



European Statistical
Advisory Committee

36th Meeting

19 October 2021

10.00 – 13.00

Videoconference

Minutes

ESAC Doc. 2021/19

1 – Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The ESAC members adopted the agenda with one additional point under AOB: 2022 edition of the Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders (CESS).

The Acting Chair explained that at its latest meeting the ESSC had a broad discussion on privately held data, interesting for ESAC because many users, especially the experts, need to use also that data. He invited Ms Mariana Kotzeva to take the floor and convey information on how Eurostat is developing statistics on the crisis and on the recovery, as well as other items she wishes to raise.

2 - Recent developments – Feedback from Eurostat

Ms Kotzeva explained that the pandemic affects Eurostat's work in many ways. There is the challenge to keep the production and dissemination of statistics up to the deadlines and with the necessary quality, to create the evidence base for monitoring the developments of the crisis and to support the recovery (the October release of the Recovery Dashboard has been published on 19th October, at the time of the ESAC meeting).

Two important issues arise:

- timeliness of official statistics: the shift to real time statistics (short term indicators) enables new indicators but not always of high quality. An example from NSIs is the job vacancy index, where indicators from online advertisements are used to monitor the direction and the speed of economic recovery. Questions arise in particular as to their robustness as European indicators.
- data governance in all its aspects, most of all sustainability, access, sharing models (B2B, B2G, G2B). In this context the Commission is going to put forward a Data Act proposal, aiming at setting the basic principles of sharing data in the society as well as between businesses and the government. The mobilisation of stakeholders in statistics during the consultation process has been very good. Changes brought by the Data Act have also prompted Eurostat to start discussing – both internally and with Member States – possible amendments to the Regulation 223/2009 on European.

MrGueye presented developments on three aspects:

- the European Statistical Recovery Dashboard is evolving in a dynamic way: while offering, from the onset, a very good coverage of the economy and of labour market developments, it has improved in timeliness in terms of frequency and inclusion of new indicators on environmental and social aspects. Eurostat added two quarterly indicators – on business registers and on bankruptcies – and increased the frequency of statistics on services from quarterly to monthly. Moreover, an indicator on accommodation and food service and a monthly indicator on air quality in the EU capital cities have been added.
- the census in Member States: the reference year is 2021. 24 Member States are carrying out census in 2021, 3 will be carrying out census in 2022, but will retriangulate the data to cover 2021. Eurostat has encouraged the use of administrative data. In many countries, the census will be mostly based on administrative data and in others

there will be a combination of administrative data, partial enumeration and also some sample surveys. Eurostat has developed the Census Hub, based on the concept of data sharing between Eurostat and the EU Member States and EFTA countries. The data is located at individual NSIs, and through the IT structure developed by Eurostat allowing access to that data, the users can create their own tables from a set of basic datasets.

- the Green Deal: a major priority for the Commission, and for Eurostat as provider of the data for legal proposals and for the monitoring of progress. The main challenges are: to update the legal bases on which data in the area of environment are based, to enhance and to widen communication and – last but not least – to tap into the wealth of data.

ESAC members thanked for this very rich report and asked several follow up questions on topics such as timeliness, focus on the education area, and in particular on digital skills. Mr Gallo agreed in particular that better granularity is needed for measuring digital skills.

Ms Willeke expressed appreciation for Eurostat's excellent reaction to the crisis and underlined that there are many areas of joint interest with the ECB. One of them is the Green Deal (action plan established by the ECB's Governing Council), as well as modernisation and timeliness of data.

3 - Feedback from members representing ESAC in Director Groups and other meetings

Mr Herteliu participated in the meeting of the Directors of Macroeconomic Statistics (DMES) on 16-17 June and briefed ESAC on the main discussions: globalisation issues, update of SNA (System of National Accounts 2008) and BPM (Balance of Payments Manual v. 6 issued in 2009), as well as Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP).

Ms Sloka participated in the meeting of the Directors of Social Statistics (DSS) on 14-15 October, where important statistical issues were debated in virtual form.

3.1 – Update of the 2021/2022 meeting schedule

Ms Silberman will attend the meeting of the Directors Group of Agricultural Statistics (DGAS) on 24-25 November 2021.

Ms Silberman and Ms Sloka will attend the meeting of the Directors of Social Statistics (DSS) on 19-20 April 2022.

