

ESSC 2016/31/EN

31st Meeting of the European Statistical System Committee

Luxembourg

17th November 2016

Final minutes

INTRODUCTION

The Chairperson of the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) welcomed all the participants to the 31st ESSC meeting and the 89th EEA Conference.

The delegates participating at the meeting were informed that items 6 and 7 (featuring the visit of the Director General of DG NEAR, Mr Christian Danielsson, and the report on the statistical cooperation with the enlargement and European neighbourhood countries) of the draft meeting agenda were postponed to a future meeting.

The ESSC was also reminded of the Eurostat Conference entitled "Towards more agile social statistics", to be held between the 28th and 30th of November at the Luxembourg Congrès Conference Centre. Furthermore, the attention of the ESS members was also drawn to the note updating the practical guidance on other national authorities (ONAs) that had been sent to them in the days prior to the November ESSC meeting.

The Chairperson invited the delegates for his farewell cocktail during the lunch break of the meeting.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/1

Commission implementing regulation (EU) No .../.. of XXX adopting the specifications of the 2018 ad hoc module on reconciliation between work and family life provided for by Council Regulation (EC) No 577/98

In line with the Commission's Better Regulation Agenda, the consolidated version of the above draft Commission Regulation was published on the dedicated Web Portal for a four week feedback period (19/10/2016 – 16/11/2016) in order to collect the stakeholders' views.

Follow-up: no comments were received.

A. Presentation

1. Eurostat explained that this draft implement act sets out the technical characteristics of the ad hoc module on the reconciliation between work and family life. The ESSC was informed that the variable specifications and the draft questionnaire were pilot-tested in five countries, and that the draft act was prepared by a Eurostat Task Force comprising seven Member States, with the participation of DG Justice, DG Employment and the OECD.
2. Eurostat confirmed that that the draft implementing act had received the support of the Labour Market Statistics Working Group (LAMAS) as well as the Directors of Social Statistics (DSS).
3. Eurostat thanked the ESS for its support for this draft act and remarked that this action will be co-financed with Commission grants (for which it would be launching a call for proposals in the spring of 2017).

B. Discussion

-

C. Opinion

1. None of the Member States voted against.
2. None of the Member States abstained.
3. All of the represented Member States voted in favour. In favour: 28 Member States representing a population of 100%.
4. EEA/EFTA was in favour. Switzerland was in favour.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/2

a) Report on the implementation of the ESS Vision 2020;

b) VIG Report on its 2015/16 achievements;

c) ESS IT Security Assurance Mechanism

A. Presentation

1. Eurostat started by presenting the quarterly report on the implementation of the ESS Vision 2020, summarising the main activities of the quarter ending in September 2016. Eurostat made particular reference to a number of successful workshops including those on access to administrative data (Brussels, 13 – 14 September) and on Big Data access (Luxembourg, 22 – 23 September), and a second Big Data Workshop (Ljubljana, 13 – 14 October). Eurostat highlighted the utility and the importance of the outcomes emanating from these workshops.
2. Commenting on the first two year mandate of the Vision Implementation Group (VIG), its co-chair praised the work done in translating the ESS Vision 2020 document into a number of practical actions and projects. The co-chair also extolled the synergy and streamlining brought about by the VIG in relation to the multitude of ESS projects through the portfolio management approach.
3. The co-chair of the VIG also commended the model introduced by the VIG whereby a small group of ESS members work closely and intensively on a particular topic with Eurostat as front-runners bringing a number of ideas that are then discussed, and on which action is taken, by the whole ESS. This means that the system can make quicker progress while at the same time getting the best out of each member of the ESS.
4. In this context, the co-chair of the VIG praised the support offered by the Vision Implementing Network (VIN) in ensuring an effective flow of information to all the members of the ESS as well as proper consultation on key issues.
5. Eurostat thanked the ESS for its support for the prolongation of the mandate of the VIG expressed via the EoV forms and informed that the composition of the VIG will be rotated, starting with a call for a deputy-chair of the group.
6. On the topic of the ESS IT Security Mechanism, Eurostat explained the two-pronged approach, namely the network to communicate data in a secure way (the physical infrastructure), and the assurance to the ESS that all exchanged data is protected by a set of controls. Eurostat argued that the ESS has a high compliance with the best international standards in terms of control, although there are still some improvements to be made.
7. Eurostat mentioned the possibility of co-financing available for the Member States in relation to increased IT security. After a first round of grants amounting to EUR 1.3million, other rounds of grants were foreseen for 2017 and 2018. Eurostat also explained its plans of extending the membership of the expert group on IT security in order to include all the countries.
8. On the topic of the Assurance Framework for IT Security, Eurostat announced the launching of the first round of the certification exercise for 2017, which includes three members of the ESS and should be finalised by 2019.

