



European Statistical
Advisory Committee

37th Meeting

17 June 2022

10.00 – 13.00

Videoconference

Minutes

ESAC Doc. 2022/06

1 – Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The ESAC members adopted the agenda. The Chair, Mr Vichi, invited Ms Kotzeva to take the floor and provide an update on how Eurostat develops statistics on the crisis generated by the Russian military aggression against Ukraine; on how Eurostat continues to develop statistics on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; on the implementation of the 3rd round of ESS peer reviews; on the evolution of the European statistics on population (ESOP); and, on the modifications of Regulation (EU) 223/2009, as well as other items she wishes to raise.

2 – Recent developments – Feedback from Eurostat

Regulation (EU) 223/2009

Ms Kotzeva presented the modification of Regulation (EU) 223/2009 and underlined its importance for the work of Eurostat (and referred to the slides describing these possible modifications, at the end of the summary document for the agenda item 2).

The Regulation 223 was adopted in 2009 (and the preparation of the substance was done in the early 2000s) and therefore an update was considered necessary to keep the regulation relevant, for example to reflect digital transformation effects and to meet growing demands for timelier, more granular and responsive European statistics to support EU policies and public debate.

Many parts of the Regulation are kept unchanged but amendments could be proposed to allow to use the full potential of new data sources and to allow quicker reactions when urgent requests (like for Covid-19 and Ukraine, but not only limited to crisis situations as also quicker mechanisms in general are needed in many other cases as well). The modifications also target emerging needs and the development of more experimental statistics.

It aims to describe the situations and conditions for the private sector to make data available for compiling European statistics, complementary to traditional data collections and reporting obligations; to describe the process of justification of the need, specification of the data needed, modalities of getting the data, ensuring statistical confidentiality and data privacy, marginal costs recovery; to minimise burden on private sector, and to enhance data sharing.

Regarding data sharing, one example is multinational data sources, where Eurostat has access to data from online accommodation, like for Airbnb. In such cases, it appears more practical to have access for Eurostat only and that Eurostat makes the data available to the NSIs. However, in this context, it is important to remember that the data holder has a responsibility vis-a-vis the people booking the online accommodation as it concerns private data of their guests. It is always necessary to be able to demonstrate that the data will stay in safe hands.

Moreover, it is necessary to preserve the subsidiarity and the diverse situations and circumstances in the different countries are be taken into account. Furthermore, fundamental principles like confidentiality should never be compromised.

A public consultation will be opened end of June/beginning of July, lasting for three months, where ESAC could participate. It is foreseen to have a possible revision proposal ready by early October 2022 in view of a possible amendment proposed to the Commission at the beginning of 2023. There is a very ambitious time plan to go through the European Parliament during one year.

Ms Bohata stated that this is an enormously challenging project with an extremely ambitious time table. Moreover, she underlined that having an enabling clause in the Data Act would be good, in order not to rely exclusively on sectoral legislation. She reminded that the red lines, the fundamental principles such as for example the confidentiality principle makes it extremely difficult to envisage the impact of those changes. Strict formulation of (statistical) confidentiality principal could hamper data sharing; therefore, it can become necessary to re-approach the principle.

Mr Vichi underlined the importance of reflecting the users' need of statistics in the Regulation 223 and pointed out the link to the Data Act. He reminded that it is still necessary to aim for stronger formulations in the Data Act as the current text refers only to emergency situations and the demand for quick information is increasing. An amendment of Regulation (EU) 223/2009 should focus on this, in view of returning the data to citizens (data as public good). Mr Vichi encouraged innovation together with Academia, to increase the potential of official statistics and considered whether it may become necessary to re-formulate the concept of confidentiality. Moreover, he underlined the importance of data sharing.

Ms Silberman said there may be a contradiction between Data Act and Regulation (EU) 223/2009 and for some countries, it might be a step back, as they may already use business data.

Ms Silberman asked questions linked to the data sharing between ESS and ECB; to the diverse situation regarding administrative data and surveys in the different countries and whether Eurostat would be coordinating the access to new sources with academia.

