Eurostat and the European Statistical System

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Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union (EU), situated in Luxembourg. Its task is to provide the EU with statistics at a European level that enable comparisons between countries and regions. Looking for ways to continually improve its products and services, Eurostat gained the European Foundation for Quality Management "Committed to Excellence" recognition in November 2016.

Eurostat

Eurostat’s mission is to provide high quality statistics for Europe. While fulfilling its mission, Eurostat promotes the following values: respect and trust, fostering excellence, promoting innovation, service orientation, and professional independence. Eurostat is one of the Directorates-General of the European Commission. For more information, please see Eurostat’s Who does what.

European Statistical System (ESS)

Since the creation of a European statistical office in 1952, there has always been a realisation that the planning and implementation of European policies must be based on reliable and comparable statistics. As a result, the European Statistical System (ESS) was built-up gradually to provide comparable statistics for the EU.

The ESS is the partnership between the EU’s statistical authority, which is the European Commission (Eurostat), and the national statistical institutes (NSIs) and other national authorities responsible in each EU Member State for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics; this partnership also includes the EFTA countries.

The ESS functions as a network in which Eurostat’s role is to lead the way in the harmonisation of statistics in close cooperation with the national statistical authorities. The work of the ESS concentrates mainly on EU policy areas — but, with the extension of EU policies, such harmonisation has been extended to most statistical fields.
The ESS also coordinates its work with candidate countries and at European level with other European Commission services, agencies and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB), as well as international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank.

**Legal framework for European statistics**

Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics established a revised legal framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics. It provides that Eurostat is the statistical authority of the Union. Like national statistical institutes at national level, Eurostat co-ordinates statistical activities at Union level and more particularly inside the Commission.

The Regulation states that European statistics shall be developed in conformity with the statistical principles set out in Article 338 of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU and further elaborated in the European Statistics Code of Practice, namely, that: 'the production of Union statistics shall conform to impartiality, reliability, objectivity, scientific independence, cost-effectiveness and statistical confidentiality; it shall not entail excessive burdens on economic operators'.

Article 7 of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 establishes the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC), which is at the heart of the ESS, stating that the Committee ‘shall provide professional guidance to the ESS for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics’. The ESSC is chaired by the European Commission (Eurostat) and is composed of representatives from the national statistical institutes of the EU Member States. The national statistical institutes of EEA and EFTA countries participate as observers, as can representatives of other European / international bodies, for example, the European Central Bank (ECB), the OECD or the UN.

Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 was amended by Regulation (EU) 759/2015 with the overall purpose of strengthening the ESS and maintaining a high degree of credibility for European statistics. In particular, this amending regulation requires that heads of NSIs coordinate all activities at national level for European statistics and that they have the sole responsibility for deciding on processes, statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases and publications for all European statistics. Heads of NSIs must neither seek nor receive instructions from national governments or other bodies; similarly, the Director-General of Eurostat has the same rights and obligations. The procedure for the recruitment of heads of NSIs and of the Director-General of Eurostat must be transparent and based on professional criteria. Moreover, the text also includes several elements which are for the European Commission to implement, notably regarding: the professional independence of the Director-General of Eurostat; an annual statistical dialogue; and the European Commission’s commitment on confidence in statistics.

**Legal framework for Eurostat**


The Decision also lays down the responsibilities and independence of Eurostat’s Director-General, with the latter designated as the Chief Statistician of the European Union. Among other tasks, the Chief Statistician may make recommendations to other Directorates-General after being consulted about their intentions to undertake activities involving the production of statistics.

More generally, the Decision specifies Eurostat’s role in steering the planning and coordination of other statistical activities within the European Commission. It underlines the importance of monitoring, assessing and reporting on quality and also refers to a labelling process for European statistics that is to be promoted and applied.
**Objectives and means**

Eurostat aims:

- to provide other European institutions and the governments of the EU Member States with the information needed to design, implement, monitor and evaluate European policies;
- to disseminate statistics to the European public and enterprises and to all economic and social agents involved in decision-making;
- to implement a set of standards, methods and organisational structures which allow comparable, reliable and relevant statistics to be produced throughout the EU, in line with the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice;
- to improve the functioning of the ESS, to support the EU Member States, and to assist in the development of statistical systems at an international level.

Eurostat and its partners in the ESS aim to provide relevant, impartial, reliable and comparable statistical data. Indeed, access to high-quality statistics and Eurostat’s obligation for trustworthiness is enshrined in law. European statistics should be provided to all types of users on the basis of equal opportunities, such that public administrations, researchers, trade unions, students, businesses and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), among others, can access data freely and easily. Access to the most recent statistics, as well as an expanding archive of information, is guaranteed through free access to Eurostat databases on its website.

The data collected and reported to Eurostat have been agreed through a well-defined political process at the European level in which the EU Member States are deeply involved. In order to be able to produce comparable statistics between countries, concepts and definitions, as well as technical standards and infrastructures are needed. Indeed, this is one of Eurostat’s key roles — leading and facilitating these harmonisation and standardisation processes.

**ESGAB and ESAC**

In order to enhance the accountability of the ESS, the **European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB)**, set up in 2008, prepares an annual report for the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice by Eurostat and by the ESS as a whole; it is composed of seven independent members. ESGAB’s annual reports are available on its website.

The **European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC)**, also set up in 2008, assists the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission in ensuring that user requirements and the costs borne by information providers and producers are taken into account by advising the European Commission on priority setting taking account of user perspectives. This committee is composed of 24 members representing users, respondents and other stakeholders of European statistics (including the scientific community, social partners and civil society), as well as institutional users (for example, the European Council and the European Parliament).

**Publications**

- **ESS Vision 2020 — Building the future of European statistics**
- **The ESS Report 2017**
- **The ESS Report 2016**
- **The ESS Report 2015**
- **The ESS Report 2014**
• The ESS Report 2013
• The ESS Report 2012

External links
• The European Statistical System (ESS) website

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