Commission staff working document on the second mid-term evaluation of the European statistical programme 2013-17

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Glossary

Term or acronym	*Meaning or definition*
AAR	Annual activity report
DG	Directorate-General
EDAMIS	Electronic Dataflow Administration and Management Information System
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ESAC	European Statistical Advisory Committee
ESBRs	European System of interoperable statistical business registers
ESGAB	European Governance Advisory Board
ESP	European statistical programme
ESS	European Statistical System
ESS.VIP	European Statistical System vision implementation programme
ESSC	European Statistical System Committee
ESSnet	European Statistical System collaboration network
EU	European Union
FRIBS	Framework regulation integrating business statistics
FTE	Full time equivalent
IA	Impact assessment
Intrastat	Statistics on the intra-EU trade in goods
ISG	Interservice Steering Group

KPI	Key performance indicator
MFF	Multiannual financial framework
MP	Management plan
MS	Member State
NCB	National central bank
NSI	National statistical institute
ONA	Other statistical authority
PMR	Eurostat database for planning, monitoring and reporting
PSI	Provider of statistical information
REFIT Programme	Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme
RSB	Regulatory Scrutiny Board
SMP	Single Market programme
SWD	Staff working document
USS	Eurostat general user satisfaction survey

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose and scope

Pursuant to Article 13 of Regulation (EC) 223/2009[1] on European statistics, 'the European statistical programme shall provide the framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics, setting out the main fields and the objectives of the actions envisaged for a period corresponding to that of the multiannual financial framework'.

Regulation (EU) 99/2013[2] provides for the evaluation of the European statistical programme covering 2013-2017. It has been extended by Regulation (EU) 2017/1951[3] to cover the remaining period of the MFF, i.e. 2018-2020. Throughout this document it is referred to as 'the programme' or simply 'the ESP'.

The previous evaluation[4] of the current ESP was finalised in 2015, covering the years 2013 and 2014. It was used when preparing for the ESP's extension to 2020. This evaluation covered the programme's implementation in 2015, 2016 and 2017. It also assessed whether the recommendations issued in the previous evaluation were carried out.

This evaluation is based on the original ESP's Regulation covering 2013-17, before the programme was extended. The extension to 2020 was only adopted at the end of October 2017.

This evaluation's conclusions and recommendations were taken into account when preparing the impact assessment of the post-2020 ESP.

The present evaluation report will also be used to prepare a monitoring report on the programme's implementation, required under Article 15 of Regulation No 223/2009 extending the ESP. The Commission (Eurostat) will submit the monitoring report to the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) by 31 December 2019. This report must also be submitted to the European Parliament and to the Council.

1 OJ L 87, 31.3.2009, p. 164.

2 OJ L 39, 9.2.2013, p. 12.

3 OJ L 284, 31.10.2017, p. 1.

4 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4375449/Report+to+EP+and+Council+on+the+implementation+of+the+ESP+2013-2017+%28Intermediate%29/969ef4c1-7e6d-49b1-8168-02dd80bc280d (available in English only).

The evaluation encompassed all Member States (MSs) and other countries covered by the programme. Participation in the programme was open to the European Economic Area (EEA)/European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, Switzerland and countries to which the enlargement policy applies.

The evaluation covered five evaluation criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value). Regulation (EU) 2017/951 on the ESP has no related implementing/delegated acts.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE INTERVENTION

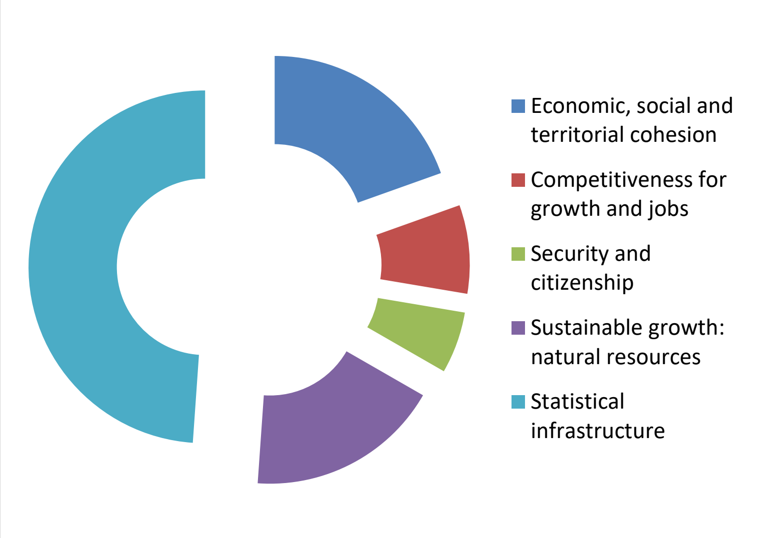
Description of the intervention and its objectives

The general objective of the ESP is for the European Statistical System to continue to be the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe. Official European statistics, provided under the ESP are indispensable for EU decision-making and for measuring the performance and impact of EU initiatives. High-quality European aggregates, together with comparable statistics on all individual Members States, underpin the investment plan for Europe, the Stability and Growth pact, the European Semester exercise, the social agenda and top priorities in numerous policy domains. Statistics are also key instruments which strengthen the transparency and accountability of EU policies and enable EU citizens' civic engagement and democratic participation in the political life.

As a spending programme, the ESP constitutes the overall framework for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. As such, it provides the financing for developing and maintaining the statistical infrastructure of Eurostat and of the European Statistical System as managed by Eurostat. It also provides financial support to Member States. MSs use this support to improve their national statistical systems and implement measures to initiate new data collections as well as to strengthen the quality and efficiency of statistical production through innovative statistical methods and tools.

The statistical infrastructure enables statistics to be regularly produced and disseminated in the policy fields. Also, depending on the specific needs and use in these policy fields, it enables new statistics to be developed. The programme's budget can be roughly split between developing and maintaining the general methodological and IT infrastructure on one side and on the other providing support to the production, dissemination and development of statistics in the specific policy domains. Chart 1 shows the distribution between the spending on the general infrastructure and the specific fields.

Chart 1: ESP budget allocations to the statistical infrastructure and the policy areas



The ESP is composed of four specific objectives:

- 'Objective 1: provide statistical information in a timely manner, to support the development, monitoring and evaluation of the policies of the Union properly reflecting priorities, while keeping a balance between economic, social and environmental fields and serving the needs of the wide range of users of European statistics, including other decision-makers, researchers, businesses and European citizens in general, in a cost-effective manner without unnecessary duplication of effort;'
- 'Objective 2: implement new methods of production of European statistics, aiming at efficiency gains and quality improvements;'
- 'Objective 3: strengthen the partnership within the ESS and beyond in order to further enhance its productivity and its leading role in official statistics worldwide;'
- 'Objective 4: ensure that delivery of such statistics is kept consistent throughout the whole duration of the programme, provided that this does not interfere with the priority-setting mechanisms of the ESS.'

The programme is divided into three parts, each focusing on a specific priority area:

I. Statistical outputs

II. Production methods of European statistics

III. Partnership

Objectives 1 and 4 are covered by the measures undertaken in priority area I; objective 2 corresponds to priority area II; and objective 3 to priority area III.

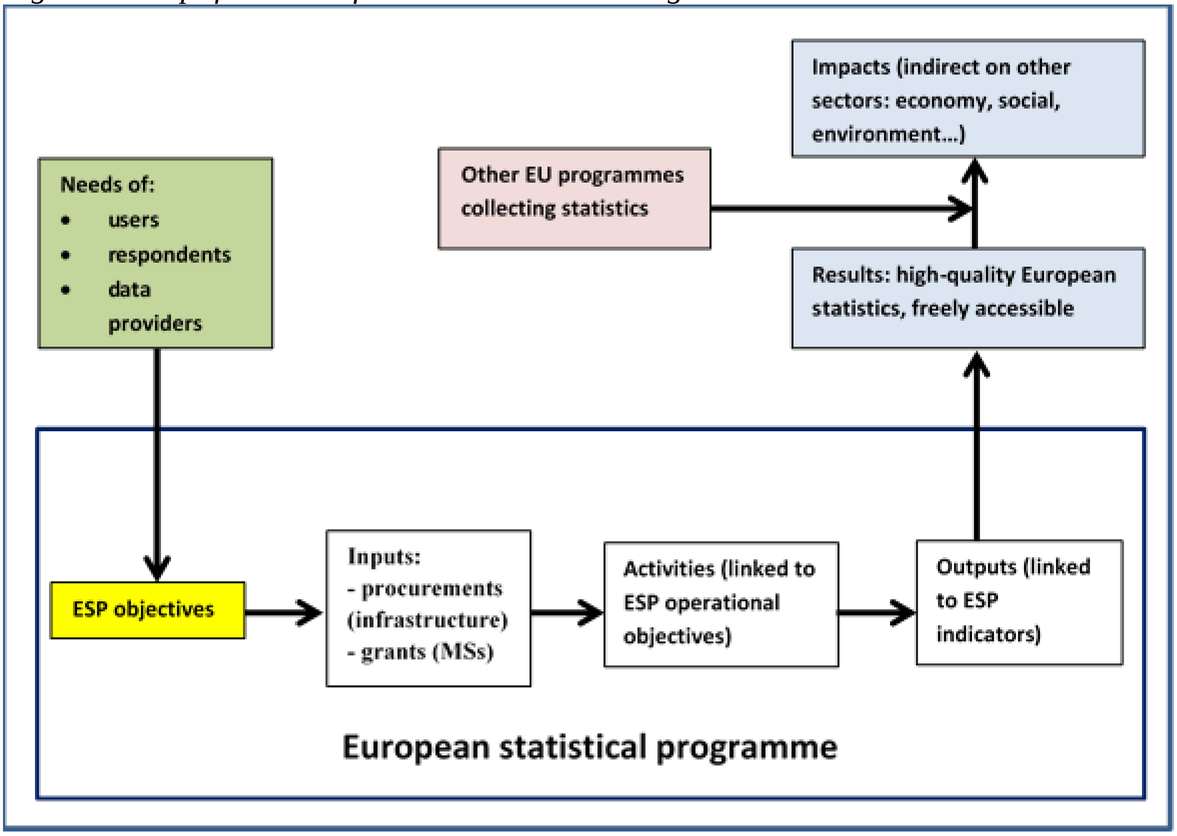
The three priority areas are themselves divided into one or two levels of sub-areas.

There is a total of 23 second-level detailed, more operational objectives, spread across the three priority areas. A set of achievement indicators is provided for each of these objectives. A total of 114 achievement indicators are used to measure the progress being made towards achieving the 23 objectives.

To achieve the programme's objectives, financial contributions, in the form of grants to Member States and procurements are used; procurement is mainly used for developing and maintaining the general infrastructure, whereas grants support the national statistical systems in developing statistics in specific policy domains.

A schematic view of the ESP's intervention logic is presented in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Simplified view of the ESP intervention logic



The needs of the users of European statistics, of the respondents to the surveys and of the data providers (mostly national statistical institutes (NSIs) and other statistical authorities (ONAs)) have been translated into the ESP objectives. The financial inputs provided by the programme, in the form of procurements and grants, contribute to the activities that implement the operational objectives and produce the expected outputs (statistical outputs, production methods and partnerships). This should result in high-quality European statistics, freely and easily accessible. The statistics produced, together with those collected in other EU programmes, contribute to the EU policies in different sectors, in which they therefore have an indirect impact.

Baseline and points of comparison

When the ESP's impact assessment was carried out in 2011, Eurostat found that the European Statistical System (ESS) faced a number of challenges.

(1) The need for European statistics had been constantly increasing over the preceding years and it was unlikely that this tendency would change in the future.

(2) The nature of statistics was changing — there was a growing need for complex multi-dimensional statistics of even higher quality which had to be provided within shorter periods of time than before.

(3) Due to new participants appearing on the information market providing new types of statistics, including those providing information almost in real time, the future priority for the ESS would be the freshness of data, in particular when it refers to short-term economic information.

(4) The situation has become more challenging due to budget constraints both at national and European level, which had become more pertinent with the economic crisis, as well as the need to further reduce the burden on businesses and citizens.

The ESP was designed to face all those challenges. For this reason, its main objectives were combining the production of more statistics (including those that are more complex and of a higher quality) with the modernisation and reengineering of the processes used to produce such statistics.

As a step further in modernising the production of statistics, at the start of 2015 the ESSC agreed to implement the ESS Vision 2020[5], a strategic vision on how the ESS should develop by year 2020, initially through eight ESS vision implementation projects.

The ESP's state of implementation was evaluated a first time in 2015, taking into consideration the activities carried out and the results obtained in the first 2 years of the programme — 2013 and 2014. Therefore, the baseline to compare to in the present evaluation will be the situation described in the report of the first mid-term evaluation.

The first mid-term evaluation concluded that the implementation of the ESP was advancing well, with 17 out of the programme's 23 detailed objectives well on track to be completed. The evaluation provided a detailed summary of the produced outputs. Good progress had also been made on projects related to modernising the production systems. The evaluation stated that the ESP continues to be relevant, as its objectives still correspond to the EU's needs and it continues to provide clear EU added value. The evaluation concluded that Eurostat had made efficient use of its resources, both financial

5 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/10186/756730/ESS-Vision-2020.pdf (available in English only).

and human, with improved productivity at a time when human resources were being reduced. The ESP was well coordinated with other EU initiatives in the same field, both other Eurostat programmes and initiatives concerning statistics produced by other Commission Directorate-Generals.

The first mid-term evaluation also made a few recommendations. This evaluation will examine how Eurostat followed them up. The recommendations were:

1. to give special attention to the objectives where problems have been encountered;
2. to try to secure sufficient resources to maintain the necessary level of investment for modernising the production of European statistics; and
3. to identify and implement projects at EU level which could maximise EU added value.

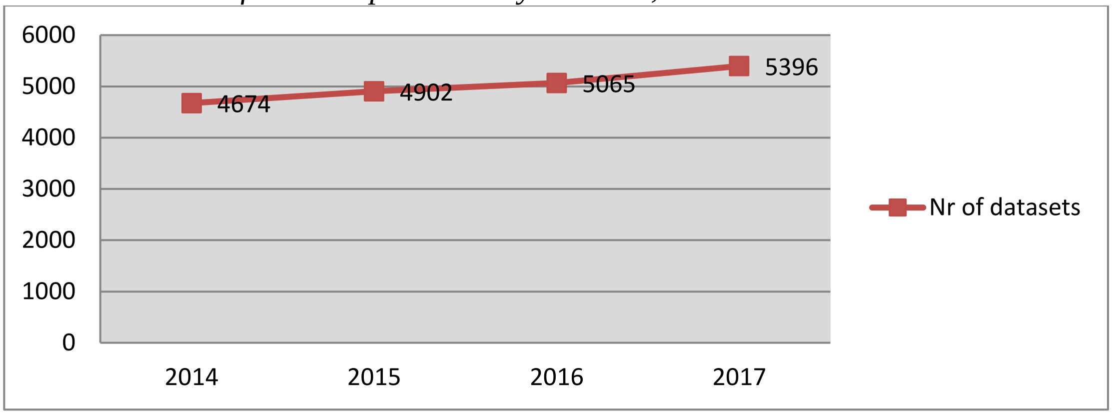
3. IMPLEMENTATION / STATE OF PLAY

Description of the current situation

The extended ESP 2013-2020 is in its sixth year of implementation. The programme's budget has supported the work carried out so far. Around 37 % has been spent on grants and 63 % on procurements. In the years included in the current evaluation, 2015-2017, the total budget spent has been around EUR 181 million (including EFTA funds and administrative expenditure in direct support of the programme implementation). Almost another EUR 94 million has supplemented the ESP's own budget in the form of credits sub-delegated by other policy DGs to cover data collections specifically requested by these same DGs.

The budget has been spent in the programme's three priority areas. The first priority area 'Statistical outputs' deals with the production of European statistics. In this area the money has been mostly spent on grants used to provide financial support to MSs. Member States use the support to improve their national statistical systems and to implement measures to carry out new data collections. All MSs have benefited from grants, which have ultimately allowed them to produce more and better quality data. As a result the total number of disseminated datasets increased by 722 or around 15 %, in the 3 years evaluated.

