



European Statistical  
Advisory Committee

**31<sup>st</sup> Meeting**

**Friday, 1 February 2019**

**09.30 – 16.00**

**JDE70**

**7<sup>th</sup> floor**

**Committee of the Regions /  
European Economic and Social Committee**

**Rue Belliard 101**

**1040 Brussels**

**Draft minutes**

**ESAC Doc. 2019/13**

## Minutes of the 31st ESAC meeting

1 February 2019

09.30-16.00

### Present:

Chair: Ineke Stoop

Members: Axel Börsch-Supan, Michael Gold, David Hand, Claudiu Herteliu, Mariana Kotzeva, Marko Kristof, Petra Lang, Asta Manninen, Matthieu Méaulle, Biruta Sloka, Maria João Valente Rosa, Ildefonso Villán Criado, Maurizio Vichi, Thomas Wobben, Petr Zahradník

Observer: Lars Svennebye (replacing Volker Täube)

### Other

Participants: Gallo Gueye (Eurostat), Tamara Pal (replacing Gabriella Vukovich), Ioannis Ganoulis (replacing Caroline Willeke), Igor Caldera (CoR), Delia Monica Bistreanu, Annette Scherpenzeel (SHARE, Max-Planck-Institute) for Item 4

Absent: Irena Kotowska, Ariane König, Fulvio Martusciello, Gabriella Vukovich

Secretariat: Kirsi Mankki, Cristina Pereira de Sá

### 1. Welcome, adoption of agenda and outstanding action points from the previous minutes

The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed the members and other participants and introduced Mr Gueye, the Eurostat Director responsible for Social statistics, and Ms Bistreanu, the new ESAC secretary as from 16 February 2019.

The Chair also informed members that Ms Scherpenzeel from Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), Munich Center for the Economics of Aging (MEA) - Max-Planck-Institute for Social Law and Social Policy will attend the meeting to present Item 4 “The use of population registers for sample drawing for large cross-European scientific surveys”.

Two items were added to the agenda under Item 5 “Other ESAC activities”: “CESS 2020” and “European Statistics Day (ESD) 2019”. The modified agenda was adopted.

The Chair reminded members of outstanding action points from the previous meeting:

- ESAC recommendations on indicators to be added to the agenda of the ESS Committee in May

A letter (ESAC Doc. 2018/46) regarding the ESAC recommendations<sup>1</sup> based on the report on the workshop “New perspectives and priorities for EU 2030 Indicators – Indicators and methodologies for describing society in the Information Age”, held in Rome on 8 June 2018, was sent to Eurostat

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<sup>1</sup> [ESAC Doc. 2018/43](#)

on 22 November 2018. The Chair informed the Committee that the ESAC recommendations will be added to the agenda of the ESS Committee meeting of 16 May 2019. The Chair proposed that Mr Vichi attends the meeting to present the ESAC paper. **(Action: Mr Vichi, Eurostat)**

- ESAC draft paper on micro-macro data linking in relation to statistics on income, consumption and wealth (ESAC 2017/40 and ESAC 2017/49)

It was agreed at both the February and October meetings of 2018 that the draft paper will be discussed further once the set of legislative proposals defining future EU spending programmes under the new Multiannual Financial Framework post-2020 are known. Although the legislative proposals for future spending programmes have been adopted by the Commission, the process is not yet finished: the proposals are currently subject to inter-institutional negotiations (with the EP and the Council). Therefore, the discussion on this item is postponed to later this year.

Eurostat informed ESAC that two Expert Groups have been established with the OECD on the subject of the joint distribution of income, consumption and wealth. One expert group works on microdata in the context of the Statistics on Income and Living Conditions Survey (EU-SILC), the Household Budget Survey (HBS) and the ESCB's Household Finance and Consumption Survey (HFCS). The other one works on Linking Macro and Micro Statistics for the Household Sector (EG-LMM). The ECB participates in both expert groups.

