



Brussels, 24.6.2015
COM(2015) 309 final

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

on the implementation of the European Statistical Programme 2013-2017

1. INTRODUCTION

Regulation (EU) No 99/2013¹ on the European statistical programme for 2013-2017 was adopted on 15 January 2013.

Article 15 of the Regulation requires the Commission to submit an intermediate progress report on the implementation of the programme to the European Parliament and to the Council by 30 June 2015. It must consult the European Statistical System Committee before submitting this report.

The intermediate progress report is considered as an evaluation of the programme to date against the Commission's standards. It must therefore cover five evaluation criteria: effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, EU added value and coherence.

The scope of the report is limited to the execution of the European statistical programme in 2013 and 2014. Relevant progress accomplished in 2015 are also highlighted where appropriate.

The report is structured in five chapters, corresponding to the five criteria to be evaluated, plus one containing a few high level recommendations.

The European statistical programme has four main objectives. The programme is divided into three parts, each focusing on a specific priority area. Objectives 1 and 4 are covered by the actions undertaken in priority area I; objective 2 corresponds to priority area II; and objective 3 to priority area III. The three priority areas are themselves divided into one or two levels of sub-areas.

There are a total of 23 second-level detailed objectives, spread across the three priority areas. A set of achievement indicators is provided for each of these objectives. A total of 114 achievement indicators are used to measure progress towards the 23 objectives.

Since effectiveness is the most relevant criterion for this kind of report, the chapter on effectiveness includes a summary, followed by information on the results achieved so far, which is presented respecting exactly the structure of the programme, by the three priority areas and sub-areas and their 23 detailed objectives.

The other chapters only contain information related to the programme as a whole.

In its report on the peer review it conducted of Eurostat, the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board confirmed that Eurostat is a well-run institution that has been strengthened over recent years. In the view of the authors, it is well equipped to guide the European Statistical System through the process of modernising European statistics on a structural and sustainable basis, in order to meet the growing challenges to be faced in the future.

2. EFFECTIVENESS

Summary

The Commission is considered to be 'well on track' to achieving an objective when 75% or more of its indicators are being met. On this basis, 17 of the 23 detailed objectives are currently well on track for completion, with only limited difficulties

¹ Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2013 on the European statistical programme 2013-17 (OJ L 39, 9.2.2013, p. 12).

being experienced in relation to the other six, these being economic governance (1.2.2), people's Europe (3.2.1), geospatial, environmental, agricultural and other sectoral statistics (3.3.1 and 3.3.4), priority setting and simplification (2.1) and partnership within the European Statistical System and beyond (1.1).

Notably, all Eurostat projects classified as critical on the basis of their strategic importance, the number of staff involved or the financial resources invested were successfully concluded or are on track.

Good progress has also been made on the projects related to modernisation. The projects involving collaboration between the members of the European Statistical System showed good results, with the European Statistical System collaboration networks and the European Statistical System vision implementation projects making especially good progress. At the start of 2015, the European Statistical System Committee agreed to implement the European Statistical System Vision 2020², initially through eight European Statistical System vision implementation projects. Further development of the modernisation projects, both in terms of their extent and their scope, will depend on the continuous availability of resources for the European Statistical System.

Priority area I: Statistical outputs

1. Indicators³

1.1 Europe 2020

Strengthening economic governance is a fundamental element of the Europe 2020 strategy. The European statistical programme was an important data source for the Commission Alert Mechanism Report, and provided related statistical information for the 2014 and 2015 European Semesters. Eurostat was, for the first time, responsible for preparing the statistical annex for the Alert Mechanism Report, the starting point for the annual Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure.

There were major achievements to monitor the Europe 2020 Resource Efficiency flagship initiative: the resource efficiency scoreboard was released in December 2013 and further developed in 2014.

In the area of social statistics, work continued towards the development and production of high quality indicators for Europe 2020 and Education and Training 2020. The initial results already released provided more up-to-date data on poverty and inequalities and ensured the availability of regional data on poverty.