Chart2: Number of datasets published by Eurostat, 2014-2017



The second priority area 'Production methods of European statistics' deals with improving the way statistics are produced, their quality and the way they are disseminated. In this area grants were given to MSs to strengthen the quality and efficiency of statistical production through innovative statistical methods and tools. MSs used the money to participate in the modernisation projects of the European Statistical System vision implementation programme (ESS.VIP), described in Chapter 5.3 on relevance. In this same area procurements were used either to partly finance ESS.VIP projects or to finance the modernisation of the statistical infrastructure used to regularly produce and disseminate the statistics. Examples of results include the modernisation of the IT infrastructure to exchange data with MSs, the renovation of Eurostat's website, and the introduction of a series of new visualisation tools and of new ways to reach out to users. Details can be found in the chapter on relevance mentioned above.

The third priority area 'Partnership' aims to support the production and quality of statistics by improving the cooperation within the ESS and with other international organisations and countries outside the EU. In this area the budget was mostly used to support the development and production of statistics in countries outside the EU and EFTA, with particular emphasis on enlargement and the European neighbourhood policy. This has enabled some non-EU countries to regularly publish data, especially to support the enlargement process and the negotiations.

In spending the budget there have been no major problems and there were no infringements. Eurostat put in place an effective system of anti-fraud measures, which prevented cases of fraud.

Different monitoring arrangements have been put in place for the ESP.

Twice a year the status of all planned Eurostat activities and their outputs are checked. The percentage of activities and outputs which were on track or achieved has consistently been greater than 90 %.

Table1: Percentage of planned outputs achieved or on target

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017
Outputs achieved or on target	92.3 %	93.8 %	92.9 %	95.1 %

A set of key performance indicators (KPIs) are monitored each year:

- 'Percentage of users that rate as 'Very good' or 'Good' the overall quality of European Statistics';
- 'Number of data extractions made by external users from Eurostat reference databases (EuroBase and Comext) via the Eurostat website';
- 'Percentage of users that rate as 'Very good' or 'Good' the timeliness of European Statistics for their purposes';
- 'Percentage of users that rate as 'Very good' or 'Good' the comparability of European Statistics among regions and countries'.

The details and values of the indicators can be found in Chapter 5.3 on relevance. Since most of the KPIs come from the same source, i.e. the subjective opinions of the respondents to the Eurostat user satisfaction surveys, some new more robust KPIs have been drawn up and are to be used in the extended ESP until 2020.

The ESP's implementation in 2013 and 2014 was also evaluated for the first time in 2015. The evaluation results were fairly positive and a few recommendations were issued.

4. METHOD

Short description of methodology

In the original text of Regulation No 223/2009 on the ESP 2013-17, a final evaluation of the programme was required under Article 15, to be finalised by the end of 2018. When the ESP was extended to 2020, Article 15 was amended and the final evaluation of the entire programme was postponed to 2021. No other evaluation was required according to the legal text but Eurostat decided that a second mid-term evaluation was necessary to support the impact assessment of the next post-2020 ESP. This second evaluation covers the years 2015 to 2017 and responds to the requirements of the Commission's better regulation guidelines for evaluations and impact assessments. The original plan was to start the evaluation earlier, at the same time as the impact assessment. However, in 2017 the Commission changed the procedures for all the programmes belonging to the new MFF, which starts in 2021.

Therefore, the preparation of the evaluation and of the impact assessment was only able to begin at the end of 2017 and was due to be concluded by March 2018. As a consequence Eurostat decided to conduct the evaluation internally and based it almost entirely on existing documents, such as annual activity reports and reports that monitored activities, results of user satisfaction surveys, results of Commission Directorates-General (DGs) hearings, reports of critical projects and reports on the cost of producing European statistics. The full list of documents also includes the results of several stakeholder consultations undertaken in recent years. It is presented in Annex 4.

The Commission decided at the end of 2017 to include the ESP in a cluster with other MFF programmes dealing with 'Investment, research & innovation, SMEs and single market', referred to as the 'investment' cluster in the rest of this document. An Interservice Steering Group (ISG) was established to follow all the evaluations and impact assessments of the programmes in the cluster and an open public stakeholder consultation was organised for the entire cluster. The results of this consultation were of no use to the evaluation because they did not give any information on the ESP's past performance. Very few respondents to the consultation gave an opinion on European statistics; they only gave opinions on the future needs for the production of statistics. Some information could be retrieved from a consultation of Commission DGs. Eurostat also used all of the available information on the ESP's past performance including results from stakeholder conferences.

The evaluation of the ESP was conducted at the same time as the impact assessment of the post-2020 ESP. The conclusions of the executive summary of the evaluation were included in the impact assessment. As the Commission decided to integrate the post-2020 ESP, together with the other programmes of the 'investment' cluster, into the new single market programme (SMP), the impact assessment (IA) of the ESP was included in the IA of the SMP and presented to the Regulatory Scrutiny Board (RSB). The full ESP evaluation report was made available to the RSB, but was not included in the IA of the SMP, because it would have made it too long. The RSB gave a positive opinion[6] on the IA of the SMP on 20 April 2018, and the Commission adopted the proposal for the SMP[7], including the post-2020 ESP, on 7 June 2018.

The evaluation covers the five criteria described in the better regulation guidelines: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value. Eurostat drew up a set of questions for all criteria and then listed which data sources could be used to answer each question.

6 SEC(2018) 294.

7 COM(2018) 441 final.

Limitations and robustness of findings

The evaluation had to be carried out in less time than originally planned, because it had to be ready before mid-March 2018 together with the impact assessment, to meet the deadlines imposed on the preparation for all of the next MFF's programmes. An open public consultation was not specifically organised for the evaluation and the one conducted for the cluster of programmes in which the ESP was included did not provide any useful contribution.

5. ANALYSIS AND ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

5.1 EFFECTIVENESS

The ESP is composed of four specific objectives, each one divided into a group of more detailed objectives, for which a set of indicators is provided. The degree of effectiveness of the programme can be measured using those indicators.

Two questions were designed to assess if the objectives of the programmes have been reached or progressing:

Q1) To what extent have the objectives of the ESP 2013-2017 been fulfilled or are on track to being fulfilled by the end of the ESP in 2020?

Q2) Did the associated EU anti-fraud measures allow for the prevention and timely detection of fraud?

The analysis of the findings for these two questions shows that the programme is producing the expected results, with a few limited problems, and that no cases of fraud have been found.

Q1: To what extent have the objectives of the ESP 2013-2017 been fulfilled or are on track to being fulfilled by the end of the ESP in 2020?

- **The large majority of the ESP detailed objectives are on track to being fulfilled by the end of the programme and only a few have limited problems.**

To check if the ESP objectives are on track, we have considered the outputs of around 1 000 activities linked to the ESP, which were registered in the Eurostat database for planning, monitoring and reporting (PMR). All outputs were linked in PMR to 1 of the 114 indicators used to measure the accomplishment of the 23 detailed ESP objectives. The following approach was used to classify the objectives, considering that some actions have a longer time span than the original ESP. Therefore, the objectives are declared to be on track but not yet achieved:

- An indicator was considered as being met if at least 75 % of its outputs were achieved or on track.

- A detailed objective was considered on track to be accomplished by the end of the ESP if at least 75 % of its indicators were being met.

Such measurements show that 19 of the 23 detailed objectives were on track, while 3 had a slightly smaller percentage of achievements and 1 looked more problematic.

Table2: Degree of achievement of the ESP detailed objectives

Objective	Field	Indicators met
1	Europe 2020	100.0 %
2	Economic governance 1	66.7 %
3	Economic governance 2	100.0 %
4	Economic globalisation	66.7 %
5	Economic performance	80.0 %
6	Social performance	100.0 %
7	Environmental sustainability	100.0 %
8	Business	100.0 %
9	People’s Europe	100.0 %
10	Geospatial information	100.0 %
11	Environmental statistics	100.0 %
12	Energy and transport statistics	100.0 %
13	Agriculture, fishery and forestry statistics	80.0 %
14	ESS quality management	100.0 %
15	Priority-setting and simplification	100.0 %
16	Multi-purpose statistics and efficiency gains in production	88.9 %
17	Collaboration and communication in the ESS	100.0 %
18	Dissemination and communication	66.7 %
19	Training, innovation and research	75.0 %
20	Enhanced ESS governance framework	0.0 % (100 %)
21	Enhanced coordinating role of Eurostat as the European Union’s Statistical Office	100.0 %
22	Cooperation with the ECB and the European and international organisations involved in the production of statistics	100.0 %
23	Statistical advisory and statistical assistance in countries outside the Union	100.0 %

The original very low percentage of achievement of objective 20, ‘Implement the enhanced ESS governance framework’, was because only one indicator belonged to this objective and less than 75 % of its outputs were achieved in 2015 and 2016. The problem registered for that indicator arose from a delay in getting ‘Commitments on Confidence in Statistics’[8] signed or progress reports submitted by all Member States and EEA/EFTA states. This issue was solved in 2017 and so there are no more problems with this objective, which can be considered met at 100 %.

For the objectives showing limited problems, the situation in specific projects is described here below.

- For detailed objective 2 on economic governance, instead of the proposed Commission Communication on European public sector accounting standards (EPSAS), which had been referred to the current Commission, the work of EPSAS was given a new direction linked to current Commission priorities. There were some delays reported with the creation of methodological manuals and one meeting of the task force on government finance statistics was cancelled.
- For detailed objective 4 on economic globalisation, there were some delays reported in producing statistics on the collaborative economy and on competitiveness, in particular with the publication of the Wheel of Competitiveness. The final timing for a survey on international sourcing was agreed with the participating MSs which was carried out later than originally expected, in 2017 and 2018. It must be considered that these actions are not the most significant in fulfilling the objective and so there are not many problems that need to be tackled in this regard.
- For detailed objective 18 on dissemination and communication, a project, on establishing and piloting a remote access system connecting safe centres in national statistical institutes to the central node where the data are stored, has experienced some delays. For this the needs of the users and the units producing the data have to be reconciled.

The details of all the results obtained for all objectives during the last 3 years can be found in Eurostat’s annual activity reports for 2015, 2016 and 2017[9].

In the first mid-term evaluation of the ESP in 2015 it was recommended that special attention be given to the six detailed objectives (objectives 3, 9, 10, 13, 15 and 20) which were showing some problems at that time. Eurostat established an action plan with improvement measures and these objectives are now all on track.

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8 In order to improve the governance of European statistics, all Member States are invited to sign up to ‘Commitments on Confidence in Statistics’ in which they will formally commit themselves to taking all necessary measures to maintain confidence in their statistics and to monitoring the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice.

9 https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/annual-activity-reports-2016_en (if you are searching for a report from another year then replace ‘2016’ in the link; reports available in English only).

In more detail:

- For objective 3 on economic governance, Eurostat and the European Central Bank have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the quality of statistics underlying the macroeconomic imbalances procedure which is being implemented.
- For objective 9 on people's Europe:
  - Several actions have been designed and will be carried out through the proposed framework regulation on Integrated European Social Statistics[10]: (i) social surveys are being more integrated; (ii) concepts, variables, ways of fulfilling requirements on precision and quality reports are being standardised; and (iii) statistics on income and living conditions would become available at regional level.
  - Concerning the Household Budget Survey, improvements will take place for timelier dissemination of the next wave of statistics collected in 2020. Further improvements are also expected with the inclusion of the Household Budget Survey under the integrated European social statistics in 2025.
  - In order to rectify the delay in collecting culture statistics, a work plan has been designed with the users (DG Education and Culture).
- For objectives 10 and 13 on geospatial information, and on environmental, agricultural and other sectoral statistics, the Commission introduced an internal geoportal which provides the DGs with access to a wide range of geographic datasets for the geospatial analysis of social, economic and environmental statistics. A number of projects were launched to (i) explore the potential of geospatial big data, such as satellite imagery (Copernicus programme), and mobile phone data for statistical purposes and (ii) develop recommendations for a geocoding framework for statistical unit record information using address databases. A legal basis has been prepared and adopted for the 2021 population census data collection based on a 1 km square geographical grid[11] as defined in the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE) Directive.
- For objective 15 on priority setting and simplification, substantial reductions could not be obtained with the existing mechanism to fix negative priorities (i.e. activities which could be stopped or reduced). The Commission has introduced

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10 Proposal for a regulation — COM(2016) 551 final.

11 Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/1799 of 21 November 2018 on the establishment of a temporary direct statistical action for the dissemination of selected topics of the 2021 population and housing census geocoded to a 1 km^2 grid.

new approaches for priority setting in the ESS and has adopted proposals for framework regulations for agriculture statistics, business statistics and social statistics to simplify the production of statistics in those fields.

- For objective 20 on partnership within the ESS and beyond (i.e. with international organisations and countries outside the EU), the Commission implemented the revised Regulation (EC) No 223/2009[12] and adopted Commission Decision 2012/504/EU of 17 September 2012 on Eurostat[13].

When examining the results that were produced for the different objectives, the evaluation work has shown that in general the ESP's structure is fairly complex, with objectives and sub-objectives covered by areas and measured by indicators which sometimes are not clearly distinct one from another. It is then inherently difficult to understand and monitor the ESP and it can be quite hard for those who do not work directly with the programme to understand its functioning. As already reported in the first mid-term evaluation of the programme, because of the complex structure and the large number of ESP indicators, it has been difficult to correctly link all the outputs to the indicators. As a result no outputs were linked to some of the indicators and they were not considered in the counting. Therefore, it is recommended to simplify the structure of the programme when preparing the future post-2020 ESP.

Two other recommendations were formulated in the first mid-term evaluation of the ESP:

- secure sufficient resources to maintain the necessary level of investment for modernising the production of European statistics;
- identify and implement projects at EU level which can maximise EU added value.

These have both been addressed through the implementation of the ESS.VIP programme. The ESS will deal with the challenges posed to official statistics through the ESS Vision 2020. These challenges include: (i) the data revolution — a mass of data and data providers; (ii) globalisation — differing ways of organising and measuring production; (iii) the price of statistics — how to produce quality products with reduced budgets; and (iv) the future of Europe — policy increasingly requires quantitative objectives and high-quality indicators. In February 2015 the ESSC adopted a portfolio of eight projects for implementing the core of the ESS Vision 2020. Such projects have a strong EU added value, being the results of a combined effort of Eurostat and several MSs, and they all help in modernising the production of European statistics.

Table 3: ESS Vision 2020 Portfolio as adopted by the ESSC in February 2015.

12 Regulation (EU) 2015/759 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics.

13 OJ L 251, 18.9.2012, p. 49.

Projects/acronyms	Definition
ADMIN	Making administrative data more accessible
BIGD	Exploring the use of big data
DIGICOM	Tailoring statistical tools and channels for maximum benefit to users
ESBR	National business and Eurogroups registers harmonised and improved to allow sharing of data across borders
ESDEN	Improved data exchange procedures and security
SERV	Sharing statistical services around the ESS
SIMSTAT and REDESIGN	Towards a single information system to measure intra-EU trade flows
VALIDATION	Common standards and guidelines to validate data

Some details on the results of the ESS.VIP projects are presented in response to the evaluation question No 8 in Chapter 5.3 on relevance.

<u>Q2: Did the associated EU anti-fraud measures allow for the prevention and timely detection of fraud?</u>

- **Eurostat put in place an effective system of anti-fraud measures, which has prevented cases of fraud.**

Since 2014 Eurostat has had an anti-fraud strategy in place. The strategy covered 2014-2017 and has been updated for 2018-2020. The strategy was accompanied by an action plan that was completed by the end of 2017. A new action plan has been agreed for 2018-2020 (to accompany the strategy).

The action plan included many measures. Those among the most important include:

- making the statistical legislation resistant to fraud and strengthening the anti-fraud resistance when drafting legislative proposals and programmes;
- implementing the control programme for *ex ante* and *ex post* checks;
- revising and updating the Eurostat guidance on early warning registration in order to also cover fraud reporting.

Several internal measures were also introduced, in particular:

- Eurostat integrated fraud risk assessment in the risk assessment exercise;
- Eurostat reports on its fraud prevention activities in the Annual Activity Report;
- fraud prevention components were integrated into the training courses on grants and on procurement.