Ms Kotzeva, confirmed that there is indeed a close cooperation between ESS and ECB. ECB also consider changing their basic regulation related to statistics and Eurostat are discussing confidentiality with them. Moreover, ECB is going to provide an opinion on the Data Act. Furthermore, Ms Kotzeva explained that Eurostat cannot prescribe data sources, meaning that the diverse situations and circumstances in the different member states need to be taken into account. Having said that, it is nevertheless essential to ensure comparability of statistics produced between the different member states. Finally, cooperation with academia should happen primarily in the member states. For the platforms, it is more practical that Eurostat gets access and shares access.

The report on the public consultation on the Data Act was shared with ESAC in the chat of the meeting.

Ms Lang asked a question about the reference to direct compilation of statistics in a document circulated by Eurostat, Ms Kotzeva explained that the reporting obligations will not be touched but that private sector could be ready to make data available under certain conditions but that the conditions and the process needs to be defined. Mr Vichi stated that, for the private sector, the *predictability* of what ESS will do with their data is key. Ms Kotzeva explained that it needs to be agreed what should be included in the requests and what type of data it concerns (issues like timeliness, granularity, anonymised or not, and modality needs to be discussed and negotiated) and if/how to compensate for the marginal cost (where normally access would be for free) together with other details and practicalities.

Mr Vichi reminded that, similar as for research and academia, regarding privately hold data, the most important is to communicate what will be done with the data received and how it would be shared/controlled. If no such information is provided, the private sector may not always wish to share the data.

As a general comment, Ms Kotzeva underlined the importance of having access to privately hold data for official statistics to stay relevant.

It was agreed that Mr Vichi, Ms Silberman and Ms Bohata would prepare an initial list of issues to consider and discuss with Ms Kotzeva. Thereafter this list should continuously be updated by ESAC.

Ukraine

Ms Kotzeva initiated discussions about proposals and initiatives related to the calls for European statistics to provide more targeted and timely information on the impact of the war in Ukraine. For example, are changes of methodological guidance necessary? Is the data available likely not to be sufficient for decision makers? Is a dedicated page on the Eurostat website necessary? Is a dashboard needed?

Another important question is how the ESS can support the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, in the current situation, and, after the end of the military aggression. Ms Kotzeva will meet online with the Ukrainian statistical authorities to discuss this.

Currently the only source of data is the European data (as no data is currently directly collected by the Ukrainian statistical office). Therefore, only European projects are currently possible.

Eurostat, in close cooperation with the ESS partners and involving relevant Directors Groups will follow up on this, first concentrating on population and migration, then reflecting on how to measure the economic consequences of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine. For example, there are ongoing discussions about how to count displaced Ukrainian refugees. Another example is that timely and detailed Prodcom data is foreseen to be available already one month after the reference months for the measurement of economic consequences.

Mr Vichi would appreciate a dashboard over the situation in Ukraine, also to convey the message that official statistics are living in today's world.

Ms Silberman expressed a positive opinion about the ongoing contacts between Eurostat and the State Statistics Service of Ukraine and raised different possibilities like mobile phone data and labour survey data to receive information to track migration. However, she expressed worry about the access to secure use files. Moreover, she explained that it is impossible to get info about nationality in a labour force survey. Furthermore, she raised the question what kind of data that could be used on people without Ukrainian nationality.

Eurostat will follow up on the issue linked to the possible use of secure files for LFS.

When it comes to organise new data collections/faster data collection, a more detailed requirement would be needed in Regulation (EU) 223/2009 as under the current Regulation (EU) 223/2009, it was done on a voluntary basis.

Peer reviews

Ms Kotzeva explained that the third round of peer reviews are progressing very well; they are already in the second half and should be finished in in Q3/2023. A summarized presentation could be prepared for next meeting for input and comments to benefit from the expertise available in ESAC for discussions about experiences and results.