In the area of business statistics, the target indicators for research and development intensity, one of the areas covered by the Europe 2020 strategy, were released for the first time following the rules of the new European System of Accounts (ESA 2010)⁴. The data on transnationally coordinated research, expressed in terms of the national research and development budgets, was produced more quickly. This data is used for the monitoring of the European Research Area carried out under the Innovation Union flagship initiative.

² <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/10186/756730/ESS-Vision-2020.pdf/8d97506b-b802-439e-9ea4-303e905f4255>.

³ A definition of statistical indicators can be found on pages 19-20 of the European statistical programme 2013-17.

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/esa-2010>.

A flagship publication⁵ on the Europe 2020 targets was produced for the first time in 2013.

1.2. Economic governance

The biannual validation of the data for the Excessive Deficit Procedure marked an important achievement in 2014. In the April 2014 notification, Eurostat expressed one reservation on the quality of the data reported by Member States, which was lifted in October 2014. In October 2014, Eurostat did not express any reservations on the reported data in spite of the implementation of the new European System of Accounts methodological framework, ESA2010, for the first time. The ESA 2010 data on debt and deficit was accompanied by annual and quarterly national accounts tables on the general government sector. Regulation 479/2009⁶, which lays down the procedure for Member States' submission of statistics for the Excessive Deficit Procedure, was amended replacing the reference to 'ESA 95' in the Regulation with 'ESA 2010'. The Manual of Government Deficit and Debt was adapted to ESA 2010.

1.3. Economic globalisation

There were three notable developments relating to ongoing work on the global value chain: the Sturgeon report — commissioned by Eurostat — on a measurement framework for the global value chain was published; the European Statistical System collaboration network on the global value chain was finalised; and Member States now actively participate in the United Nations Friends of the Chair group, which is working to develop a global framework for the global value chain.

2. Accounting frameworks

Eurostat was very active in implementing its action plan *GDP and beyond*. The plan covers the years 2012 to 2014, and focuses on three priority areas:

- a) further developing the production of statistics at household level and the production of statistics measuring the distribution of income, consumption and wealth;
- b) measuring quality of life in a multidimensional way;
- c) measuring environmental sustainability.

2.1. Economic and social performance

Eurostat produced and disseminated high quality economic statistics on national accounts, balance of payments, prices and purchasing power parities. Its work included producing statistics for essential indicator sets such as Europe 2020, the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure scoreboard, the sustainable development indicators and the principal European economic indicators. It also produced statistics for administrative purposes such as calculating the regional gross domestic product for structural funds and the gross national income (GNI) for budgetary own resources, and calculating staff remuneration and pensions.

Further achievements included producing a more detailed breakdown of the euro area flash estimate of inflation and managing the first systematic dissemination of house price indices. Member States also sent quarterly price indices for owner-occupied

⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/product?code=KS-02-13-238>.

⁶ Council Regulation (EC) No 479/2009 of 25 May 2009 on the application of the Protocol on the excessive deficit procedure annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community (OJ L 145, 10.6.2009, p. 1).

housing for the first time, and the Commission adopted the proposal for a new framework regulation on the harmonised index of consumer prices⁷.

Member States were able to send their national accounts and balance of payments data under the new methodological frameworks, the latest European System of Accounts (ESA 2010) and the sixth edition of the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (BPM6). The introduction of the new frameworks involved using the new standard for statistical data and metadata exchange (SDMX), meaning that work needed to be carried out on the methodological manuals and guidelines.

The task force for European public sector accounting standards, created in 2014, prepared an impact assessment. The project aims to improve the comparability and transparency of public sector financial reporting by laying the foundations for introducing standardised European public sector accounting and general purpose financial reporting standards, under which accounts will be prepared on an accrual basis.

Eurostat produced a number of publications, covering topics including quarterly deficit and debt, the structure of government debt and trends in taxation. It also continued to publish regular press releases on quarterly government debt and began publishing a new euro indicator press release on seasonally adjusted quarterly government deficit. Eurostat also released its biennial monitoring report on sustainable development in the EU at the end of 2013⁸.