All these actions provided tangible results. Thanks to the effectiveness of these fraud prevention activities all potential fraud cases notified by Eurostat have been dismissed by the European Anti-Fraud Office since 2012.

5.2 Efficiency

Under 'efficiency' the evaluation looked in particular at (i) the costs of producing European statistics as well as at the trends of these costs and (ii) the burden on the statistical respondents.

Three questions were designed to find out if the programme has been run efficiently so far:

Q3) Did the programme ensure the best use of available resources?

Q4) What are the costs and burden involved in producing European statistics in the ESS and how have they evolved?

Q5) How timely and efficient is the ESP process for reporting and monitoring?

The answers were positive for all three questions but in some cases there is still room for improvements.

Q3: Did the programme ensure the best use of available resources?

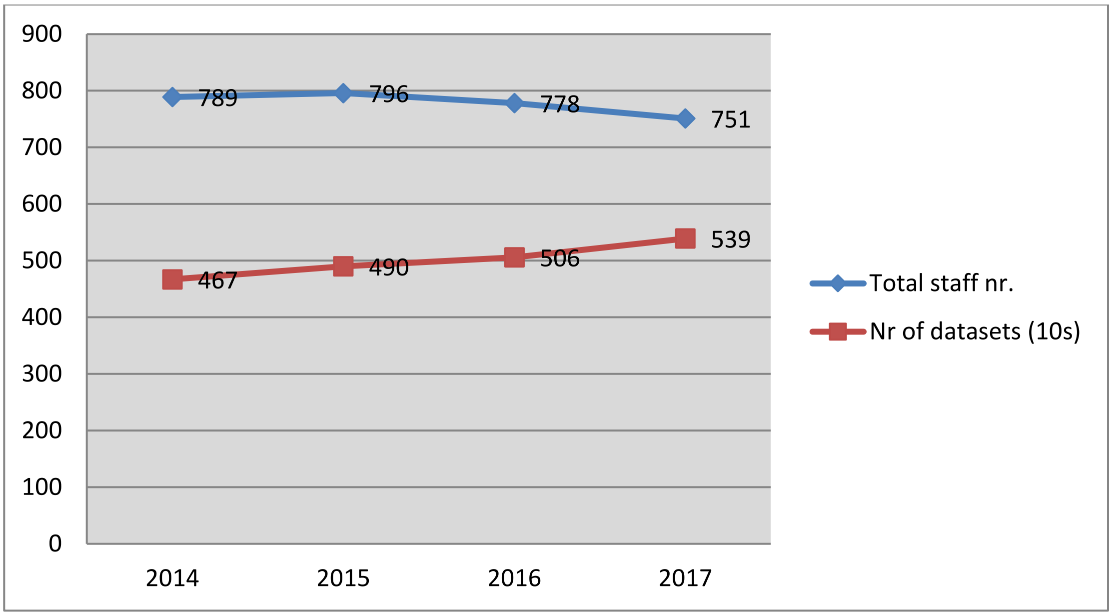
- **A trend of increased internal productivity is observed.**

From the data that Eurostat published concerning the human resources that were available from 2014 to 2017, increased internal productivity and the efficient use of internal resources can be observed.

The total number of Eurostat employees, including permanent staff, temporary and contract staff as well as seconded national experts went down from 789 at the end of 2014 to 751 at the end of 2017, a reduction of about 5 %. Permanent staff decreased from 637 to 614.

At the same time the total number of disseminated datasets increased by 722 or around 15 %, and the total quantity of values available in Eurostat's dissemination database increased by 88 %, which is far more than the increase which would be due to simply adding three new reference years to the existing datasets.

Chart 3: Number of staff and of published datasets (10s) at the end of each year 2014-17



On top of that an extra 20 GB of data per year have been disseminated in the Comext database for international trade data, by means of adding 20 data tables per year for some datasets and expanding the existing tables for another 22 datasets.

- **The financial implementation shows great efficiency.**

The budget allocated by the European Parliament and the Council to the ESP in 2015, 2016 and 2017, together with the EFTA contribution, totalled EUR 172 790 467, of which EUR 171 859 035 were committed, for an execution rate of 98.87 %.

Eurostat manages financial operations exclusively under direct management mode, by awarding grants and procurements. Their share out of the individual commitments is as follows:

Table 4: Share of grants and procurements out of individual commitments in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

ESP years	Individual commitments (€)	Share of grants	Share of procurements	Total
2015	51 927 287	35 %	65 %	100 %
2016	50 267 888	47 %	53 %	100 %
2017	57 432 763	37 %	63 %	100 %

- **Execution on available commitment and payment appropriations exceeded the targets set in Eurostat's management plan (MP).**

Targets are set annually in Eurostat's MP for the final appropriations for commitments and payments for the year. The next table compares the 2015, 2016 and 2017 budget execution of the ESP appropriations with the annual overall targets.

Table 5: Execution of commitment and payment appropriations compared to target set in Eurostat's MP, 2015-2017.

ESP years	Execution of:	Target[14]	ESP Result
2015	Commitments appropriations	>90 %	99.59 %
	Payment appropriations	>95 %	100 %
2016	Commitments appropriations	no target in MP	99.61 %
	Payment appropriations	no target in MP	99.93
2017	Commitments appropriations	no target in MP	97.42 %
	Payment appropriations	no target in MP	99.94 %

The above indicators show a budget execution either above the targets (i.e. 2015, for which a target was set in the MP), or at a very high level (for 2016 and 2017, for which no target was set in the MP).

Q4: What are the costs and the administrative burden involved in producing European statistics in the ESS and how have they evolved?

- **Costs and administrative burden are decreasing but slowly and they are difficult to measure.**

Measuring the costs for the NSIs and the administrative burden on respondents for producing European statistics is a complex task. In the past attempts were made to measure such costs and burden but with limited results. The way costs were measured varied a lot from one country to another, providing results which were not comparable. It is difficult to separate the administrative burden stemming from the production of European statistics from the burden stemming from the production of national statistics. The methods for collecting data differ between MSs and so the burden also differs. Respondents may also have a perception of the burden that does not correspond to the time actually spent. Due to the complexity and differences in the cost accounting systems in MSs, it is only possible to observe decreasing or increasing trends in costs and administrative burden. They are difficult to measure, especially the administrative burden.

1.1) Measuring costs

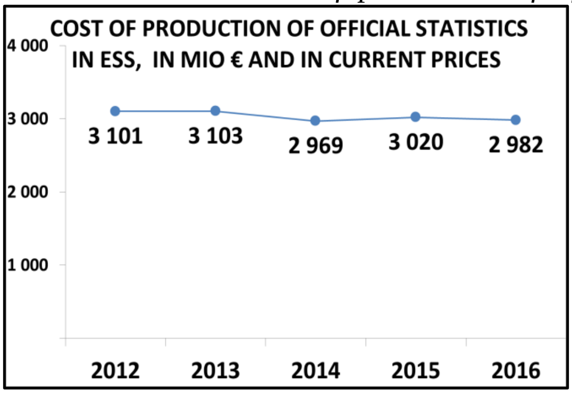
14 These targets cover all programmes and credits managed by Eurostat.

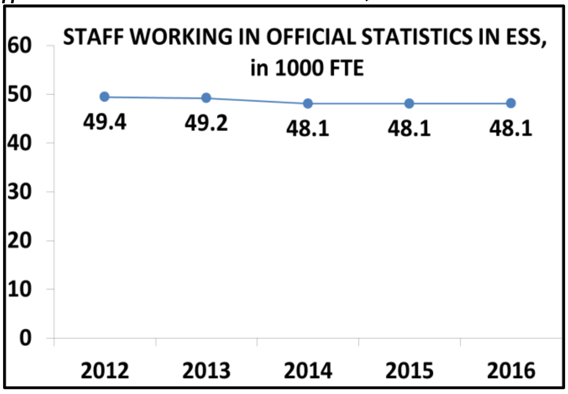
To measure the costs Eurostat launched three projects in the ESS:

a) The cost assessment survey on producing official statistics in the ESS (incl. NSIs, regional offices, ONAs, national central banks (NCBs)): this top-down approach aimed to collect information on costs and human resources in full time equivalents (FTEs) in the ESS for 2012-2016. Eurostat launched the first cost assessment survey on official statistics at the end of May 2015. The survey aimed to better assess the resources used by NSIs and ONAs to produce official statistics, recognising the need to support initiatives improving statistical infrastructure in order to ensure appropriate funding.

   According to the information collected in the third round on costs (at current prices measured in euro) to produce official statistics in the EU, costs decreased by around 4 % over 2012-2016 on aggregated country level and by around 3 % in terms of FTEs.

   Charts 4 and 5: costs of production of official statistics in the ESS, 2012-2016.





   Estimates of the production of statistics in 2016 point to costs of around EUR 3 billion and to around 48 000 FTEs on the ESS level.

b) The survey on the cost of European statistics (by products) in the ESS (incl. NSIs, regional offices, ONAs, NCBs): this bottom-up approach covered costs at the level of statistical products for one year (2015). It is important to have cost information for statistical products in order to assess the relative demand on resources of different statistical products and to provide input for setting priorities. The aim of the survey was to get a full and harmonised view on the financial and human resources for the production of each statistical product. However, only the European cost layer had to be reported; costs for national statistics were excluded. A total of 26 products were selected for the first phase; the list is presented in Annex 3. All ESS countries were asked to report on costs, with 2015 as the reference period. Despite some limitations in the data coverage, the cost information could be used as an input for calculating the ESS aggregate for the overwhelming majority of countries. A second phase (with 27 additional products) was launched at the beginning of 2018.

c) Sharing best practices in the area of cost accounting within the ESS: improving the common guiding principles for the cost collection surveys and identifying common items, e.g. time recording system; a nomenclature of statistical activities (projects/products); definition of cost centres as well as accounting systems (IT programme) which link the different cost items (like human resources and financial parts) to activities. So far, 15 NSIs have presented their cost accounting systems in the Resource Director's Group meetings.

1.2) Reducing costs

A significant way to reduce the costs and burden of producing statistics is to establish framework regulations. By bringing all statistics in a certain sector under a common legal framework, the principle of 'collect once, use many times' has been followed and any risk of double counting or inconsistency has been eliminated. The work on establishing framework regulations has advanced in recent years with some proposals. It is the case for agriculture statistics with the proposal for a regulation on integrated farm statistics[15], for business statistics with the proposal for a framework regulation integrating business statistics[16] (FRIBS) and for social statistics with the regulation on integrated European social statistics[17]. The impact assessments of two of the proposals, published in 2016, contained estimations of the costs and of possible savings when moving to framework regulations.

- The total cost for national statistical authorities to produce business statistics was estimated to be EUR 290 million annually, while the estimated burden on businesses in collecting the current business statistics was around EUR 689 million. Although the burden of collecting business statistics corresponds to around EUR 1.4 per person in the EU, the subjective perception of statistical burden is higher. One of the aims of FRIBS is to reduce the burden on businesses. Various options were examined in the impact assessment with different possibilities, particularly for the statistics on international trade in goods (Intrastat). The options were based on a study which is described in the next chapter in this document on burden. The ESSC preferred the option of combining the results of two projects for the statistics on international trade in goods, which were called 'SIMSTAT' and 'Revised Intrastat'. When implemented, it is estimated that such an option alone could give a potential reduction for FRIBS (for the EU in total) of 13.5 % or EUR 93 million. The novelty of the SIMSTAT approach compared to current Intrastat is the creation of an additional data source. Each MS collects data on intra-EU exports and makes this data available to other

15 Proposal for a regulation — COM(2016) 786 final, act adopted by the co-legislator (see Regulation (EU) 2018/1091 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on integrated farm statistics and repealing Regulations (EC) No 1166/2008 and (EU) No 1337/2011).

16 Proposal for a regulation — COM(2017) 114/875782.

17 Proposal for a regulation — COM(2016) 551 final.

MSs via a hub. Each transaction reported in one MS may thus serve as a data source for two MSs: for compiling the intra-EU exports of the exporting MS, and for compiling and/or verifying the intra-EU imports of the partner MS. Revised Intrastat means the current Intrastat system continues in a simplified form, but the coverage requirements are adjusted. The preferred solution combines parts from the SIMSTAT option (mandatory exchange of microdata) and the Revised Intrastat option (more flexibility in the choice of data sources used).

- For social statistics the total costs of producing the social surveys considered amount to roughly EUR 294 million for conducting each of the surveys in the reporting MSs. When breaking down the costs of all surveys per year this amounts to EUR 176 million per year. On average, the cost of collecting information on one observation unit (a person or household) is around EUR 100, with substantial differences for the diary-based surveys and between countries. The bulk of the cost for all surveys corresponds to the data collection phase (where a large number of interviewers have to be mobilised for the traditional face to face interviews, be it on paper or with computer). The margins for efficiency gains are larger in the data collection and the field work, as they are the most resource intensive. The use of new methods to interview the respondent, in particular the web-interviews, takes into account that if 30 % of the respondents answer via web interview, the data collection costs could be reduced by 20 %. More advanced techniques, currently under development, based on modularisation of social surveys leading to reduced sample size could also reduce costs. An experimental simulation of the gains in costs made by Eurostat showed that data collection costs could potentially be reduced by 15 %.

2) Administrative burden

Information on administrative burden has been provided in some of the monitoring reports that are regularly produced on the implementation of the statistical legislation. Also, a specific survey has been conducted on international trade in goods statistics, one area with a relevant burden and potential for reduction. The use of new data sources has been identified in general as a major way to reduce the burden.

For the statistics on pesticide sales many MSs rely now on administrative data kept by the pesticide authorities or the authorisation holders, which keeps the administrative burden quite low. It is higher for the statistics on pesticide use, as the information has to be recorded at farm level.

Around half of MSs now use administrative data as their main source for waste statistics and thus avoid burdening the data providers with additional questionnaires. Other countries use administrative data among many other data sources. Small companies are exempt from various surveys. The number of countries that have implemented or plan to implement electronic reporting systems is growing.

In the case of short-term statistics, the administrative burden was measured around 40-45 minutes per month for an average business but with big differences among countries. It has slightly decreased over recent years as more and more statistical offices facilitate companies in providing data, e.g. by electronic collection instead of paper surveys. Statistical offices also attempt to reduce sample sizes and rely, whenever possible, on administrative data.

For business registers, the long-term improvements to their quality are supposed to reduce the costs for the production of business statistics and the administrative burden on respondents. However, in the short and medium terms, around one third of MSs reported that implementing the business registers regulation[18] implied some modest increase in the administrative burden, in order to reach the levels of quality and harmonisation necessary to gain the desired benefits.

For structural business statistics, as most MSs frequently use the sample surveys, they have adopted new sampling strategies to reduce both the administrative burden on business and the costs for NSIs. A number of countries have also excluded small businesses from their surveys and used administrative data sources combined with estimates instead. Some countries have developed and implemented online systems for collecting annual fiscal and statistical information.

In the field of tourism statistics, reducing the response burden on the parties responsible for providing statistical data, in particular SMEs, has been advanced via three main channels, using the possibilities offered by the regulation[19]:

1) A number of countries collect data from businesses (for example on the capacity and occupancy of tourist accommodation establishments) via a sample survey (instead of an exhaustive census).
2) Other countries make use of administrative data held by the local authorities, instead of directly addressing suppliers of accommodation.
3) Those Member States accounting for less than 1 % of the total annual number of nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments in the EU can further reduce the scope of observation by only including those that have 20 or more beds. This latter threshold is applied to 12 Member States. This limitation of scope exempts many SMEs active in the tourist accommodation sector from the reporting obligation under the Regulation. Furthermore, to allow for flexibility concerning the data sources used, a breakdown of accommodation occupancy

18 Regulation (EC) No 177/2008.

19 Regulation (EU) No 692/2011.

data by size class was made optional.