## **2. Recent developments (ESAC Doc. 2019/07)**

ESAC welcomed Eurostat's proposal to brief the Committee on recent developments on statistical domains regularly in the future. The relevant briefing documents will be distributed to members prior to the meetings. **(Action: Eurostat, Secretariat)**

Eurostat briefed ESAC on recent developments orally as follows:

### **2.1. Bucharest Memorandum on Official Statistics in a Datafied Society (Trusted Smart Statistics, TSS)**

The annual DGINS conference on 10-11 October 2018 was devoted to TSS, resulting in the adoption of the *Bucharest Memorandum on Official Statistics in a Datafied Society (Trusted Smart Statistics, TSS)*. The TSS concept aims at systematic increase of new data types and technologies in official statistics. On the basis of results from pilot projects, the discussions will focus on how to apply those results in production: the memorandum and the commitment of Directors-General is now being translated into action plans which will be discussed at the ESS Committee meeting on 16 May 2019.

### **2.2. State of affairs regarding the Single Market Programme and European statistics framework 2021-2027**

The preparations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework are progressing, with a marked focus on innovation. The ESS is also discussing the establishment of an intermediary document between the broad actions defined in the multiannual programme and future annual work programmes: a multiannual action plan.

### 2.3. Next round of peer reviews

The next ESS round of peer reviews will start in 2020 with the peer review of Eurostat by ESGAB. Peer reviews of the Member States and EFTA countries are foreseen in 2021-2022, taking due account of overall workload in relation to the dates of the upcoming population censuses in the respective countries.

The ESS Committee will discuss at its meeting on 7 February the methodology and scope of the exercise, as well as the establishment of the ESS Task Force on Peer Reviews. The latter is expected to be composed of up to ten senior managers from NSIs who will agree on its strategic tasks, responsibilities and communication/reporting channels. ESGAB will have a permanent member in the Task Force. As dissemination and communication are part of principles of the CoP, Eurostat invited also ESAC to reflect on the form of its possible contribution to the ESS Task Force by appointing a member to it or participating in the meetings on *ad hoc* basis. ESAC could also be consulted on the methodology of the peer reviews. ESAC will discuss this at its June meeting and possibly also with ESGAB. **(Action: Members, Eurostat)**

### 2.4. Employment flash estimates

In the end of 2018 Eurostat started publishing quarterly flash estimates of unemployment 45 days after the end of the reference period, which is 30 days earlier than before. This is a result of efforts from member states and Eurostat to advance and consolidate releases of main GDP aggregates, including employment.

### 2.5. Monitoring SDGs

Eurostat has published a Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context<sup>2</sup>, a result of the review in preparation for the 2019 edition of the EU SDG monitoring report<sup>3</sup>, and an updated webpage dedicated to SDGs<sup>4</sup>. On 30 January 2019, the Commission published the reflection paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030"<sup>5</sup> which includes many references to the Eurostat data and its SDG report.

### 2.6. Regional aspects of the Digital Single Market, Regional data in Big Data and use of SDGs at local level

Mr Wobben wished to hear more on regional aspects of the Digital Single Market and Regional data in Big Data and asked whether it would be possible to get the GDP per capita figures on NUTS 2 level quicker. He welcomed the Commission communication on SDGs and enquired, whether there are any initiatives or plans to make the SDGs user-friendly for local administration and stakeholders.

Eurostat explained that all indicators on digitalisation are based on ICT surveys among enterprises and households and therefore regional data is not included. Also, big questionnaires are a problem as they reduce response rates. A solution for both the regional dimension and increasing the

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/9237449/KS-01-18-656-EN-N.pdf/2b2a096b-3bd6-4939-8ef3-11cfc14b9329>

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/276524/9479054/2019-01-08\\_EU\\_SDG\\_indicator\\_set\\_2019\\_review\\_final\\_report.pdf/7234d06f-4fd5-40ce-8071-7bcddc4013c2](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/276524/9479054/2019-01-08_EU_SDG_indicator_set_2019_review_final_report.pdf/7234d06f-4fd5-40ce-8071-7bcddc4013c2)

<sup>4</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/overview>

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/rp\\_sustainable\\_europe\\_30-01\\_en\\_web.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/rp_sustainable_europe_30-01_en_web.pdf)

reliability of these information sources is to use the new data sources in addition to administrative data. Eurostat is already working with other Commission DGs (CNECT, JRC, OP and GROW) to reflect how to construct the sources in the digital single market to cover the regional needs and how to update the surveys. Eurostat also informed the Committee that regional accounts data at NUTS-2016 will be published for the first time on 26 February.