B. Discussion

1. The ESS Member States thanked the VIG for its work and the progress achieved during the preceding two years, and some also confirmed their wish for continuing to be part of the VIG.
2. Some Member States stressed the importance of deployment of project results and reflected on the lessons learned.
3. A number of Member States emphasised the importance that while the VIG maintains a strong focus on the implementation of the ESS Vision 2020, the decision on Vision-related actions to be taken by the ESS after 2020 would remain the sole prerogative of the ESSC.
4. Eurostat thanked the ESSC for its support and confirmed that the strategic discussions for the work of the ESS beyond 2020 shall fall solely on the shoulders of the ESSC.

C. Opinion

1. The ESSC took note of the good progress achieved on implementing the ESS Vision 2020 as summarised in the quarterly report of the Vision Implementation Group (VIG).
2. The Committee welcomed the VIG activity report for the period 2015-2016 and expressed high appreciation for the group's dedication and quality of results. The ESSC agreed to revise and renew the mandate of the VIG until 2020. ESSC members also supported further enhancement of the activities within the Vision Implementation Network (VIN).
3. There was a common agreement that the process of elaborating ESS strategic priorities beyond 2020 should start very soon at the ESSC level and be prepared by the Partnership Group. The support by the VIG to the PG and the ESSC in their strategic reflection will be included in the revised VIG mandate.
4. The Committee acknowledged the progress achieved on the implementation of the ESS IT Security framework and supported the proposed next steps regarding the IT security assurance mechanism.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/3

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning European Business Statistics (FRIBS)

A. Presentation

1. Eurostat reminded the ESSC that the need to modernise business and trade statistics was already recognised in 2008 when the Modernisation of European Enterprise and Trade Statistics (MEETS) programme was launched. In 2011 the Council had requested considerable cuts in the administrative burden on businesses created by Intrastat. Furthermore, the ESS Vision 2020 emphasised the need to produce statistics efficiently utilising modern methods ensuring high quality, while the Riga Memorandum of 2014 highlighted the importance of improving the analytical capability to address cross-domain

phenomena, such as globalisation and improved coverage of services. Eurostat explained that the draft Regulation on FRIBS addresses all the above-mentioned requirements.

2. Eurostat argued that FRIBS has been discussed extensively with the Member States in more than 140 meetings of which more than 100 were held at technical level. Besides, the legal architecture, and more particularly the basic act, was discussed with the Member States over a period of five years, mainly at the Business Statistics Directors' Group (BSDG). After emphasising the constructive spirit of the BSDG members throughout the years in order to reach a reconciliation of different views, Eurostat informed that the BSDG considers the current proposal mature enough to proceed to the next stage of the legislative process.
3. Eurostat expressed its gratitude to the ESS and to the experts involved for the support shown for the proposal. Eurostat also took note of one Member State's position against proceeding with the draft to the co-legislators, but promised to do its utmost to facilitate the process of its implementation.
4. Eurostat tackled the reservations expressed by some of the Member States, namely those regarding the legal architecture and technical issues. Concerning the legal architecture, Eurostat acknowledged the concerns regarding the use of delegated acts, the possibility of amending business register requirements, the safeguard clauses, the absence of a sunset clause for delegated acts and of a no-opinion clause for implementing acts. In this regard, Eurostat argued that the said legal architecture had been discussed in a very detailed way and that the Commission had made all the adjustments and reconciliations possible at this stage. These include the introduction of the maximum number of safeguard clauses where possible, the acceptance of the concept of dynamic and stable business statistics in order to allow for a slightly different legal architecture for both types of business statistics, and the least possible use of delegated acts.
5. The Commission finds itself at the limit of what can be done at this stage of the legislative process within the boundaries of the Lisbon Treaty and the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-making, and without the FRIBS Regulation becoming a backward-looking text and losing part of the flexibility enjoyed currently by the ESSC in relation to business statistics.
6. Eurostat also made a reference to reservations focussed on technical issues. Regarding the warning period between the adoption of the implementing/delegated acts and the end of the first reference period, as well as the transition period for the implementation of FRIBS, Eurostat explained that the Commission's proposal reconciles the concerns of the NSIs and those of the stakeholders for timelier response to important new data needs.
7. Concerning the list of variables to be exchanged for intra-EU exports in goods, Eurostat reassured the Member States that the FRIBS regulation is output-oriented and that it does not stipulate how these variables are to be collected. This will be covered by the implementing acts and Eurostat would do its best to introduce as much flexibility as possible in order to maximise the advantages for the receiving Member States and minimising the cost for the sending Member States.
8. With respect to the enforcement regime vis-à-vis confidentiality and security for exchanged micro-data, Eurostat argued that the provisions included in the basic act have been deemed to be sufficient in light of the Statistical Law and will allow further specifications to be dealt with in the implementing act. As concerns the article on derogations, the formulation included in the proposal for the FRIBS Regulation is the

