



## **26<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

### **European Statistical Advisory Committee**

**12 and 13 June 2017**

## **Minutes**

**Minutes of the 26th meeting of the European Statistical Advisory Committee**

**12 June 2017 9.30-11.40 and**

**13 June 2017 9.00-13.30**

**Present:**

Chair: Ineke Stoop

Members: Axel Börsch-Supan, Tasos Christofides, Claudiu Herteliu, Asta Manninen, Frances Ruane, Biruta Sloka, Maria João Valente Rosa, Maurizio Vichi, Michael Smyth, Thomas Wobben, Aurel Schubert, Marko Kristof, Agnieszka Piasna, Mariana Kotzeva

Observer Volker Täube

Absent: Hugues Bayet, David Hand, Gabriella Vukovich, Alba Bosch Moline, Ulrike Oschischnig, Michael Gold, Irena Kotowska, Ariane König, Ildfonso Villán Criado

Secretariat: Cristina Pereira de Sá, Stephen Clarke, Kirsi Mankki

**1. Welcome, overview of the previous minutes, adoption of the agenda**

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked Statistics Finland and Asta Manninen for the practical organisation of the meeting in Helsinki.

There were no comments on the minutes or the action points from the January meeting. The draft agenda (Doc. 2017/23) was approved.

**2. Executive Board renewals**

The 2½ year term of office for the two coordinators on the Executive Board, Maria João Valenta Rosa and Frances Ruane, ends on 29 July 2017. In the meeting both members were re-elected unanimously to their posts for a further 2½ years.

Maria João Valenta Rosa was reappointed as Statistics User Network Coordinator and Frances Ruane was reappointed as Seminar and Research Activities Coordinator.

14 of the 23 members (61 %) eligible to vote were present.

### 3. Recent developments (Doc. 2017/24)

#### 3.1 Report on the Eurostat “Power from Statistics” round table event

The fifth and final round table in the Power from Statistics project took place in Frankfurt on 24 April and dealt with the theme statistics, science and society. Aurel Schubert was present at the meeting and reported back to ESAC members. The papers discussed at the round table included topics on stakeholders' engagement, the future of official statistics, and the funding of statistical systems. The outcome of the discussions at the round table will feed into a final report covering the series of round table events that have taken place since October 2016 and which will be presented at the high-level conference “Power from Statistics: Data, Information and Knowledge” organised by Eurostat and the European Political Strategy Centre in Brussels on 18-19 October.

Marko Kristof, Michael Smyth and Thomas Wobben will be invited by Eurostat to represent ESAC at the conference (**Action: Eurostat - done**).

#### 3.2 Report on the NTTS 2017 conference

The Chair reported back on the biannual New Techniques and Technologies for Statistics (NTTS) 2017 conference which took place in Brussels on 13-17 March. The event included a hackathon involving the creation of a data product on regional labour markets which was won by Croatia, France and Estonia.

Eurostat informed ESAC that the results of the hackathon would continue to be developed to facilitate the presentation of statistics on the supply and demand for labour in Europe on the Eurostat website.

#### 3.3 Feedback on ESAC Opinion on draft strategic priorities (AWP 2018)

Eurostat updated ESAC on the latest situation regarding the Annual Work Programme for 2018 and informed members that when the Annual Work Programme 2018 is adopted, Eurostat will provide feedback to the Committee on how ESAC's Opinion on the draft strategic priorities for 2018 has been taken into account.

Also, the European Statistical Programme 2018-2020 is waiting for adoption and an increase to the Eurostat budget for the period 2018-2020 has been approved.

Members discussed how a rise in funding at the ESS level could stimulate budget increases at a national level.

In the discussion, geocoding was considered to be a good application for co-funded initiatives as it involves both statistical and administrative development. Eurostat agreed to provide a paper on the current status of geocoding development for circulation to ESAC members (**Action: Eurostat – done – Doc. 2017/39**).

This paper would then form the basis for an ESAC paper on the issues of co-funding, methodology and collaboration as ways of supporting developments in NSIs (**Action: Thomas Wobben, Maurizio Vichi and Asta Manninen**).

Thomas Wobben informed the members that the Committee of the Regions Cohesion Report would be published in October and could provide additional input into the discussion of suitable projects and ideas for an ESAC workshop.

### 3.4 European Statistical Programme beyond 2020

Eurostat informed members that the first discussions with Heads of NSIs on the ESS beyond 2020 had taken place in Malta and the discussions will continue in Budapest in September 2017. Eurostat will seek input from ESAC and from high-level user conferences such as the Power from Statistics conference. A roadmap for the work on the ESP beyond 2020 will be provided to ESAC for the next meeting (**Action: Eurostat - done - Doc. 2017/36**).

There was a discussion of the ways ESAC could be involved in the work related to the ESP beyond 2020. The possibility of an ESAC Opinion or workshop was suggested and the issue will be discussed further at the next meeting.

