



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on EU Statistics

*2972nd ECONOMIC and FINANCIAL AFFAIRS
Brussels, 10 November 2009*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Following the priorities set-up in the ECOFIN Council on 8 November 2005 on statistical governance, on 28 November 2006 on the reduction of the administrative burden related to statistics and on 4 November 2008 on the Status Report on Information Requirements, the ECOFIN Council has reviewed the progress made in these areas and endorses the EFC opinion on EU Statistics.

2009 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements

The Council ENDORSES the 2009 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in the EMU. In particular, the Council

- WELCOMES the European Statistical System's (ESS) and the European System of Central Bank's (ESCB) response to the economic and financial crisis. NOTES that the ESS as a whole was able to provide relevant and to a large extent timely statistical information needed for analysing the essential effects of the crisis.

P R E S S

- WELCOMES the progress achieved with the Principal European Economic Indicators (PEEIs) matching most of the targets fixed by the 2002 Communication of the Commission¹, and the ongoing work on the updated and new PEEIs targets fixed in 2008. CALLS UPON the ESS to enhance co-operation in relation to the PEEIs and to step up efforts to fully achieve all PEEI targets, in particular in the area of services, labour market statistics, housing statistics, and the timeliness of the quarterly sector accounts and the feasibility of reliable flash estimates.
- CALLS UPON the ESS to continue its efforts to ensure high quality statistics that are needed for structural analysis according to the needs highlighted by the Economic Policy Committee.
- INVITES Eurostat and the ECB to provide an updated Status Report on the fulfilment of EMU statistical requirements in 2010.
- NOTES that the crisis has emphasised the statistical needs and IS AWARE that Member States should ensure the appropriate level of resources for meeting those needs.

Reduction of statistical burden and the future production of statistics in the EU

The Council WELCOMES the Report on the implementation of the Communication on reduction of response burden, simplification, and priority-setting providing an update of the commitments given and ongoing actions. The Council WELCOMES² the direction outlined in the Commission communication on a vision for the next decade² and NOTES that the two Communications are complementary and that both are to be pursued. In this context; the Council furthermore LOOKS FORWARD to the development of a common ESS strategy on the basis of the latter Commission communication taking fully into account the subsidiarity principle. This would include cooperation with users and between the ESS and the ESCB. In particular, the Council

- NOTES that most of the proposals concerning the simplification of statistical requirements in the areas identified in 2006³ have been implemented or are pending adoption. However, more work is needed on additional issues.

¹ COM (2002) 661 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and The Council on Eurozone Statistics “Towards Improved Methodologies for Eurozone Statistics And Indicators”

² COM(2009) 404 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the production method of EU statistics: a vision for the next decade

³ COM(2006) 693 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on reduction of the response burden, simplification and priority-setting in the field of Community statistics

- REITERATES the need to continue, without jeopardizing the quality and availability of essential data for policy-making in the EU, the efforts on reduction of response burden, simplification, and priority-setting. ENCOURAGES the ESS to continue the measurement exercises for establishing reliable trends in response burden over time.
- CALLS UPON the ESS to develop structures and production processes of statistics in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the production of European statistics.
- INVITES Eurostat to consult extensively all members of the ESS and to report on concrete developments in relation to the Communication by the Commission on a vision for the next decade, including further progress on burden measurement, and priority-setting by autumn 2011.

Statistical Governance

The Council reviewed the progress made with the efforts to enhance independence, integrity and accountability of the European Statistical System and the development of statistical governance structure. In particular, the Council:

- WELCOMES the recent establishment of the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) and the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB), which together with the adoption of the new Regulation on European Statistics forms important cornerstones of the revamped European Statistical System governance structure.
- WELCOMES in general the first annual report of the ESGAB on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice by Eurostat and the European Statistical System, especially regarding the plans for future work of the ESGAB with a particular focus on the principle of Professional independence. In this respect, adequate professional capacity and integrity remain the key.
- WELCOMES the clear progress achieved on the compliance with the statistical Code of Practice and NOTES that around one third of the improvement actions have been completed. ENCOURAGES National Statistical Institutes to continue the implementation of their improvement actions and to take full advantage of the experience within the ESS, also considering the co-ordination work with other data providers.

Revision of SNA and ESA

- The Council WELCOMES the progress made in the revision of SNA and ESA and LOOKS FORWARD to an impact assessment in early 2010.
- While the process is progressing smoothly, the Council CALLS ON Eurostat and the Member States to step up their efforts so that major methodological issues should be resolved before the introduction of the Commission proposal.

GDP and beyond

- The Council STRESSES the need to step up efforts to improve the interlinkages between economic, social and environmental statistics and WELCOMES in this context the contribution of the Commission communication⁴ on “GDP and beyond” and the so called Stiglitz report⁵ and invites the ESS to contribute to these initiatives.

Fiscal notifications by Greece

- The Council REGRETS the renewed problems in the Greek fiscal statistics. The Council CALLS ON the Greek government to urgently take measures to restore the confidence of the European Union in Greek statistical information and the related institutional setting. The Council INVITES the Commission to produce a report before the end of 2009. Moreover, the Council INVITES the Commission to propose the appropriate measures to be taken in this situation. In this context, the Council WELCOMES the commitment by the Government to address this issue swiftly and seriously and CONSIDERS the measures announced recently, such as those aiming to make the National Statistical Service fully independent, to be steps in the right direction. "

⁴ COM(2009) 433 final, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament; GDP and beyond – Measuring progress in a changing world

⁵ Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi (2009): Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress