



Luxembourg,
ESTAT-DG/MK/eo/D(2020)

**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 5

Dear colleagues,

Let me first thank you again for the very inspiring discussion at last ESSC meeting on 14th of May 2020 and the rich set of proposals on how the ESS could further respond to the challenges triggered by the COVID-19 outbreak.

In response to your request for providing regular information about COVID-19 related actions, I would like to provide you with the following update:

Progress of TF on ESS Strategic Communication

TF on ESS Strategic Communication did a quick survey among its members about their communication responses to the Covid-19 outbreak. I am delighted to announce that Eurostat summarised the survey results and published the note [ESS STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS](#) in the corner "Covid-19: Support to Statisticians" on its website on 18 May 2020. The documents presents the first summary of the challenges faced and communication actions taken by NSIs in response to Covid-19.

The work of the Task Force continues. Next, it will hold a virtual meeting on 29 May to further discuss two main issues: i) how to continue the exchange of good practices relating to the communication activities in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic; and ii) preparation of the Workshop on Strategic Communication for DGs of NSIs and Eurostat, to be held in Wiesbaden in November this year.

Statistical implications of some policy measures aimed at tackling Covid-19 economic consequences

Recently, national governments have launched a number of policy measures to support businesses and households facing economic difficulties cause by Covid-19. Some of them aim at keeping employment and supporting self-employed and small businesses, others relate to fiscal policies (e.g deferral of tax deadlines). An increasing number of measures involve

national promotional banks (NPBs). Examples of measures channelled through the NPBs include delays in debt servicing for loans granted by NPBs, granting of new loans or credit lines at non market conditions, purchase of debt and rolling over of debt, covering operating costs of SMEs and self-employed, provision of guarantees and support in financing issues arising from the crisis.

There is growing interest in the accounting consequences of these operations on public finances, in particular on the debt and deficit. In this context, it will be very important that MS examine closely all such operations, in order to apply the rules included in the latest version of the Manual on government deficit and debt (MGDD), in the context of the forthcoming GFS reporting in the coming months. Eurostat is at present using available sources in order to conduct an overview of all operations and is available to discuss further and provide methodological support needed to NSIs.

Next PG meeting scheduled for 29th of May 2020

Next PG meeting will be held as a videoconference on 29 May 2020. The main topic in the agenda will be the first exchange of views on what the ESS should do next in response to Covid-19. In particular, the discussions will focus on the following questions:

- 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.

To facilitate the discussions Eurostat has prepared a short issue paper that draws 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. Due to the very limited time available, the exchange of views carried out before the PG will not take place. We will discuss at the PG how to involve you all in the further discussions.

Guidelines and methodological notes

Eurostat has pursued the development of guidelines and methodological notes in the context of the COVID-19 in cooperation with NSI experts. The following documents have been published in the [COVID-19: support to statisticians](#) section of the Eurostat website since 1st of May 2020:

- Guidance on the compilation of statistics on intra-EU trade in goods;
- Clarifications the implications of Covid-19 measures on the statistical treatment of existing PPPs and concessions;
- ESS strategic communication during the Covid-19 crisis;
- Guidance on statistical processing for health and safety at work;
- Guidance on statistical processing for public health statistics;
- Guidance on non-market output.

In the context of questions concerning flash indicators raised at the last ESSC, I would like also to draw your attention on the Guidance note on quarterly national accounts (including flash) estimates, published on Eurostat website on 24 April 2020.

Yours sincerely,

(eSigned)
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