### 3.5 Eurostat seminar on migration statistics at DGINS

ESAC members were invited to inform the Secretariat by 18 June 2017 if they are interested in speaking at session 2 'Research in migration statistics' at the meeting of Directors-General of National Statistical Institutes (DGINS) in Budapest on the afternoon of 21 September 2017 (**Action: ESAC members - done**).

### 3.6 Workshop on globalisation

In a discussion about the DG Seminar on globalisation, which took place in February, the importance of resilience was raised. Eurostat informed members that some work has been undertaken by the Joint Research Centre in this field and Thomas Wobben added that the Committee of Regions would be reporting on resilience and on how it could be measured.

### 3.7 Feedback from members representing ESAC in meetings

Feedback forms from the ESS Resource Directors Group (RDG) meeting of 27-28 April 2017 and the ESSC meeting of 17-18 May 2017 had been circulated prior to the meeting (Doc. 2017/25).

In her report from the ESS RDG meeting of 27-28 April, Agnieszka Piasna asked if Eurostat could make available the results of the first stage of the cost analysis project, possibly by product. Eurostat replied that the comparability of the preliminary results is still under discussion, and that the availability of the data will also depend on the willingness of countries to release their figures. Work on the cost analysis project is ongoing and a more detailed discussion of the results will be possible at a later stage.

Maurizio Vichi gave an oral feedback on the DIGICOM Steering Group which took place in Vienna in April 2017 and the state of play of its four work packages. Issues covered in the DIGICOM meeting included:

- A presentation of the ESS Facebook page of NSI data and an analysis of the interest in these pages (in terms of the number of hits)
- Some innovative products are now ready and have been included on the Eurostat website
- Open data dissemination (including data from international statistical institutes): there will be a need to have tools to connect to different data sources
- A discussion of the hackathon (see item 3.2) and of the Statistics Olympics in Spain to promote statistical literacy.

Mr Vichi will provide written feedback on the discussions at the Steering Group (**Action: Mr Vichi**).

### 3.8 Meeting schedule 2017

Agnieszka Piasna will represent ESAC at the Directors of Social Statistics meeting on 3-4 October 2017 (**Action: Agnieszka Piasna - done**).

The Secretariat will contact Ariane König to check if she can attend the Microdata Access Network as an ESAC representative if needed (**Action: Secretariat - done**).

#### 4. Meeting with Martti Hetemäki, ESGAB Chair

Martti Hetemäki welcomed the opportunity to meet ESAC members and began the session by focusing on the issue of ‘truth’ which was highlighted in the 2016 ESGAB Annual Report.

In an environment where facts and statistics are being ignored by some politicians, Mr Hetemäki said it was important that NSIs react when statistics are misreported. This reaction could be in three ways:

- a) using fact-checking entities, which now exist and have proved to be very useful;
- b) explaining facts and giving background; and
- c) attracting attention to facts/statistics (e.g. use of infographics).

These measures can strengthen the professional integrity of official statisticians and can stimulate more interest in statistics. Bodies such as ESGAB and ESAC have an important role to play by making their views known to the Council, Parliament and the media.

In the discussion that followed, the need for good data, at sufficient regional detail, better statistical literacy and the concept of a professional code for statisticians were raised. Regarding the issue of independence of NSIs from government, Mr Hetemäki said there were practical constraints, given the dependence on funding and the data inputs required. However, the Code of Practice and Regulation 223/2009 provide a solid basis on which to build.

Mr Hetemäki suggested collaboration between ESGAB and ESAC could take two forms: strategic and concrete actions. Strategic actions could include the further development of professional standards and quality frameworks, while concrete actions could include the publication of common views and opinions.

ESAC members proposed additional ways of collaboration, e.g. papers on areas of shared interest such as methodology, indicators, statistical independence, the role of the media; workshops; and sharing meeting agendas. However, while common topics can be identified, the different roles of the two bodies should also be recognised.

The Executive Board will examine possible ways of working jointly with ESGAB in the light of the discussion (**Action: Executive Board**).

The Chair thanked Mr Hetemäki for meeting with ESGAB and said the issue of collaboration with ESGAB will be discussed further at the next ESAC meeting.

### 5. EU SDG indicator set

Eurostat informed the ESAC members that it is leading the work to develop a set of EU indicators aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. There has been wide consultation, and Eurostat thanked ESAC for its formal Opinion provided in March 2017. The ESSC gave a favourable opinion at its meeting in May and the list of indicators has been published.

The next step will be to collect the available data and to produce a draft statistical report. It is expected that the indicator list will be revised at regular intervals.

Eurostat also informed ESAC that a reply from the Commission to ESAC's letter on the EU SDG indicator set is expected to be issued shortly (**Action: Commission - done**).

Frances Ruane asked if it would be possible to show how the different indicators are linked, so that they are easier to understand. Eurostat agreed to explore ways of presenting graphically the links between different statistical indicators published on the Eurostat website, e.g. macro-economic imbalance procedure scoreboard indicators<sup>1</sup> (**Action: Eurostat**).

