



European Statistical  
Advisory Committee

**29<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

**Thursday, 7 June 2018**

**11.00 – 18.00**

**Sala Multimediale,  
Palazzo del Rettorato  
Sapienza Università di Roma  
P.le A Moro 5  
Rome**

**Minutes**

**ESAC Doc. 2018/26**

**Minutes of the 29th ESAC meeting**  
**7 June 20.0018**  
**11.00-18.00**

**Present:**

Chair: Ineke Stoop

Members: Alessandro Bonara (replacing Caroline Willeke), Igor Caldeira (replacing Thomas Wobben), Tasos Christofides, David Hand, Claudiu Herteliu, Marko Krištof, Petra Lang, Asta Manninen, Matthieu Méaulle, Biruta Sloka, Maria João Valente Rosa, Maurizio Vichi, Petr Zahradník, Tamara Pal (replacing Gabriella Vukovich), John Verrinder (replacing Mariana Kotzeva),

Observer: Volker Täube

Absent: Axel Börsch-Supan, Michael Gold, Irena Kotowska, Ariane König, Fulvio Martusciello, Ildefonso Villán Criado

Secretariat: Cristina Pereira de Sá, Kirsi Mankki, Szilvia Opoczky

**1. Welcome, adoption of agenda**

The Chair opened the meeting and announced that there would be a change to the order of the items on the agenda due to the visit of the ESGAB Chair, Mr Enrico Giovannini, which was foreseen at 15.30.

The modified agenda was approved.

**2. Outstanding actions from meeting of 6 February 2018**

Points were raised on two items in the previous minutes:

The Chair stated that Ms Piasna, a former ESAC member, will organise a session at the Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders, CESS 2018 on “Measurement of the digital economy and non-standard forms of work: challenges for statistics users and producers” and therefore no paper from ESAC will be prepared (Item 1 of the minutes).

Ms Piasna could not participate in the workshop on collaborative economy on 29-30 May 2018 and Mr Täube informed that he will not be able to attend the Microdata Access Network Group (MANG) of 14 June 2018 (Item 3.5. of the minutes).

**3. Presentation of new ESAC members**

The Chair welcomed all participants, especially the new ESAC members to their first ESAC meeting: Petra Lang, Matthieu Méaulle and Petr Zahradnik. Caroline Willeke and Fulvio Martusciello could not participate.

All members present briefly introduced themselves.

The Chair hoped to see the representative of the European Parliament at the future meetings and regretted that the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) has not appointed a representative after the end of term of Alba Bosch Moline. The presence of a EDPS representative at ESAC would be important.

#### **4. Commission's alignment of its data protection practices with the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**

The Chair reminded all members to reply to the secretariat's message regarding the Commission's alignment of its current data protection practices with the new GDPR. Although no-one present at the meeting expressed a wish to opt out of the mailing lists when asked by the Chair, the members who had not yet sent their positive reply to the secretariat were asked to do so by 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018 to guarantee that they will receive all documents and messages also in future. **(Action: members who have not yet confirmed the agreement to remain on the ESAC secretariat mailing list)**

#### **5. Recent developments (ESAC Doc. 2018/19)**

##### **5.1. Eurostat**

Eurostat referred to the documents under this item circulated to members prior to the meeting.

##### **5.1.1. Informal ESSC workshop in Sofia 22-23 May 2018**

The main subject of the Directors' General workshop was the organisation of the next round of Peer Reviews with visits to the National Statistical Offices and Eurostat to assess the compliance with the Code of Practice.

Directors General recognised the importance of Peer Reviews and exchanged views on their focus, scope, methodology and communication. A holistic concept paper will be prepared next autumn for further discussion by the Directors General and transmission to the High-level Group on Quality and to the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) on 12 October. It will define the organisation, timing and strategy of the next round of Peer Reviews.

##### **5.1.2. Digital Single Market Package**

Eurostat informed ESAC that on 25 April 2018 the Commission adopted the third Data Package which includes a communication "Towards a common European data space" addressing the issue of access to private sector data for public interest purposes. This communication contains some ideas for the future, which could be enshrined in legislation.

