

ESS agreement

Early estimates for Social Protection expenditure main indicators

1. Introduction

The present document shall be regarded as a European Statistical System (ESS) agreement within the meaning of Article 14(1)(c) of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics. According to that Article the European statistical programme can be implemented by individual statistical actions decided by means of an agreement between the national statistical institutes (NSIs) or other national authorities, and Eurostat.

To guarantee a sufficient level of transparency, clarity and certainty in the development, production and dissemination of European statistics, this Agreement is in writing.

The national authorities participating to this Agreement are listed in the Annex. Participants acknowledge this Agreement as a valid instrument for ensuring the statistical action that it foresees and are committed to its full implementation.

The agreement specifies the detailed information to be collected for ESSPROS¹ early estimates data, namely a small subset of the annual ESSPROS Core System data (also referred to as 'main indicators'), i.e., social protection benefits broken down by eight functions: sickness/health care, disability, old age, survivors, unemployment, family/children, housing and social exclusion not elsewhere classified.

¹ [Regulation \(EC\) No 458/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council](#) of 25 April 2007 on the European system of integrated social protection statistics (ESSPROS). OJ L 113, 30.4.2007, p. 3

The collection of early estimates data for ESSPROS main indicators responds to the policy needs as identified during the 2014 ESSPROS Conference² that considered data timeliness as high priority.

There is a growing need for data on social protection in order to create and implement coherent policies. Thus, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³, launched in September 2015, together with the European Pillar of Social Rights⁴ launched by the European Commission in 2017 are the leading initiatives to achieving better working and living conditions in Europe also contributing to the global framework for international cooperation on sustainable development and its economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has not only underscored the vital role of social protection as a front-line policy response but has also further heightened the need to reflect on its role.

In this context, the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) Action Plan⁵ published by the Commission on 4 March 2021 draws attention to the significant impact of COVID-19 on jobs and welfare systems across Europe. In its *Porto Declaration*⁶ issued on 8 May 2021, the European Council recognises these challenges and underlines the EU commitment to continue deepening the implementation of the EPSR at EU and national levels, establishing among its key priorities the need to reduce inequalities, defend fair wages, fight social exclusion and tackle poverty, promote equality and fairness, support young people, and address the risks of exclusion for particularly vulnerable social groups.

Achieving the above-mentioned goals requires a comprehensive review, the identification of areas where changes are needed, and the development of coherent policies which produce lasting social, economic, governance and environmental co-benefits, recognising and acting on interlinkages between all goals and targets. Coherent policies need to be built on more recent data. Thus,

² See [DOC SP-2015-02.3](#)

³ See https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/international-strategies/sustainable-development-goals_en

⁴ See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en

⁵ See https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en

⁶ See <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/08/the-porto-declaration/>

for reaching its goals, the European Commission places greater emphasis on social indicators and is likely to further increase demands for more timely data.

The ESSPROS legislation sets the deadline for the transmission of ESSPROS Core System data for year N (and revisions to previous reference years) to 30th June of year N+2. Policy users indicated the need to improve data availability, in particular regarding the possibility to produce data for ESSPROS main indicators to be used for the European Semester, and therefore to be made available to users by 31 October of year N+1.

2. List of variables/coverage

National authorities participating in this ESS agreement should provide the following data:

- Total social protection benefits
- Total benefits for sickness/health care function
- Total benefits for disability function
- Total benefits for old age function
- Total benefits for survivors function
- Total benefits for unemployment function
- Total benefits for family/children function
- Total benefits for housing function
- Total benefits for social exclusion not elsewhere classified function.

The data are defined according to point 1.1.1.1 a:

“1.1.1.1. Social protection benefits classified by:

(a) function (corresponding to each risk or need);”

of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 458/2007.

3. Quality requirements and reporting

3.1 Relevance

Early estimates for 'main indicators' would allow to improve data availability for policy users and for European Semester⁷, for which data are needed in N+1 for annual monitoring purposes.

3.2 Accuracy

The precision requirements for the early estimates data are comparable to those of the variables collected according to the definition in 1.1.1.1 (a) of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 458/2007, taking into account reasonable differences which might derive from the statistical sources and methods used in order to provide early estimates data with improved timeliness. Differences between early estimates and Core System data for the same reference year should be regularly analysed in order to monitor accuracy.

3.3 Timeliness and punctuality

Data and metadata for early estimates of year N should be delivered by 7th October of year N+1 with the objective for Eurostat to publish the indicators by 31 October of year N+1 (which is close to the legal deadline for dissemination of Core system data for reference year N-2).

3.4 Accessibility and clarity

Data and metadata for early estimates will be available in the Social protection part of the Eurostat website. The release of early estimates data and metadata will cover countries having participated to at least two consecutive annual exercises.