same as the one included in the proposal for the IESS Regulation ensuring consistency of the approach to the framework regulations.

9. Acknowledging and appreciating the very useful and direct exchanges of views and discussions that have taken place among members of the ESS when preparing the draft texts of the FRIBS proposal, Eurostat expressed its determination in continuing the discussions with the two branches of the legislator.

B. Discussion

1. The ESSC thanked Eurostat for its constructive approach. A number of Member States reiterated their concerns related to the legal architecture and the above-mentioned technical details, as well as the need for appropriate measures to prevent and penalise breaches of confidentiality.
2. One Member State affirmed that the proposed FRIBS sufficiently meets the different interests and positions of the ESS Member States, exhorting the ESS to agree on an act that is flexible enough to address a changing business environment. Furthermore, a number of ESSC members accentuated the importance of security and confidentiality in the context of the exchange of micro-data.
3. One Member State mentioned that according to their impact assessment, the current proposal might lead to more work and an increase in administrative burden and costs.
4. The OECD stated that the FRIBS proposed act will provide a major impetus to the international statistical community. It also extolled the reference in the proposed act to the international guidance beyond the EU with a specific reference to the Frascati manual.
5. Eurostat thanked the ESSC for the support for the proposed act and for the work done in order to reach a compromise.

Opinion

1. The ESSC generally supported the draft regulation on European business statistics (FRIBS) as a tool for a more streamlined, efficient and modern system for the production of European business and trade statistics.
2. The ESSC acknowledged the progress made in the discussions in the Business Statistics Directors Group as well as in the different technical expert groups and recognised that the draft Regulation was a compromise between the different stakeholders. It was considered mature for discussions by the co-legislators.
3. A number of Member States reiterated their concerns regarding the legal architecture of FRIBS and, more particularly, the use of delegated acts for amending detailed topics, the length of the warning periods and safeguard clauses as well as a request to include further elements in the Annexes of the FRIBS basic act.
4. The ESSC took note of the views expressed by Member States on the legal architecture of FRIBS and agreed that this is fundamentally an institutional issue that can be discussed at technical level but that has to be decided at the level of the Union legislator.
5. One Member State expressed its reservations regarding the mandatory exchange of some data elements of intra-EU exports of goods. Some ESSC members re-emphasised the

importance of sufficient security and confidentiality measures in the exchange of micro-data.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/4

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Integrated Farm Statistics and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1337/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 concerning European Statistics on permanent crops

A. Presentation

1. Eurostat reminded the ESSC that, after the Committee had endorsed the Strategy for Agricultural Statistics for 2020 and beyond, Eurostat has developed the proposal for the framework regulation in Integrated Farm Statistics (IFS) in close cooperation with the Directors' Group on Agricultural Statistics (DGAS) and its working groups. Indeed, the DGAS was consulted six times on successive drafts of the proposal.
2. The ESSC was informed that the IFS proposal was aligned with the IESS and FRIBS wherever this proved possible. The current proposal emerged as the best possible compromise that takes account of all the stakeholders' concerns in a balanced manner.
3. Eurostat also addressed some of the concerns of the Member States. As regards the data transmission deadlines, Eurostat stated that while it understood the challenges to the Member States, it still believed that a deadline of three months was a viable timeframe.
4. Regarding physical thresholds, Eurostat maintained that these have been set carefully to ensure that all the relevant information is available for the Member States. On the topic of financing, it was explained that all the necessary provisions have been included in the proposal.