During the discussion, Mr Vichi proposed that NSIs should have access to privately held data and act as a kind of a "national library" for all data in the country. As cyber security issues might occur, the NSIs should guarantee that the data would stay the property of the person or body involved but the NSI should be able to use it for statistical purposes.

Mr Hand highlighted that it could be risky if the NSIs do not have access to the privately held data, as private sector producers holding the data can distribute it without the same quality requirements as the NSIs. He also emphasised the need for ethical guidelines on the issue.

Mr Krištof informed ESAC on the Estonian strategy to turn the NSI into a national data hub, which not only has access to privately held data but can also facilitate the use and reuse of the information and ensure that it is handled in a secure way. He proposed to invite a representative of the Estonian NSI to present the concept and strategy to ESAC.

Mr Hand considered useful to know what different European countries are doing in this matter. Eurostat referred to the ESSC position paper on access to privately held data which are of public interest, as it includes examples of solutions for cooperating with enterprises in this area. The secretariat will send ESAC the ESS position paper from November 2017 on access to privately held data. **(Action: secretariat)**

The Chair concluded that a balanced letter should be drafted included the elements mentioned above. She also supported the idea to invite a representative of the Estonian statistical office to an ESAC meeting in the future.

Mr Vichi, Mr Krištof and Mr Hand will draft a letter to the Eurostat Director General, Ms Kotzeva **by the end of June**, supporting the NSIs access to privately held data for official statistics. It will be circulated to ESAC members for comments and then sent to Eurostat for further transmission to the NSIs. **(Action: Mr Vichi, Mr Krištof, Mr Hand, secretariat)**

Ms Lang proposed to mention in the letter the fears of some data holders who are reluctant to give this data to the NSIs.

### **5.1.3. Information on the Business Sector Profile (BSP)**

Eurostat informed ESAC that it has launched a new statistical information tool for businesses, trade associations, policy makers and other users presenting information in a user-friendly way: the Business Sector Profile (BSP).

Members were invited to test the beta version of the tool which can be accessed at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/scoreboards/BSP/> **until the end of June 2018** and send their feedback to Eurostat. Any feedback on the data, the idea and the way it is presented would be highly appreciated. At the October meeting Eurostat will give further information to ESAC on user test outcomes and next steps. **(Action: members, Eurostat)**

### **5.1.4. Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027**

ESAC was informed that the annex of the legal act (Commission' proposal for the Single Market Programme, including the framework for European Statistics 2021-2027) has been approved on 7 June<sup>1</sup>. The secretariat will circulate it to ESAC. **(Action: Secretariat)**

## **5.2. Feedback from members (ESAC Doc. 2018/13)**

Feedback forms from the European Statistics System Committee (ESSC) meeting of 17 May 2018, the Directors' of Social Statistics (DSS) meeting of 1-2 March 2018 and the Directors' of Macro-Economic Statistics meeting of 14-15 December 2017 had been circulated prior to the meeting.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-18-4049\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4049_en.htm)

### 5.2.1. European Statistics System Committee (ESSC)

Ms Pal explained briefly to new members the role of the ESSC in the European Statistical System and the frequency of its meetings (three times per year), mentioning that at its May meeting the ESSC had discussed among other issues strategic planning beyond 2020, the concept for priority-setting and the Annual Work Programme 2019.

Under this item members discussed the need for more involvement of ESAC in the consultation process of the post-2020 framework for European statistics and stressed the usefulness of informing the NSIs about the ESAC opinions on strategic issues in particular before the new planning period.

### 5.2.2. Directors of Social Statistics

The Chair briefly repeated the points provided by Ms Piasna on her written report which have relevance for ESAC.

### 5.2.3. Directors of Macro-Economic Statistics

Mr Herteliu reported that Eurostat presented ongoing activities on globalisation, including more information on the establishment of the Early Warning System (EWS), and informed on a workshop on Large Case Units. Another important point from the agenda was the general endeavour of reducing the time gap between an event and its measurement, as well as communication to the public. The mandate of the DMES Task Force on ESA 2010 Data Validation had terminated and its final report had been presented. The ESA 2010 Validation Handbook is in its final stage of consultation before publication expected in 2018. Mr Herteliu has distributed the final report of the Task Force to ESAC.

ESAC also discussed briefly the cases of regional statistical misreporting in Salzburg and Valencia.