For the detailed objective 2.1.2 on key indicators, Eurostat published two handbooks, *Getting messages across using indicators* and *Towards a harmonised methodology for statistical indicators*.

2.2 Environmental sustainability

The new legislation on European environmental economic accounts (Regulation (EU) No 538/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁹) was adopted by the Council and the European Parliament. It introduces modules on environmental protection expenditure accounts, environmental goods and services sector accounts and energy flow accounts. An updated European strategy for environmental accounts, covering the period 2014 to 2018, was adopted by the European Statistical System Committee.

3. Data

3.1. Business

Eurostat concluded the discussions it had been holding with partners of the European Statistical System on several of the individual packages contained within the foreseen Framework Regulation Integrating Business Statistics.

⁷ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:61b14699-7f95-11e4-9e6e-01aa75ed71a1.0015.03/DOC_1&format=PDF and http://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:61b14699-7f95-11e4-9e6e-01aa75ed71a1.0015.03/DOC_2&format=PDF.

⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/5760249/KS-02-13-237-EN.PDF/f652a97e-e646-456a-82fc-34949bbff956>.

⁹ Regulation (EU) No 538/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Regulation (EU) No 691/2011 on European environmental economic accounts (OJ L 158, 27.5.2014, p. 113).

Eurostat continued the testing and implementation of ‘European profiling’ — a method for analysing the structure of businesses. It finalised the results of a study into the feasibility of the use of mobile positioning data for tourism statistics. Pilot studies on the use of microdata linking to explore links between structural business statistics and statistics on services trade by business characteristics continued. Studies were also launched into the potential for microdata linking of structural business statistics with international trade statistics. Eurostat obtained the data it needed to develop the new indicator of innovation to be used for high-growth innovative enterprises. This data was provided by Member States on a voluntary basis.

Eurostat released data and metadata on short-term statistics, tourism statistics, structural business statistics, business demography, foreign affiliates statistics, foreign direct investment and international trade in goods and services. It also published the results of the survey on community innovation, data on science and technology needed to produce the new innovation output indicator, and the results of the survey on information and communications technology.

The requirements for the European Sample Scheme, a method used in the production of short-term statistics, were updated.

Statistics on research and development, including notably the target indicators for research and development intensity for the Europe 2020 strategy, were released for the first time following the rules of the new European System of Accounts, ESA 2010.

3.2. People’s Europe

Eurostat continued working on the development and production of indicators for central EU policies — such as Europe 2020, Education and Training 2020 and the underlying joint assessment frameworks — and in the area of population and migration. Results from the five-year lifelong learning surveys were made available.

Statistics on the causes of death were published for the first time under Commission Regulation 328/2011¹⁰ and the Regulation on the European Health Interview Survey was adopted in 2014¹¹.

Eurostat is revising the indicator on material deprivation, and data for the revised indicator should be available in 2015. Significant progress was achieved in developing methodologies in a number of areas, including for the labour force survey and the statistics on income and living conditions.

A first set of indicators on measuring progress, well-being and sustainable development was disseminated in 2013, and a set of publications and new indicators in 2014¹².

¹⁰ Commission Regulation (EU) No 328/2011 of 5 April 2011 implementing Regulation (EC) No 1338/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on public health and health and safety at work, as regards statistics on causes of death (OJ L 90, 6.4.2011, p. 22–24).

¹¹ Commission Regulation (EU) No 68/2014 of 27 January 2014 amending Regulation (EU) No 141/2013 implementing Regulation (EC) No 1338/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on public health and health and safety at work, as regards statistics based on the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) by reason of the accession of Croatia to the European Union (OJ L 23, 28.1.2014, p. 9-11).

¹² <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators>

Eurostat has begun implementing the measures set out in Regulation (EU) No 1260/2013¹³ on European demographic statistics, following its adoption in 2013.

