

Enlargement policy and statistical cooperation

Statistics Explained

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This article is part of a series of [background articles](#) that present the international statistical cooperation activities of the [European Union \(EU\)](#) with non-member countries (also known as non-EU countries or third countries), and focuses on [enlargement policy](#), which is part of the [Treaty on European Union](#). Eurostat's priorities concerning the enlargement process include supporting the enlargement countries in the development of their statistical systems, monitoring progress on economic, social and institutional reforms and integrating the statistical data of enlargement countries in the Eurostat database.

EU enlargement policy

Accession negotiations assess a [candidate country's](#) ability to meet the obligations of EU membership. They focus on how and when countries will comply with **the EU *acquis***. The [EU Enlargement Policy](#) remains a key driver of democratic, social, and economic reform in the enlargement countries. It has strengthened governance and created new opportunities for trade and growth across an expanded internal market. As reaffirmed in the [EU Commission's 2024-2029](#) priorities, enlargement is a strategic objective that supports stability, resilience, and competitiveness in Europe's changing geopolitical environment.

The EU's enlargement and neighbourhood engagement are supported by the [Instrument for Pre-Accession \(IPA\)](#) and the [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe \(NDICI–Global Europe\)](#). Since 2007, IPA provides financial and technical assistance to enlargement countries, helping build institutional capacities and support reforms throughout the accession process, fostering progressive developments in the region. Currently at its third edition, IPA III (2021–2027) is closely aligned with EU flagship initiatives and strategies for the Western Balkans, supporting targeted investments and reforms in the region. NDICI–Global Europe is the EU's significant external financing tool for 2021–2027, promoting stability, sustainable development, and international partnerships. It merges several previous instruments to provide more flexible and coordinated support for partner countries, particularly those most in need. The instrument contributes to achieving the [UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the [Paris Agreement on climate change](#), while reinforcing the EU's role as a global partner in resilience and sustainable growth.

The EU Member States have granted the perspective of membership to several [neighbouring countries](#), which are at different stages of the enlargement process. The [EU's enlargement policy for the Western Balkans](#), aims to promote stability, regional cooperation, and alignment with EU values and standards. It supports gradual integration into the EU single market and advances reforms in governance, the rule of law, and the economy. The [Reform and Growth Facility](#), complementing the [Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance \(IPA III\)](#), provides financial and technical support to sustain reforms and strengthen resilience in neighbouring countries. It underpins key initiatives such as the [EU–Moldova Reform and Growth Plan \(2025\)](#), [reform agendas](#) for [Albania](#), [Kosovo](#)¹, [Montenegro](#), [North Macedonia](#), and [Serbia \(2024\)](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina \(2025\)](#) and the [Ukraine Facility \(2024\)](#).

¹This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

The role of official statistics in the enlargement process

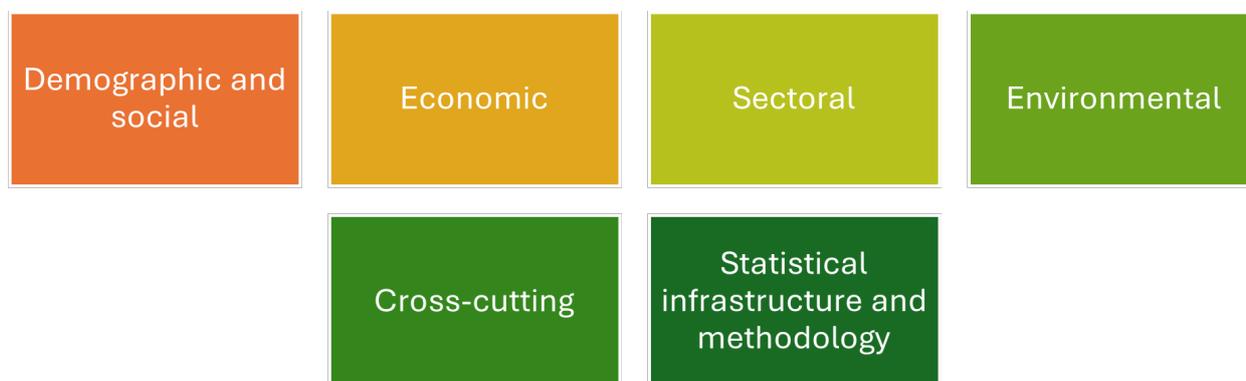
Official statistics play a double role in the enlargement process:

- the EU *acquis* in the field of statistics ([Chapter 18](#) of 35, on the negotiation process) defines the harmonisation of statistics with EU standards and rules, which has to be achieved in the pre-accession period;
- they serve other EU policy areas by providing data for monitoring progress and assessing the impact of policies.

