



25th Meeting

European Statistical Advisory Committee

27 January 2017

Minutes

Minutes of the 25th meeting of the European Statistical Advisory Committee

27 January 2017

09.00 – 16.00

Present:

Chair: Ineke Stoop

Members: Axel Börsch-Supan, Tasos Christofides, Claudiu Herteliu, Irena Kotowska, Ariane König, Asta Manninen, Frances Ruane, Biruta Sloka, Maria João Valente Rosa, Ildefonso Villán Criado, Maurizio Vichi, Michael Smyth, Thomas Wobben, Ioannis Ganoulis (replacing Aurel Schubert), Marko Kristof, Michael Gold, Agnieszka Piasna, Ulrike Oschischnig, Mariana Kotzeva

Observer Lars Svennebye (replacing Volker Täube)

Absent: Hugues Bayet, David Hand, Gabriella Vukovich, Alba Bosch Moline

Secretariat: Cristina Pereira de Sá, Stephen Clarke

Krisztina Perlaky-Toth (EESC) and Oliver Heiden (CoR) were also present.

1. Welcome and adoption of the agenda

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked Thomas Wobben and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) for hosting the meeting.

Following the meeting of the Executive Board the day before, the Chair announced that there would be a change to the order of the items in the agenda to allow discussions on DIGICOM, Big Data and the Quality of Life Expert Group to feed into a discussion on the draft strategic priorities of the European Statistics Annual Work Programme 2018.

The modified agenda was approved.

The Chair said that in future the documents issued for meeting would include the minutes of the previous meeting for reference purposes (**Action: Secretariat**).

2. Recent developments

2.1 Extension of the European Statistical Programme (ESP) 2018-2020

Eurostat informed ESAC that the discussion at the last meeting of the Council Working Party on Statistics went well and the extension to the ESP 2018-2020 is now with the European Parliament (ECON and EMPL committees). It is expected that the ESP extension, with a total planned budget of €218.1 million, of which €25 million is additional budget for new actions, will be adopted under the Maltese Presidency.

The additional funding provided in the ESP extension will address important data gaps and the Big Data developments.

2.2 Memorandum of Understanding on the quality assurance of statistics underlying the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure

Eurostat announced that this Memorandum with the ECB was signed in autumn 2016. It concerns the practical working arrangements for cooperation between Eurostat and the ECB Directorate General Statistics on the quality assurance of statistics underlying the macro imbalances procedure, produced within the European Statistical System (ESS) and the European System of Central Banks. On 25 January 2017 there was a Eurostat/ECB management meeting at which the procedures for putting the Memorandum into practice were discussed. The first results are expected in November 2017.

2.3 “Power from Statistics” initiative

Eurostat informed ESAC about the Eurostat initiative entitled “Power from Statistics” involving a series of five one-day round table discussions with expert speakers from different domains¹. The first round table took place in October 2016 on the topic of migration and further round tables are planned on globalisation; new economic and business models; sustainability; and science statistics and society.

¹ For more details see: <https://www.powerfromstatistics.eu/>

The reports from all five round tables will be discussed in a conference with stakeholders on 18-19 October 2017 and will form the starting point for a discussion on the European Statistical Programme beyond 2020.

Eurostat confirmed that copies of the round table reports will be sent to ESAC when they become available **(Action: Eurostat)**.

Mr Wobben asked to be kept informed about the round tables so that the CoR could be involved in the round table discussions where appropriate **(Action: Eurostat)**.

2.4 Globalisation

There will be a workshop on globalisation in Luxembourg after the ESS Committee meeting on 9 February, involving Directors-General.

The discussions take place in the context of the significant revision of Irish GDP figures following a transfer of intellectual property rights. The workshop will look at what information needs to be exchanged, how to adequately communicate revised GDP figures, cooperation with the IMF and World Bank etc.

Mr Wobben suggested that it would be very useful to have the regional GDP data available in the workshop discussions to illustrate how national changes can have a significant effect on specific regions **(Action: Eurostat)**.

Eurostat will report back on the workshop on globalisation at the next ESAC meeting **(Action: Eurostat)**.

2.5 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Eurostat publication “Sustainable development in the European Union”² was published in November 2016 and copies were circulated at the meeting.

Eurostat is preparing a draft list of SDG indicators for monitoring in an EU context. Consultations with Member States are ongoing and there will be a meeting of the Working Group on Sustainable Development and Europe 2020 indicators on 9 March 2017. Eurostat invited ESAC to add SDG indicators as a topic for the next ESAC meeting **(Action: Secretariat)**.

Mr Wobben asked Eurostat if it would be possible for the Commissioners Timmermans and Katainen to reply to the ESAC letter of 10 November 2016 and for

² [Sustainable development in the European Union 2016](#)

a Cabinet official to meet ESAC to discuss the SDGs. Eurostat will look at how this could be arranged (**Action: Eurostat**).

2.6 Feedback from the CESS 2016 conference

Feedback sheets from members on four specific sessions at the Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders (CESS) 2016, which were of particular relevance to ESAC, had been circulated to members prior to the meeting (Doc. 2017/13).