Good progress has been made in revising the labour force survey, the aim being to produce new and more detailed labour market data. The new legal framework for the labour force survey (Regulation (EU) No 545/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council¹⁴) and for the programme of ad hoc modules for the years 2016 to 2018 (Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1397/2014¹⁵) were adopted in 2014. Eurostat published up-to-date indicators for the EU 2020 strategy, other indicators on education and lifelong learning produced using data from the labour force survey and new data on disabilities. Implementing regulations were adopted for statistics on education and lifelong learning¹⁶ and for statistics on income and living conditions¹⁷.

3.3 Geospatial, environmental, agricultural and other sectoral statistics

The compliance monitoring applied to data sent by Member States was extended to cover aspects relating to the quality of the data. Efforts were made to improve the completeness and reduce the time taken to prepare statistics for agriculture and fisheries, the environment and accounts and energy. These statistics are now published with a shorter time delay.

Commission Regulation (EU) No 715/2014¹⁸ introduced a new list of characteristics for the 2016 survey on farm structure.

Eurostat launched a first dedicated user survey on energy statistics. The area of energy statistics further benefited from the introduction of online dissemination of annual nuclear energy data. A manual for statistics on household energy consumption was published at the end of 2013. The Energy Statistics Regulation¹⁹ was amended to cover final energy consumption in households by fuel and by use.

Early estimates of carbon dioxide emissions from energy use are currently published approximately five months after the end of the reference year. Methods for calculating ‘bottom-up estimations’ of greenhouse gas emissions from different transport modes are also now being developed.

¹³ Regulation (EU) No 1260/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on European demographic statistics, (OJ L 330, 10.12.2013, p. 39).

¹⁴ Regulation (EU) No 545/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 577/98 on the organisation of a labour force sample survey in the Community (OJ L 163, 29.5.2014, p. 10).

¹⁵ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1397/2014 of 22 October 2014 amending Regulation (EU) No 318/2013 adopting the programme of ad hoc modules, covering the years 2016 to 2018, for the labour force sample survey provided for by Council Regulation (EC) No 577/98 (OJ L 370, 30.12.2014, p. 42).

¹⁶ Commission Regulation (EU) No 1175/2014 of 30 October 2014 implementing Regulation (EC) No 452/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the production and development of statistics on education and lifelong learning (OJ L 316, 4.11.2014, p. 4).

¹⁷ Commission Regulation (EU) No 112/2013 of 7 February 2013 implementing Regulation (EC) No 1177/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning Community statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) (OJ L 37, 8.2.2013, p. 2).

¹⁸ Commission Regulation (EU) No 715/2014 of 26 June 2014 amending Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 1166/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on farm structure surveys and the survey on agricultural production methods, as regards the list of characteristics to be collected in the farm structure survey 2016 (OJ L 190, 28.6.2014, p. 8).

¹⁹ Commission Regulation (EU) No 431/2014 of 24 April 2014 amending Regulation (EC) No 1099/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on energy statistics, as regards the implementation of annual statistics on energy consumption in households (OJ L 131, 1.5.2014, p. 1).

Progress was made on the development of indicators for monitoring the targets set in the 2011 Transport White Paper.

An amendment to the common classification of territorial units for statistics was adopted²⁰.

Eurostat worked in close cooperation with the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and the Committee of the Regions to produce the Regional Yearbook and the accompanying electronic version, the Statistical Atlas.

The coordination of national initiatives for monitoring land cover and land use statistics was extended. The aim of this is to be able to develop a long-term strategy for the survey on land use and land cover statistics.

Priority area II: Production methods of European statistics

1. European Statistical System quality management

A new round of peer reviews was launched in 2013. A total of 32 countries (the EU Member States plus the four other countries in the European Free Trade Association and European Economic Area) and Eurostat take part in the exercise. All countries and Eurostat completed self-assessment questionnaires, and, during 2014, peer reviews were conducted of 12 countries and of Eurostat. The peer review of Eurostat, carried out by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board, was completed and the report published.