Moreover, a report on the main findings and lessons learnt from the third round of peer reviews is planned for the end of 2023/beginning of 2024. The concrete activities (e.g. workshop on lessons learnt, summarising the lessons, discussing experiences with a view to

issue the final report, etc.) will be agreed at a later stage. Possibly a structured discussion could take place in ESAC based on a summary report in order to bring things forward.

ESOP

Ms Kotzeva gave short update on the European statistics on population (ESOP) progress of the discussion after ESSC meeting and suggested to make a more detailed presentation in the October 2022 meeting.

Mr Vichi confirmed that the discussion on ESOP is very complex and that regular production versus census involves political questions. Ms Valente Rosa raised the issue about personal information as sexual orientation, housing conditions, religion and migration etc. where the answers are not mandatory and therefore the data often of limited quality and asked what can be done about this. This kind of data cannot be included in administrative data. Some countries would not look to ask new questions, so there may be a need to find a compromise.

Publication of census data by countries is foreseen in 2024. Thereafter, the intervals of the regular occurrence of population censuses is being discussed.

Ms Kotzeva confirmed that it is indeed only possible to collect personal information like religion and sexual orientation on a voluntary basis and then it should be combined with a communication campaign to provide the context of the questions.

The new ESOP regulation is foreseen to be adopted 2024/2025.

It was proposed to further involve ESAC, as was requested by one member in the ESSC meeting.

3 – The Data Act proposal and the use of private data for official statistics

The ESAC Doc 2022/01, Data Act proposal and the use of private data for official statistics, was enclosed to a letter on the ESAC position on the Data Act proposal, sent 10 June 2022, from ESAC to EP. In this letter, ESAC recommends that, through the legislative process, the conditions for Business-to-Government data-sharing are not further restricted but rather that these conditions are revisited by the co-legislators in the direction of a sustainable data-sharing framework for the regular development and compilation of official statistics. Moreover, the document was enclosed to a letter sent 7 June 2022 from the Chair of the CWPS to the Chair of the WP on Telecommunications and Information Society.

MV reported about the letter (Ms Silberman was the main author) and linked to this, also on the on-line EP policy breakfast on the Data Act, organised by one of the shadow rapporteurs, (ITRE) Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, Member in the Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.

The policy breakfast took place in the morning Thursday 16 June 2022. Mr Vichi and Ms Silberman from ESAC participated. MV explained that the EP Committee demonstrated interest in provision in the Data Act for timely official statistics as a public good. They discussed data transfers from businesses to public authorities. Right now, the Data Act limits these transfers to exceptional situations, but it should be discussed whether this limitation is appropriate.

Moreover, the shadow rapporteur in question (Miapetra Kumpula-Natri) proposed to meet the ESAC representatives. However, it appears that ESAC need to propose suggestions and to consider whether better to add to the Data Act or to work on Regulation (EU) 223/2009.

In general, the EP is interested in getting official statistics. There is an idea that the value provided by the citizens in terms of data should also return to citizens as this is being part of the role of official statistics. In particular, the possibility to use privately held data should be further investigated and reinforced. However, the shadow rapporteur for the Data Act appears to think that sectoral legislation (Regulation 223) rather than the Data Act should be amended. This being said, in the view of ESAC, having an enabling clause in the Data Act would be good in order not to rely exclusively on sectoral legislation.

It was agreed to make an ESAC proposal to EP, on a clause to be added to the Data Act. It was also proposed to set up a meeting with the EP.

Ms Silberman raised the issue that the local authorities are key actors and that many of them get data at a local level.

It was agreed that concrete examples on what Eurostat and the NSIs are currently doing are needed (not only ideas about what can be done in the future).

Mr Vichi suggested asking for input from Eurostat in view of a possible redrafting of the original Data Act proposal by EAC. It should address the use of private data for official statistics and further stress that timeliness is essential and include the idea that data belongs to the citizens and should go back to the citizens in the form of statistics. Moreover, Mr Vichi proposed to go ahead with the meeting with the European Parliament.