In 2016 a study[20] was conducted on the burden on providers of statistical information (PSIs) when they provide statistics on the intra-EU trade in goods (Intrastat). The results of the study showed that for the year 2014 the actual administrative burden on PSIs related to Intrastat system was estimated at EUR 494 million. The breakdown of this total burden was estimated at 31 % on exports and at 69 % on imports. The burden for the baseline (97/93[21]) — i.e. generated by EU legal requirements with exports/imports coverage rates of 97/93 — was estimated at EUR 290 million, a gap of EUR 204 million between that and the actual burden. The gap in monetary terms reflects the gap in the numbers of PSIs which reported due to higher national coverage rates that were above the EU legal requirements. This accounted for 45 % all PSIs in imports and 30 % in exports (respectively 183 000 and 94 000 PSIs). The study proposed three possible options for reducing the administrative burden namely: SIMSTAT[22], Revised Intrastat[23] and Single Flow[24]. Each option was associated with different scenarios based on different export/import coverage rates. The results of the study were used in the impact assessment of the proposal for the FRIBS framework regulations.

A measurement of the administrative burden and of its trend can also be derived from the work conducted in MSs, particularly Germany. Evidence from Germany, where a comprehensive measurement of administrative burden is being conducted using the standard cost model, shows that the proportion of official statistics in the overall administrative burden for businesses is less than 1 %[25]. The proportion of administrative burden stemming from European statistical legislation is even lower, since many MSs undertake additional statistical surveys, or collect data at a higher level of detail than is required by European legislation. National statistical offices have also put in place

20 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/about/opportunities/consultations/intrastat.

21 According to Regulation (EC) No 638/2004 the current thresholds are designed so that Intrastat declarations cover 97 % of the value of intra-EU exports and 93 % of the value of intra-EU imports.

22 SIMSTAT entails a paradigm change to the Intrastat system. The main principle of SIMSTAT is to create an additional data source that guarantees the improvement of the quality of the statistical data, by making the exchange of micro-data on intra-EU exports among Member States compulsory. In contrast to the compulsory nature of the sharing of microdata, Member States decide to what extent these micro-data are used together with other sources in the compilation of the import statistics.

23 One possibility to simplify Intrastat and reduce response burden on enterprises by exempting more enterprises from Intrastat reporting can be achieved by further reducing the minimum coverage requirement in Intrastat legislation.

24 In a single flow reporting system, the Member States would be obliged to collect and compile only one flow, the other flow would be taken over from the partner Member State by mirroring its data.

25 Vorgrimler et al. (2015): Measuring the response burden of official statistical surveys for businesses. AStA 9, p. 59-71.

several measures to reduce the actual and perceived burden on both businesses and citizens, for example by applying rolling sampling schemes to ensure that a respondent does not participate in a survey every year.

When looking at the development of statistical response burden over time, it is evident that simplifications of both EU and national legislation and the efforts of national statistical offices had a positive effect over recent years. A ‘barometer of burdens’ maintained by the Federal Statistical Office in Germany indicates that the response burden from official statistics — adjusted for short-term economic effects — has continuously declined since they started measuring it in 2006. Figures show that it has declined by more than 10 % since the beginning of the ESP, a saving of around EUR 37 million, and by more than 3 % in 2015-2016, the latest year for which data are currently available.

Table 6: Statistical burden in Germany, 2012-2016

Year	Value (1 000s Euro)	Change per year	Index 2012=100
2016	313 513	-13555	89.4
2015	327 068	339	93.2
2014	326 730	-22590	93.1
2013	349 320	-1538	99.6
2012	350 857		100

3) Benefits

When measuring costs and burden, it is appropriate to consider also the benefits that such costs produce. A direct quantification of the benefits produced by the ESP is not possible. The main product of the ESP is European statistics, which are freely available to the public. They are not sold and they do not generate direct economic returns. Statistics do not have a direct influence on either the economy, the businesses, the environment or the society. Their role is to accurately inform policy makers and the public at large so that they can make their decisions based on correct facts and assumptions. It is the policies, which are implemented using the statistics, which have an effect on the different sectors. Therefore, the benefits, or their absence, depend on the policies, not on the statistics.

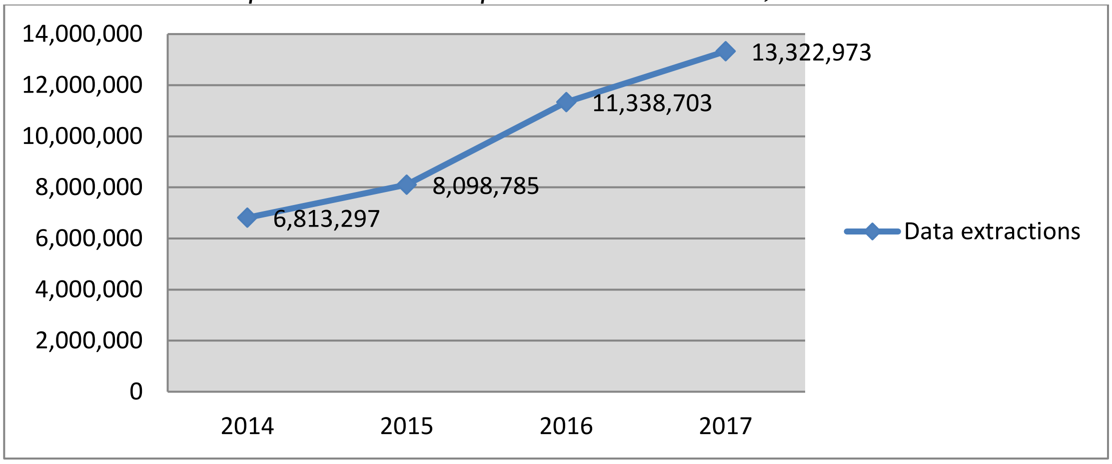
An indirect way of looking at the benefits produced by the statistics it to check if they are used and if their use has increased. In this way the main objective of the ESP, “to continue to be the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe” is fulfilled and we can assume that if the accurate statistics are used, it is more probable that the right policies are implemented.

As shown in details in the chapter on relevance, there is a clear indication that the use of

European statistics has increased in the last years:

- The number of users and the quantity of data extracted from the Eurostat website have increased substantially
- Eurostat is increasingly mentioned as a reference source of data on the internet
- More microdata sets are available for users, and the number of requests has steadily increased
- New modern ways of reaching out to users (social media) are used
- Every year Eurostat consults the other Commission DGs, and could accommodate their requests for data in most cases

Chart 6: Number of data extractions from Eurostat website, 2014-2017



It is therefore possible to conclude that the benefits of European statistics are increasing while their costs are decreasing.

Q5: How timely and efficient is the ESP process for reporting and monitoring?

– **All ESP activities are monitored in a timely and efficient way.**

Eurostat has developed an integrated database for planning and monitoring all its activities, which is called Planning, Monitoring and Reporting (PMR). In PMR all Eurostat activities are planned and their outputs are checked twice a year. Until 2015 the activities which are related to the ESP were linked to the ESP's objectives but not to their indicators. Following an internal recommendation from the first mid-term evaluation of the ESP, the activities have also been linked to the indicators of the ESP's objectives, allowing automatic monitoring, and facilitating the evaluation of the programme's effectiveness. The PMR also offers the possibility to produce monitoring reports.

A set of key performance indicators (KPIs) has been drawn up for the four main objectives of the programme. The KPIs are monitored each year and consist of the following for each objective:

- for objectives 1 and 4: Indicator 1.1 'Percentage of users that rate as 'Very good' or 'Good' the overall quality of European Statistics' and Indicator 1.2 ' Number of data extractions made by external users from Eurostat reference databases (EuroBase and Comext) via the Eurostat website';

- for objective 2: Indicator 2 'Percentage of users that rate as 'Very good' or 'Good' the timeliness of European Statistics for their purposes';
- for objective 3: Indicator 3 'Percentage of users that rate as 'Very good' or 'Good' the comparability of European Statistics among regions and countries'.

Since most of the KPIs come from the same source, i.e. the subjective opinions of the respondents to the Eurostat user satisfaction surveys, some new more robust KPIs have been drawn up to be used in the extended ESP until 2020. They will be based on (i) the statistical coverage; (ii) the number of data extractions made by external users; (iii) Eurostat impact on the internet; (iv) timeliness of a subset of the statistics; (v) punctuality of a subset of the statistics; and (vi) the percentage of the time series that cover 10 or more consecutive years.

The implementation of the main statistical legal acts, which provide the legal framework of the statistics produced under the ESP, is also regularly monitored every few years according to each regulation[26].

5.3 Relevance

Under 'relevance' the evaluation examines, in particular, how the results of the ESP correspond to the EU policy goals and priorities and to the needs of the users of European statistics.

Three questions were designed to learn how relevant the ESP's results were and continue to be:

Q6) Is the ESP helping to satisfy the information needs of different categories of users?

Q7) Is the ESP contributing to the design and monitoring of policies in priority areas?

Q8) How well adapted is the ESP to subsequent technological changes or advances?

The answers to the three questions show that the ESP has helped and continues to help satisfy the users' needs and contributes to the design and monitoring of policies. However more is needed. Users ask for improvements in the quality of data, especially concerning timeliness and comparability. Not all requests for new data for emerging policy needs could be taken into account. Eurostat and the ESS are modernising the statistical production processes to respond to such needs while taking advantage of new

26 The most recent monitoring reports can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/domain-specific-results (available in English, French and German only).

technologies. Focus must be given to modernisation, which may require changes in the way statistical authorities gather and process data and necessitate access to adequate resources.

<u>Q6: Is the ESP helping to satisfy the information needs of different categories of users?</u>

- **The number of users and the quantity of data extracted from the Eurostat website have increased substantially.**

A first indication that Eurostat's data are useful for a growing number of users comes from the increased number of users accessing the Eurostat website and in the quantity of extracted data. The number of users is estimated via the number of distinct IP addresses which were used to access the database. The quantity of data extractions is the sum of those carried out on the two databases of the Eurostat website; Comext for the international trade statistics and Eurobase for all other statistics except the data of the Census Hub. As can be seen from charts 7 and 8, in 3 years the number of users increased by 18.3 % and the number of data extractions almost doubled.

Chart 7: Number of distinct IP addresses accessing Eurostat website, 2014-2017

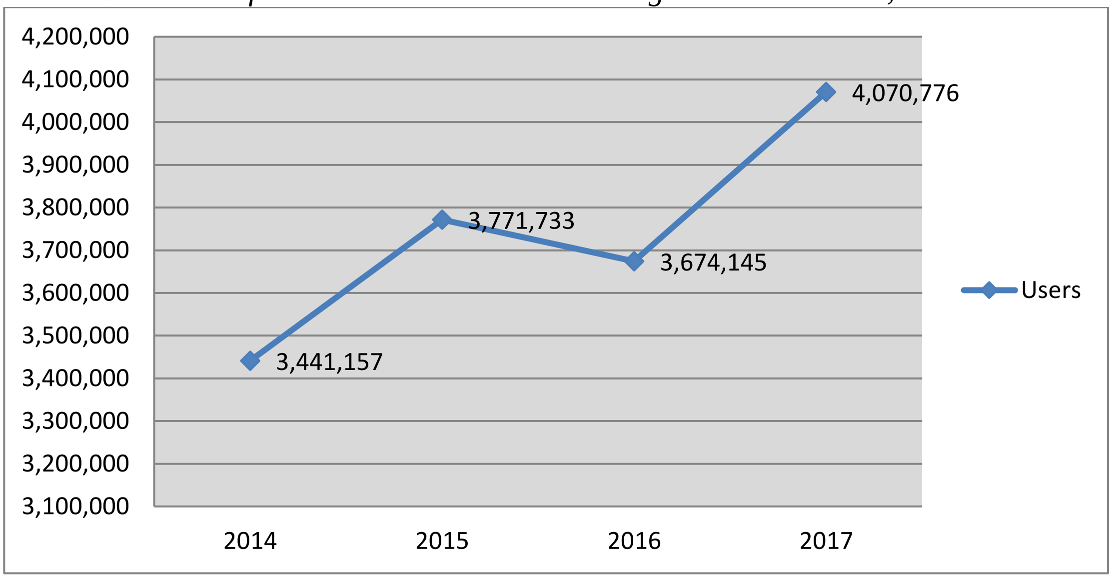
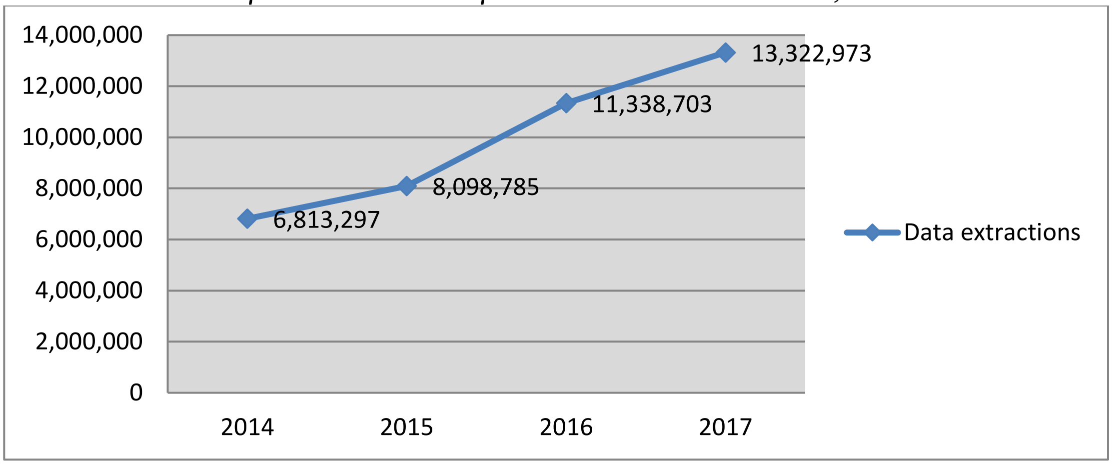


Chart 8: Number of data extractions from Comext and Eurobase, 2014-2017

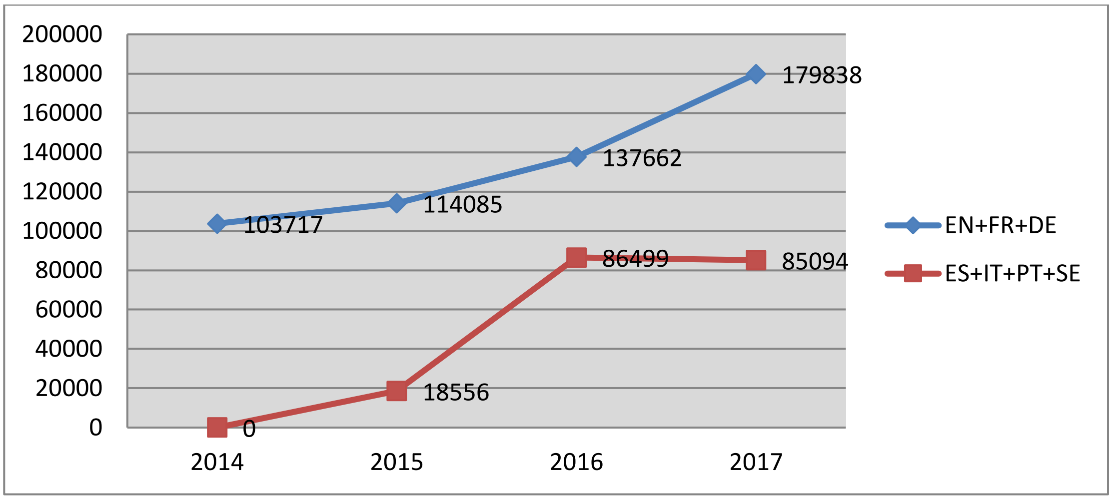


– **Eurostat is increasingly mentioned as a reference source of data on the internet.**

The popularity of the statistics published by Eurostat can be deduced from the number of times that Eurostat is mentioned as a data source on the internet. Eurostat measures how many times it is mentioned as a source in various types of internet categories: Twitter, news, blogs, general, forums, Facebook, images, Instagram, videos and reviews. Until October 2015 this measuring was carried out for the three main working languages of Eurostat: English, French and German. Since November 2015 Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Swedish have been added.

As shown in chart 9, the number of mentions in the three main languages has increased by 73.4 %, while the number of mentions in the other four languages is almost half of those in the three main ones.