B. Discussion

1. A number of ESS Member States welcomed the proposal.
2. A number of Member States expressed their concern on the proposed legal architecture to be applied and pronounced themselves in favour of stronger safeguard clauses due to the increase in burden expected on the NSIs.
3. One delegation conveyed its opinion that the inclusion in the legal act of the provision that "a maximum of 10% of Annex III characteristics can be amended" could be counterproductive. Other delegations expressed their concern concerning technical issues such as the coverage, module and ad-hoc data, financing provisions and the reference periods included in the act.

C. Opinion

1. The ESSC generally supported the proposal for a Regulation on Integrated Farm Statistics. In particular, several elements were appreciated, such as the simplification made in some domains and the flexibility concerning data sources. The efforts made to implement changes and modifications suggested by Member States during the intensive process of preparation of the proposal were also positively received.
2. Some delegations felt that the aspects of financial support towards carrying out the surveys would need further clarification during the next steps of the legal procedure. Although few delegations expressed different opinions on physical thresholds, on transmission deadlines and on safeguards to limit burden, it was generally agreed to proceed with the proposal.
3. The ESSC took note of the views expressed by Member States on the legal architecture of the Regulation on Integrated Farm Statistics, and agreed that this is fundamentally an institutional issue that can be discussed at technical level but that has to be decided at the level of the Union legislator.
4. As a next step, Eurostat will launch the procedure for the adoption of the proposal by the Commission, which will then forward it to the Council and the European Parliament.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/5

2016 ESGAB Report

A. Presentation

1. The Chairperson of the ESGAB presented the 2016 ESGAB Report by focusing on three main points:
 - a. In the view of ESGAB the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP) is not keeping pace with the challenges ahead, one of which being the use of new and multiple data sources;
 - b. The challenge faced by the ESS to maintain and improve trust in official statistics at a time when their credibility is increasingly put under strain through concerns about their misuse or quality. The ESGAB recommended that the NSIs engage more with civil society in order to promote the value of statistical data, and to be prepared to vigorously defend their official statistics if they are publicly misused;
 - c. On the issue of the appointment and dismissal procedures for Eurostat's Director General, the Chairperson of ESGAB expressed his satisfaction for the Commission's decision to fill up this post following an open competition.

B. Discussion

1. One Member State argued that some of the recommendations in the 2016 ESGAB Report are too ambitious, especially as regards the human and financial resources needed to implement them. It consequently called for a longer timeframe for their implementation.
2. Furthermore, two delegations highlighted that some recommendations could not be acted upon at the level of the NSIs, and should therefore be discussed at the ECOFIN meeting in order to gain its active support.
3. A number of Member States expressed themselves against "the continuous updating and modernisation of the CoP" since the said CoP embodies basic principles which should be seen as stable. They also argued that increasing public confidence in official statistics would be difficult to achieve.
4. Two delegations commented on the development of Big Data, including the emergence of private statistics producers. One of them proposed a quality label to evaluate the statistics produced by such entities. Another delegation commented upon the methodology used by the organisations that rank countries according to their economic performance and urged ESGAB to look at such products and consider public statements as regards their validity. ESGAB was also invited to build direct links to government officials in the field of statistics in order to promote the CoP.
5. The Chairperson of ESGAB reconfirmed the importance of NSIs in coordinating ONAs to ensure high quality statistics. He also acknowledged the importance of having a stable CoP, although he reiterated that revisions mirroring the changes in the landscape of the data supply were necessary.

Agenda items **ESSC 2016/31/6** (Visit by Mr Danielsson, Director General of NEAR, to the ESSC) and **ESSC 2016/31/7**, (Report on statistical cooperation with the enlargement and European neighbourhood countries) were postponed to a future ESSC meeting.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/8