Ms Manninen reminded that the success of the SDGs depends on their implementation at regional and city level. The UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) will discuss in March how to promote the Sustainable Development Indicators at city level. Ms Manninen referred also to the City Prosperity Initiative (CPI): the UN developed its index (including six dimensions)<sup>6</sup> ten years ago. It serves to define targets and goals that can support the formulation of evidence-based policies. In autumn 2018 Helsinki joined a voluntary international network of cities which have committed to do a voluntary city review of its progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) at city level. SDIs should be used as far as possible.

Eurostat confirmed that one of the topics at the UNSC on 5-8 March 2019<sup>7</sup> is indeed cities. A meeting of the Expert Group on Statistical Methodology for Delineating Cities and Rural Areas took place in New York from 28 to 30 January 2019 to discuss a harmonised and universally applied definition of urban and rural areas in general, and the definitions of cities (metropolitan, urban, semi-urban, rural and uninhabited areas) in particular. If the UNSC decides on the definition, Eurostat hopes that the global community will "validate" the standard within one year.

Eurostat also informed that an innovation has been made to have a 1 km<sup>2</sup> grid referencing of the data in the next 2021 census. It is important to have a common grid in all countries, enabling to collect local data which is comparable over time.

## **2.7. Migration statistics**

Eurostat briefed ESAC on important legislative procedures in social statistics which are being negotiated with the European Parliament before the end of its current term: migration and modernisation of social statistics.

The Commission proposal on a more flexible regulation on Community statistics on migration and international protection was adopted in May and presented to the Council in Sofia. A political agreement is expected on 6 February 2019. The future legal act will enable to react quickly to new, emergent user needs. Although the current regulation<sup>8</sup> allows already the collection of some data, part of it is provided on a voluntary basis and does not guarantee time series. The new legal act aims to strengthen the quality by giving a legal basis to statistics currently collected on a voluntary basis, and also by ensuring stability and certainty.

The regulation on modernising social statistics covers seven main surveys, and aims to improve timeliness (which is currently a problem in particular in income data where the time line is 2 years) and to cover multidimensional phenomena like skills on the labour market, regional data and inequalities, while promoting the use of new data sources and innovative techniques.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://unhabitat.org/urban-initiatives/initiatives-programmes/city-prosperity-initiative/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/50th-session/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32007R0862&from=EN>

## 2.9. Data governance and the GDPR

Mr Hand asked whether data governance is covered by the GDPR and whether it will be discussed by the ESS.

Eurostat informed that European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) will participate in the ESS Committee meeting of 7 February, to start a dialogue on how to implement the GDPR at the national level, the need to keep close contact with national data protection authorities and the access to new data sources.

The Chair stated that the EDPS has not appointed a representative in ESAC after the end of term of the previous one, Ms Bosch Moline. At the ESSC meeting she will try to convince the EDPS of the importance to appoint a member.

## 2.10. Real estate statistics

Mr Ganoulis enquired about Eurostat's plans to coordinate its numerous initiatives on real estate statistics.

Eurostat has started developments in this new area, where problems of methodology and data sources can be observed. The ESS Committee decided at its meeting in May 2018 to establish a Task Force on Commercial Real Estate Indicators (TF CREI) to provide input into the further development of short and medium as well as long-term solutions. A conference on Real Estate Statistics will be organised in Luxembourg<sup>9</sup> on 20-22 February 2019.