## 5.3. Update of the 2018 meeting schedule (ESAC Doc. 2018/14)

ESAC Doc. 2018/14 was discussed, with the following modifications or comments:

The Chair as a member of the Scientific Committee and Mr Christofides as a member of the Programme Committee will represent ESAC at the European Conference on Quality of Official Statistics Q2018 on 26-29 June 2018 **(Action: Chair, Mr Christofides)**

Ms Sloka will attend the Directors of Social Statistics meeting on 4-5 October 2018. **(Action: Ms Sloka)**

The Chair will attend the DGINS conference and ESSC meeting on 10-12 October. A joint presentation of Big Data and Mass Statistics by Mr Vichi and Mr Hand will be delivered at the DGINS conference. **(Action: Chair, Mr Vichi, Mr Hand)**

Mr Méaulle will attend the Business Statistics Director's Group meeting on 4-5 December 2018. **(Action: Mr Méaulle)**

Mr Zahradnik will attend the Directors of Macroeconomic Statistics meeting on 18-19 December 2018. **(Action: Mr Zahradnik)**

An updated version of the list will be circulated to members **(Action: secretariat)**.

## **6. Other ESAC activities**

### **6.1. CESS Conference**

Mr Vichi briefed ESAC on the state of play of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders, CESS 2018<sup>2</sup>. It will be organised on 18-19 October in Bamberg by ESAC, Eurostat, the European Central Bank (ECB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Federation of European National Statistical Societies (FENStats), the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, the German Statistical Society, the Deutsche Bundesbank and the University of Bamberg.

There will be 10 sessions at the conference. Organisers have accepted all the sessions proposed by ESAC. The session proposed by Mr Krištof has been merged with another, similar one, proposed by the UNECE, with Mr Krištof still as its organiser. The deadline for sending abstracts has been extended until 14 June 2018.

### **6.2. European Statistics Day 2018**

The European Statistics Day (ESD) 2018 will be Saturday, 20 October 2018, but ESAC will celebrate it at the CESS 2018.

Members had been asked to send their proposals for a possible motto for advertising the European Statistics Day 2018 not only during the CESS 2018 but also on national events in member states.

ESAC was reminded about the ESD mottos of 2016 and 2017 “Better data - Better lives“ and “The value of official statistics as a public good” to avoid similar ones. Six mottos received from members before the meeting were circulated prior to the meeting. During a lively discussion, several new ideas were proposed. Members were asked to send their suggestions to the Chair by the end of the day. The Chair will collect them, send a list to members asking to rank the proposals and take a final decision on the topic as soon as possible. **(Action: members, Chair)**

### **6.3. Workshop “New perspectives and priorities for EU 2030 Indicators” on 8 June 2018**

The Chair informed that Ms Vukovich cannot attend the seminar. The Chair volunteered to replace her as chair of session 3.

Members were asked to give a short report from the sessions as follows:

Mr Hand will report from the session 1,  
Mr Bonara will report from the session 2,  
Ms Manninen from the session 3 and  
Ms Sloka from the session 4.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.uni-bamberg.de/en/cess2018/>

The members mentioned above will send their reports to the secretariat as soon as possible and **by the end of June** at the latest. **(Actions: Mr Hand, Mr Bonara, Ms Manninen, Ms Sloka)**

#### **6.4. Appointment of new members**

ESAC was informed about the launch of the appointment procedure for members appointed by the Commission. The proposals from the Permanent Representations had been requested by 31 May 2018. Eight members will be appointed. Mr Börsch-Supan, Mr Christofides and Ms Valente Rosa have shown their willingness to renew their memberships for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term and that been supported by the respective member states. Five new members are needed to replace the Chair, Ms Manninen, Mr Villan Criado, Ms Kotowska and Ms Ruane. So far new candidate names have been received from the Netherlands, Lithuania, Sweden, Hungary and Czech Republic.

#### **7. Statistical development, financing and collaboration in relation to geocoding**

Eurostat thanked ESAC for the paper “Statistical Development, financing and collaboration in relation to geocoding” (ESAC Doc. 2017/58) and welcomed its recommendations.