Strategic priorities for the Annual Work Programme (AWP) 2018

A. Presentation

1. The ESSC was informed that, as the current five-year European Statistical Programme (ESP) will end in 2017, the Commission has adopted a proposal to extend the ESP until 2020 to align it to the duration of the multiannual financial framework (MFF). Eurostat iterated that the ESP extension is currently being discussed in the Council Working Party for Statistics (CWPS). In this context Eurostat commended the work done by the Slovak Presidency and the constructive spirit of the Member States, thanks to which Eurostat expressed its optimism of reaching a balanced compromise by the end of 2016 which could then be discussed with the European Parliament in early 2017.
2. Eurostat highlighted the fact that, since the legislative process on the ESP extension will only be concluded in 2017, the final content of the extended ESP is still uncertain. However Eurostat maintained that, in the preparation of the detailed AWP, it would take into account any changes to the text of the ESP that will be introduced by the Council and the European Parliament.
3. The extension of the ESP will address urgent policy needs, for instance by providing timelier, more detailed or better quality data in several domains. Eurostat listed several specific actions linked to the new orientations in the ESP extension. These include the work related to measuring and monitoring the progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), work on indicators for monitoring the circular economy, more timely early estimates of energy balances, the review of the suitability of the owner-occupied housing price index for integration into the HICP and the work to improve the timeliness of social indicators.
4. The ESP extension will also further improve the quality and efficiency of statistical production and contribute to reducing the burden on respondents. This aim will be supported by an increased budget, which will allow the co-financing of the participation of the ESS NSIs in these activities, as well as by a priority-setting mechanism to balance the workload on the NSIs and to simplify wherever possible.
5. In addition to this, Eurostat highlighted that the priority-setting for 2018 will be supported by the cost-assessment exercise launched by the Resource Directors' Group (RDG), which covers all the ESS NSIs, ONAs and regional offices and a broader selection of statistical products. The proposed list of discontinued products and simplification measures for 2018 will be presented to the ESSC at its May 2017 meeting.
6. Concerning the next steps and the further consultation procedure on the 2018 AWP, Eurostat stated that it will be accommodating the request of several Member States that the Directors' Groups are consulted more closely. After the ESSC's discussion of the strategic priorities for 2018, Eurostat will launch a written consultation of all the Directors' Groups on the mentioned priorities with the deadline of 31st of January 2017, aiming at collecting more detailed feedback from the Member States.
7. The ESSC was also informed that the European Statistics Advisory Committee (ESAC) will be invited to express its views on the draft strategic priorities for 2018.

8. Addressing some of the concerns of the Member States, Eurostat argued that the budget for 2018 will be on the same level as in previous years. As regards the LUCAS 2018 survey, Eurostat reiterated that this is an important exercise that supports the agricultural and environmental policies of the EU, and that it will be financed from the EU budget. On the issue of confidentiality of micro-data exchange, Eurostat invited the particular Member State to indicate any specific improvements that it envisaged in the text.

B. Discussion

1. One Member State welcomed the efforts on the priority-setting, but at the same time, in view of persistent constraints in resources, it asked for an enhancement of the balance between new actions and the discontinuation of less demanded products. The same delegation noted that the draft strategic priorities for 2018 will require further human resources that will hardly be available in the coming years.

C. Opinion

1. The ESSC broadly supported the strategic priorities for the Annual Work Programme 2018, which will be the first year of implementation of the extended European Statistical Programme (ESP) 2018-2020. The Committee took note of the link between the ESP extension and the Annual Work Programme 2018, whereby the legislative process of the ESP extension might entail eventual modifications in the Annual Work Programme 2018.
2. The Committee welcomed the better involvement of Directors' Groups in the preparation of the Annual Work Programmes, and supported the written consultation of the Directors' Groups on the draft strategic priorities after the November ESSC.
3. Some Member States felt that the draft strategic priorities 2018 do not yet allow for an assessment of the implied resource demands at Member State level, and looked forward to the presentation of the detailed draft Annual Work Programme and the discussion about priority-setting at the ESSC in May 2017.
4. Eurostat will take into account the specific comments in the elaboration of the detailed Annual Work Programme 2018.
5. Eurostat will submit draft strategic priorities to the ESAC for opinion.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/9

Draft Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending 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), as concerns the inclusion of territorial typologies into the NUTS Regulation

A. Presentation

1. Eurostat explained that the importance of territorial typologies as a means to classify and categorise statistical information is largely undisputed, since it allows for target policy intervention towards cities, urban or rural areas as well as coastal areas.
2. This is why Eurostat launched a series of initiatives with the aim of integrating the most important and most used typologies into the NUTS Regulation, which would give such typologies a legal recognition, ensuring a harmonised application and allowing for referencing from other legislation. Eurostat added that the proposed typologies are already in use in the ESS and in the OECD.
3. The ESSC was reminded that during the preceding two years Eurostat had been in regular contact with the experts from the NSIs in order to improve and fine tune the proposal. It was confirmed that the feedback from the national experts has been taken into account in various ways, from the waiver of basic data delivery on cities, to putting the definitions of the typologies into a future implementing act.