## 2.11. Data on inequalities

Mr Méaulle enquired about developments on data on inequalities and statistics on tax evasion, referring to the OECD initiative to tackle tax avoidance. Eurostat agreed that it is difficult to grasp in time series something that by definition should not exist.

Concerning tax evasion, Eurostat's approach so far has been to ensure that GDP figures are complete. Tax avoidance as such has not been measured, but methods were used to take it into account in GDP estimates.

ESAC was informed that experimental data on ICW distribution have been published on Eurostat website. The Secretariat will send ESAC a link to the [website on experimental statistics](#) on Income, Consumption and Wealth and members were encouraged to send their feedback by using the [European Statistics User Forum](#). (Action: Secretariat, Members)

## 3. Feedback from members representing ESAC in Directors' Groups and in other meetings:

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.real-estate-statistics.eu/>

In addition to the written feedback received (ESAC Doc. 2019/02) some comments were provided by the ESAC representatives during the meeting.

### **3.1. Business Statistics Directors' Group (BSDG) meeting**

Mr Méaulle referred to a technical issue with getting the meeting documents in advance on the dedicated site. The meeting included a discussion about the priorities regarding business statistics: globalisation and international trade were agreed.

Ms Lang asked what is the alignment of the variable "hours worked" in the Short Term Statistics (STS) and Structural Business Statistics (SBS) and whether that variable includes hours worked by self-employed persons. The Secretariat will check with the relevant Eurostat unit. **(Action: Secretariat, Eurostat)**

### **3.2. Directors of macro-economic statistics (DMES) meeting**

Mr Zahradník attended the meeting of the Directors of macro-economic statistics on 18-19 December 2018. He emphasised the discussion on strategic planning: the annual work programme for 2019 was finalised and the programme for 2020 was in early stages. Other issues discussed were globalisation, forecasting and consequences in national accounts and payments. Also, the 2020 strategic priorities, agreed by the ESSC in November last year, were debated. They include multinational enterprise (MNE) groups, commercial indicators and economic imbalances scoreboard, commercial property prices and the Early Warning System.

## **4. Update of the 2019 meeting schedule (ESAC Doc. 2019/05)**

The Chair will attend the ESSC meeting on 7 February 2019 to present the ESAC paper on *The role of communication in statistical science and the strategies of communication for statistics users* (ESAC Doc. 2018/28) and the ESAC recommendations on how to improve communication with statistics users. **(Action: Chair).**

Mr Méaulle will attend the Directors of Social Statistics meeting on 2-3 April 2019. **(Action: Mr Méaulle, Eurostat).**

As the new ESAC Chair will be appointed only at the June 2019 meeting, Mr Vichi, Mr Krištof, Ms Vukovich or Mr Täube/Mr Svennebye will report from the ESSC meeting on 16 May 2019 **(Action: Mr Vichi, Mr Krištof, Ms Vukovich or Mr Täube/Mr Svennebye).**

The Secretariat will contact Ms König to check her availability to attend the meeting of Directors' Group on Agricultural Statistics (DGAS) on 5-7 June 2019. **(Action: Ms König, Eurostat).**

The European Economic and Social Committee / Committee of the Regions will co-host the ESAC meeting of 13 June 2019. A representative of the European Parliamentary Research Service (DG EPRS) of the European Parliament will be invited to attend that meeting. Mr Wobben will send the contact details of the DG EPRS to the secretariat. **(Action: Secretariat, Mr Wobben)**

Mr Vichi was invited to chair the June 2019 ESAC meeting where the new Chair will be selected amongst the members appointed by the Commission. **(Action: Mr Vichi)**

Mr Herteliu will attend the meeting of Directors of Macroeconomic Statistics on 18-19 June 2019.  
**(Action: Mr Herteliu, Eurostat)**

Mr Zahradník will attend the meeting of Business Statistics Directors' Group on 26-27 June 2019.  
**(Action: Mr Zahradník, Eurostat)**

Ms Valente Rosa will attend the meeting of the Directors of Social Statistics on 27-28 June 2019.  
**(Action: Ms Valente Rosa, Eurostat)**