The ongoing work to align the quality assurance frameworks used by the European Statistical System and the European System of Central Banks focused on implementation and monitoring tools, in particular on the round of peer reviews and statistical audits being conducted in the respective systems.

The work carried out by the group ‘Sponsorship on Quality’ and the implementation of its recommendations on quality reporting led to the development of the Single Integrated Metadata Structure and the publication of the 2014 edition of the European Statistical System Handbook for Quality Reports. In 2014, Eurostat began planning the implementation of the priority area ‘quality’ of the European Statistical System Vision 2020, in cooperation with the members of the European Statistical System. The biennial European conference on quality in official statistics was held in Vienna. A new procedure for handling and reporting errors found in published statistics was developed and approved for use by Eurostat in 2014.

2. Priority setting and simplification

The framework provided by the European statistical programme requires priority-setting in the European Statistical System to ensure that the five-year objectives can be achieved within the available resources at both national and European levels. Eurostat thus conducts an annual priority-setting exercise, in consultation with users and producers of statistics. Priorities are fixed on the basis of a review of existing statistical requirements, which identifies legal acts that are going to be repealed, voluntary data collections (based on gentlemen’s agreements) that are no longer going to be carried out, and areas to be reduced or simplified. The introduction of a ‘product list’ for the European Statistical System has improved the system for setting

²⁰ Commission Regulation (EU) No 868/2014 of 8 August 2014 amending the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) (OJ L 241, 13.8.2014, p. 1).

priorities. This exercise is particularly important at a time when the resources are actually decreasing, both at Eurostat and in Member States, and statistical offices had to make major efforts to match reducing resources with the increasing demand for statistics.

Work has begun on rationalising and modernising water and forest statistics. The amendment of the Rail Transport Regulation, under which Member States will no longer be required to report data for certain tables, was presented to the legislator. Steps were taken to simplify fisheries statistics, by using data on catch, reported under the Common Fisheries Policy. A number of changes are being made to simplify agricultural statistics, including devising a more flexible survey on farm structure, for use from 2020 onwards, and developing greater synergies between the various areas of agricultural statistics. Data on land prices and rents was collected using the harmonised methodology. City statistics collected under the urban audit were further rationalised.

The production and dissemination of statistics on labour market policy was transferred to the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Voluntary data collection was discontinued for annual gross earnings and labour costs. Data collection for the production of statistics on occupational diseases has been simplified, the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion having provided financial support for these changes over a four-year period.

The Single Market Statistics (SIMSTAT) project and the re-design of internal trade statistics were launched. The aim of these changes was to reduce the burden created by data collection and improve the quality of the data.

A number of new guidelines and explanations were produced and published, as a way of rationalising the support provided for the European Statistical System classifications and standardised structural metadata.

The Commission did not engage in any further work with non-EU countries other than the enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy countries.

3. Multi-purpose statistics and efficiency gains in production

The process of modernising European statistics continued, with the European Statistical System Vision 2020 being adopted at the European Statistical System Committee meeting of May 2014 as the central strategy for the development of the European Statistical System during the period up to 2020. This framework identifies five priority areas: users, quality, new data sources, production processes and dissemination and communication. A major achievement of note was the development of the central modernisation projects (the European Statistical System vision implementation projects) in collaboration with Member States. The areas covered include the data exchange network, statistical validation, the use of new data sources (for administrative and big data), critical business projects (the modernisation of trade statistics and the creation of interoperational business registers within the European Statistical System) and support frameworks (information models and standards, quality, enterprise architecture).

The European Statistical System vision implementation project on statistics on the single market, which was focused on the exchange of microdata on intra-EU trade,

progressed according to schedule. The feasibility study was finalised and work on the development of a centralised data hub began.

The preparatory phase of the European Statistical System vision implementation project on the European system of interoperable statistical business registers was completed in 2013 and the European Statistical System collaboration network project on the European system of interoperable statistical business registers was launched in 2014.

The main achievement for the European Statistical System vision implementation project on validation was the development of the validation syntax, which will allow Eurostat to exchange validation rules with Member States and to draw up functional specifications for developing improved validation tools.

