18 January 2018**

Minutes

Doc ESGAB 2018/22

The Secretariat



Brussels, 23 February 2018

Minutes

53rd Meeting of the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB)

Expert Group *X02147*

17-18 January 2018

European Commission Representation in Italy
Via IV Novembre, 149, Rome

1. Introductions and approval of the agenda

The Chair welcomed the current and future members to the meeting, which was a special handover meeting to enable the current and future ESGAB members to discuss together current ESGAB issues and the programme of work for 2018. The current and future members then introduced themselves.

The draft agenda (Doc. 2017/68) was presented by the Chair and approved.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was a non-public meeting of six members of ESGAB, six future members of ESGAB, two observers from Eurostat and the Secretariat.

3. Appointment of Eurostat Director-General

The Chair asked Eurostat for an update on the appointment of the next Eurostat Director-General. Eurostat described the open appointment procedure that had been followed in accordance with ESGAB's recommendation and explained that an announcement of the person chosen was awaited.



4. Presentation of the activities of the European Statistical System and Eurostat

Eurostat described the European Statistical System (ESS) and the specific roles played by Eurostat, ESGAB, the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB). Eurostat also highlighted the importance of the European Statistics Code of Practice, which had been revised in November 2017, and the challenges and priorities currently faced by the ESS. Finally, Eurostat described the process of assessing compliance with the Code of Practice through peer reviews, which were last undertaken in 2013-2015. A new round of peer reviews is now being planned.

In the discussion that followed, issues included the difficulty of ensuring coordination of other national authorities by NSIs and the relationship between Eurostat and the ESCB.

5. Commitments on Confidence in Statistics

Eurostat described the purpose of the Commitments on Confidence in Statistics, namely to enable Member States to commit themselves to guarantee the institutional quality of the National Statistical System (NSS), in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 and the Code of Practice. By 9 June 2018 the Commission will report to the European Parliament and the Council on the current status of the national Commitments on Confidence.

In addition to Commitments on Confidence from Member States, the Commission also has its own Commitment on Confidence, which was published in 2012 as Commission Decision 2012/504. ESGAB has to assess the implementation of this Commission Decision, also by 9 June 2018 (see section 7 below).

6. ESGAB's key activities

6.1. Peer reviews

Mr Kopsch described ESGAB's role in the latest peer review exercise in 2013-2015, which aimed to assess compliance of Member States, EFTA countries and Eurostat with the Code of Practice. For the peer review of Eurostat, ESGAB members met with the relevant stakeholders to discuss Eurostat's implementation of the Code of Practice. The peer review report was published as the Board's Annual Report 2014. ESGAB also analysed the peer review reports for the individual countries to identify the main improvements required. The recommendations in the peer review reports are monitored on an annual basis as follows: Eurostat provides ESGAB with a report on how Eurostat is addressing the ESGAB recommendations; Eurostat also compiles, and sends to ESGAB, a separate annual monitoring report covering progress with improvement actions in the EU and EFTA countries.



Mr Kopsch emphasised that the objective was not to 'name and shame' individual countries but to report on the Eurostat and the ESS 'as a whole'. A particular challenge arising from the peer reviews are the actions which depend on authorities outside of the National Statistical Institute for their implementation.

6.2. ESGAB Opinions

Ms O'Hara and Mr Profiroiu explained that a key purpose of ESGAB Opinions is to comment on governance issues and specific concerns in Member States. They are also an important tool for raising awareness about ESGAB and its role. Opinions develop out of internal ESGAB discussions on the implementation of the Code of Practice in the ESS. A draft version is circulated between members for agreement and the final version of an Opinion is published on the ESGAB web pages.

6.3. Dialogues with NSIs and other bodies

Mr Giovannini and Ms Martín-Guzmán described the importance of having dialogues with the heads of NSIs or with other bodies such as national ESGAB-like bodies. The dialogues enable members to hear about good practices and concerns regarding statistical governance and the implementation of the Code of Practice, which can provide input for the Annual Report and potential Opinions. Dialogues also demonstrate ESGAB's willingness to meet with the heads of NSIs and draw attention to the Code of Practice at a national level.