Mr Vichi will attend the meeting of DIME & ITDG Directors' Group on 2-3 July 2019. **(Action: Mr Vichi, Eurostat)**

Mr Herteliu will attend the meeting of the Directors of Social Statistics on 1-2 October 2019.  
**(Action: Mr Herteliu, Eurostat)**

The Secretariat will contact Ms König to check her availability to attend the meeting of Directors' Group of Sectoral and Environmental Statistics and Accounts (DIMESA) on 16-17 October 2019.  
**(Action: Secretariat, Ms König, Eurostat)**

## **5. ESAC Opinion on the Draft Strategic Priorities for the European Statistics Annual Work Programme 2020**

The Chair thanked members for their comments on specific areas included in the ESAC Doc. 2019/03. Members were invited to make further comments for inclusion in the draft ESAC opinion.

Ms Valente Rosa proposed to add elements on migration statistics, in particular harmonisation of migration data, integration of migrants and comparability of data. Mr Wobben and Mr Börsch-Supan proposed to include a paragraph highlighting the need to review the SDG indicators.

It was agreed that the Secretariat will prepare an updated version of the Opinion following the comments made at the meeting and circulate it to the Committee for information before forwarding the Opinion to Eurostat. **(Action: Secretariat)**

## **6. The use of population registers for sample drawing for large cross-European scientific surveys (ESAC Doc. 2018/40 and 2019/06)**

At the meeting of 17 October 2018 the Chair had briefed ESAC about the initiative launched by SERISS (Synergies for Europe's Research Infrastructures in the Social Sciences<sup>10</sup>) proposing that ESAC drafts an opinion addressed to Eurostat and possibly to the ESSC supporting the access to NSIs' population registers for sampling in the context of pan-European scientific surveys.

To continue the discussion, the Chair had invited Ms Scherpenzeel from SERISS to give more details on this initiative. Ms Scherpenzeel explained the background of the initiative and reminded that access to population registers varies a lot: in ten member states the registers are generally accessible, in 12 countries they are accessible for some, in nine countries the registers exist but are not accessible and some countries do not have central or local population registers.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://seriss.eu/>



Ms Scherpenzeel emphasised the following reasons for ESAC to support the initiative:

- Importance of reliable social statistics and indicators, comparable across countries;
- Use of non-ESS data for informing policies;
- "White list" of high-quality studies provide a sound scientific basis for that, complementary to ESS domains;
- Only register samples allow true representativeness and comparability;
- ESAC would have a central role in the further harmonisation and integration of the large European surveys and Research Infrastructures, in partnership with the NSIs.

Members discussed the initiative. It was stated that the issue is controversial, in particular because of legal constraints both at European and national level, and heterogeneous situations in different countries make it difficult to give access to sample frames for the moment. Instead, a pragmatic approach in the form of cooperation and discussion between statisticians and researchers was proposed.

Mr Börsch-Supan will revise the document based on comments and reflexions made by members. The document will be resubmitted to ESAC for its next meeting in June. **(Action: Mr Börsch-Supan)**

## 7. Other ESAC activities

- **Collaboration with ESGAB** (ESAC Doc. 2019/08)

The Committee discussed different forms of collaboration with ESGAB and concluded that a new dialogue with either the ESGAB Chair or all the Board members should be organised later this year, for example as a joint meeting. The Executive Board will prepare a proposal to ESGAB to debate potential forms of collaboration. **(Action: Executive Board, Secretariat)**

- **Appointment of an Executive Board member further to Tasos Chistofides' resignation and appointment procedure of new members**

An Executive Board member will be appointed at the next meeting. Members were encouraged to stand as candidates. **(Action: Members)**

The Chair explained the current state of play of the appointment procedure of new ESAC members to be nominated by the Commission: the inter-service consultation in the Commission finished in January. The written procedure (including translation and publication of the Commission decision) has started and is foreseen to finish before the end of the term of the current members (8 May 2019).