The European Statistical System Committee issued a memorandum on big data, and subsequently adopted the European Statistical System Action Plan and Roadmap 1.0²¹. Work began on developing prototype applications on the use of big data in official statistics in the fields of healthcare, unemployment and demographics.

A number of modernisation initiatives relating to the development of social and population statistics in the coming years are currently ongoing, such as on the integration of European social surveys. A census hub was opened in 2014, allowing the publication of comparative and very detailed data on population and housing.

Eurostat completed the second phase of the National Accounts Production System project, the aim of which was to modernise the statistical production chain for the main statistical areas relating to national accounts and the balance of payments.

An international agreement was concluded setting a standard format to be used when exchanging national accounts and balance of payments statistics. This agreement was implemented at EU level through the introduction of the new European System of Accounts, ESA 2010, and the sixth edition of the Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (BPM6). Good progress was made with the implementation of standards including those for reference metadata, quality reports, code lists, statistical data and metadata exchange (SDMX), and others used in the European Statistical System.

The revised version of European Statistical System Guidelines on seasonal adjustment was endorsed by the European Statistical System Committee and the official version of the new software for seasonal adjustment was released.

4. Dissemination and communication

A number of new services (web services, apps and widgets) were offered for the first time. The main achievement was the launch of the new Eurostat website in December 2014. There was a particular focus on producing cross-cutting publications, such as the two flagship publications *Europe 2020 indicators*²² and *Youth in the EU. Statistics Explained* was extended and a new European statistical data support network was set up, with 33 support centres covering 31 European languages.

²¹ <http://www.cros-portal.eu/content/papers-big-data-context-official-statistics>.

²² <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/product?code=KS-EZ-14-001&mode=view>.

Eurostat allowed researchers access to four additional microdata sets. Discussions were held on the technical viability of developing a remote access infrastructure to give access to highly confidential secure-use files.

Eurostat published two handbooks on indicators, *Getting messages across using indicators* and *Towards a harmonised methodology for statistical indicators*.

The European Statistical Advisory Committee played an important role in reaching out to academics, involving users and making microdata available for research.

5. Training, innovation and research

Eurostat continued to support and promote collaboration between members of the European Statistical System. Members are encouraged to share knowledge, to exchange ideas on best practices and innovative approaches to the production of statistics, to collaborate on the development and implementation of new methodologies and to promote research into official statistics. Both the Centres of Excellence and various international initiatives, including leading conferences such as *Quality 2014* and the workshop on big data in official statistics have played a particularly important role in this area. The first *Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders* in 2014 was a good example of strengthening the links to academia and stakeholder relevance.

Significant progress was made in relation to the European Master in Official Statistics. A feasibility study was planned, and is now in progress. The European Statistical System Committee gave its agreement to the concept of the European Master in Official Statistics, to the proposed governance framework for the programme and to the creation of the European Master in Official Statistics Board.

Priority area III: Partnership

1. Partnership with the European Statistical System and beyond

A political agreement on the proposal amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics was reached in December 2014. On 19 May 2015 the amended Regulation²³ was published in the Official Journal.

A number of improvements were made to the governance structure of the European Statistical System: in particular, the European Statistical System Committee was made the main committee, and the European Statistical Forum was set up to improve cooperation between the European Statistical System and the European System of Central Banks.

The overall assessments of the statistical systems of the candidate, potential candidate countries and the European Neighbourhood Policy East countries were used to prepare cooperation strategies for the period 2014-2020. The Strategy for Statistical Cooperation and the Strategy for Statistical Co-operation in the European Neighbourhood Instruments (ENI) East Countries 2014-2020 are frameworks for developing sustainable and reliable statistical systems. In the context of Enlargement Negotiations the objective is the implementation of the *acquis* and integration in the European Statistical System. In European Neighbourhood East the co-operation aims at capacity building and provision of timely and reliable data related to the Association and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements. Cooperation

²³ Regulation (EU) 2015/759 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics (OJ L 123, 19.5.2015, p. 90).

with the European Neighbourhood Policy South countries focused on the development of a statistics code of practice for these countries, based on the European statistics code of practice. Eurostat designed a pan-African statistical cooperation programme while cooperation with countries classified as high income continued in the form of exchange of information and knowledge.