Eurostat explained that in its response it proposes a list of short-term, mid-term and long-term activities, many of which have to be integrated into already existing processes for example with the UN. An important activity is the planned Census 2021 where geocoding will be systematically implemented. For the long-term Eurostat has plans for assuring the first delivery of annual population grids. The challenges faced concern agreeing the methodologies for the whole ESS, issues regarding national legislations, need for support from the NSIs’ managements and need for resources for geospatial statistics.

Mr Krištof informed ESAC that in some countries geodata is not available for free even for the NSIs, as geodetic institutes are charging for it. Eurostat will take that information back to geoexperts.

The Chair thanked Eurostat for its response and Ms Manninen, Mr Vichi and Mr Wobben, authors of the original ESAC paper on this issue.

#### **8. DIGICOM Steering Group – ESAC paper – The role of communication in Statistical Science and the strategies of communication for statistics users – ESAC Doc. 2018/15**

Mr Hand introduced the paper which he had drafted together with Mr Vichi. The paper highlights the new communication methods and changes that have taken place in communication over the past few years. It comprises nine recommendations from ESAC to the ESS and Eurostat, which are linked with data collection procedures and aim at increasing the role of Computer-Assisted web interviewing in order to reduce errors, inconsistencies and anomalous answers during data collection, decreasing the burden of data collection for the citizens, collaborating more with universities and promoting the introduction of standards at European level to make data produced by smart devices linkable.

In the discussion which followed, members highlighted the importance of measuring the results and wished to know how the special article in the new GDPR allowing to use new data sources for statistical purposes will be put into practice by the NSIs and other big providers of statistics.

Also, a recommendation was proposed to be added for building up a network of researchers including experts and people working on different topics, enabling them to communicate, to have open source activities, and to exchange data from different institutions (such as universities and national statistical institutes). The Chair referred to the Data collection innovation network<sup>3</sup>, a cooperation between Statistics Netherlands and universities, as an example.

The need for guidelines on communication with users, on how to best advise the public on statistics by using the new media and the new tools, was emphasised. A suggestion was made to mention in the recommendations 5 and 6 that ESAC recommends Eurostat not only to extend and encourage but also financially support these actions.

Members also highlighted that citizens should be encouraged to visit the national websites and use them. Statistics should be made more attractive in such a way that it would gather attention, for example by adapting it so that citizens could better compare their individual, private situation to averages.

Mr Vichi and Mr Hand will revise the paper on the basis of the comments received at the meeting for further transmission to Eurostat. **(Action: Mr Vichi, Mr Hand)**

## 9. Collaboration with ESGAB

The Chair welcomed the ESGAB Chair, Enrico Giovannini, to the meeting. The link between these two bodies was recognised in June 2017 when the former ESGAB Chair, Mr Martti Hetemäki, first attended an ESAC meeting in Helsinki.

Mr Giovannini informed that ESGAB has a mandate to supervise the implementation of the Code of Practice, which also refers to quality and relevance. The Board's main output is an annual report, which includes several recommendations. They are followed up by Eurostat which sends ESGAB a report on their improvement actions as a response. In the last few years, ESGAB has highlighted the challenges faced by the European Statistical System in order to help Eurostat and the ESS as a whole to anticipate potential difficulties.

On 8 June 2018 ESGAB will issue its fundamental opinion on the implementation of the Commission's Commitment on Confidence (CoC), the Commission Decision on Eurostat, which defines the status of Eurostat, the role of its Director General and also its relationship with other Commission services, as required by the Regulation 223/2009 on European statistics (as amended in June 2015)<sup>4</sup>. This opinion<sup>5</sup> includes some key findings, which are based on the dialogues with important stakeholders, such as several Directorates General (DGs) of the Commission, the chairpersons of the Economic and Financial Committee (EFC) and the European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON). Although the key findings are quite positive, the opinion contains 13 recommendations on different tasks of Eurostat, on improving the relationship of Eurostat with other Commission DGs as well as on the recruitment and dismissal of the Director General of Eurostat.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/our-services/innovation/nieuwsberichten/output/cbs-and-utrecht-university-start-innovative-survey-network> and [www.blaise.com/images/products/1.-Data-collection-Innovation-Network-web.pdf](http://www.blaise.com/images/products/1.-Data-collection-Innovation-Network-web.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32015R0759>

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/34693/344453/ESGAB-Opinion+on+implementation+of+Eurostat+Decision\\_final.pdf/cc307506-74eb-4d9d-abde-0603fb3596d5](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/34693/344453/ESGAB-Opinion+on+implementation+of+Eurostat+Decision_final.pdf/cc307506-74eb-4d9d-abde-0603fb3596d5)



Mr Giovannini underlined the importance of the revised Code of Practice<sup>6</sup> which is a new opportunity to strengthen the governance and organise the new round of Peer Reviews. Eurostat has asked ESGAB for its input on how to improve the Peer Review mechanism.

