



Luxembourg,
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**NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF
DIRECTORS-GENERAL AND PRESIDENTS OF THE NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTES
OF THE EUROPEAN STATISTICAL SYSTEM**

Subject: European Statistical System's response to COVID-19 / number 6

Dear colleagues,

In response to your request to keep you informed about the COVID-19 related actions, I would like to provide the following update:

Last PG meeting held on 29th of May 2020

Following the discussions at the last ESSC meeting, the PG gathered for a videoconference on 29th of May 2020. The meeting focused on the first exchange of views on what the ESS could do next in response to Covid-19. Eurostat provided a short issue paper as an input to the discussions. The paper drew heavily on the results from the survey of national initiatives launched to measure better the Covid-19 impact and the opinions expressed by you at the last ESSC. In particular, the PG discussed:

- i) How the ESS could be even more relevant through leveraging and expanding experimental statistics and other initiatives that have been launched at national level;
- ii) What aspects of Covid-19 impact on statistical production and dissemination, in particular methodological and comparability issues, need to be addressed in the coming months;
- iii) What achievements in terms of access to new data sources, innovative solutions and organisational efficiency could be taken for the future, after the end of the pandemic.

The PG members agreed that Eurostat would translate this discussion into a number of issues to be debated by the Directors Groups during their virtual meetings foreseen for June 2020. Directors Groups would structure their reflections alongside the three main questions described above. The outcome from the discussions including actions to be implemented in short and long term would be summarised and presented to ESS Directors-General at videoconference at the end of June/beginning of July 2020.

Next videoconference of DG of NSIs in the ESS

I would like to invite you to the next videoconference of DG of NSIs in the ESS on 3rd of July 2020, at 10:00-12:30 (CET).

The video conference will focus on two main points:

- i) ESS response to Covid-19 – state of play and next steps;
- ii) Access to privately held data – report by the dedicated PG TF and discussion of next steps.

Eurostat will provide input paper for the first point. It will summarize the outcomes from the June Directors Groups meetings and put forward proposals on the next steps. As regards second point, the PG TF will prepare input paper that will provide some reflections **on the ESS involvement in the implementation the European Data Strategy, in addition to the report of the TF on-going activities and identified priorities for the future work.**

Guidelines and methodological notes

Eurostat has pursued the development of guidelines and methodological notes in the context of the COVID-19 in cooperation with the NSIs experts. Since 27th of May 2020, when I sent you my latest update letter, no needs for new methodological notes or update of the existing ones have been identified. As an outcome, no new documents have been published in the [COVID-19: support to statisticians](#) section of the Eurostat website. Nevertheless, the Directors Groups have kept in their June meetings the question about the need for more guidelines and methodological notes or update of the existing ones in the coming months. The result of these discussions will be included in the Eurostat paper on the ESS response to Covid-19 – state of paly and next steps, to be presented at our next videoconference, foreseen for 3 July 2020.

Launching calls for grants

In my letter of 26 March 2020, I informed you that only a very limited number of calls for new grants with a higher priority would be launched before the middle of June 2020, in order to take into account the capacity difficulties you were facing. Now when all member states are gradually lifting the confinement measures, Eurostat is planning to launch several calls for grants. It is important to launch these calls for proposals now to allow the costs eligibility period to start early, and thus to support the preparatory work needed for the initiatives that are scheduled for next year. Your directors have been informed in detail about the launch of the calls.

Meetings and missions organised by Eurostat

Covid-19 outbreak has forced us to conduct ESS meetings by a videoconferencing and put on hold missions. Recently, following the national initiatives of lifting confinement measures, Eurostat has started reflections on the possibility to organise physically some important ESS

meetings and conduct some missions towards the end of the year. These meetings and missions will be limited indeed to the essential ones that cannot be held efficiently via videoconferencing (e.g. EDP and GNI missions as well as ESSC, Directors Groups and other specific meetings for which the agenda would call for discussions in physical format). In this regard, Eurostat directors will contact your teams to explore together the feasibility of conducting these missions and plan the relevant timetables. At our the next video conference on 3rd of July, I also would like to have a quick exchange of views with you on the possibility to have physical ESSC in Luxembourg in October 2020 and physical meetings of Directors Groups towards the end of 2020.

Weekly deaths reporting

Finally, I am very pleased to inform you that thanks to the high commitment and efforts by your teams, the weekly [data](#) on deaths in 2020 and back series over past years, decomposed also by age, sex and NUTS3 regions, have been available in the Eurobase for an increasing number of countries. This allows specialists to analyse the deaths time series, independently from their causes, in order to assess the additional direct or indirect mortality in the current period. These data, collected on a voluntary basis, are highly demanded by users. Eurostat is planning to promote further the availability of weekly deaths data through a small communication package (e.g. statistics explained article, some set of graphs and related social media messages) foreseen for 24th of June. The Directors of social statistics dealing with the subject have been informed about the publication and its content.

Yours sincerely,

(eSigned)
Mariana Kotzeva