Chart 9: Number of internet mentions of Eurostat as source by groups of languages, 2014-2017



Also some users add comments about various aspects of Eurostat, such as on the quality of the data published by Eurostat, on the usefulness and quality of the news releases, and on the ease of using the information provided. The analysis for 2017 shows that a large majority of the comments were positive. Out of a total of 497 comments, 409 or 82.3 % were positive while only 88 were negative.

- **Users are generally satisfied with the quality of Eurostat's data and services but they demand more, especially regarding timeliness and comparability of data.**

For each of the years evaluated Eurostat conducted a general user satisfaction survey (USS) and in 2015 and 2016 it conducted a specific survey for media users. The questionnaire in the survey covered four main aspects:

- information on types of users and uses of European statistics;
- quality aspects;
- trust in European statistics;
- dissemination of statistics.

Respondents to the surveys can give their opinions ranging from 'very good' to 'very poor' and by adding free text comments.

After reaching a peak of 4 839 in 2014, the number of respondents dropped in 2015 and in 2016 to a minimum of 3 038. The drop was probably due to user fatigue in having to reply to a long questionnaire every year; the users themselves had asked for the questionnaire to be shortened. Therefore, the 2017 survey included a much shorter questionnaire focusing just on the data quality and only had a generic question on the quality of the services. Eurostat decided to focus on the data quality because some of the KPIs of the ESP were derived from the results of the USS. In that way Eurostat succeeded in getting 50 % more responses in 2017 than in 2016.

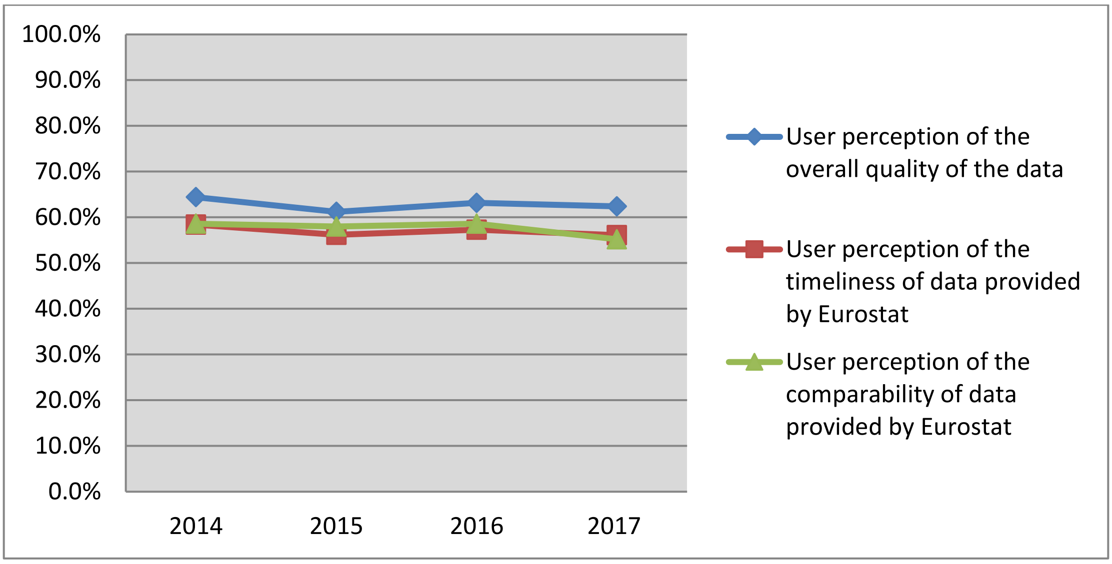
When analysing the results, Eurostat considers a user to be satisfied if they choose the option 'very good' or 'good' in response to a question. The results of the surveys show that most users are satisfied with all aspects of the quality of the data and of Eurostat's services, but to different degrees.

Considering in particular the results for the different aspects of data quality, the results show that the proportion of satisfied users has not increased in the last 3 years, despite the efforts made in the ESS to improve the data quality, especially in terms of timeliness and comparability. Three of the ESP KPIs were based on the results of the USS for data quality:

- user perception of the overall quality of the data;
- user perception of the timeliness of data provided by Eurostat;
- user perception of the comparability of data provided by Eurostat.

The indicators are calculated without counting those respondents who gave a 'no opinion' reply. The results must be taken with caution because (i) the indicators measure only the users' perception of the different aspects of the data quality and (ii) the survey is anonymous, so the users who reply can vary each year. Eurostat had defined as its objective obtaining a positive trend for those indicators. Such a positive trend has not materialised in the last 3 years, as shown in the chart 10.

Chart 10: Users' perception of different aspects of data quality, as percentages of 'very good' and 'good' replies, 2014-2017



The reasons for why user satisfaction has not increased can be found in the respondents' comments.

On **timeliness** respondents would like to have more fresh data, especially now that other statistical sources offer more timely, if possibly less accurate, data. This is especially true for those data collections that have a time lag of more than 1 year, for which data seem too old for some users. When something unexpected happens, like the economic crisis or the sudden rise of the migration phenomenon, users need data very quickly as well as more data. Data are mostly produced in the ESS by means of applying statistical regulations, which need years to follow the legislative procedure when they have to be established or amended. Also, new data collections in all MSs, traditionally undertaken via national surveys, take a long time to prepare and process. The data may then need to be validated, harmonised and aggregated by Eurostat. Therefore, the entire process can take a very long time, making it difficult to respond quickly to new user needs.

On **comparability**, some users complain that data do not seem to be calculated in the same way in all MSs. In particular some users say that MSs sometimes use different definitions and different ways of collecting data, resulting in less comparable statistics. Other differences are found in some cases between figures published at national level by MSs and at European level by Eurostat. Data that are comparable at national level are in other cases not comparable at regional level, where they are less harmonised. Furthermore, changes in methodology make it difficult to compare data over time and it is not always possible to compare all countries as data gaps exist due to confidentiality.

To have a better understanding of Eurostat's results concerning the users' perception of data quality, Eurostat is planning to conduct a benchmarking exercise with other international organisations producing statistics, like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

The results are better for **services**. The share of satisfied respondents with data and services has always been high and reached its peak in 2017 at almost 75 %. Other services such as the user support and the news releases (according to the survey for media users) constantly receive very positive ratings. Respondents were generally happy with the new dissemination tools that were offered and the satisfaction with the website reached a peak when the new Eurostat website was launched. As technological developments and the users' expectations when using a website change very quickly, it is necessary to be constantly improving the dissemination tools to keep users satisfied. Therefore, Eurostat is already developing a new improved version of the website, which should be ready soon.

Chart 11: Overall user satisfaction with data and services provided by Eurostat, 2014-2017

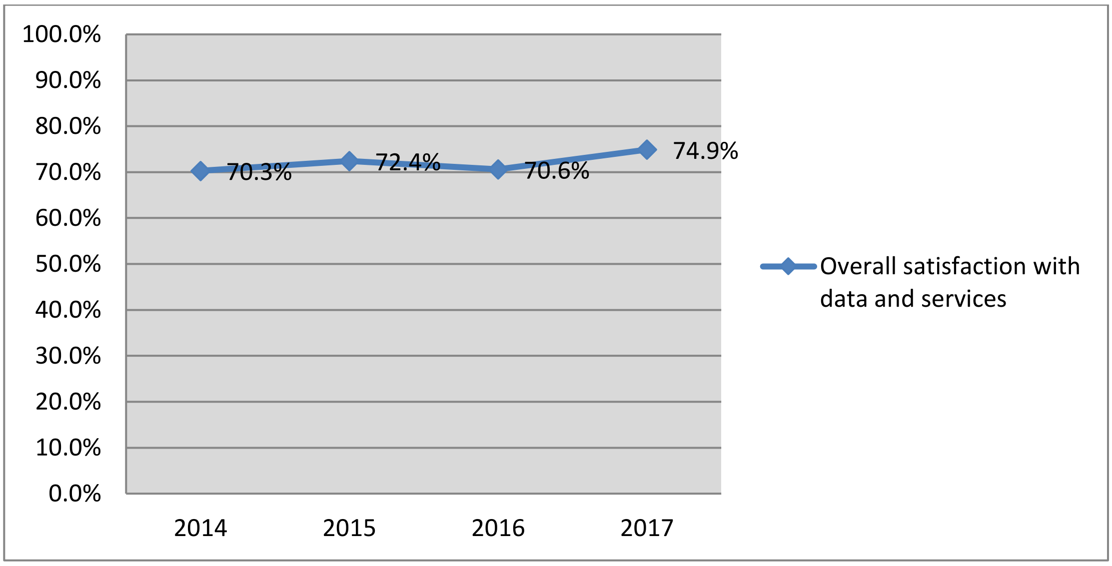
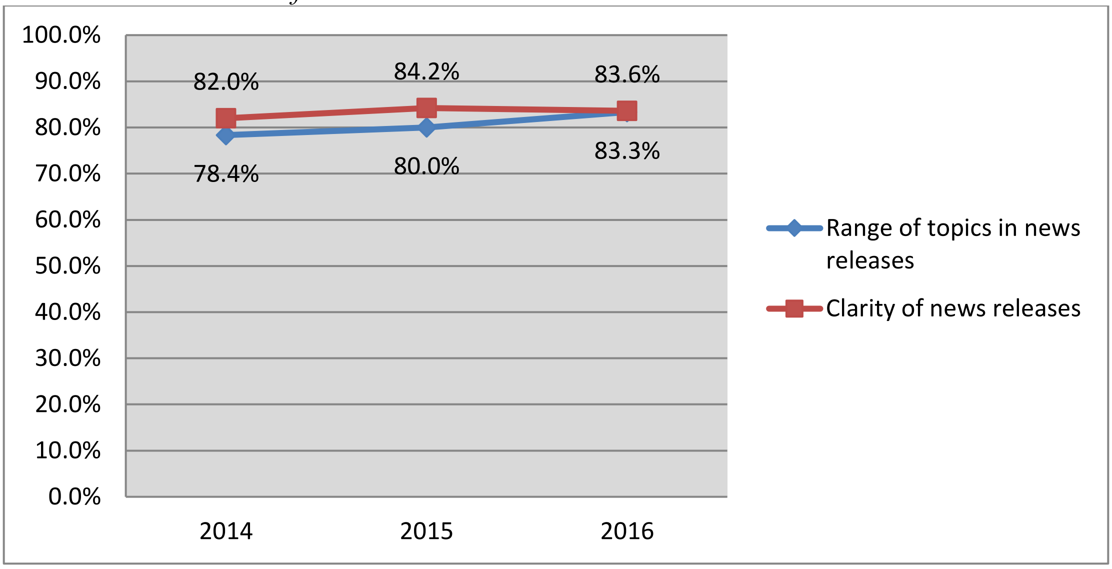


Chart 12: Overall satisfaction with Eurostat's news releases and media 2014-2016



– **More microdata sets are available for users, and the number of requests has steadily increased.**

Following the demands of the scientific community, Eurostat has increased the numbers of microdata datasets which are available for research purposes. As these contain confidential data, researchers have to follow a specific procedure to get access, according to the Commission Regulation (EU) No 557/2013 on access to confidential data for scientific purposes. The table here below shows the list of datasets and the number of requests for the years 2014-2017. Two new datasets have been published and the number of requests has increased by 29 %, a sign of growing interest in the data contained within these datasets. A single request can be made for more than one dataset.

Table 7: Requests for access to microdata, 2014-2016

	EU-SILC	EU-LFS	EC HP	CI S	SE S	AE S	EH IS	CV TS	CS IS	MM D	ER FT	HB S	Requests number
2014	164	134	41	32	32	21	13	8	2		1		310
2015	206	152	40	37	28	14	15	6	7	4	4		352
2016	187	131	38	36	28	9	24	6	8	6	9	9	356
2017	219	173	48	36	50	20	29	14	17	7	5	36	400

– **New dissemination tools have made it easier for users to consult European statistics.**

Following the feedback users give to the user support, and that provided in satisfaction surveys and in consultations organised by Eurostat's dissemination unit, and following the latest developments in the field, both technical and conceptual, Eurostat's website has been enriched with a series of new tools. This has made it easier for users to consult European statistics. The new tools include the following.

1) 'Themes in the spotlight' is a line of Eurostat data visualisations aiming to

present data in an easily understandable way, targeting the general public. ‘Themes in the spotlight’ was created in March 2015 and since then 67 pages have been published.

New content is created to accompany: (i) Eurostat ad hoc news releases[27]/news items[28] linked to data that could be interesting for the target audience: (ii) special celebrations (such as European Statistics Day, World Youth Day, etc.); and (iii) special events (Presidency of the EU). Most data visualisations are dynamic and interactive, but for some pages, static infographics are also presented.

2) The ‘What’s new?’ news section was launched on Eurostat’s website on 24 January 2017. The idea behind its creation was to open up an additional dissemination channel to bring the data produced by the ESS closer to its users. In addition, some of the news section items have replaced the traditional news releases published by Eurostat in recent years.

All news items featured on ‘What’s new?’ consist of relatively short texts, often accompanied by colourful infographics and visualisations. Since its launch, the news section has proved popular with many of our key users, including leading international media outlets. It has quickly become an additional source of statistical information, complementing Eurostat’s regular news releases. The news items are regularly picked up and featured in international news media, including European newspapers, television and radio stations as well as social media. The section has proved to be a big success with users, generating more than 650 000 hits in the first 11 months of its operation.

3) The ESS flagship publication ‘The life of women and men in Europe’. This specific ESS digital publication was released in October 2017. It contains short texts, interactive visualisation tools, infographics, photos and even a quiz.

The novelty with this publication is that it has been developed by Eurostat in collaboration with the national statistical institutes (NSIs) of the ESS as part of a project on user analytics and innovative products. The NSIs have translated the publication into their national languages, so it is available in 24 languages on the Eurostat website as well as on the respective web sites of the NSIs. The release of the publication was accompanied by a common communication campaign including a press release and trailer videos translated into the national languages. The publication was well received by the public and had a high impact on both social media and the mainstream media.

[27] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/news-releases (available in English, French and German only).

[28] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/whats-new (available in English only).

4) ‘Air traffic in the EU’. This interactive tool helps users to visualise air passenger transport in EU and EFTA countries.

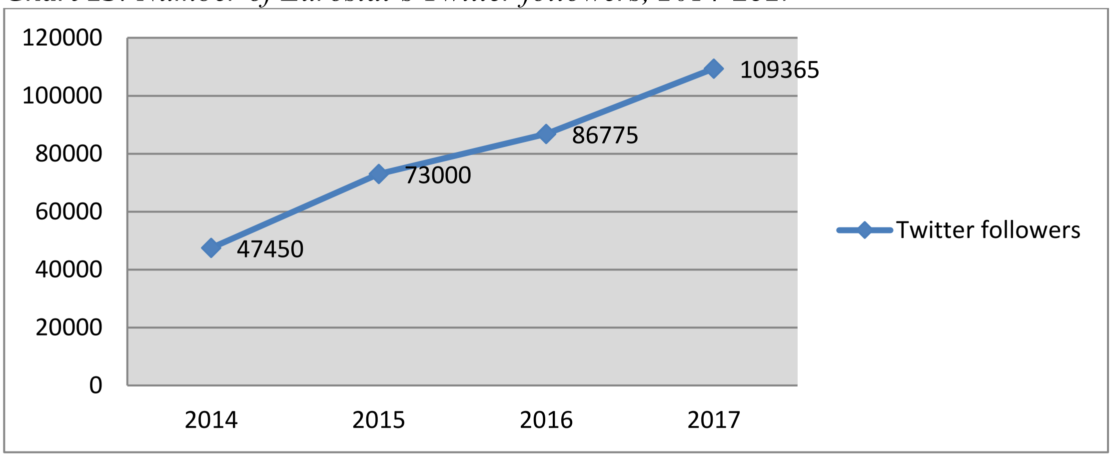
When you select an airport on the map, the visualisation will display the top five routes from that airport, the number of flights that departed and the number of passengers carried on those flights. In addition, the tool shows the share of passengers carried to and from other EU member states (intra-EU), to countries outside the EU (extra-EU), and also to other cities in the same country (national) for the latest available year.