The EU *acquis* in the field of statistics

The EU *acquis* is divided into **six thematic clusters** , with **official statistics forming Chapter 18** , under *Cluster 1: Fundamentals* . Statistics also play a key role in other chapters, as they enable **screening and monitoring** of progress towards meeting the **accession criteria** .

The **Statistical Requirements Compendium (SRC)** outlines the legal basis, methodologies and data requirements of the EU *acquis* in statistics. Since 2024, it has been organised according to the *Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA) Rev. 2.0 (2023)* , covering six areas:



CSA Rev. 2.0: Six Statistical Activity Domains

Before negotiations begin, the **screening process** helps the [European Commission](#) and each candidate country assess the level of preparedness for adopting EU rules. The Commission **monitors reform progress** in candidate countries and in potential candidates and reports annually to the [Council](#) and [European Parliament](#) through the [Enlargement Package country reports](#) . The first reports covering **Moldova** , **Georgia** , and **Ukraine** were published in **2023** .

The [Law](#) on European statistics - Regulation (EC) No 223/2009, as amended and revised by the Regulation (EU) 2024/3018 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 November 2024 defines the legal framework for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. It sets out the **principles** , **procedures** and **responsibilities** of national and EU statistical authorities, with [Eurostat](#) serving as the EU's statistical authority.

Quality and trust in statistics are ensured through the [European Statistics Code of Practice \(ESCoP\)](#) , which sets **16 principles** governing the production and dissemination of official statistics. It is aligned with the [United Nations' Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#) and the [United Nations' Principles governing international statistical activities](#) . The ESCoP adjusts the principles to the EU context and contains indicators to measure their implementation.

The **EU *acquis* in statistics** requires enlargement countries to build **robust statistical systems** capable of producing official statistics aligned with evolving EU standards. [Eurostat](#) supports this process by:

- **Monitoring alignment** with the EU *acquis* in statistics (Chapter 18);
- **Providing technical assistance** through training, study visits, management programmes, statistical projects and participation in European Statistical System (ESS) meetings;

- **Implementing cooperation programmes** , both **multi-country** and **bilateral** , to strengthen national statistical capacities and ensure the production of **harmonised** , **high-quality data** that are compliant with the EU *acquis* .

In addition, Eurostat conducts [peer reviews and sector reviews](#) . Peer reviews are assessments of how a country's statistical system adheres to the European Statistics Code of Practice. Sector reviews analyse in detail the statistical production processes in specific sectors. They are specifically tailored to the needs of selected partner countries. Countries request a detailed review of a statistical sector to receive recommendations on how to align this sector of statistics with European requirements.

Eurostat's IPA strategy with the enlargement countries for the period 2021 – 2027

Statistical cooperation with the enlargement countries is aimed at supporting them in their efforts to become compliant with the EU *acquis* in statistics. The [IPA strategy 2021–2027](#) targets priority areas for improvement and strives to make the achieved results sustainable. This strategy covers the Western Balkans and Türkiye, but not the three newest enlargement countries: Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine. Its timeframe aligns with the [EU multi-annual financial framework](#) and IPA III, the unified EU pre-accession funding instrument. The objectives of the strategy are to:

- increase the production and dissemination of high-quality statistical data;
- implement the European Statistics Code of Practice;
- strengthen the administrative and management capacity of national statistical systems;
- enhance regional statistical cooperation.

Data sources and publications

Enlargement countries - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, Ukraine, and Kosovo - progressively increase the production and dissemination of statistics, which are aligned to EU standards, to support the EU accession process. Most countries already submit data to Eurostat that are disseminated through:

- [Eurobase](#) – Eurostat's free reference database, where statistics validated from enlargement countries are published alongside EU Member States;
- [Statistics Explained](#) – articles covering specific statistical domains;
- Eurostat publications, such as the [Eurostat Regional Yearbook](#) , that include harmonised data from enlargement countries when data are available.

Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine also provide some data, but much of it is still being validated and not yet disseminated in the Eurobase tables along with the data from EU Member States. To fill these gaps, selected annual indicators from these countries are collected in an additional, simplified data collection and disseminated in Eurobase via the [ENP-East domain](#) and in [Statistics Explained articles](#) . These data are supplied by and under the responsibility of the national statistical authority. They are not validated by Eurostat and without assurance as regards their quality and adherence to EU statistical methodology. The dissemination of validated data in the regular Eurobase tables is expected to expand in the coming years.

Footnotes

Explore further

Other articles

- [Enlargement countries - statistical overview](#) — online publication
- [International statistical cooperation](#) — online publication

Database

- Available data on the candidate countries and potential candidate are disseminated with the data of the EU Member States in [Eurostat's database](#)

Thematic section

- [Enlargement countries](#)