4 – European Statistics Day 2022, Motto and Statement

The three main messages are now connected in one motto: *Statistics to understand and connect to society, in the search for truth!*

In summary, the heart of the message for the European Statistics Day 2022 is to reinforce the democratic central role of statistics for societies, as the main driver of social cohesion, wellbeing, and against disinformation.

Ms Valenta Rosa presented the revised motto at the meeting; it was adopted and can now be spread.

5 – Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders (CESS) on 20-21 October 2022 in Rome, Italy

The 2022 CESS will take place in Rome on 20-21 October 2022. It will be a hybrid conference. Moreover, the next ESAC meeting will take place the day before, 19 October 2022, also in Rome. ESAC members are invited to participate in the CESS 20-21 October 2022. The reimbursement for such attendance is done via AGM.

Mr Vichi presented the conference and the preliminary programme. There will be around 250 participants, plenaries and 28 sessions (four sessions in parallel). Zoom will be available for all sessions.

Mr Vichi asked the ESAC members if they would wish to present a paper or to chair a session. Ms Valente Rosa would be interested in chairing the session on statistical literacy. ECB would be interested in chairing a session about statistical dissemination. Moreover, Ms Silberman could provide a paper linked to dissemination. Mr Méaulle would be interested in chairing session 20 (Measuring inequality). Ms Bohata would be interested in the session on ethical principles (S18) or sustainable development indicators (S26). Moreover, it was

proposed that there could be a session on communication and dissemination where perhaps Eurostat could provide and present a paper.

It was agreed that it is important to promote the conference on the ESAC website. It was decided to check that it is announced on the conference website that the conference is a hybrid event.

Moreover, MV proposed that maybe within the CESS October 2022 event, ESAC could also meet the National User Councils (NUCs) referring to the survey that he presented in the October 2021 ESAC meeting (the survey monitoring the activities of these bodies, their organisation and their role as to the quality of data) as an event would be an excellent idea for the NUCs and for national users to meet and to share information about difficulties, best practices, common challenges and ways forward. Mr Vichi will prepare a report of the survey shortly. A meeting with the national users' councils is planned for the morning of 21 October and ESAC secretariat will be asked to organise this.

It was agreed to circulate the programme of the conference to ESAC members.

Mr Vichi pointed out that there is a small delay in the overall planning of the conference, especially considering that the holiday period is now coming up. Therefore, it was agreed that Mr Vichi and the ESAC secretariat would meet to discuss the next steps in the organisation of the conference.

6 – Feedback from members representing ESAC in Directors' Groups and other meetings

Ms Jakaitienė participated in the second day of the meeting of the Directors of Macroeconomic Statistics (DMES) on 9 -10 December 2021 and briefed ESAC on the main discussions: vertical consistency, Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP), GNI and EDP, among others. She found the meeting interesting and volunteered to follow DMES also in the future.

Ms Silberman was foreseen to attend the meeting of the Directors Group of Agricultural but unfortunately did not receive an invitation.

It was agreed that information about the ESAC participation in the coming Directors meetings and information about ESSC/DGINS meetings would be provided shortly by Eurostat to ESAC.

7 – 2022 meeting schedule

As described above, ESAC is planning a meeting on 19 October 2022 in the afternoon at ISTAT (physical meeting in Rome the day before the CESS conference).

8 – AOB

Mr Vichi debriefed about his recent meeting with ESGAB. In the meeting, it was agreed to continue discussions as there are many common issues and that in many countries, the two committees form one single institution. It was proposed to meet once a year.

Moreover, Mr Vichi invited ESGAB to CESS. Mr Schubert is preparing a session. Furthermore, Ms Durand will present a paper.

Mr Vichi suggested having one meeting with ESGAB and Eurostat when opinion of ESAC on Regulation (EU) 223/2009 is ready.

Moreover, Ms Valente Rosa reminded about the proposal of a possible paper between ESGAB and ESAC on big data. Mr Vichi agrees that this should be done as soon as time permits.