### 6. Harmonised statistics on income, consumption and wealth

A document from the meeting of Directors of Social Statistics had been circulated to members (Doc. 2017/27) prior to the meeting concerning the action plan for harmonisation of statistics on distributional aspects of household income. In order to have a full discussion of the paper and the issues it raises, the item was postponed to the next meeting in October. However, some brief comments were made by ESAC members.

Aurel Schubert informed the members that the ECB has established a working group on the micro-macro linking of financial data, which could be of interest in the context of data on income, consumption and wealth.

Thomas Wobben, Aurel Schubert and Axel Börsch-Supan agreed to collaborate to produce a discussion document on macro-micro data linking in relation to statistics on income, consumption and wealth, which will include a reference to the Committee of the Regions report on GDP and beyond (**Action: Thomas Wobben, Aurel Schubert and Axel Börsch-Supan – done – Doc. 2017/40**).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/macroeconomic-imbances-procedure/indicators>

## 7. Draft Opinion on the Quality of Life Expert Group Report

Following comments by members on the draft ESAC Opinion on the report of the Expert Group on Quality of Life (Doc. 2017/28), it was agreed that Mr Börsch-Supan and Ms Ruane would make some modifications to the draft. The revised draft will be circulated by the Secretariat to ESAC members for comments (**Action: Axel Börsch-Supan, Frances Ruane, Secretariat - done**).

## 8. Other issues

### 8.1 European Statistics Day event in Lisbon

Maria João Valente Rosa explained the state of play regarding the European Statistics Day (ESD) 2017 conference “Official statistics as a public good” in Lisbon. The conference will be a half-day event which will be opened by a Portuguese minister and the keynote speaker will be David Hand from ESAC.

Aurel Schubert, Maurizio Vichi and an EMOS student will be panellists and the journalist George Arnett will act as a moderator. The closing speech will include the key messages of the conference. Ms Valente Rosa showed a link to the event website and asked members to register for the conference via the event website.

ESAC members were invited to provide to the Secretariat any further comments on the text of the Eurostat/ESAC/ECB/FENStatS joint announcement regarding European Statistics Day, which had been circulated to members at the meeting, by 18 June 2017 (**Action: ESAC members - done**)

### 8.2 CESS 2018 and an ESAC workshop

Maurizio Vichi introduced the item on the next Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders (CESS) and informed the Committee that the date, location and theme of the conference had still to be decided.

ESAC members supported a proposal to hold the 2018 conference alongside an ESAC plenary meeting close to European Statistics Day (20 October). Further discussion will take place at the ESAC meeting in October.



The organisation of a workshop in 2018 was also discussed. One suggestion for the topic of the workshop was geocoding (see item 3.3). Possible topics for a workshop will be discussed further at the next meeting.

### **8.3 Forthcoming ESAC member appointments and renewals**

Several members, whose first term ends in 2018, have already indicated that they are willing to have their appointments renewed by their respective institutions. In particular, the Chair noted that Gabriella Vukovich and Marko Kristof are willing to continue as ESAC members for a second term if nominated by the ESSC in September.

The Chair thanked members whose term will come to an end in 2018 and all the members who have actively participated in the meetings. The Chair regretted that the members appointed by the European Parliament and European Data Protection Supervisor have not been present at many meetings.

The secretariat will launch the procedure for renewing the appointments during the autumn (**Action: Secretariat - done**).

### **8.4 Availability of ESAC documents on a collaborative platform**

Some members asked if it would be possible for ESAC documents to be made available in an intranet site, to avoid difficulties with the transmission of large files by email. The Secretariat will look at how this could be done using a collaborative platform such as the European Commission's CIRCABC (**Action: Secretariat - done**).

### **8.5 ESAC representative in EMOS Board**

Maurizio Vichi will remain the ESAC representative on the European Master in Official Statistics Board.

### **8.6 Massive Open Online Courses – cooperation between CoR and Eurostat**

Thomas Wobben reiterated the offer of the Committee of Regions to work with Eurostat on Massive Online Courses.

## **9. Next meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be 19 October in Lisbon.

## 10. Summary of remaining actions

1. Written feedback on the DIGICOM Steering Group which took place in Vienna in April will be provided to ESAC members (**Action: Maurizio Vichi**).
2. The Eurostat paper on geocoding will form the basis for an ESAC paper on the issues of co-funding, methodology and collaboration as ways of supporting developments in NSIs (**Action: Thomas Wobben, Maurizio Vichi and Asta Manninen**).
3. Thomas Wobben, Aurel Schubert and Axel Börsch-Supan will collaborate to produce a discussion document on macro-micro data linking in relation to statistics on income, consumption and wealth. The discussion document will include a reference to the Committee of the Regions report on GDP and beyond (**Action: Thomas Wobben, Aurel Schubert and Axel Börsch-Supan**).
4. The Executive Board will examine possible ways of working jointly with the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) in the light of the discussion with the Chair of ESGAB (**Action: Executive Board**).
5. Eurostat will explore ways of presenting graphically the links between different statistical indicators published on the Eurostat website e.g. macro-economic imbalance procedure scoreboard indicators (**Action: Eurostat**).