ESAC noted that the CESS 2016 indicated a lot of activity is under way in the Member States, but it is not clear how good practices are transferred so that all National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) are aware of what is taking place.

A range of topics was proposed for the CESS 2018 conference:

- SDG indicators
- misuse of statistics
- communication of statistics through social media
- communicating the relevance of statistics to people who are not data users
- lessons from the Brexit experience and Irish GDP revision
- independence of statistical offices.

Linked to the discussion, Mr Herteliu offered to circulate a link³ to a special issue of the ESSACHESS – Journal for Communication Studies on communication in statistics (**Action: Mr Herteliu**).

2.7 Feedback from the Directors Group meetings and other meetings

Feedback forms from the Business Statistics Directors Group (BSDG) and the meeting of Directors of Macro-Economic Statistics (DMES) in December 2016 had been circulated prior to the meeting (Doc. 2017/14). There were no additional comments on the feedback forms in the meeting.

Mr Vichi gave oral feedback on the European Master in Official Statistics (EMOS) workshop in November 2016. The workshop discussions included how to measure the results of the EMOS project, how to increase its visibility and when to launch the third call for participation. In addition, the workshop discussed initiatives to include official statistics in university courses and to develop research links between universities and the ESS.

³ <http://www.essachess.com/index.php/jcs/issue/view/18>

2.8 ESAC representation at future ESS meetings

Members indicated which future meetings they would attend as ESAC representatives, based on the list issued before the meeting (Doc. 2017/4). An updated version of the list will be circulated to members (**Action: Secretariat**).

Mr Wobben asked to be involved in a Directors' Group meeting if a discussion item with a regional interest is planned on the respective agenda (**Action: Eurostat**).

It was suggested that the next ESAC meeting could discuss income, consumption and wealth, following the DSS discussions on this in March 2017 (**Action: Secretariat**).

2.9 Draft paper on the proposed PRODCOM revision

It was agreed that the draft paper on the proposed revision of PRODCOM (Doc. 2017/16) will be discussed at a future meeting, to allow members more time to prepare for the discussion (**Action: Members, Secretariat**).

3. Quality of Life Expert Group report

Ms Kotowska introduced the item, stating that the Quality of Life Expert Group report (Doc. 2017/7) is a good summary of the Expert Group's discussions, in which Ms Kotowska, Mr Smyth and the Chair took part at different points between 2012 and 2015.

Eurostat welcomed the report of the Expert Group, stating that it forms a solid basis for further development in this field. Eurostat is preparing the report for publication as a Eurostat methodological paper. In addition, a dedicated section on Quality of Life is now on the Eurostat website and further analyses are planned.

There was a discussion about the quality of subjective health measures used to measure quality of life and the lack of reference to geo-referencing in the report.

ESAC will draft an Opinion in March supporting the work of the Expert Group and the usefulness of the report as an important reference document. The Opinion will emphasise the importance of geo-referencing, particularly in the context of the 2021 census and the fact that some surveys referred to in the report are not carried out in all Member States. The final version of the Opinion will be drafted by March and then discussed at the next ESAC meeting in June (**Action: Ms Kotowska (leading), Mr Börsch-Supan, Mr Wobben, Mr Smyth**).

Eurostat agreed to keep ESAC informed about progress with the Quality of Life indicators (**Action: Eurostat**).

4. Follow-up of the ESAC workshop at The Hague

The Chair thanked Ms Ruane, Mr Wobben, Mr Herteliu and Ms Manninen for their work on the final report (Doc. 2017/8).

ESAC and Eurostat agreed to publish the report on their webpages (**Action: Secretariat**).

There are no plans to develop the report into an ESAC Opinion.

5. Update on DIGICOM project

Christine Kormann (Eurostat) presented the current state of play with the DIGICOM project, describing the activities under four work packages (user analysis and engagement; shareable products and tools; open data dissemination; and communication and promotion) during the first year of implementation of the project.

Following the presentation, ESAC members welcomed the work done so far and raised a number of ideas for further consideration, including how to communicate with schools and with people who are not data users, distinguishing between actual statistics and statistical methodologies, the use of Facebook, tackling fake news and the direct involvement of Directors-General in social media.

The possibility of statistical training for journalists was discussed, together with alternative ways of presenting data in a more understandable way, e.g. enabling citizens to compare their situation with the average.

Mr Wobben informed members that the CoR has a communication strategy for getting different users engaged using Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs) and suggested it would be useful to have a MOOC on Eurostat data. The CoR would be happy to cooperate with Eurostat on this (**Action: CoR, Eurostat**).

ESAC members were shown the CROS portal⁴ on the Eurostat website and invited to contact Ms Kormann if there were any access problems.

⁴ Collaboration in Research and Methodology for Official Statistics (DIGICOM information is under Groups/Networks/ESS.VIP) http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/content/essvip_en

6. Update on Big Data projects

Albrecht Wirthmann (Eurostat) presented the current state of play with the Big Data projects, describing the activities under way in the service contract and in the pilot work with Member States (Doc. 2017/15).