3. RELEVANCE

The European statistical programme continues to be relevant, as its objectives still correspond to the needs of the EU.

The programme meets the needs of a number of different categories of users, as shown by several indicators:

- the number of website users increased in 2013 and in 2014;
- the number of times that data published by Eurostat was accessed online and the number of publications downloaded both increased in 2013 and 2014;
- the frequency of mentions of Eurostat on the internet is steadily rising;
- the level of user satisfaction remained high, as demonstrated by the results of user satisfaction surveys;
- the European Statistical Advisory Committee gave overall favourable opinions in its assessment of the 2013 and 2014 work programmes, albeit with some concerns to be taken into account in the future;
- a new Commission Regulation allowed an increased number of requests from researchers for access to microdata sets to be accommodated;
- the number of user requests addressed to Eurostat's support for data and methodology increased; and
- a set of new methods for publishing data was introduced to make the Eurostat website more powerful and more user-friendly.

The European statistical programme is contributing to the design of policies in priority areas. Eurostat communicated on a regular basis with the other Directorate-Generals of the European Commission in order to remain informed of their needs and to be able to contribute to the design of policies in priority areas. The information provided in connection with these policies was communicated to the public and to the main institutional actors, the European Parliament and the Council.

Eurostat began producing a publication on Europe 2020 policies, the first of a new series of annual publications providing statistical analyses related to the European Commission's main policy frameworks or other issues of social importance.

The number of parliamentary questions on Eurostat's statistics remained at a continual high level, with a particularly large number of questions being asked on statistics relating to the financial crisis. Eurostat made an important contribution to the European Semester through the provision of data and a number of indicators.

Finally, the European statistical programme is also contributing to a review of the statistical priorities via legislation or by setting negative priorities. Three regulations that included prioritisation were respectively adopted or proposed, one proposal was withdrawn and two impact assessments of new legislative measures were carried out

or started. A list of around 40 negative priorities was drawn up and put into use, ensuring that European statistics remain relevant. A significant number of Eurostat staff were reassigned in 2013 and 2014, in order to take account of new priorities.

4. EFFICIENCY

Eurostat has made efficient use of its resources, both financial and human.

Budget execution in 2013 and 2014 exceeded the targets set in the management plans and the level of participation in projects supported by EU grants was good, with all Member States benefiting from at least one grant provided by Eurostat.

Productivity has improved at a time when human resources are being reduced. The volume of data published by Eurostat increased substantially, although the total number of employees fell slightly.

5. EU ADDED VALUE

The European statistical programme supports a continual improvement in the quality of statistics used for the Europe 2020 scoreboard, the development and evaluation flagship initiatives and the EU monitoring of national policies (specifically through the Stability and Growth Pact, the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure and the European Semester). In particular, it aims to improve the relevance and comparability of statistics, and to reduce the time lag between the reference period and the publication of statistics. The European statistical programme is the main channel through which the EU provides financial support to national statistical authorities, for the production of statistics, the development of new statistics and the implementation of new methodologies, classifications and standards. The improvement in the quality of the statistics produced by Eurostat is evidenced by the increase in the level of user satisfaction with the overall quality and comparability of the published data, and with the speed with which it is produced and made available. The programme also supports the development of new methods for producing statistics, which will increase efficiency and lower the administrative burden on businesses and individuals. The European statistical programme has therefore delivered and continues to deliver a clear 'EU added value'. This is true for all the main objectives of the European statistical programme and is particularly visible in some statistical areas and projects, as indicated in the following sections.