Discussion continued on the basis of a list of issues prepared by Mr Christofides (ESAC Doc. 2018/18) on statistical literacy, independence of producers of statistics, trust in statistics, access to data and data protection as well as professional development. Mr Giovannini stated that statistical literacy is a precondition to understand statistics correctly. He referred to the recommendations<sup>7</sup> of the European External Action Service East Stratcom Task Force<sup>8</sup> and advised a more proactive role in fighting not only misinterpretation of statistics but also fake news.

The need to have a Code also for non-official statistics was discussed. Mr Giovannini clarified that as ESGAB supervises the ESS and the ESS is not dealing with non-official statistics, ESGAB's mandate does not deal with non-official statistics. However, ESGAB stated in its annual report of 2017 that the increasing number of independent or private producers producing statistics may be a challenge for the ESS. ESGAB-like bodies exist only in six European countries<sup>9</sup>. ESGAB intends to call a meeting with these entities in the future where such issue could be debated.

Regarding the independence of producers of statistics, Mr Giovannini confirmed that in its last report ESGAB named the Independence of Other National Authorities (ONAs), for example tax authorities or social security institutes producing data for European Statistics, as one of the biggest issues in the ESS. The Board has issued a recommendation on this<sup>10</sup> due to some concerns as to whether the chief statistician in an NSI can evaluate the independence of ONAs which often are powerful ministries, when producing statistics. Is national legislation adequate to ensure statistical independence? It is a very delicate question and ESGAB enters into it only when problems occur.

ESGAB advocated in its two last annual reports the need to continue monitoring trust. Some work has been done in this respect, but more could be done.

ESGAB also issued a recommendation to grant researchers a faster access to individual data, in conformity with the rules that protect confidentiality<sup>11</sup>. Rules on access to confidential data differ across countries and NSIs are worried that the Eurostat gate is used by researchers to get data whose access had been refused at the national level. Therefore, one of the topics in ESGAB's annual report 2018 will be the impact of the new data privacy regulation (GDPR) on statistics.

ESGAB has issued a recommendation<sup>12</sup> on professional development, in particular with reference to the recruitment of experts by Eurostat. In its recruitment procedures Eurostat has to follow the Commission's rules. Therefore, the Board encourages the Commission to rethink its job descriptions and give adequate consideration to Eurostat's need to recruit people with appropriate specialist skills (statisticians, data scientists etc.). In this context, ESGAB welcomes

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-catalogues/-/KS-02-18-142?inheritRedirect=true&redirect=%2Feurostat%2Fpublications%2Fleaflets>

<sup>7</sup> <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/reading-list/recommendations/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/2116/-questions-and-answers-about-the-east->

and information page: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/>

<sup>9</sup> Malta, Greece, Italy, France, UK, Switzerland

<sup>10</sup> [Recommendation 2017/7 in the ESGAB annual report 2017](#);

<sup>11</sup> [ESGAB's opinion concerning the implementation of the Commission's Commitment on Confidence, Recommendation 6](#);

<sup>12</sup> [ESGAB's Opinion concerning the implementation of the Commission's Commitment on Confidence, Recommendation 11](#);

the European Master of Official Statistics (EMOS)<sup>13</sup>, which should open new possibilities in the future.

Regarding how ESGAB and ESAC could collaborate in the future, Mr Giovannini indicated two domains: Trust in statistics, and access to data and data protection, where there are new developments relevant both from governance and from users' point of view.

The Chair thanked Mr Giovannini for this interesting exchange of views. A new dialogue will be organised during 2019 after the publication of the ESGAB annual report 2018. **(Action: secretariat)**

---

<sup>13</sup> xxx