3.5 Comparability

Member States participating in this ESS agreement will endeavour comparability through the use of a model questionnaire and a metadata and quality reporting template recommended by the ESSPROS Expert Group for the early estimates

⁷ The European Semester is the framework for integrated surveillance and coordination of economic and employment policies across the European Union. Since its introduction in 2011, it has become a well-established forum for discussing EU countries' fiscal, economic and employment policy challenges under a common annual timeline.

data collection. The concepts and definitions to be applied for the early estimates data should be comparable to those of the variables collected according to the definition 1.1.1.1. (a) of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 458/2007, taking into account reasonable differences which might derive from the statistical sources and methods used in order to provide early estimates data with improved timeliness.

3.6 Coherence

The coherence between the early estimates data and Core System data is ensured through the use of the same variables and of the same definitions.

3.7 Quality reporting

The quality reporting for the variables listed in this agreement will be done in line with the quality report for the ESSPROS Core System Data.

4. Data sources

According to the ESSPROS Core System data collection, ESSPROS data are mainly derived from administrative data and register-based data sources. Other data sources and methods used by the countries to complete the data collection are National accounts, surveys/census, models and estimations.

5. Format for the transmission of data files

Data are to be transmitted in flat files - **CSV or XML format**, via the single entry point.

The delimiter for the CSV file is semicolon “;”

The decimal separator is dot “.”

The file transmitted in CSV or XML format, should be generated according to the structure of the DSD EXP of the ESSPROS SDMX data structure.

A flat file including the following data: 'Total Social protection benefits' and 'Total benefits by function – sickness/health care, disability, old age, survivors, family/children, unemployment, housing, social exclusion not elsewhere classified' has to be transmitted. The data should be reported by filling in the information related to:

- (1) **REF_AREA** (Country): the 2 characters code of the reporting country. Codes are listed in the code list **CL_GEO_ESSPROS**.
(ex. IT, BG etc.)
- (2) **FUNCTION**: As defined in the code list CL_FUNCTION.
(ex. SICK etc.)
- (3) **TIME_PERIOD** (Year): Reference year in the format YYYY.
(ex. 2018)
- (4) **OBS_VALUE**: This column should be filled in with the value of the cell (the value of the social benefits expressed in millions of national currency), using the dot (".") as decimal separator. It is recommended to use a fixed number of decimals. Eurostat, considering the order of magnitude of the data, proposes to report figures with a scale of 5 decimals.
(ex. 1234.56789)
- (5) **UNIT**: National currency code. Codes are listed in Table 1 that is an extract of the code list CL_UNIT. Euro area countries should use the code EUR_FX.
(ex. EUR_FX, BGN)

Table 1: Currency codes

Currency code	Currency
EUR_FX	Euro, fixed rate
BGN	Bulgarian lev
CZK	Czech koruna
DKK	Danish krone
HUF	Hungarian forint
PLN	Polish zloty
RON	Romanian leu
SEK	Swedish krona
ISK	Iceland krona
NOK	Norwegian krone
CHF	Swiss franc
ALL	Albanian lek
MKD	Denar (of North Macedonia)
RSD	Serbian dinar
TRY	Turkish lira
BAM	Bosnia and Herzegovina convertible mark
MDL	Moldovan leu
UAH	Ukrainian hryvnia
GEL	Georgian lari

Source: extract of code list CL_UNIT

The metadata shall be transmitted in line with the format as defined by Eurostat for the ESSPROS Core System Data.

6. Data transmission procedure

6.1. Data flow

Early estimates data and reference metadata shall be transmitted to the Commission (Eurostat) using the single entry point.

6.2. Deadlines for transmission

The deadline for the transmission of the data is 7 October of year N+1.

The same deadline applies for the transmission of the accompanying metadata and quality report.

6.3. Confidentiality measures

Not applicable.

7. Financing provisions

Not applicable.

Annex -List of the participating statistical authorities:

Country	Statistical authority participating in the ESS agreement
Belgium	FPS Social Security
Bulgaria	National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria
Czechia	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Denmark	Statistics Denmark
Estonia	Statistics Estonia
Ireland	Central Statistics Office
Greece	Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)
Spain	Subdirector General of Statistics and Employment and Social Analysis (State Secretariat for Employment and Social Economy; Ministry of Labor and Social Economy)
France	Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques - INSEE
Croatia	Croatian Bureau of Statistics
Italy	Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT)
Cyprus	Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT)
Latvia	Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia
Lithuania	State Data Agency (Statistics Lithuania)
Luxembourg	Inspection générale de la sécurité sociale (IGSS)
Hungary	Hungarian Central Statistical Office
Malta	National Statistics Office
Netherlands	Statistics Netherlands
Austria	Statistics Austria
Poland	Statistics Poland – GUS
Portugal	Instituto Nacional de Estatística
Romania	National Institute of Statistics
Slovenia	Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia
Slovakia	Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
Finland	Statistics Finland
Sweden	Statistics Sweden
Iceland	Statistics Iceland
Norway	Statistics Norway
Switzerland	Federal Statistical Office