B. Discussion

-

C. Opinion

1. The ESSC issued a positive opinion on the proposal to integrate the territorial typologies into the NUTS Regulation.
2. Eurostat confirmed that the usual resident population can be estimated using administrative registers.
3. The ESSC took note of the views expressed by Member States on the legal architecture of the Regulation and agreed that this is fundamentally an institutional issue that can be discussed at technical level but that has to be decided at the level of the Union legislator.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/10

The impact of globalisation and multinational enterprises activities on GDP and other macroeconomic statistics

A. Presentation

- B. The Central Statistical Office (CSO) of the Republic of Ireland made a presentation regarding the highly globalised nature of the Irish economy, which was demonstrated with the publication, in July 2016, of the national accounts and balance of payments statistics for 2015 showing a substantial increase of the Irish GDP.

C. Discussion

1. A number of Member States expressed their surprise at the level shift in the Irish GDP figures for 2015, and exhorted the ESSC to draw the right conclusions from this case.
2. Several Member States emphasized that GDP figures were expected to reflect real economic activity, whereas it was not felt to be the case. Such a discrepancy has been of great concern to them.
3. Eurostat thanked the CSO Ireland for its presentation and confirmed that the Irish calculations are in line with the European System of Accounts (ESA) as well as the UNECE Guide on measuring global production. GDP has to include what happens on the domestic territory and the globalization effects. The latter are "real" as well and have to be recorded. One direction of further presentation of the accounts could be to separate domestic from global production in order to address justified user requests wanting to know what happens at the domestic territory. For other users' needs, e.g. knowing the taxation base, the globalization effect is, however, equally important.
4. Eurostat suggested that the Business Statistics Directors' Group (BSDG) and the Directors of Macroeconomic Statistics (DMES) jointly create a specific Task Force to make a stock-taking of progress in implementing the Riga Memorandum, based on responses to a questionnaire focused on globalisation, and discuss further initiatives in this respect.
5. Eurostat also proposed that, given the importance of this issue and its cross-cutting nature, the ESSC could consider holding a dedicated seminar to look into the potential directions of work identified by the Task Force.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/11

Report on the EFC statistical package

A. Presentation

1. Eurostat confirmed that the statistical package was presented to the ECOFIN Council on the 8th of November and expressed its satisfaction with the Conclusions emanating from the Council, which provide guidance for the further work of the ESSC.
2. The ECOFIN acknowledged the work of the ESS, particularly the new GDP flash estimates and the harmonised consumer price index. Nevertheless, on the latter it was remarked that further efforts are needed to look into house sales.
3. On the Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP), the Council Conclusions appreciated the recently published guidance on the statistical reporting of Private Public Partnerships (PPPs). The ECOFIN also emphasised the need to improve the governance of EDP statistical processes.
4. In the area of social statistics, the Council encouraged the ESS to further its work on population projections and statistics on migration, requesting the ESS to monitor the SDGs.
5. Eurostat emphasised the ECOFIN's link between further requirements to develop statistics and the need to invest into the statistical infrastructure, and the necessity to have more resources for this. The ECOFIN Conclusions also recognised the need for cooperation among countries on issues related to globalisation.
6. The ECOFIN Council was also very appreciative of the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between the European Central Bank/DG-S and Eurostat on the quality assurance of statistics underlying the MIP.

B. Discussion

-

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/12

Eurostat monitoring report on NSI compliance with the Code of Practice - situation March 2016

A. Presentation

1. Eurostat presented the first monitoring report on the second round of peer reviews carried out in the 2013-2015 period. As an output of the peer review exercise 707 recommendations we made, resulting in 910 improvement actions. It was pointed out that only 9% of all actions concerned compliance with the CoP, whereas the majority concerned actions with the aim of enhancing the current situation.
2. The ESSC was informed that as of the 31st of March 2016, the NSIs reported that 188 actions (or just over 20% of the total) had been implemented and that 126 actions (13.8%) are considered to be delayed, due to reported inadequate resources or changing priorities in their offices. In this context, Eurostat maintained that delayed improvement actions, or decisions not to pursue certain actions, would undermine the credibility of the exercise.

The NSIs were therefore encouraged to fulfil all improvement actions with the agreed timeframe.