Ms Lang and Ms Sloka will attend the meeting of the Business Statistics Directors Group (BSDG) on 15-16 June 2022.

Ms Silberman will attend the meeting of the Directors Group of Agricultural Statistics (DGAS) on 21-23 June 2022.

Mr Herteliu and Mr Karlsson will attend the meeting of the Directors of Macroeconomic Statistics (DMES) on 21-22 June 2022.

Ms Silberman and Ms Sloka will attend the meeting of the Directors of Social Statistics (DSS) on 24-25 October 2022.

Ms Lang and Ms Sloka will attend the meeting of the Business Statistics Directors Group (BSDG) on 8-9 Dec 2022.

Ms Jakaitienė will attend the meeting of the Directors of Macroeconomic Statistics (DMES) on 14-15 December 2022

4 - Preparation of the ESAC Opinion on the final evaluation of the ESP 2013-2020

The Acting Chair explained the content of the draft Opinion, circulated prior to the meeting.

Several members proposed additions in different areas, such as: prioritisation of user demands as further efficiency gains will be difficult to achieve; need to resolve issues of comparability; actions to address the different typologies of users (for example, providing translations of the website into more languages, or 'light' metadata for less experienced users); and more efforts towards non-users.

Members were invited to send further comments to the Secretariat by 2 November cob, so that the ESAC Opinion can be sent to Eurostat by the deadline of 5 November.

5 – National User Councils (NUCs)

The Acting Chair gave a quick update on the state of affairs concerning the survey addressed to the NUCs. He mentioned that in March 2021 Ms Valente Rosa, Ms Bohata and himself prepared the survey monitoring the activities of these bodies, their organisation and their role as to the quality of data. There are already some results available in terms of typology of the bodies, of the tasks they perform and of their governance.

Ms Bohata raised the issue of framing this activity. On one hand a discussion with national user bodies at a stakeholder conference would be legitimate, and everyone could benefit from sharing experiences. However, as also mentioned by Ms Kotzeva, the subsidiarity issue needs to be respected, so it is very important to stay within the mandate of ESAC which should focus on European statistics, not on national statistics. Ms Valente Rosa underlined that the organisation of 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.

It was also agreed that ESAC (Ms Lang) should address the Austrian NUC, as they did not provide a reply yet.

6 – ESAC workshop on Non-traditional (big) data sources and data science for official statistics - 20 October

The purpose of the workshop is to explore challenges and opportunities relating to diverse non-traditional data sources for official statistics, including crowd-sourced, remotely sensed and big data for official statistics.

The workshop has been widely promoted: NSIs, ESGAB, European Commission network of statisticians and some statistical societies, as well as ECB and STATEC contacts. Over 350 participants have registered for this online event, which aims to spotlight the topic of digital transformation in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

7 – AOB

European Court of Auditors's (ECA) performance audit on the quality of European statistics

The Acting Chair informed the Committee that he had been invited for an interview with ECA auditors on the above-mentioned topic. The interview will touch upon various interesting topics, such as the role of ESAC, cooperation with other stakeholders, translation of user expectations into the strategy for European statistics, or the increasing use of administrative data.

Ms Lang and Mr Méaulle had also been contacted by ECA auditors and will share the questionnaire received with the Acting Chair, for preparation of the interview with ECA.

The Acting Chair will contact the ECA to agree on a date for the interview. In addition, he suggested being accompanied by the following ESAC members: Ms Valente Rosa, Ms Lang and Mr Méaulle, as well as Mr Dandea and Mr Gold if they are available.

2022 CESS

The 2022 CESS will take place in Rome, on 21/22 October. The preferred format is on site presence with possibly a hybrid option. The Acting Chair outlined briefly possible topics, such as improving statistical literacy, and a methodological session on modernisation of statistics).

The topic raised great interest and several members of ESAC expressed their opinion. Ms Silbermann suggested also the issue of merging data sources. Mr Herteliu proposed to return to some of the themes planned for the cancelled Prague conference, such as statistics on religion.

The Acting Chair invited the members to organise sessions, stressing that three perspectives should be reflected in the division of topics: the methodologists, the producers and the users of statistics. He announced the imminent set up of the scientific committee for the CESS conference.