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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL ON THE EX-POST EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY
STATISTICAL PROGRAMME 2003-2007**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Decision No 2367/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Community statistical programme 2003 to 2007 (CSP) was adopted on 16 December 2002¹. The programme was to be guided by the principal Community policy priorities of economic and monetary union, European Union enlargement and competitiveness, sustainable development and the social agenda. It was structured around the objectives of Eurostat's mission statement, of high-quality statistics for all EU-policy purposes and of the efficient use of resources and budgetary implementation.

Article 4 of the Decision states: “At the end of the period covered by the programme, the Commission, after consulting the Statistical Programme Committee, shall present an appropriate evaluation report on the implementation of the programme, taking into account the views of independent experts. The report is to be completed by the end of 2008 and subsequently submitted to the European Parliament and the Council.”²

This document constitutes the required evaluation report and addresses the obligation enshrined in the Financial Regulation³ and its Implementing Rules⁴ that programmes must be subject to an evaluation in terms of human and financial resources and results obtained to verify that they were consistent with the objectives set. The evaluation of this programme should also provide valuable input for developing future five-year statistical programmes and for establishing a monitoring system for their follow-up.

The report is based on the mid-term evaluation prepared by Eurostat in 2006 and on a report provided by an external evaluation company as required in Article 4 of the CSP. Chapter 2 summarises the main findings concerning the achievements of the objectives stated in the programme and gives an overview of cross-cutting issues and new initiatives not originally covered under the programme. Chapter 3 presents the main recommendations for future programme planning and implementation.

The final report of the external consultants can be found in the annexed Commission working document.

2. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROGRAMME

This chapter focuses on the achievements accomplished during the programme for all statistical domains under the Titles of the programme and the horizontal objectives listed under the implementation strategies. It also reports on activities and initiatives

¹ OJ L 358, 16.12.2002

² OJ L 358, 16.12.2002, p. 2.

³ Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1995/2006 of 13 December 2006.

⁴ Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 478/2007 of 23 April 2007 amending Regulation EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002

that were, in part, not included as explicit objectives in the CSP, on others of a cross-cutting nature and on the use of human and financial resources.

SUMMARY

Based on the detailed achievements reported per Title⁵ of the programme below it can be stated that almost all the objectives were accomplished. Worthwhile emphasising is the demonstrated ability of the European Statistical System (ESS) to ensure that new and emerging policy needs were underpinned with additional statistical information as was the case for e.g. data needs in the context of EU enlargement concerning the Member States joining the EU in 2004 and 2007 respectively, energy statistics, environment statistics, asylum and migration statistics, statistics on foreign affiliates, flash GDP and HICP estimates, European sector accounts, indicators regarding social protection and others. Furthermore, a multiannual programme on the modernisation of European Enterprise and Trade statistics was prepared. This progress was possible also due to intensive work on issuing new or revising legislation (e.g. especially in the areas of economic, business and social statistics) but even more by developing and implementing new methodologies and tools. This is particularly illustrated by the fact that the considerable number of activities for producing new statistics was almost equal to those covering routine data production. A relatively large number of activities concentrated on quality assurance and on the development of the ESS illustrating its capacity to pursue further advancement and improvements. This focus is confirmed by the development and implementation of the Code of Practice, the opening of free access to all Eurostat statistical data on its web-site as well as actions linked to better priority setting and reducing the response burden.

ACHIEVEMENTS ON STATISTICAL DOMAINS

Free Movement of Goods: New legislation for both Intrastat and Extrastat was developed aimed at increasing thresholds of reporting, more efficient use of existing information and aligning statistical and custom systems, thus reducing the burden on enterprises.

Agriculture: Substantial support was provided to Member States to further improve indicators on agri-environment and rural development as well as for progress on farm registers. New legislation was developed in the area of the farm structure survey with the aim of reducing the reporting burden.

Free Movement of Persons, Services and Capital: New legislation and the corresponding methodological manual were developed and a first data collection implemented in the field of Statistics on *Foreign Affiliates* (“inward and outward FATS”). Regarding the area of *information society* a framework regulation was developed followed by annual data collections including a fixed and a variable section of questions thus making for faster reaction to new data needs.

