



## 42<sup>nd</sup> Meeting

14 March 2024

14.30 – 17.30

Video conference meeting

## **Minutes of the meeting**

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## 1. Welcome to the new Members and adoption of the agenda

The Chair welcomed a new Member, Ms Ylva Heden Westerdahl representing the European Council. The new Member briefly presented herself.

The Chair also introduced Ms. Avis Benes, the new Head of Unit B.2 in Eurostat.

The agenda was adopted subject to one change as the Chair invited Eurostat to provide feedback on recent developments in the ESS (New agenda item 3).

## 2. Topical presentation and discussion: Environment Accounts Strategy

Eurostat gave a presentation about environmental accounts, explaining that they are an extension of national accounts. They consist of a set of tables, subject to some definitions, concepts and constraints, organised in 3 main categories: monetary modules derived from national accounts (sub-sets of stocks and flows already included in national accounts, and in GDP) and focusing on the environment in more detail, physical modules focusing on the interactions between the economy, natural resources and emissions & waste, and an ecosystem module related to natural capital (data to be available in 2026). For some of the modules the data are voluntary and not yet reported by all Member States, but the legal basis is being developed and the data will be available soon. Environmental statistics have a degree of specialisation for certain users and perform best under certain conditions, as compared to non-statistical environmental information. Environmental accounts use national accounts definitions, are best suited to measure the interactions between the economy and the environment and less suited to measure purely environmental issues such as pollution or water scarcity. Eurostat elaborated on the case of the greenhouse gas accounts. A lot of progress has been made over the last 30 years based on the first 2008 Strategy for Environmental Accounts (a non-binding self-regulatory instrument) and Regulation 691/2011. A new strategy for 2024 - 2028 was adopted by the ESSC in February 2024 and includes 5 strategic objectives and an implementation plan. The new strategy focuses on improving the communication and use of the accounts, implementing new modules (forests, ecosystems, environmental subsidies) on cooperation with non-statistical data producers (such as JRC and the European Environment Agency), on exploring new data sources and on setting a new research agenda. The new strategy also prepares a new EU research agenda for environmental accounts. Eurostat provided an overview of the activities foreseen for the first objective of the strategy outlining some user needs for environmental data, in particular for the European Parliament, the Commission DG's and the ECB as well as for the purposes of the report on the Sustainable Development Goals.

More information could be found on the following links:

- Online article: [Environmental accounts - establishing the links between the environment and the economy](#)
- Online article: [Ecosystem accounts - measuring the contribution of nature to the economy and human wellbeing](#)
- Eurostat website: [environment](#)
- Eurostat [online database](#)
- Eurostat [methodology](#)

Some members and Eurostat discussed several issues, in particular the part of the data provided by Member States and the comparability between Member States. Some Members also raised how users evaluate the development of environmental accounts and implications for users, in particular policy makers and media. Eurostat follows very closely how the data is used. It also carries out reviews of some categories of users about how they use the data and what data could be missing. One challenge is to determine the right level of technicality in the communication of the results.

Some ESAC Members and Eurostat further discussed the delivery of data that very much depends on resources and the political priorities. In that regard Eurostat provides compilation tools, pre-filled questionnaires, handbooks, and guidelines to help Member States. Eurostat also provides grants but for development of specific areas and not for data production.

Referring to the Impact Assessment of the EC Communication on the 2040 Climate Targets. ESAC briefly emphasised the interest in regional data, given the diversity of situations in regions affected by climate change, but also by the green transition.

Some Members also noted that priorities can change both at EU and Member State level, such as the interplay between biodiversity and Member States' food autonomy. The current consensus is to include biodiversity in the ecosystem services accounts and progress is being made in this respect.

Lastly some ESAC Members inquired about challenges related to new data sources and how the next strategy is reflected in the ESS work programme. Eurostat confirmed the activities in the upcoming strategy are in line with the ESS work programme.

### 3. Eurostat feedback on recent developments in the ESS: Amendment to Regulation 223/2009 etc.

The Director General of Eurostat briefly reported on the conclusion of the negotiations on the amendment of Regulation 223/2009 and the next steps. A provisional agreement on the

revised text has been achieved. The text is in the process of translation into all official EU languages. Afterwards the EP will proceed with its formal adoption.

The amended Regulation will be an important step forward, in particular as regards access to privately held data and new digital sources. The revised legislation will also clearly mention the need for statistics under development to boost innovation in the ESS. A third important change concerns the introduction of a response mechanism to meet urgent statistical needs in crisis situations. In addition, the amended Regulation will allow Eurostat to publish statistics already published at national level before the deadline for the member states to transmit these data to Eurostat. Finally, the text has been improved with regard to access to data for research purposes, an important issue for users, although some practical implementation aspects will be challenging. More information on the implementation aspects could be provided at one of the ESAC meetings. The Director General of Eurostat also offered to give presentations on topics discussed in the ESSC, such as housing and real estate, and/or on the conclusions drawn after the last round of peer reviews.

## 4. Presentation and discussion: Eurobarometer survey on “Public awareness and trust in European statistics”

Eurostat presented the latest Eurobarometer survey on trust in European statistics, and Eurostat in particular, which was released on 28 February. It was conducted in October 2023 via telephone survey on sample of more 25.000 participants from all EU countries.

Links to full report and its summary as well as factsheets and infographics were sent to ESAC members after the meeting:

- [Main report](#)
- [Summary report](#)
- [Main infographic](#)
- [Eurobarometer page associated with the survey](#)

The rich discussion that followed emphasised appreciation for the steps taken as well as concerns about the results, in particular in the areas of trust and independence and how to reach out further to users. Questions were raised about the next steps for Eurostat to follow up on the results of the survey and to play a stronger role among users as well as non-users. The need to be more proactive in the public debate and to take a leading role in fact-based data was also emphasised. It was pointed out that the level of awareness of European statistics and Eurostat needs to be increased, especially in schools and workplaces.

