



Luxembourg,
ESTAT-DG/MK/DG01/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 2

Dear colleagues,

Thank you very much for keeping Eurostat informed about the enormous challenges to the statistical operations you have faced since the outbreak of Covid-19 and for all your efforts to ensure the continuation of statistical production and dissemination according to established deadlines and European quality standards.

In response to the current unprecedented situation, Eurostat has undertaken or is considering to undertake a number of actions.

Statistics to be prioritized

More than ever, European citizens, businesses and policy-makers need official statistics to take important decisions that protect human livelihoods, contain the outbreak of Covid-19 and overcome its adverse economic and social impacts. At the same time, the Coronavirus pandemic has made it virtually impossible for statistical offices to continue with business as usual. Therefore, Eurostat considers that the ESS efforts and resources should concentrate on producing statistics that are most relevant and needed in the current situation.

Timely, reliable and comprehensive short-term statistics (monthly and quarterly), which are planned for release in the next couple of months, will be crucial for providing an objective picture of the economic and social situation in Europe. They will be also crucial for developing an adequate response to the economic and social shocks caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The prioritisation list includes the Principal European Economic Indicators, selected indicators from Labour Force Survey, from statistics on population, managed migration, agriculture, energy and transport. For your convenience, a detailed prioritisation list is attached to this letter. ESS should put priority on these statistics and not spare any effort to provide them in time and with the highest quality.

At the beginning of next week, and based on the already ongoing work, all directors' groups will discuss the difficulties to obtain each of the prioritised statistics and the specific actions that should be taken to ensure their production and dissemination.

We understand that the data collections based on interviews are among the most adversely affected by the lockdowns introduced in a number of countries. Many of you have initiated changes in the mode of data collections and streamlined some of the questionnaires. Several of you have suspended some surveys. All these changes have opened methodological and comparability issues as well as required proactive common communication to the users. Under the umbrella of the directors' groups, dedicated virtual meetings have been, or will be organised in the following weeks for experts to address the topical issues, especially with regard to price collections, the LFS and SILC surveys. Additionally, changes to existing questions and adding new questions to support the analysis of the impact of Covid-19, for instance on the labour market and living conditions, will be considered.

We are examining the possibility of postponing some pilot projects and studies that are not urgent. In particular, the feasibility and pilot studies foreseen under the IESS regulation 2019/1700 and the migration regulation could be postponed, with the exception of the work needed in 2020 to manage the LFS breaks in series expected in 2021 due to the implementation of IESS regulation. The new European business statistics regulation 2019/2152 will become applicable as of 1 January 2021 and therefore the legislative work with respect to the package of implementing and delegated acts of the basic act should proceed as much as possible according to the original planning.

Ongoing and new grants

The outbreak of the coronavirus will have a significant impact on the implementation of the current and future grants and contracts of the Annual Statistical Programme. If the execution of grants or contracts is impeded by the crisis, for example due to the unavailability of key staff or the impossibility of carrying on work in a zone affected by the virus, the beneficiary can send a request for extending the implementation period. If deemed appropriate by the responsible Eurostat director, an amendment to the contract will be prepared.

Concerning the current and future calls for grants, Eurostat takes due consideration of the concerns raised by many Member States. Therefore, the submission deadline for most of the ongoing calls will be extended until mid-June. Only a limited number of calls with a higher priority will be launched before that date. However, for these calls, where possible the submission period will be significantly increased compared to the usual practice.

Meetings and missions

Eurostat will not organise physical meetings until the end of May 2020. Written consultations, videoconferencing, especially for task forces, or postponement will be implemented instead. Currently the opportunity to have ESSC via videoconferencing in a restricted composition and with a much shorter agenda is also under investigation. All Eurostat' missions will also be suspended until the end of May 2020.

All the measures described above will be reassessed at a later stage to take into account the evolution of the Covid-19 crisis in Europe.

Dear colleagues,

It is clear that the outbreak of the coronavirus is having a significant impact on the administrative capacities in your respective countries, as your governments take the necessary measures necessary to protect citizens. Even so, the proper application of EU law remains crucial, including respecting deadlines established in law. As already emphasised in my letter to you on 18 March, it is a priority to ensure the continuity of producing high-quality statistics on Europe, fulfilling our duty towards European citizens and policymakers who rely on our data. With this in mind, Eurostat will explore the potential flexibilities with a view to finding pragmatic solutions in each case, while safeguarding the interests of the EU as a whole. The success of this approach will depend on our common efforts and transparent collaboration.

Yours sincerely,

(eSigned)
Mariana Kotzeva

Annex: 1

Principal European Economic Indicators (PEEIs)

Consumer Price Indicators

Monthly Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices: euro area flash estimate

Monthly Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices

Quarterly National Accounts

Quarterly National Accounts: First GDP (flash) estimates

Quarterly National Accounts: GDP release with more breakdowns

Quarterly National Accounts: Household and Company Accounts

Quarterly National Accounts: Government Finance Statistics

Business Indicators

Monthly Industrial production

Monthly Industrial producer prices for domestic markets

Monthly Industrial import prices

Monthly Production in construction

Monthly Retail trade turnover

Quarterly Services turnover

Quarterly Services producer prices

Labour Market Indicators

Monthly Unemployment rate

Quarterly Job vacancy rate

Quarterly Employment

Quarterly Labour cost index

International Trade in goods

Monthly International trade in goods balance: intra- and extra-euro area; intra- and extra-EU

Housing Indicators

Quarterly House price index

Annual House sales

Monthly Building permits

European Social Statistics

Population and vital events of first 6 months 2020

Quarterly employment and unemployment statistics

Monthly and quarterly managed migration statistics

European Sectoral Statistics (Agriculture, Energy, Transports)

Monthly Animal production statistics (milk, meat, poultry)

Annual Crop production statistics (area and production estimates), multiple transmissions

Monthly Energy statistics (quantities of electricity, oil, coal, natural gas & crude oil imports)

Quarterly Transport statistics (road, air, rail, maritime, inland waterways)