Visas, Asylum, Immigration and other Policies related to Free Movement of Persons: A new Regulation on Community statistics on migration and international protection was adopted in 2007. The content and structure of data on residence permits were revised in this context and intensive discussions for harmonising statistical definitions and outputs as well as metadata were held with the Member States to ensure better comparability for migration and asylum data.

⁵ According to the Treaties

Transport: Data coverage and quality for all modes of transport were improved and efforts deployed to regularly provide and improve the quality of various indicators such as on road-traffic, intermodal transport and performance.

Economic and Monetary Policy: In *national accounts* the implementation of the Regulation on the European System of Accounts (ESA95) was pursued by updating the transmission programme and by monitoring compliance. GDP flash estimates were produced in accordance with the timetable, and annual and quarterly sector accounts were published for the first time in 2006 and 2007 respectively. The validation work on own resources GNI and VAT statistics was pursued. A revision of the underlying methodology on national accounts was started in the international and European context. The methodological framework related to the *excessive deficit procedure*, and more generally, *public finance statistics* were further developed and integrated government finance statistics on a quarterly and annual basis were disseminated. Statistics and corresponding metadata on *Foreign Direct Investment*, *International Trade in Services* and *Balance of Payment (BoP)*, including quarterly data for the latter, were disseminated and quality reports produced. The data collection system for BoP statistics was revised taking changed data reporting thresholds for banks into account. Furthermore, the drafting of the IMF Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (BPM6) was supported with considerable input. Regarding *short term statistics* the Regulation was amended and the availability and timeliness of the indicators increased significantly. Further efforts were undertaken to set up and improve the coverage, length of series and timeliness for the Principle European Economic Indicators. In *price statistics* methodological work and improved strategic guidance have led to further improved timeliness and quality of data on the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices. A Regulation on purchasing power parities was adopted in 2007.

Employment: Key elements of the integrated system of earnings and labour costs were set up, including the quarterly labour cost index and the four-yearly detailed structural surveys on labour costs and earnings. The continuous quarterly Labour Force Survey was implemented in all Member States, a new regulation on job vacancy statistics was adopted by the European Commission and the labour market policy database was further developed.

Common Commercial Policy: Several actions for improving the quality of BoP data were initiated and a set of sustainable development indicators related to foreign trade was updated. Progress was made on harmonisation of BoP statistics with national accounts and foreign trade statistics.

Social Policy, Education, Vocational Training and Youth: Indicators on social inclusion and social protection were revised and most of the corresponding data provided. A Framework Regulation on education and lifelong learning statistics was adopted and the vocational training survey implemented with data published in 2007 and a pilot adult education survey as well. The preparation of the European Household Survey was launched, this being an integrated programme of social statistics aimed at rationalising existing and planned European social surveys and responding to policy needs through ad-hoc modules. A Framework Regulation on population and housing censuses was prepared and population projections at national and regional levels provided.

Culture: A methodological report and a pocketbook were published including several dimensions of culture statistics.

Public Health: A proposal for a Framework Regulation on public health and safety at work was adopted by the European Commission and activities commenced for producing European Community Health indicators. A European Health Interview survey was started as well as different modules such as on health status prepared. First datasets for a system of health accounts were published and the European Statistics on Accidents at Work and European Occupational Diseases statistics were improved.

Consumer Protection: Several publications on consumers in Europe were issued and data on food safety made available. Indicators to monitor food safety and nutrition policy were defined and data sources evaluated to identify EU relevant data.

Industry: Development focused on the services sector and statistics related to entrepreneurship. With the recast of the legal basis for structural business statistics business demography and business services were included, requirements of less importance deleted and ad-hoc modules and the European sample approach introduced. The new Regulation on the Business Register was adopted and works on creating a Community register of multinational enterprise groups commenced. New classifications on economic activities and products were adopted. Intensive negotiations took place to prepare a regulation on energy statistics. Furthermore, the recast of the price transparency directive was undertaken, reporting obligations on Combined Heat and Power established and important contributions to the EU annual CO₂ inventory reporting provided.