The service contract started in January 2016 and involves an ethical review of the implications of using Big Data, a communication strategy, a review of relevant legislation, and the development of a suitable training strategy to address skill gaps. The contract ends in December 2017.

The pilot work with Member States includes work packages on web scraping, smart meters, AIS⁵ data, mobile telephone data, methodology and dissemination.

In addition, a hackathon on Big Data is planned for 13-15 March 2017⁶, which will gather teams from all over Europe to compete for the best data product combining official statistics and big data in a particular policy area.

In the discussion that followed, members raised the issues of availability of micro data, data confidentiality, data comparability and the 'smart city' initiative in Helsinki. Eurostat referred to its collaboration in this field with AirBnB, LinkedIn and Proximus.

7. ESAC Opinion on the draft strategic priorities of the Annual Work Programme 2018

ESAC members provided some initial comments on the draft strategic priorities of the AWP 2018 (Doc. 2017/5). There was a view that the work programme could better reflect recent changes in society and issues such as regional inequality, trust in statistics, migration, cybersecurity and Big Data information flows. A reference to Brexit was also suggested.

Eurostat offered to provide ESAC with a summary of the draft strategic priorities, produced for the ESS Committee (**Action: Secretariat**).

The secretariat will recirculate the previous ESAC Opinion to members to use as the basis for their comments on the draft strategic priorities. Comments must be returned by 6 February so that the ESAC Opinion can be finalised (**Action: Members, Secretariat**).

⁵ Automatic Identification System used for ship tracking

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/EU-BD-Hackathon_en

8. DGINS session on migration in September 2017

Members were informed that there will be a special session on migration at the DGINS meeting on 20-21 September 2017. As only four members indicated their interest in attending this session, it was agreed that an additional ESAC conference on migration in the autumn would not be organised. Instead, ESAC members who are already due to participate in the DGINS special session⁷ will report back on the outcome at the following ESAC meeting.

9. Next ESAC meetings

12-13 June in Helsinki

The next ESAC meeting will be in Helsinki and linked to a joint ESAC-Statistics Finland Seminar on statistics to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Finland's independence (Doc. 2017/11). Ms Manninen presented the programme for the seminar and discussions on the organisation of the seminar have been arranged, involving the Secretariat, Ms Manninen and Statistics Finland (**Action: Secretariat, Ms Manninen**).

October meeting

It was proposed that there could be an ESAC meeting linked to a European Statistics Day event on 20 October, possibly in Lisbon. The meeting would include a discussion of the outcome of the special DGINS session on migration. The secretariat will liaise with Ms Valente Rosa and Mr Vichi regarding the organisational details for the European Statistics Day event (**Action: Secretariat, Ms Valenta Rosa, Mr Vichi**).

10. Forthcoming appointments and renewals

The Secretariat will shortly contact those members whose appointments are approaching their end, with a view to implementing the procedures for renewals and replacements (**Action: Secretariat**).

⁷ The Chair, Mr Kristof, Ms Vukovich and Mr Schubert

11. Summary of remaining actions

1. Documents issued for ESAC meetings will include the minutes of the previous meeting for reference purposes **(Secretariat)**.
2. Copies of the round table reports will be sent to ESAC when they become available **(Eurostat)**.
3. The CoR asked to be kept informed about the round tables **(Eurostat)**.
4. Eurostat will report back on the workshop on globalisation at the next ESAC meeting **(Eurostat)**.
5. SDG indicators will be added as a topic for the next ESAC meeting **(Secretariat)**.
6. Eurostat will follow up ESAC's requests for a reply from Commissioners Timmermans and Katainen regarding SDG indicators and for a discussion between ESAC and a Cabinet official **(Eurostat)**.
7. The updated list of ESAC representatives attending future Directors Group meetings and other meetings will be circulated to members **(Secretariat)**.
8. Mr Wobben asked to be involved in a Directors' Group meeting if a discussion item with a regional interest is planned on the respective agenda **(Eurostat)**.
9. A discussion of income, consumption and wealth was proposed for the next ESAC meeting **(Secretariat)**.
10. The draft paper on the proposed revision of PRODCOM (Doc. 2017/16) will be discussed at a future meeting **(Members, Secretariat)**.
11. The final version of the Opinion on the Quality of Life Expert Group report will be discussed at the next ESAC meeting **(Ms Kotowska (leading), Mr Börsch-Supan, Mr Wobben, Mr Smyth)**.
12. Eurostat to keep ESAC informed about progress with the Quality of Life indicators **(Eurostat)**.
13. ESAC and Eurostat to publish the revised ESAC report on the Hague workshop on indicators on their webpages **(Secretariat)**.
14. The CoR would be happy to cooperate with Eurostat on the development of a Massive Open Online Course on Eurostat data **(CoR, Eurostat)**.
15. The Secretariat will liaise with Ms Valente Rosa and Mr Vichi regarding the organisational details for the European Statistics Day event in October 2017 **(Secretariat, Ms Valenta Rosa, Mr Vichi)**.
16. The Secretariat will contact those members whose appointments are approaching their end, with a view to implementing the procedures for renewals and replacements **(Secretariat)**.