3. The next round of annual monitoring to be carried by Eurostat would be held in January 2017, assessing the period running up to the 31st of December 2016. As a consequence, Eurostat proposed that the report to the ESSC would be submitted earlier in the year. In order to reduce the reporting burden, Eurostat suggested that the same version of the report that is presented to the ESSC is also provided to ESGAB.
4. Eurostat reminded the ESSC about the additional reporting enshrined in the revised Regulation 223/2009. In conformity with this the Member States are under a legal obligation to report either on their established Commitments on Confidence, or on the progress made in implementing the CoP and on efforts made towards establishing the Commitment. Eurostat renewed its commitment to avoid double reporting in this regard.
5. Eurostat informed the ESSC that those Member States which will not have established a Commitment by the 9th of June 2017 will be required to submit a report to the Commission, which should subsequently be made public. The established Commitments or the national reports will then be made available to the European Parliament and Council on the 9th of June 2018.
6. The Committee was made aware that the annual monitoring by Eurostat of the second round of improvement actions will continue until 2019, by which all actions should be implemented. Eurostat also proposed that NSIs share their detailed monitoring reports within the system.

B. Discussion

1. One delegation suggested that the monitoring process of improvement actions in future rounds of peer reviews should also take account of sub-actions.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/13

Progress report on the integration of statistical and geospatial information and on UN-GGIM activities

A. Presentation

1. Eurostat informed the ESSC that the main aim of the work of the UN-GGIM is to increase cooperation between NSIs and National Mapping Agencies in the integration of statistical and geospatial information.
2. The attention of the ESSC was drawn to the significant progress achieved in the different working groups, with an emphasis on the work on the SDGs as well as the preparation of the next Census round.

B. Discussion

1. One Member State pointed out the importance of the integration of statistical and geospatial data to the SDGs and other policy areas, and informed the ESSC about a dedicated working group that it has set up. Furthermore this delegation mentioned the importance of a memorandum of understanding that it has signed with the Cartography Office.
2. Eurostat praised this initiative and urged all other ESS NSIs to build up contacts with their national cartographic institutions.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/14

ESS Achievements Report 2016

A. Presentation

- B. The ESS Achievements Report includes a selection of achievements that could be mentioned in the national reports of the NSIs.

C. Discussion

-

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/15

Eurostat's coverage of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators

A. Presentation

1. Eurostat stated that the main aim of the document submitted to the Committee is to help the ESS NSIs identify data gaps at national level, and accentuated the differences between monitoring the SDGs at EU, national, or global levels.
2. The ESSC was informed that the EU monitoring of the SDGs will refer to the initiative named *Next steps for a sustainable European future* included in the 2016 Commission work programme. Eurostat also announced that on the 22nd of November the Commission will release a Communication related to this initiative, which will show the significance of the SDGs for Europe and explain what the EU does to reach these goals.
3. Eurostat made reference to its plan to develop an EU SDG indicator set that will involve other Directorates General of the Commission, but in which Eurostat expects to have a principal role. The NSIs were informed that Eurostat plans to consult them for technical advice in due time.

4. Eurostat explained that, in the development of the aforementioned EU SDG indicator set, it plans to use existing indicators, for instance from the Europe 2020 indicators, or indicators that can be derived from existing data collections. It was announced that at this stage Eurostat is not foreseeing the establishment of new data collections.
5. The ESSC was informed that Eurostat expects to receive a mandate to monitor sustainable development at EU level, and that a first report about this is expected in late 2017.

B. Discussion

1. One NSI welcomed Eurostat's leadership as regards as the SDG indicators and expressed its wish for an enhanced role for Eurostat in the *World Data Forum* that will be held in Cape Town, South Africa in January 2017, for instance through the delivery of a presentation.
2. Eurostat confirmed its participation at the *World Data Forum* and its plan to make a presentation there.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/16

Reports from Directors' Groups

As written versions of the reports from the meetings of the Directors of Macroeconomic Statistics (DMES) and the Directors of Social Statistics (DSS) had been circulated beforehand through CIRCABC, these were not presented orally due to time constraints. This did not apply for the DIME/ITDG meeting, for which no previous written report was circulated and was thus presented orally as follows:

Directors of Methodology/Information Technology Directors' Group (DIME/ITDG)

A. Presentation

1. Eurostat informed the ESSC about the Steering Group meeting of DIME/ITDG held on the 19th of October in which the following items were discussed:
 - a. The sharing of practices for the improvement of the communication of complex methodological issues and practices;
 - b. A better insight of the new challenges faced by statisticians in relation to the methodological and technical perspectives, particularly the measurement of the digital economy and the issue of machine learning;

- c. The harmonisation of methodological and IT platform practices for the data collection systems, particularly those systems implying administrative data.