Economic and Social Cohesion: The revision of the territorial classification NUTS was completed following the enlargement and an enhanced data collection for the Urban Audit launched. Data required for the cohesion report were provided.

Research and Technological Development: Several methodological and research projects were completed or commenced, such as on new methods for statistical disclosure control, guidelines for seasonal adjustment, methodology for the integration of different sources in the ESS, while some of those used newly established cooperation instruments. Several surveys on Community innovation, career development of doctorate holder and research and development were implemented and data access was widened.

Environment: Data on waste statistics were disseminated for the first time under a regulation. A monitoring instrument for the new Community policy on chemicals was developed together with other services. A complete review of the list of sustainable development indicators was finalised. Several data collections were implemented to produce environmental accounts, and corresponding methodology work was performed.

Development Cooperation (and other External Actions): A wide range of technical advice and support for the European Neighbourhood countries was provided via the relevant Commission services. For major statistical cooperation activities at regional level in ACP countries, Asia and Latin America Eurostat provided technical advice to Commission services and participated in steering committees and other high level statistical meetings.

Some of the programme's objectives were not entirely achieved. This concerns audiovisual statistics, this being abandoned due to a change in policy, culture statistics, where the objective was not fully met due to resource constraints, and

methodological support for injuries in the home, responsibility for which was transferred to another Commission service.

ACHIEVEMENTS ON HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVES

Horizontal objectives relate to Eurostat being at the service of the Commission, of the other European Institutions and the wider user community, contributing to the maintenance and development of the European Statistical System (ESS), boosting staff motivation and satisfaction, improving the quality of its products and services and increasing internal productivity.

The objectives were accomplished to a large extent through developing the IT infrastructure, designing and implementing a quality assurance framework, improving working conditions following the results of staff opinion surveys, launching a European Statistical Training Programme, developing internal information and external dissemination strategies and enhancing the ESS governance structure.

ACHIEVEMENTS ON CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Enlargement

During the programme period the integration of the new Member States into the Community statistical mechanisms, both in terms of data collection/dissemination and working structures, was broadly accomplished. Technical assistance was provided in an efficient way to reinforce this integration but also to prepare current candidate countries for supporting the negotiation process with relevant statistical data and for future accession.

Reduction of Response Burden

Various activities were implemented focusing on improved annual statistical programming, priority-setting and on the measurement of burden and costs in selected statistical fields (transport statistics, short-term statistics, Intrastat, business statistics). The results of this work led to the Communication from the Commission on the reduction of the response burden, simplification and priority-setting in the field of Community statistics, published in November 2006. Measurement of burden and costs continued by launching an exercise covering all Member States and legal acts currently in force and through other initiatives in selected statistical areas (better use of existing data, European samples). First results gained in the context of better regulation also indicate that the administrative burden stemming from statistical reporting is relatively low.

Development of the ESS

In 2006 Eurostat and the Member States decided to launch a reflection exercise concerning the functioning of the ESS (the Krakow Action Plan) targeting the legal and institutional framework, statistical challenges and ESS resource management and programming. High-level task forces were established. The first outcome resulted in a proposal for a revised European statistical law. Furthermore, a new network mechanism to channel knowledge and resources in the ESS was established, the ESSnets. They encompass project work performed by some Member States, with the results being made available for use by all partners in the ESS.

Implementation of the Code of Practice

Ensuring adequate practices, resources and capabilities to produce high-quality statistics with a view to enhancing the independence, integrity and accountability of national statistical offices and Eurostat is the foundation on which the European Statistics Code of Practice was adopted in 2005. Comprehensive self-assessments were complemented by peer reviews carried out over the period 2006-2008, the latter specifically addressing the institutional environment and dissemination practices and the NSIs coordination function in the national statistical systems. Results from all reviews were summarised in a report from the Commission. The setting-up of a European Statistical Governance Advisory Body to oversee the implementation of the CoP was completed.

Quality Management

A wide range of activities was implemented, such as the regularly held quality conferences and quality management initiatives throughout the ESS, including development of the assessment checklist for statistical processes and outputs (DESAP) and of the handbook on data quality assessment methods and tools (DATQAM), although the monitoring of data quality aspects and the harmonisation of quality reporting could be further enhanced. Support was provided to Member States for their quality initiatives, and the resulting good practices disseminated.