- **Members' feedback on the CESS2018 sessions** (ESAC Doc. 2019/09)

At the October meeting in Bamberg members were encouraged to give feedback to the Secretariat on the CESS2018 sessions which they attended, if relevant for users and ESAC.

Ms Manninen referred to the Doc. 2019/09 and thanked ESAC and its Chair for having organised an inspiring conference. Mr Vichi reminded the Committee that the objective of the CESS conference is to connect users, producers and methodologists.

- **CESS 2020**

Mr Vichi told ESAC that two proposals have been made to organise the CESS2020 conference: one from Mr Jaromir Antoch and Gejza Dohnal from the Charles University in Prague and another from Mr Christofides from the University of Cyprus. Members welcomed the proposals and supported organising the CESS2020 conference in Prague. **(Action: Eurostat)**

- **European Statistics Day 2019**

ESAC decided that the motto for the 2019 European Statistics Day is *Look at the facts*. **(Action: Eurostat)**

## 8. AOB

- **United Kingdom leaving the European Union**

Eurostat briefed ESAC on the current situation of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. On 30 March the United Kingdom will not be a member of the ESS regardless of whether there is a deal or not and experts will not be present at the meetings organised within the EU. UK's future relationship with the ESS will be discussed only afterwards, depending on relations of the UK with the EU.

Eurostat will be ready on 30 March to switch to EU27 aggregates (EU without UK) and will keep the historical data including the UK for reference periods before Brexit. In case of UK's withdrawal without a deal, the UK does not have an obligation to send data. Eurostat's objective then will be to produce estimates for the EU28 aggregates for reference periods when the UK was an EU Member State, should the users need them.

Eurostat will inform ESAC on implications of United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union as well as the possible impact of deferring the exit when more information is available. **(Action: Eurostat)**

- **End of term of the Chair, Ms Manninen, Ms Kotowska and Mr Villán Criado in ESAC**

The Chair stated that her second term in ESAC will end in May and this plenary is her last as a Chair. She thanked Eurostat, ESAC members and the Secretariat.

Eurostat and the Secretariat thanked the Chair, Ms Manninen, Ms Kotowska and Mr Villan Criado for their commitment to the work of ESAC.

ESAC Vice-Chair, Mr Vichi gave a speech honouring the Chair and outgoing members (Annex).

**Speech of Mr Vichi to the outgoing ESAC Chair, Ms Ineke Stoop, and ESAC members Asta Manninen, Irena Kotowska and Ildefonso Villán Criado**

I consider this opportunity as a great privilege and an honour to present concluding remarks and a vote of thanks in this ESAC moment organised to pay the gratitude to our highly reputed and greatly honoured Chairperson and members of ESAC who are finishing their mandate.

At the same time, I would like to mention that we are sad due to the vacuum created by their leaving and also that we will miss their company and their valuable contribution in the future organisation of our Committee's work. Thanks to Ineke, Asta, Irena and Ildefonso for the intense work done. Special thanks go to Asta for writing a paper on the importance of spatial statistics for users.

Let me now say some words to Ineke:

Ineke is a senior scientist at The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), which produces for the central government information on the Dutch welfare state. She has been the Chair of ESAC since 2014. Under her responsibility, ESAC has organised several initiatives together with the institutional activities of the Committee. Just to recall some of these:

The seminars:

"Indicators: user requirements, methodological issues and communication challenges", Den Haag, 2016

"New perspectives and priorities for EU 2030 Indicators", Rome 2018

Conferences:

CESS conference, Rome October 2014

CESS conference, Budapest 2016

CESS conference, Bamberg 2018

European Statistics Day

From 2016 Budapest, 2017 Lisbon and Bamberg

and many papers and documents prepared by ESAC on key areas identified by the Committee.

Therefore, the work of ESAC under the Ineke's chairmanship has been very intensive.

Dear Ineke, we will certainly miss you a lot. We always found that you were a cool, happy, kind hearted and peaceful person and very active to rise the reputation of ESAC in Europe. We wish to thank you with a vote of gratitude, and a warm applause.