B. Discussion

-

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/17

Partnership Group (PG)

a) Review of the functioning and of the Rules of Procedure of the PG

b) Report on the last meeting, 28th September 2016

c) Draft agenda of the next meeting, 16th December 2016

A. Presentation

1. The Chairperson of the PG presented the report of the 62nd meeting of the PG that was held in Vienna on the 28th of September 2016. She thanked all the Member States participating in the exchange of views on the agenda of the meeting and reassured the ESSC that the feedback of the ESS NSIs which are not members of the PG is always taken into account during the Group's discussions.
2. The ESSC was informed about the main topics that were discussed as strategic issues, namely the implementation of the ESS Vision 2020 and the progress achieved concerning the modernisation of intra-EU trade in goods statistics. In December the PG will discuss the way forward as regards the latter issue.
3. The PG Chairperson also reported the satisfaction of the Group in connection with the discussions and choice of topics of the 2016 DGINS Conference. The PG debated the preparation processes of the 2017 DGINS Conference, and will decide on the topics in December, after the customary consultation with the ESS NSIs.
4. During the September PG meeting Eurostat presented the 2017 Catalogue of Products in the context of which it was decided that Eurostat would establish bilateral contacts with the Member States in order to obtain specific explanations regarding the column entitled "Other" in part 1 of the Catalogue.
5. Other strategic items included the debriefing from the meeting of the European Statistical Forum (ESF) Bureau on the 16th of September. In this regard the PG appreciated the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the ESS and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) on the quality assurance of statistics underlying the MIP. In connection with the issue of globalisation Eurostat debriefed the PG about the recent statistical events in Ireland. On the 2016 ESS Report, the PG agreed that the editorial board would continue in its current composition. The PG also considered that it

would be better to open up membership to non-PG members in order to increase the variety and breadth of points of view.

6. The ESSC was informed that the PG discussed a document regarding the integration between statistical and geospatial information. Furthermore the PG discussed the result of the questionnaire on the review of its functioning and possible amendments to its Rules of Procedure (RoP). The PG Chair informed the ESSC that the majority of the answers received indicated that the PG fulfils its mission and some Member States made suggestions on how to improve the functioning of the Group. The PG was of the opinion that its RoP should be clearer as regards the substitution of some of its members in case of unavailability and proposed a revision of the RoP in this respect, which the ESSC was invited to endorse.

B. Discussion

1. One Member State expressed its opinion that the current rules regarding the replacement in exceptional cases of all members of the PG are sufficient and should be maintained, and not be limited only to the Presidency members.
2. The Chairperson of the PG replied that the members of the PG, excluding the Presidency members, are appointed in their personal capacity and that the change in the RoP only confirmed the existent practice.

Agenda item ESSC 2016/31/18

Presidency Reports

a) Report from the current Presidency (Slovak Republic)

b) Plans for the next Presidency (Malta)

A. Presentation

1. The Presidency informed the ESSC about the state of play of three proposals inherited from the previous Presidency (The Netherlands), namely the Regulation proposing an amending Regulation N 1365/2006 on statistics of good transport by inland waterways, Regulation amending Regulation n 91/2003 on rail transport statistics and the Regulation on natural gas and electricity prices. It was reported that in the three cases the legislative process has been completed.
2. The ESSC was briefed that the proposal for a Regulation establishing a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households (IESS) was adopted by the Commission on the 24th of August 2016. The Slovak Presidency then launched a written consultation with the Member States, the examination of which started in the Council working Party on Statistics (CWPS) on the 30th of September 2016. Further discussions on the proposal were envisaged during the last meeting of the Slovak Presidency on the 6th of December 2016.

3. Regarding the proposal for Regulation amending Regulation n 99/2013 on the ESP extension, the proposal was adopted by the Commission on the 7th of September 2016. The Slovak Presidency launched a written procedure on the 13th of September, the outcomes of which, together with the Impact Assessment, were examined at the CWPS meeting of the 19th of October.
4. The upcoming Maltese Presidency stated that it will be building its agenda on the progress achieved by the preceding Dutch and Slovak Presidencies, and expressed its intention of continuing work on the IESS and the ESP files. The ESSC was also informed that work would be carried out on the Integrate Farm Survey (IFS) proposal and the FRIBS, TERCET and GNI dossiers.
5. The Presidency informed the ESSC about the composition of its team and the scheduled meetings for the CWPS. The ESSC was also informed that Malta will be hosting an ESS Workshop on the Dissemination of Official Statistics on the 18th and 19th of January 2017.

B. Discussion

-