– **New modern ways of reaching out to users (social media) are used.**

Social media is a simple and powerful tool that enables Eurostat to reach out to a wide audience. It helps Eurostat to promote its products, receive immediate feedback and directly interact with people. Eurostat has two social media accounts, in Twitter and in Facebook, which attract more and more interest.

The twitter account was set up in 2011. The platform is traditionally used more for professional purposes, e.g. by journalists, experts, academia, stakeholder organisations. Eurostat uses it mainly for news and announcements. The number of followers has more than doubled in the last 3 years, going from 47 450 at the end of 2014 to 109 365 at the end of 2017.

Chart 13: Number of Eurostat’s Twitter followers, 2014-2017



Facebook is mainly used for informative and entertaining content that the general public can relate to. Within its first year Eurostat’s account[29] gained over 10 000 followers, reaching 10 400.

The ESS Facebook page ‘European Statistics’[30] was launched on 15 November 2016. Its objectives are to promote the ESS and European statistics, and to allow for targeted

29 https://www.facebook.com/EurostatStatistics

30 https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanStatistics/

communication with a group of potential users of European statistics in order to identify their needs. The page is used to elicit user feedback and consider it in future product development. The content shared on 'European Statistics' comes from 14 NSIs and Eurostat. To manage the page effectively, the ESS has set up a network of social media correspondents.

Another way to reach out to new young users was the first European Statistics Competition, which was run by Eurostat along with interested MSs in 2017. The initiative aimed to stimulate the awareness of and need for sound statistics in an age of fake news. It did so by promoting statistical literacy and stimulating curiosity among students, while encouraging teachers to use new educative materials based on official statistics. More than 11 000 students aged 14-18 participated.

- **When approving Eurostat's annual work programmes, the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) has expressed some general concerns to be taken into account for the future, including the need for adequate resources.**

ESAC is a body representing users, respondents and other stakeholders in European statistics (including the scientific community, social partners and civil society) as well as institutional users (e.g. the Council and the European Parliament). Each year it gives its opinion on Eurostat's annual work programmes, which are taken into account in order to finalise the programmes. Its opinions on the annual work programmes for 2016, 2017 and 2018[31], were generally positive, showing that the large majority of the actions planned were in the users' interest. However it also expressed some concerns, even at a general level, which should be kept in mind regarding the continuation of the ESP and the future programmes.

In its opinion on the annual work programme for 2016, ESAC recommended that Eurostat pay special attention to improving the quality of statistical data so that they are consistent and coherent over a given time period. ESAC welcomed, as a significant way to reduce the administrative burden of the respondents, the strengthening of Eurostat's and the NSIs' role in the use and design of administrative records. However, they warned that different sources can only replace one another to a limited extent and so they will have to be combined. Complementing the existing sources with the opportunities provided by new technologies and data sources (such as big data), where methodologies are just emerging, raises a number of new issues and opportunities. Given the equally significant potential benefits and risks to safeguarding confidentiality, it is important that NSIs handle big data projects responsibly. They added that using those new sources and technologies will require considerable investment in research and that in the short term

31 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-statistical-advisory-committee-esac (available in English only).

meeting the increasing demand for new policy priorities to be underpinned by solid data without additional resources will put the ESS under severe pressure.

On the dissemination strategy, ESAC encouraged Eurostat to take into account various target groups such as researchers, businesses, decision-makers, journalists, students, teachers or other individuals.

The issues linked with using new sources and the necessity to get adequate resources were reiterated in ESAC's opinions for the annual work programmes 2017 and 2018. In particular ESAC saw risks in fulfilling the work programmes due to the need to develop the statistical system and services and maintain current production, despite having limited resources. It suggested that the ESS needs to be adequately resourced in order to anticipate emerging statistical needs and to cater for unexpected information needs and for the development and modernisation of statistics.

Other general remarks concerned the need to provide sufficient geographical breakdowns of data to have well informed decision-making at regional level, and the growing challenges to the way official statistics are used to inform people. Not only have official statistics been used in misleading ways, they are competing with unreliable data sources and false information that is quickly spread through social media. Therefore, ESAC called on Eurostat and the NSIs to take a more strategic look at these challenges and the implications for those responsible for producing and disseminating official statistics.

- **Major stakeholders suggested that changes are needed in the way official European statistics are produced to stay relevant.**

The 'Power from Statistics' conference took place in Brussels in October 2017. Its aim was to determine which topics would be relevant to decision-makers and the public in the future and how official statistics could best deliver this information. The conference brought together a multidisciplinary audience, consisting of policy makers, journalists, business leaders, academics and official statisticians from all over Europe to discuss the needs and challenges facing evidence-based policy-making.

The conclusions from the conference suggested that some changes are needed in the way official statistics have been produced and disseminated so far.

- The policy cycles should be more agile and better informed. This can be carried out by using new data sources (open data, citizens sourcing and private data). Access to new data sources requires new partnerships, i.e. data collaboratives (data cooperatives or data pooling, research intelligence products, application programming interfaces, trusted intermediary, etc.).
- It is crucial to shorten the time lag between the policy makers' requests/needs and the time when statistics are produced. Timeliness can change the political

discussion.

- Eurostat and the NSIs should simplify the presentation of data, use interactive tools and always test these tools on consumers. Easy access to information via simplified friendly search tools should be enabled. Journalists complained that while statistical offices have a lot of data they are either not available or presented in a confusing way.
- New economic and business models are emerging, which tend not to be captured by official statistics and may not be part of the traditional measurement of GDP and production. This leads to a search for new techniques and measures. Examples of these could be data harvesting from the web or 'web scraping', and machine learning.

<u>Q7: Is the ESP contributing to the design and monitoring of policies in priority areas?</u>

- **Every year Eurostat consults the other Commission DGs, and could accommodate their requests for data in most cases, but not all.**

Eurostat has continued to cooperate with the other DGs in order to follow-up and adjust the ongoing projects, to be informed about their new needs, and to plan the necessary support for implementing their policies.

During 2015-2017 55 bilateral hearings took place between Eurostat and the other DGs[32]. The analysis of these hearings shows that Eurostat considered most DG requests for data and the main requests to be feasible.

Eurostat cannot satisfy some specific requests (most frequently those concerning new sub-modules of data collection) because of a series of objective reasons: confidentiality restrictions, lack of legal basis, lack of resources and negative impact on data's quality.

For some other statistical needs, Eurostat will be able to explain the outcome after investigating their feasibility.

The ratio between the requests approved, the requests to investigate and the requests refused is roughly 5:1:1.

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32 • In 2015: DG CLIMA, DG AGRI, DG COMP, DG CNECT, DG ENER, DG FISMA, DG JUST, DG MOVE, DG ECFIN, DG NEAR, DG RTD, DG TRADE, DG HOME, DG REGIO, DG EMPL, DG EPSC, DG SANTE and DG ENV (18).

• In 2016: DG CLIMA, DG AGRI, DG COMP, DG CNECT, DG ENER, DG MOVE, DG EAC, DG ECFIN, DG ENER, DG TRADE, DG SANTE, DG JRC, DG HOME, DG REGIO, DG GROW, DG EMPL and DG EPSC (17).

• In 2017: DG CLIMA, DG AGRI, DG CNECT, DG ENER, DG FISMA, DG JUST, DG MOVE, DG EAC, DG NEAR, DG TRADE, DG SANTE, DG JRC, DG REGIO, DG GROW, DG ECFIN, DG RTD, DG EMPL, DG ENV, DG HOME and DG MARE (20).

Some of the DGs' statistical needs/requests are common: reuse of the new Eurostat dissemination tool, big data, support to the statistics produced by the DGs, and the main Commission's priorities.

In the targeted consultations with the DGs, many new requests for additional or more detailed data were made. Eurostat could not satisfy all of them but will take them into account in preparing for the new post-2020 ESP. Some common remarks were on the need to have increased and easier access to microdata, on the need to improve the statistics' timeliness, on the possibility of Eurostat performing more data analysis and on the use of new data sources and new technologies.

Q8: How well adapted is the ESP to subsequent technological changes or advances?

- **The European Governance Advisory Board has suggested that changes are needed to exploit the advances in data sources and keep official European statistics relevant.**

The European Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) is a body charged with providing an independent overview of the ESS, particularly on the implementation of the European statistics Code of Practice. ESGAB's aim is to strengthen professional independence, integrity and accountability (three key parts of the Code of Practice) in the ESS, and the quality of European statistics. Its tasks include preparing an annual report to Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Code of Practice insofar as it relates to the Commission (Eurostat), as well as an assessment on implementation in the ESS as a whole.

In its 2016 report[33] ESGAB recognised the opportunities and risks associated with using new data sources. Multiple data sources, particularly 'big data', present exciting opportunities for statistics. They can potentially address the issues of declining response rates and response burden, as well as users' expectations on timeliness, reliability and relevance. Yet seizing such opportunities will require changes in the way statistical authorities gather and process data. These changes do not come without risks, for example, in terms of data quality, impartiality and trust.

They also warned that adequate resources need to be invested to attract and upskill staff who are able to manage the new technologies. NSIs are competing with better-resourced private sector businesses to attract staff with relatively scarce new skills, particularly in data science. Failure to invest in this area poses not only a very real risk to quality, but also the danger that official statistics will be perceived as less relevant or technologically sophisticated than those produced by commercial bodies.

33 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/esgab/annual-reports (available in English only).

In its 2017 report ESGAB declared that access to privately-held data has become a crucial issue for statisticians. Not only are such data now at the core of economic development, generating new products and services, but they can also offer an opportunity to improve the coverage and timeliness of statistics at a lower cost and with less response burden. In particular, emerging technologies such as the Internet of Things are opening up new ways of collecting and analysing privately-held data. Where data are provided by private sector organisations, it is important that access to these data can be sustained over time. Furthermore, it is also necessary to be assured about the methods used and the quality and security of the data.

ESGAB also said that the quality of the data published outside the ESS can influence the credibility of European statistics. This is particularly true for the statistics that enjoy wide media coverage. Therefore, they suggested that MSs extend the coordination task of NSIs to other national statistics soon.

- **The modernisation of the statistical production is progressing and delivering results but now it is time to implement those results in the ESS.**

The modernisation of the production of European statistics is progressing through the implementation of the ESS Vision 2020. The ESS Vision 2020 included a portfolio of eight projects and their supporting frameworks. These are expected to be completed by 2020, coinciding with the end of the current ESP. The work is mainly carried out via European Statistical System collaboration networks (ESSnets). The ESSnets are projects carried out by a team of institutions aiming to provide results which can be used by the whole ESS community.

Two of the projects have already been concluded and their results are now being implemented in the ESS:

1. VALIDATION. This project developed common methodological and architectural frameworks for validating data. It paved the way for more transparency in the validation of data transmitted to Eurostat and therefore helped to increase the quality and credibility of European statistics. The project facilitated the sharing and reuse of IT solutions for validating data, thus potentially reducing IT development and maintenance costs across the ESS.
2. SIMSTAT (Single Market Statistics) and REDESIGN (Redesign of Intrastat). This project included two sub-projects: (i) a pilot on the feasibility of exchanging microdata on intra-EU trade in goods (SIMSTAT) and (ii) a cost-benefit analysis of the options for a redesign of production of statistics on intra-EU trade in goods (REDESIGN). Based on the results of these two sub-projects, the ESSC agreed in May 2016 on the key parts of the modernised system of intra-EU trade in goods statistics.

The other six projects are advancing well:

1. ADMIN (Administrative data sources). This project aims to (i) improve access to harmonised administrative sources; (ii) strengthen methodological knowledge on the integration of administrative data into statistical production; (iii) provide tools to assess the quality of outputs based on administrative sources alone or together with survey data; (iv) pilot the access and use of, for statistical purposes, administrative data already collected by Commission DGs and services. All deliverables from the ESSnet on the quality of multisource statistics, which were expected as the results of the first Specific Grant Agreement have been finalised and published. A training course on 'Moving towards register based statistical system' was provided under the European statistical training programme. Work has begun on improving the use of administrative data sources.

2. BIGD (Big data). The objectives of this project are to: (i) conduct pilots to gain experience in using big data in official statistics; (ii) create dedicated collaborative communities to discuss specific data-related topics; (iii) explore the potential for using big data for statistical purposes to reduce the costs of statistical production; (iv) extend the range of statistical products; and (v) increase the timeliness of official statistics. Given the increasing importance of big data, this subject is the main topic of the next discussion point in this question.

3. DIGICOM (digital communication, user analytics and innovative products). This project aims to (i) strengthen the communication with users through a social network platform; (ii) share visualisation tools among ESS partners and create a new flagship product to increase the understanding of the statistics provided on Europe; (iii) facilitate access to and the reuse of statistics through open data portals; and (iv) develop a strategy to communicate the value of official statistics and increase statistical literacy. Among the main results so far are the digital publication 'The life of women and men in Europe'[34] in 24 languages, the ESS Facebook page[35] that features content from 19 NSIs, the launch of experimental statistics[36] and the educational videos on regional statistics[37] disseminated via a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC).

4. ESBRs (European System of interoperable statistical business registers). The

34 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/womenmen/ (available in English only).

35 https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanStatistics/.

36 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/experimental-statistics/introduction.

37 https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjO2YQzR0ZzNc-YKFI7rTrQ.

main objective of the ESBRs is to provide infrastructure (i.e. methodologies, processes and IT systems) to improve the quality of business statistics in Europe. In particular, the ESBRs project aims to achieve progress in confronting three main problems: (i) inconsistencies in business statistics due to different national practices; (ii) inconsistencies in globalisation statistics due to absence of a shared view on global business groups; and (iii) inefficiencies in business processes due to the absence of common infrastructure. The project has already achieved significant results, such as: (i) the implementation of the EuroGroups Register 2.0; (ii) the European profiling methodology; (iii) the Interactive Profiling Tool for international profiling of multinational groups; and (iv) the ESBRs business architecture. Under the ESBRs project, MSs have already collaboratively profiled more than 320 major groups. Besides the already extensive use of the EuroGroups Register and the Interactive Profiling Tool, MSs are going to take advantage of the ESBRs achievements in 2018-2019 during the ESBRs interoperability pilots that have already started with 22 countries participating.

5. ESDEN (European Statistical Data Exchange Network). The objectives of this project are to: (i) improve the IT platform (called EDAMIS for Electronic Dataflow Administration and Management Information System) for the data exchange services across the ESS; (ii) to offer standard, secure communication procedures and improved physical networks to ESS members; and (iii) to allow ESS members to set up the data exchange according to their own security policies and infrastructure. As a main result the development and internal testing of the new EDAMIS 4 Web Portal has finished, and NSIs have been invited to participate in the testing. The launch of EDAMIS 4 had been due to take place before the end of 2018. The number of NSIs connecting to secure networks for data exchange, such as TESTA — Trans-European Services for Telematics between Administrations — and the Common Communication Network, continues to increase.

6. SERV (shared services). Its objectives are to (i) establish a catalogue of common statistical services, such as software solutions, that could be shared across the ESS; (ii) to provide support for implementation through guidelines and recommendations which include descriptions of what shared services entail; and (iii) to enable faster implementation of new production processes as well as cost reduction for development and maintenance of information systems if reusable services are integrated into MSs’ systems. A first ESSnet on Sharing Common Functionalities in the European Statistical System was concluded, and a second ESSnet (geared towards deploying the outcomes in the ESS) is being prepared. A static version of the Service Catalogue was released and is continuously promoted

in relevant fora. This is the only ESS VISION related project for which it is not certain whether the results will be delivered as planned because of delays in releasing the new versions of the catalogue.

The two supporting frameworks are:

1. Enterprise Architecture. Among its main outcomes the project should provide an ESS Enterprise Architecture Reference Framework and an ESS Statistical Production Reference Architecture. A helpdesk function for project managers in Eurostat and in the Member States involved in project deployment will soon become operational. This helpdesk will support architecture alignment in Member States in the fields of linked open data, ESBRs and validation.