User Dialogue and Dissemination

A major achievement was the start of free dissemination of Eurostat's statistical data on the website as from 1 October 2004. As a result, a significant increase in access to the portal, much greater recognition in the media and complete coverage of metadata were observed. The publication programme and the release calendar were improved and different kinds of user surveys implemented. A cooperation scheme for user support in the Member States was developed and user feedback regularly monitored. Finally, the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) was set up to promote dialogue with users.

Infrastructure Development

A new website was opened and a revised reference database implemented for improving access to data and the functionalities of the website. Infrastructure development was performed in such a way that the Single Entry Point was increasingly used by Member States for their data transmissions, thus increasing their efficiency and security. Furthermore, the initiative to develop common standards and guidelines for electronic data exchange and metadata (SDMX) in the international context benefited from Eurostat's leading role.

USE OF HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

As for human resources, over the period there was a steady increase of about 15%, mainly due to the enlargement. Around 82% of the human resources are involved in statistical production, the rest being employed for administrative and policy support. This ratio has remained relatively stable over the years, with a slight increase in recent years. The total budget for programme implementation for the period amounted to €220.6 million.

The resource situation was in general satisfactory over the programme period because new statistical tasks, such as enlargement and new policy demands, were balanced by productivity gains and limited provision of extra resources.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The recommendations listed in the ex-post evaluation report on the 1998-2002 CSP were taken on board to a large extent in implementation of the CSP dealt with here. On two recommendations some work started but was not completed. They concern the recommendation to improve the measurement of Eurostat's performance and the recommendation to identify and manage skills and knowledge at ESS level.

The following recommendations were drawn up by the independent experts during the evaluation of this CSP (more details can be found in the annexed report).

IMPROVE THE LINK BETWEEN THE CSP AND ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMMES

The CSP is designed to be a framework programme formulating a strategic vision for five years and ensuring, together with the annual work programmes, the CSP's flexibility and relevance over the entire period. In using the CSP as a reference, the annual work programmes should make explicit mention of and be based on the respective CSP. Key objectives included in the CSP should be reflected in corresponding hierarchical objectives in the annual programmes. This will make it possible to use the full potential of both kinds of programme and ensure better monitoring of the strategic objectives.

IMPROVE THE MONITORING OF CSP IMPLEMENTATION

A number of monitoring instruments already exist in Eurostat, such as monitoring of data quality, the website, compliance with legal acts, user satisfaction surveys and staff opinion surveys. However, these instruments are not part of an integrated system yet and, moreover; there is no monitoring of the CSP in terms of objectives. Overall monitoring of the CSP should be implemented by defining a key set of indicators that provide sufficient information on the achievement of operational and strategic objectives over the programme period. Monitoring activities in place should be streamlined and integrated into a system of monitoring.

BALANCE DEMAND AND RESOURCES

Eurostat has the task of being the intermediary between the main users at the European level (mainly other Commission services) and NSIs and other providers of national information. Together with those, many instruments were put in place to increase the efficiency of working together. The demand for frequent and detailed data expressed by users will increase in the future because of the launch of new policies and the monitoring needs for implementation and evaluation of ongoing policies. However, there is a limit to using further productivity gains in the ESS to continuously fulfil the increasing demand for sophisticated and complex data. This situation requires strategic reflection regarding demand, combined with modernization of production systems and further harmonisation of processes and possibly an increase in (human and financial) resources throughout the ESS. Efforts should be deployed to address this ESS-wide challenge by improving priority-setting, simplifying legislation, evaluating the impacts of new demand beforehand and reviewing resource needs.

FURTHER ENHANCE TRUST AND PARTNERSHIP IN THE ESS

Trust and partnership between the different stakeholders is crucial for the well-functioning of the ESS. Eurostat as the intermediary between the NSIs and the Commission services is faced with sometimes opposing interests from the different actors in the system. Several bodies and institutionalised instruments exist to

stimulate dialogue among all actors and thus create trust and foster partnership. This trust and partnership form the cornerstone of the system and Eurostat should continue to reinforce them in the future.