The Director General of Eurostat thanked the ESAC for the relevant points raised and informed that this was only a first step. The results would need to be properly reflected upon

and would be included in the update of the Eurostat's dissemination and communication strategy. It is planned to continue these surveys in the future and the next iteration of the survey could possibly include NSIs. Overall, the first imperative is the need to be recognised in order to be trusted, therefore more effort would be invested in raising the level of recognition of Eurostat and European statistics as well as awareness of official statistics. In addition, data need to be present in areas where people are looking for them, which also raises questions in terms of existing resources and possible impact, which require further contemplation.

Eurostat would share its reflections with ESAC members in the future. At the same time, it will welcome advice from ESAC members, including a dedicated discussion with ESAC on this issue.

## 5. CESS Conference 2024 – State of Play

The Chair confirmed that the CESS 2024 will take place in Paris, on 15-16 October 2024. She also provided information on the conference partnership composition (Insee, Banque de France, PSE, CNIS, etc.), the outcome of the 1<sup>st</sup> steering committee meeting, and underlined the ESAC participation to the scientific committee.

The Chair recalled that the link to the CESS website developed by Insee had been sent to the ESAC. The Chair invited ESAC Members to disseminate the call for papers through their networks and stressed the importance of providing user-related topics before the end of April.

Some Members expressed their interest in participating to the Conference as speakers and some suggested topics that could be incorporated in the programme.

## 6. Preparation of the May and June 2024 Meetings – ESAC opinion on the ESS Annual Work programme, ESD motto

ESAC secretariat confirmed the following meeting dates:

- 6 May (afternoon), videoconference.
- 13 (afternoon)/14 June (all day), in person.
- 26 September (afternoon), videoconference.

The Chair anticipated that next in person meeting should be on last week of November, in Brussels, avoiding Mondays.

In view of the preparation of the next ESAC opinion, the Chair invited Eurostat to make an overall presentation on the Annual Work Programme (AWP) at the next meeting (6 May). The meeting on 13-14 June will be devoted to the discussion of the opinion about the AWP and possible further clarifications by Eurostat.

The Director General of Eurostat confirmed the presentation of the annual work programme at the meeting on 6 May and reiterated its availability for presentations on any topic of interest to the ESAC. The Eurostat Director General also offered to share the first draft of the AWP with the ESAC by the end of April, at the same time as it is submitted to the Member States.

The Chair recalled that the next European Statistical Day will take place on 20 October 2024, i.e. on Sunday.

The ESAC Deputy-Chair presented the proposals for the 2024 motto and invited further suggestions from ESAC members. She underlined that the ESD statement should be in line with the motto and supported the view that some initiatives will be taken in Member States and Eurostat to celebrate the event.

Some other suggestions on the ESD theme were collected during the meeting for circulation within the Committee. The motto will be decided at the next meeting based on the preferences expressed by Members.

## 7. 2025 Meetings and events (incl. NUCs)

The Chair proposed that the ESAC holds the same number and type of meetings next year as in 2024, alternating online and face-to-face meetings.

In addition, the Chair proposed that ESAC organises an event with the National User Councils back-to-back with an ESAC meeting in spring 2025, based on the same structure of the event organised in November 2023 (a topical seminar followed by a more general meeting with the NUCs).

Mr. Thanopoulos proposed to hold the event in Greece.

The ESAC welcomed the proposal of Mr Thanopoulos and suggested to discuss ways to build trust in European statistics during the general meeting with the NUCs. Mr Thanopoulos mentioned data literacy as a possible topic for the seminar part and offered to elaborate a paper on this topic before the next meeting.

## 8. Appointment procedure of new Members – Update

The Secretary informed the ESAC of the state of play regarding the appointment of 5 new ESAC members and the renewal of the mandates of 3 members by the Commission. It is planned to have a decision by the Commission in May this year.

## 9. A.O.B and closing

The Chair invited Members to look at the ESAC web site and make suggestions for improvement.

## List of presence

### ESAC Members

#### Members appointed by the Commission

Ms. Roxane Silberman (Chair)

Ms Maria João Casanova de Araújo e Sá Valente Rosa (Deputy Chair)

Ms Marie Bohata

Ms Audronė Jakaitienė

Mr Peter van der Heijden

Mr Tõnu Kollo

Ms Biruta Sloka

Mr Claudiu Herteliu

Mr Antti Ripatti

#### Members appointed by their institutions/bodies

Ms Ylva Heden Westerdahl representing the European Council

Ms Pervenche Berès, representing the European Parliament

Mr Petru Sorin Dandea, representing the European Economic and Social Committee

Ms Vitaliana Rondonotti representing the European Central Bank

Ms Jūratė Petrauskienė, representing the European Statistical System Committee

Mr Athanasios C. Thanopoulos, representing European Statistical System Committee

Ms Angelika Becker, representing BUSINESSEUROPE

Ms Agnieszka Piasna, representing the European Trade Union Confederation

Mr Wojciech Rafal Wiewiorowski, representing the European Data Protection Supervisor



## Other invitees

Ms Florence Thomé (Committee of the Regions)

Elisa Huber (European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises)

Sandy Linke (BUSINESSEUROPE)

## Observer

Ms. Mariana Kotzeva (Director General of Eurostat)

## Presentations

Mr. Arturo De La Fuente, Eurostat

Mr. Marc O Sullivan, Eurostat

## Secretariat

Mr. Didier Lebrun

Ms. Avis Benes