2. QUAL (Quality). The ultimate purpose of QUAL is to (i) help the ESS to promote the value of European statistics, and (ii) to better serve users and meet their needs by providing them with high-quality data and information in a market with many information providers whose origins are unknown and whose quality is uncertain. QUAL will provide producers of European statistics with a quality management framework which will help them to efficiently ensure quality in an environment of reduced budgets and increasing needs. A high level group on quality has been set up in the ESS. A contract, designed jointly with DIGICOM, was launched in December 2017. The project will analyse users' perception of the quality of European statistics.

- **Work on big data and official statistics advanced and implementation can start. However, data governance issues may require changes in the business model.**

The ESS work on big data and official statistics started with the adoption of a big data action plan and roadmap in 2014. The work is carried out mainly in an ESSnet. The ESSnet on big data consists of 22 partners, mainly NSIs. It started work in December 2015 and was due to finish in May 2018. Its work is organised around a number of work packages. Each work package deals with one pilot and a concrete output, focusing on specific data sources or domains[38]. The work packages have been largely exploratory at this phase and have examined the feasibility of producing experimental statistical outputs while at the same time investigating issues of data access, data handling, as well as methodological and technological considerations together with an analysis of future perspectives. Working on cross-cutting issues of broader societal or institutional concern has resulted in collaboration being strengthened between policy makers, statisticians, academia and private stakeholders. This is particularly the case in the areas of legislation,

38 The 9 work packages focus on: WP 1 Webscraping/Job Vacancies, WP 2 Webscraping/Enterprise Characteristics, WP 3 Smart Meters, WP 4 AIS Data, WP 5 Mobile Phone Data, WP 6 Early Estimates WP 7 Multi Domains, WP 8 Methodology, quality and IT, and WP 9 Dissemination.

data policy, ethics and experience sharing.

The results of the work so far have consisted of feasibility reports and pilots, but already in 2018 it was proposed that the implementation phase begin in a limited number of more mature areas (e.g. estimating online job vacancies, measuring electricity consumption, etc.). This is earlier than the proposal in the initial planning (2020). To have more tangible results it has also been suggested to prioritise exploring 'themes' rather than 'sources', so as to achieve concrete statistical outputs by deploying multisource approaches capable of producing 'big data — enhanced' official statistics. Moreover, to respond to the upcoming challenges of the Internet of Things and the deployment of smart systems in everyday life, a specific strand of work could be the development of trusted smart statistics.

Several data governance issues are becoming increasingly significant and require greater attention, discussion and, if necessary, the adoption of different business models in the future. For example, access and initial exploration of certain 'global' (borderless) data sources may require revisiting the current collaboration model of European statistics.

5.4 COHERENCE

Two questions were designed to see if the programme is coherent internally and consistent externally with other initiatives aiming to produce statistics:

Q 9) Do the different components of the ESP interact well together?

Q 10) Is the programme well-coordinated with other EU initiatives in the same field?

The different components of the ESP interact well to contribute to the programme's general objective and Eurostat coordinates the production of statistics in the Commission and will improve such coordination.

Q9: Do the different components of the ESP interact well together?

- **The different components of the ESP interact well together to contribute to the general objective of the programme.**

The ESP's general objective is for the ESS to continue to be the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe. To reach such general objectives three priority areas were established. The first one, 'Statistical outputs', deals with the production of the statistics. The second, 'Production methods of European statistics', supports the production by improving the way statistics are produced, their quality and the way they are disseminated. The third, 'Partnership', aims to support the production and quality of the statistics by improving the cooperation within the ESS and with other international organisations and non-EU countries. Resources are assigned so that work on all three areas can proceed and there are no overlaps. As the ESP is the only programme for the production of European statistics there is no concern over consistency with similar programmes.

<u>Q10: Is the programme well-coordinated with other EU initiatives in the same field?</u>

- **Eurostat coordinates the production of statistics in the Commission and will improve such coordination.**

Eurostat is not the only Commission DG producing statistics. Several DGs produce statistics other than those published by Eurostat. Although no other DG produces the same statistics as Eurostat, the production of other statistics within the Commission needs to be coordinated. The Commission Decision on Eurostat[39] gives Eurostat this coordinating role. For that Eurostat has established a network of statistical correspondents in the DGs and has created and coordinates an inventory catalogue on statistical data available in the Commission (outside Eurostat). The inventory is updated annually and is available on the collaborative space[40]. It includes the statistical data collected by the different DGs, plans for future collections and indicates if the data can be reused by other DGs. When DGs plan to start a new data collection, they should first check with Eurostat and in the inventory that the data in question are not already collected by Eurostat or by another DG. Eurostat is conducting annual hearings to agree on areas of cooperation and discuss data needs and requirements with policy DGs. Hearings are formalised in memoranda of understanding with the DGs. These discussions also aim to avoid overlaps between data collections.

In 2017, the Internal Audit Service of the Commission completed an audit[41] on the production process and the quality of statistics produced by DGs other than Eurostat. The audit concluded that within the limits of the current framework and the respective responsibilities of those involved, some steps have already been taken both in Eurostat and in other DGs to coordinate and manage the production process of statistics by DGs, to improve their quality. However, the audit found that the current framework is not robust enough to ensure that the quality of the statistics produced by other DGs are of a satisfactory standard overall and that the various processes currently used are sustainable in the longer term. Therefore, the Internal Audit Service formulated recommendations for Eurostat and for the other DGs to strengthen the overall process and to improve the production and quality of other statistics. The recommendations for Eurostat concerned in particular the management of the inventory of statistics produced by other DGs, and guidance to DGs on methodological and quality issues.

39 Commission Decision 2012/504/EU of 17 September 2012 on Eurostat — OJ L 251, 18.9.2012, p. 49.

40 https://myintracomm-collab.ec.europa.eu/networks/STATCOOR/SitePages/Home.aspx.

41 https://webgate.ec.testa.eu/Ares/documentInfoDetails.do?documentId=080166e5b824794f&_f=ext.

- **Sub-delegated credits were needed to supplement the programme's budget to cover data collections that were specifically requested by policy DGs.**

As a service DG, Eurostat not only uses the budget appropriations of its own programmes, but is also responsible for the use and control of budget appropriations sub-delegated to it by other DGs. Credits were sub-delegated by between 11-14 other DGs depending on the year.

Table 8: Sub-delegated credits to Eurostat in 2015, 2016 and 2017

ESP years	Commitment appropriations sub-delegated to Eurostat		Payment appropriations sub-delegated to Eurostat	
	Sub-delegating DGs	**Total (€)**	**Sub-delegating DGs**	**Total (€)**
2015	AGRI, CLIMA, CNECT, EAC, EMPL, ENV, GROW, JRC, NEAR, REGIO, SANTE	51 236 973	AGRI, CLIMA, CNECT, DEVCO, EAC, EMPL, ENV, GROW, HOME, NEAR, REGIO, SANTE	32 635 704
2016	AGRI, CNECT, DIGIT, EAC, EMPL, GROW, HOME, JRC, JUST, MOVE, REGIO	11 221 759	AGRI, CLIMA, CNECT, DIGIT, EAC, EMPL, ENV, HOME, JRC, JUST, NEAR, REGIO, SANTE	17 443 530
2017	AGRI; CNECT, DEVCO, DIGIT, EAC, EMPL, GROW, HOME, JUST, JRC, MOVE, NEAR, REGIO, SANTE	31 375 071	AGRI; CNECT, DEVCO, DIGIT, EAC, EMPL, GROW, HOME, JUST, JRC, MOVE, NEAR, REGIO, SANTE	9 695 224

Eurostat sub-delegated operational appropriations to several DGs over the period 2015-2017, are detailed in the table below.

Table 9: Credits sub-delegated by Eurostat in 2015, 2016 and 2017

ESP years	Commitment appropriations sub-delegated by Eurostat		Payment appropriations sub-delegated by Eurostat	
	To:	Total (€)	To:	Total (€)
2015	DIGIT	2 600 000	DIGIT	1 824 078
2016	DGT DIGIT SCIC TAXUD	4 500 3 285 895 320 000 265 000	DGT DIGIT	1 679 3 105 811
2017	DGT DIGIT JRC SCIC TAXUD	139 360 3 564 768 300 000 74 542 315 000	DGT DIGIT JRC SCIC TAXUD	165 032 3 573 263 174 383 287 262 300 000

5.5 EU ADDED VALUE

One question was designed to verify how much added value the ESP produces:

Q11) Is the implementation of the programme adding value to what MSs could do alone?

- **The ESP's implementation has shown that the programme has produced and continues to produce clear EU added value for its main objectives.**

The EU added value of the programme is shown by the harmonised provision of comparable and high-quality data for EU countries. The ESP as a harmonised system with common quality standards for producing statistics is unparalleled in the world. A similar level of harmonisation, comparability and quality cannot be achieved at Member State level alone to make essential contributions to EU activities, in particular the 10 political priorities of the Commission. Only a coordinated approach to developing, producing and disseminating European statistics, as ensured through the programme, guarantees the required coherence and comparability of the statistics relevant for EU activities. At the same time the programme, through its financial support to MSs, is driving the development, modernisation and innovation in the ESS. The programme has succeeded in implementing modernisation projects which are beneficial to all MSs, which could not have been achieved through uncoordinated national spending.

For objectives 1 and 4, European statistics have a clear transnational character. While MS could ensure that statistical information is collected at national level, only a coordinated approach to developing, producing and disseminating European statistics as a whole could guarantee the required coherence and comparability of the statistics relevant for EU activities and their consistency over the whole duration of the ESP. The MSs cannot sufficiently develop, produce and disseminate European statistics under the ESP. Therefore this has been better achieved at EU level on the basis of a European Union legal act. Only the Commission can coordinate the necessary harmonisation of statistical information at the European level in all statistical domains covered by the ESP, while the data collection itself can be carried out by the MSs. The added value of EU action has been and continues to be that it allows for the concentration of the statistical activities on EU policies and relevant issues for the ESS as a whole. In addition, it contributes to resources being used effectively and provides national authorities with the capacity to, for example, set priorities, ensure harmonisation and enable methodological development.

For objectives 2 and 3, the design and implementation of the ESS Vision 2020 strategy, with its set of common projects, is having an impact on the ESS production systems as a whole. Eurostat plus 28 NSOs working largely in parallel settings cannot modernise the business architecture. Modernising the business architecture would involve moving away from the traditional way of producing statistics, i.e. in numerous parallel processes, country by country and domain by domain known as the stovepipe model. The ESS vision strategy has started to build a real System of European Official Statistics, where the overall productivity could be improved. This involves coordinating the efforts of all the participating statistical offices, so as to avoid duplication of work and to exploit synergies to the maximum extent.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Regulation (EU) 99/2013[42] provides for the evaluation of the ESP covering 2013-2017. It has been extended by Regulation (EU) 2017/1951[43] to cover the remaining period of the MFF, i.e. 2018-2020. A previous evaluation[44] of the current ESP was finalised in 2015, covering 2013 and 2014. This evaluation covered the programme's implementation in 2015, 2016 and 2017. It was based on the original ESP Regulation 2013-17, before it was extended. The extension to 2020 was adopted only at the end of October 2017. The

42 OJ L 39, 9.2.2013, p. 12.

43 OJ L 284, 31.10.2017, p. 1.

44 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4375449/02-Final-evaluation-report-2008-2012-1_EN-ACT-part1-v5.pdf (available in English only).

evaluation work covered five evaluation criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value). The evaluation's conclusions are supporting the preparation of the impact assessment of the post-2020 ESP.

The general objective of the ESP is for the ESS to continue to be the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe. As a spending programme, the ESP constitutes the overall framework for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. As such, it provides the financing for developing and maintaining the statistical infrastructure of Eurostat and the ESS as managed by Eurostat and for providing financial support to Member States.

6.1 Effectiveness

The percentages of planned outputs that were achieved or on target were consistently over 90 %, passing 95 % in 2017. As a result, 20 of the 23 detailed objectives of the ESP can be considered on track to being accomplished by the end of the programme. The remaining three objectives had only limited problems — detailed objective 2 on economic governance, detailed objective 4 on economic globalisation and detailed objective 18 on dissemination and communication. These problems, as described earlier, will have to be solved in the remaining period of the programme.

When examining the results that were produced for the different objectives, the evaluation work has shown that in general the ESP's structure is fairly complex, with objectives and sub-objectives covered by areas and measured by indicators which sometimes are not clearly distinct one from another. It is therefore inherently difficult to understand and monitor the ESP and it can be quite hard for those who do not work directly with the programme to understand its functioning. Therefore, it is recommended to simplify the structure of the programme when preparing the future post-2020 ESP.

In the years which are included in the current evaluation, 2015-2017, the total budget spent has been roughly EUR 172 million. This was supplemented by almost EUR 94 million in the form of credits sub-delegated by other policy DGs to cover data collections that were specifically requested by these same DGs.

The budget has been spent in the programme's three priority areas. The first priority area 'Statistical outputs' deals with the production of European statistics. In this area the money has been mostly spent on grants used to provide financial support to MSs. MSs use this support for improving their national statistical systems and for implementing actions to carry out new data collections. All MSs have benefited from grants, which have allowed them ultimately to produce more and better quality data. As a result the total number of disseminated datasets increased by 722 or around 15 %, in the 3 years evaluated.

The second priority area ‘Production methods of European statistics’ supports the production by improving the way statistics are produced, their quality and the way they are disseminated. In this area grants were given to MSs to strengthen the quality and efficiency of statistical production through innovative statistical methods and tools. MSs used the money to participate in the modernisation projects of the European Statistical System vision implementation programme (ESS.VIP). In this same area procurements were used either to finance part of the projects under the ESS.VIP or to finance the modernisation of the statistical infrastructure used to regularly produce and disseminate the statistics. This made it possible to address some of the weaknesses identified in the first mid-term evaluation. Examples of the results include the modernisation of the IT infrastructure to exchange data with MSs, the renovation of Eurostat website, and the introduction of a series of new visualisation tools and of new ways to reach out to users.

The third priority area ‘Partnership’ aims to support the production and quality of the statistics by improving the cooperation within the ESS and with other international organisations and non-EU countries. In this area the budget was mostly used to support the development and production of statistics in countries outside the EU and EFTA, with particular emphasis on enlargement and the European neighbourhood policy. This has allowed some non-EU countries to regularly publish data, especially to support the enlargement process and the negotiations.In spending the budget there have been no major problems and there were no infringements. Eurostat put in place an effective system of anti-fraud measures, which prevented cases of fraud.

6.2 Efficiency

The programme has been run efficiently. So far:

- A trend of internal productivity has been observed. Between the end of 2014 and the end of 2017 the total number of datasets disseminated in Eurostat’s dissemination database increased by around 15 %, while the total number of Eurostat employees fell by 5 %.
- There has been great efficiency in implementing the ESP’s budget, with an execution rate of 98.87 % for 2015-2017.
- Execution on available commitment and payment appropriations both exceeded the targets set in Eurostat’s management plan.
- Costs and administrative burden are decreasing but slowly and they are difficult to measure. Measuring the costs of producing official statistics in the ESS and the administrative burden on statistical respondents remains difficult, but some steps have been taken. Three different projects were launched to measure the costs. The overall cost assessment survey on producing official statistics in the ESS showed that

both the total costs of production and the number of staff working on official statistics in the ESS have remained stable after falling in the ESP's first 2 years. A significant way to reduce the costs and administrative burden for producing statistics is to establish framework regulations. Three proposals have been adopted, for agriculture statistics, business statistics and social statistics, with big potential for reducing costs and administrative burden. Information on administrative burden has been provided in some of the monitoring reports that are regularly produced on the implementation of statistical legislation. The use of new data sources has been identified, in general, as a major way to reduce the burden. Some areas where a reduction of the administrative burden has been observed are (i) statistics on pesticides sales; (ii) waste statistics; (iii) short-term statistics; (iv) structural business statistics; (v) tourism statistics. The burden on providers of statistical information could be quantified for statistics on international trades in goods, where it is being reduced. In particular it is estimated that the option preferred under the FRIBS regulation for the statistics on international trade, when implemented, could alone potentially reduce the administrative burden (for the EU in total) by 13.5 % or EUR 93 million. Studies at MS level suggest that the total statistical burden declined by more than 10 % since the beginning of the ESP and by more than 3 % in 2015 and 2016, which is the latest year for which data are currently available.