For objective 1 and 4, European statistics have a clear transnational character. The development, production and dissemination of European statistics, as is carried out under the European statistical programme, cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, and can be better accomplished at EU level. The Commission has therefore managed this process at EU level on the basis of a European Union legal act. Only the Commission can coordinate the necessary standardisation of statistical information at European level in all the statistical areas covered by the European statistical programme, while the data collection can be carried out by the Member States.

The added value of EU involvement continues to be that it allows statistical activities to be concentrated on EU policies and issues of relevance for the European Statistical System as a whole. In addition, it contributes to an effective use of resources and helps national authorities to better fulfil their role, where they may otherwise not

have the capacity to do so, e.g. in terms of priority setting, standardisation and methodological development.

Some clear examples of this from the first two years of the European statistical programme include: statistics on government finance, statistics on road freight transport, the European Statistical System collaboration networks, geographical statistics, the European public sector accounting standards, the survey on land use and land cover statistics, statistics on the single market, the EuroGroups register, the census hub and the social indicators for EU policies.

For objective 2 and 3, the implementation of Eurostat's plan for reforming the methods used for producing European statistics, and the definition of the new strategy in the European Statistical System Vision 2020 are having an effect on the approaches used throughout the European Statistical System. This process of modernisation is moving away from the traditional way of producing statistics, based on numerous parallel processes, country by country and area per area, which is no longer appropriate for Eurostat or for the national statistical offices working within the European Statistical System. The European Statistical System strategy has started to create a system of official European statistics, where overall productivity is improved, by better coordinating the work carried out by the statistical offices so as to avoid duplication and fully exploit potential synergies.

6. COHERENCE

In 2013 and 2014, the European statistical programme was well coordinated with other EU initiatives in the same field, both other Eurostat programmes, such as the programme for the modernisation of European enterprise and trade statistics²⁴, and statistics produced by other Commission Directorate-Generals.

The modernisation of European enterprise and trade statistics, a spending programme in the area of business statistics, was active until the end of 2013. Article 3 of the European statistical programme states, however, that it does not cover measures provided for by the modernisation of European enterprise and trade statistics programme. The most important outputs from this programme were methodological recommendations for a wide spectrum of areas relating to business and trade statistics. As a direct follow-up to this programme, and as part of the European statistical programme, Eurostat launched a fundamental revision and integration of business-related statistics via a common legal framework, the Framework Regulation Integrating Business Statistics.

The relationship between the European statistical programme and the other Commission programmes that involve the production of statistics is defined in the Commission Decision on Eurostat,²⁵ which distinguishes European and other statistics. The decision also defines Eurostat's responsibilities and its rights to access to administrative records.

²⁴ Decision No 1297/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on a Programme for the Modernisation of European Enterprise and Trade Statistics (MEETS) (OJ L 340, 19.12.2008, p. 76).

²⁵ Commission Decision 2012/504/EU of 17 September 2012 on Eurostat (OJ L 251, 18.9.2012, p. 49).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Give particular attention to those objectives where problems have been encountered

Although the implementation of the European statistical programme is proceeding well, it is advisable to concentrate on areas where limited problems have come to light, in order to remain on track for meeting all the objectives. The results of this focusing of efforts will be visible from the annual monitoring of activities.

Secure sufficient resources to maintain the necessary level of investment for the modernisation of the production of European statistics

In order for the national statistical institutes to be able to participate actively in the projects designed to modernise the production of European statistics, and to implement their results, at a time when resources are being reduced, whilst ensuring regular statistical production, more resources must be invested in the European Statistical System. The process of modernising the production of statistics offers a way of tackling the issue of limited or decreasing resources, but itself requires initial investment in order to advance at the desired speed and to guarantee the long-term sustainability of the system.

Identify and implement projects at EU level which can maximise EU added value

The EuroGroups register, the Single Market Statistics (SIMSTAT) project, and the census hub are just some examples of projects that have benefited from increased collaboration between Eurostat and the national statistical institutes, made possible through collaborative approaches such as the European Statistical System collaboration networks, and as part of the European Statistical System vision implementation projects. The work carried out in implementing the European Statistical System Vision 2020 plays also a role in maximising EU added value.