7. Commission's Commitment on Confidence

Members discussed the proposed roadmap for ESGAB's assessment of the Commission's Commitment on Confidence (Commission Decision 2012/504). The proposed roadmap was accepted and the structure for the Eurostat contribution was agreed based on the proposed table of contents issued as a room document by Eurostat (Doc. 2018/01) and the proposals emerged during the discussion.

Stakeholder meetings

ESGAB discussed which stakeholders should be met in order to provide further input into the assessment of the implementation of the Commission Decision.

It was agreed that the meetings should be arranged around the next ESGAB meeting in March, so that as many ESGAB members as possible would be able to take part.

It was agreed that the 2014 ESGAB report on the peer review of Eurostat is an important reference document and would be sent to the new members. In addition, a draft set of questions



for the stakeholder meetings will be prepared by the secretariat and circulated to members for their agreement.

8. Meeting dates 2018

The following dates were agreed for the meetings in 2018 in Brussels:

- 15-16 March¹
- 18 May
- 5 July
- 13 September
- 8 November
- 13 December

In addition, the Chair will attend the Q2018 conference in Kraków on 27-29 June to present an ESGAB paper. Ms Ruane and Mr De Moor also plan to attend, subject to funding being available from the Commission.

9. Good Practice Advisory Committee (GPAC) and Greek statistics

The ESGAB representative on the Greek Good Practice Advisory, Mr Gerry O'Hanlon, who is also the Chair of GPAC, participated in the meeting by teleconference. He presented the 4th GPAC report, which focused in particular on Principles 1-6 of the Code of Practice (Doc. 2017/75).

ESGAB took note of the report with regard to the weaknesses in the corporate management capacity, the perceived difficulties in filling senior positions under the new organigram structure and difficulties in addressing the lack of ELSTAT employees with the necessary skills.

Mr O'Hanlon said that GPAC believed the ELSTAT release calendar was too ambitious, with release dates specified too far in advance, given that there were subsequently frequent postponements.

GPAC also examined the certification of statistics produced by agencies of the Hellenic Statistical System and noted that work was proceeding, but slowly.

ESGAB took note of the report and especially the need for progress by ELSTAT regarding the use of resources.

¹ 16 March was agreed after the meeting in order to accommodate the meetings with stakeholders



10. ESGAB Annual Report 2018

Members discussed the plans for the content of the Annual Report 2018 and the proposed roadmap for its production.

The members revised the timings of the proposed roadmap, with the aim of publishing the Annual Report 2018 earlier than initially proposed, in January 2019, by reducing the amount of detail in the report. The secretariat will circulate a revised roadmap to members.

11. Governance

Following a discussion on governance issues and good governance practice, it was agreed that Ms Ruane would prepare a document outlining the main issues in relation to ESGAB together with justifications for any proposed changes to procedures.

12. Meeting with Malta Statistics Authority

In response to a request from the Malta Statistics Authority to meet with ESGAB, the Secretariat will contact the Malta Statistics Authority to see if a meeting can be organised as part of the ESGAB meeting in May or July.

List of participants

Members

Mr Martti Hetemäki (Chair)
Ms Patricia O'Hara
Ms Pilar Martín-Guzmán
Mr Enrico Giovannini
Mr Günter Kopsch
Mr Marius Profireoiu

Future Members from 1 February 2018

Mr Kai Carstensen
Mr Bart De Moor
Ms Mireille Elbaum
Mr Jaume Garcia
Ms Frances Ruane
Mr Algirdas Šemeta

Observers



Ms Mariana Kotzeva (Eurostat)
Mr Pieter Everaers (Eurostat)

Secretariat

Mr Stephen Clarke (Secretary)
Ms Cristina Pereira de Sá