- Benefits can only be measured indirectly, by looking at the use of the statistics produced under the programme, which has increased in the last years. Statistics do not have direct effects on the economy, the businesses, the environment or the society. The effects are generated by the policies which are implemented using the statistics. An increased use of accurate statistics makes it more likely that the policies will produce the expected benefits.
- All ESP activities are monitored in a timely and efficient way.

6.3 Relevance

The ESP has helped and continues to help satisfy the users' needs and contributes to the design and monitoring of policies but more is needed:

- The number of users and the quantity of data extracted from the Eurostat website have increased substantially.
- Eurostat is increasingly being mentioned as a reference source of data on the internet.
- Users are generally satisfied with the quality of Eurostat's data and services but they demand more, especially regarding timeliness and comparability of data.
- More microdata sets are available for users, and the number of requests has steadily increased.

- New dissemination tools have made it easier for users to consult European statistics.
- New modern ways of reaching out to users (i.e. social media) are used.
- When approving Eurostat's annual work programmes, the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) has expressed some general concerns to be taken into account for the future, including the need for adequate resources.
- Major stakeholders suggested that changes are needed in the way official European statistics are produced to stay relevant.
- Every year Eurostat consulted the other Commission DGs and could in most cases, but not all, accommodate their requests.
- The European Governance Advisory Board has suggested that changes are needed to exploit the advances in data sources and to keep official European statistics relevant.
- The modernisation of the statistical production is progressing and delivering results but now it is time to implement these results in the ESS.
- Work on big data and official statistics has advanced and implementation can start. However, data governance issues may require changes in the business model.

6.4 Coherence

The ESP is consistent internally and externally with other initiatives aiming to produce statistics:

- the different components of the ESP interact well together to support the programme's general objective;
- Eurostat coordinates the production of statistics in the Commission and will improve such coordination; and
- sub-delegated credits were needed to supplement the programme's budget to cover data collections that were specifically requested by policy DGs.

6.5 EU added value

The ESP's implementation has shown that the programme has produced and continues to produce a clear EU added value for its main objectives. The EU added value of the programme is demonstrated by the harmonised provision of comparable and high-quality data for EU countries. The ESP as a harmonised system with common quality standards for the production of statistics is unparalleled worldwide. A similar level of harmonisation, comparability and quality cannot be achieved at Member State level alone to make essential contributions to EU activities, in particular the 10 political priorities of the Commission.

Annex 1: Procedural information

1. LEAD DG, DECIDE PLANNING/CWP REFERENCES

This staff working document was prepared by the evaluation team in Unit A2 ‘Strategy and planning’ of Eurostat.

The purpose of the evaluation was to support the impact assessment of the post-2020 ESP, with which it was conducted at the same time. The ESP is a spending programme included in the next MFF and therefore it follows the rules established for all MFF programmes. The Commission decided to incorporate the ESP in a cluster of programmes named ‘Investment, research & innovation, SMEs and single market’ led by the Secretariat-General and so it followed the planning of the cluster.

2. ORGANISATION AND TIMING

The work on the evaluation started in the fourth quarter of 2017, after the presentation of the spending review and of the programme concept paper for the post-2020 ESP.

As the ESP was part of a cluster of programmes, the work was supervised by the ISG of the cluster. It included representatives from the following DGs:

- DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
- Secretariat-General
- Eurostat
- Legal Service
- DG Budget
- DG Communication Networks, Content and Technology
- DG Competition
- DG Economic and Financial Affairs
- DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
- DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union
- DG Health and Food Safety
- DG Informatics
- DG Justice and Consumers
- DG Taxation and Customs Union

Meetings of the ISG were held on: 8 February 2018, 19 March 2018.

3. EXCEPTIONS TO THE BETTER REGULATION GUIDELINES

Some exceptions to the better regulation guidelines were applied, according to the procedures established in the Commission for all programmes of the next MFF:

- No separate political validation was asked.

- The combined evaluation roadmap/inception impact assessment was not published for feedback.

- An open public consultation was organised for the cluster as a whole, with only a few questions on statistics, mostly about the future needs for the production of statistics. As only very few respondents gave an opinion on European statistics and the replies did not provide any information on the ESP's past performance, the consultation was unfortunately of no use to this evaluation.

4. CONSULTATION OF THE REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD (RSB) (IF APPLICABLE)

The evaluation of the ESP was conducted as the same time as the impact assessment of the post-2020 ESP. The conclusions of the executive summary of the evaluation were included in the impact assessment. As the Commission decided to integrate the post-2020 ESP, together with the other programmes of the 'investment' cluster, in the new single market programme (SMP), the IA of the ESP was included in the IA of the SMP and was presented to the RSB. The full ESP evaluation report was made available to the RSB, but was not included in the IA of the SMP, because it would have made it too long. The RSB gave a positive opinion[45] on the IA of the SMP on the 20 April 2018, and the Commission adopted the proposal for the SMP[46], including the post-2020 ESP, on the 7 June 2018.

5. EVIDENCE, SOURCES AND QUALITY

The sources used to answer the evaluation questions are listed, in relation to each question, in Annex 4.

45 SEC(2018) 294.

46 COM(2018) 441 final.

Annex 2: Stakeholder consultation

The results of the open and targeted stakeholder consultations can be found in the annexes to the impact assessment of the post-2020 ESP, with was conducted at the same as this evaluation.

The open public consultation was organised for the ‘investment’ cluster as a whole, to which the ESP belongs, with only a few questions on statistics, mostly about future needs. As only very few respondents gave an opinion on European statistics and the replies did not provide any information on the ESP’s past performance, the consultation was unfortunately of no use to this evaluation.

Annex 3: Methods and analytical models

List of 26 selected products for the first phase and of 27 selected for the second phase of the cost analysis of European Statistics (by products) in the ESS, incl. NSIs, regional offices, ONAs.

First phase:

1. Annual national accounts
2. Quarterly national accounts
3. Regional accounts
4. Annual sector accounts — non-financial flows and stocks
5. Annual sector accounts — financial flows and stocks
6. Quarterly sector accounts
7. Housing price indices
8. Balance of payments and international investment positions
9. Animal production — meat
10. Aquaculture
11. Organic farming
12. Forestry statistics and accounts
13. Material flows accounts
14. Regional environment
15. Asylum and managed migration
16. Earnings
17. Income and living conditions
18. Causes of death
19. Foreign affiliates of EU enterprises
20. Short-term business statistics — construction
21. Short-term business statistics — industry
22. Short-term business statistics — trade and services
23. Tourism industry — accommodations
24. Information society — households and individuals
25. Production of manufactured goods
26. Trade in goods by enterprise characteristics

Second phase:

1. Milk, milk products and dairies' structure
2. Crop production
3. Fishery
4. Permanent crops
5. Waste statistics and chemical indicators
6. Air transport
7. Inland waterway transport
8. Maritime transport
9. Rail transport
10. Transport of goods by road
11. Transport indicators

12. Energy
13. Energy balance sheets
14. Energy dependence and efficiency
15. Energy prices
16. Demography and migration
17. Job vacancy
18. Unemployment rates
19. Household consumption expenditure
20. Education
21. Health care
22. Health
23. Innovation
24. Information society — enterprises
25. International trade in goods
26. Trade in goods by invoicing currency
27. Landings of fishery products

Annex 4: Evaluation questions and related data sources

This document contains the evaluation questions and related evaluation indicators plus the data sources that were used. The questions are listed by evaluation criterion. In cases where the data in the sources were not clear and not complete or when ad hoc information had to be provided, the Eurostat units in charge were called upon to provide the relevant information.

I) Evaluation questions and indicators

C1) Effectiveness:

The ESP is composed of four main objectives, each one divided into a group of smaller detailed objectives, for which a set of indicators is provided. The degree of effectiveness of the programme can then be measured using those indicators. Following an internal recommendation from the first mid-term evaluation, Eurostat created a link from the database of activities for all processes and projects to the ESP indicators, to be able to measure the ESP's effectiveness. It must be taken into account that following the programme's extension, objectives now have a longer perspective and so actions can continue after the end of 2017.

Q1) To what extent have the objectives of the ESP 2013-2017 been fulfilled or are on track to being fulfilled by the end of the ESP in 2020?

- Percentage of specific objectives for which most of the indicators (75 % or more) are being fulfilled. (S. 2.3)

The quantitative information specified in the above question was complemented with some more qualitative information, which could be retrieved from the description of the main achievements included in Eurostat's annual activity reports and from the reports of the projects which are part of the ESS.VIP. (S. 3, 9)

Q2) Did the associated EU anti-fraud measures allow for the prevention and timely detection of fraud? (S. 10)

C2) Efficiency:

Q3) Did the programme ensure the best use of available resources?

- increase in number of statistical datasets/variables published compared to total number of staff; (S. 5, 18)
- balance between total budget provided for the ESP for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017 and the actual commitments, and two sub-indicators with the commitments credits consumed by procurements and by grants; (S. 14)
- execution on available commitment appropriations: this indicator should be in line with the target set in the annual management plan; (S. 2, 19)

- execution of payment appropriations: this indicator should be in line with the target set in the annual management plan. (S.2, 19)

Q4) What are the costs and administrative burden of producing European statistics in the ESS and how have they evolved?

- costs for European statistics in the ESS members; (S. 11, 5)
- trends in the production costs of European statistics; (S. 11)
- trends in the administrative burden on statistical respondents. (S. 15, 16)

Q5) How timely and efficient is the ESP process for reporting and monitoring? (S.2)

C3) Relevance:

Q6) Is the ESP helping to satisfy the information needs of different categories of users?

- increase of number of website users over recent years; (S. 6)
- increase in internet access to data; (S. 6)
- increase of Eurostat's mentions on the web; (S. 20)
- results from user satisfaction surveys; (S. 7)
- ESAC opinions; (S. 12)
- increase of number of requests of the researchers for the sets of microdata; (S. 17)
- new dissemination tools that were released; (S. Unit B4)
- increase of Eurostat's followers on Twitter and Facebook; (S. Unit DG01)
- opinions from the 'Power from Statistics' conference. (S.22)

Q7) Is the ESP contributing to the design and monitoring of policies in priority areas?

- Number of meetings (hearings) with other DGs for discussing their needs for statistical data; (S. 8)
- A qualitative analysis of the hearings results, including not accepted requests; (S. 8)

Q8) How well adapted is the ESP to subsequent technological changes or advances?

- Progresses in the use of big data; (S. 1)
- Progresses in the modernisation of the statistical production; (S. 9)
- ESGAB reports. (S. 4)

C4) Coherence:

Q9) Do the different components of the ESP interact well together? (S. 2)

Q10) Is the programme well-coordinated with other EU initiatives in the same field?

- Description of (legal) arrangements between the programme and other EU initiatives in the same field including sub-delegated credits and master plan of statistics produced by other DGs; (S. 14, 21)
- Conclusions and recommendations of the internal audit on the production of other statistics. (S. 24)

C5) EU added value:

Q11) Is the implementation of the programme adding value to what MS could do alone?

- Estimation of value added by the implementation of the programme for its four main objectives. (S. 2, 13)

II) Data sources

1) Reports on big data projects
2) Annual activities reports 2015, 2016 and 2017
3) Monitoring of activities per objectives
4) ESGAB reports 2015-17
5) HR reports 2015-17
6) Website reports 2015-17
7) Results of the USS 2015-17
8) Results of DGs hearings 2015-17
9) Reports on ESS Vision 2020 projects
10) Reports on anti-fraud prevention
11) Reports on cost of producing European statistics
12) ESAC opinions
13) ESP previous impact assessments and evaluation reports
14) ABAC extractions, 2015-2017
15) Monitoring reports to EP and Council
16) Survey on burden in business statistics
17) Microdata access reports
18) Statistics on datasets
19) MP 2015-17
20) Eurostat's impact on the web 2015-17
21) Master plan of statistics produced by other DGs than Eurostat
22) Report from the 'Power from Statistics' conference
23) DGs targeted consultation
24) Report of the Internal Audit Service's audit on the production of other statistics

Annex 5- Table 1. Overview of costs — benefits identified in the evaluation

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">Stakeholders:</td><td colspan="2">Citizens/Consumers</td><td colspan="2">Businesses</td><td colspan="2">Administrations</td><td colspan="2">[Other …] _ specify</td></tr>
<tr><td>Quantitative</td><td>Comment</td><td>Quantitative</td><td>Comment</td><td>Quantitative</td><td>Comment</td><td>Quantitative</td><td>Comment</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="10">Cost / Benefit [description]:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mark the type of cost/benefit, each on a separate line:

Costs:

Direct cost (direct compliance costs such as: administrative costs, or compliance costs; or hassle costs such as: annoyance, corruption)

Enforcement cost:</td><td>Type: recurring</td><td>Not available</td><td>Response burden on citizens is very difficult to measure and varies each year because it depends on which sources are used and on how the data are collected in each MS for each survey, on the sample sizes compared to the population, on the frequency of the surveys etc.</td><td>€689 m in 2016 (latest available estimate) for all business statistics. It represents less than 1 % of the total administrative costs for businesses. It is not possible to distinguish costs of national and European statistics, as they</td><td></td><td>€2 982 m and 48 000 FTEs in 2016 (latest available estimate) for all official statistics. It is not possible to distinguish costs of national and European statistics, as they sometime</td><td></td><td>Not applicable</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

(costs borne by public authorities in enforcing regulatory requirements as establishing licensing, dealing with applications, inspections and sanctioning) **Indirect cost** (indirect compliance costs or other indirect costs such as transaction costs) **Benefits:** **Direct benefit** (such as improved well-being: changes in pollution, safety, health, employment;		Not applicable	Benefits cannot be quantified in money because the European statistics are not sold and they do not have a direct impact on the	sometimes overlap. Only direct costs are applicable. Not applicable	Benefits cannot be quantified in money because the European statistics are not sold and they do	overlap. Only direct costs are applicable. Not applicable	The direct benefit for the statistical administrations (NSIs, ONAs, NCBs) is that	Not applicable	

market efficiency) **Indirect benefit** (such as wider economic benefits, macroeconomic benefits or other non-monetisable benefits)			economy, society or environment. As a direct benefit official European statistics are available for free to all EU citizens. As an indirect benefit EU policies for citizens are supported by and are based on the statistics.		not have a direct impact on the economy, society or environment. As a direct benefit official European statistics are available for free to all EU businesses. As an indirect benefit EU policies for businesses are supported by and are based on the statistics.		they are able to fulfil their mission by producing the official statistics. The direct benefits for the other administrations are that the official statistics that they need are available for free.		

Annex 5 — Table 2: REFIT simplification and savings *Reduction of unnecessary regulatory burden, complexity, identified inefficiencies, high costs; Gained simplification, simplicity, identified efficiencies, achievement of objectives at low / appropriate / reasonable cost*								
Table 2a REFIT simplification and savings achieved *REFIT retrospective dimension: Report any simplification and savings, including the comparison with the points of comparison/ baseline (where available, IA REFIT savings predicted in the IA or other sources)* ***achieved already*** *by the intervention evaluated.*								
Stakeholders:	Citizens/Consumers		Businesses		Administrations		[Other …] _ specify	
	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment
Description:…								
Type: Choose: **one off**	<3 %	Administrative burden on citizens and businesses is estimated to have been reduced by more than 3 % in 2015-2016	<3 %	Administrative burden on citizens and businesses is estimated to have been reduced by more than 3 % in 2015-2016	Costs for administrations have stabilised after a decrease of around 4 % in budget and 3 % in FTEs since the start of the ESP		Not applicable	

Annex 5 — Table 2b Potential REFIT simplification and savings *REFIT future dimension: Report any simplification and savings that could be still* ***achieved in the future****.*								
Stakeholders	Citizens/Consumers		Businesses		Administrations		[Other …] _ specify	
	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment	Quantitative	Comment
Description:…								
Type: Choose: **one off**	Not available		At least <13.5 %	By implementing the FRIBS regulation administrative burden for businesses should decrease of at least 13.5 %	<15 %	Estimated reduction for Eurostat in costs for producing social statistics by using more advanced data collection techniques and by implementing the Integrated European Social Statistics Regulation	Not applicable	