EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT 2009 - 2014

Plenary sitting

A7-0037/2012

14.2.2012

REPORT

on quality management for European statistics
(2011/2289(INI))

Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

Rapporteur: Edward Scicluna

CONTENTS

Page

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION 3

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT 7

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE 10

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on quality management for European statistics
(2011/2289(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'Towards robust quality management for European Statistics' (COM(2011)0211),

– having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Regional Development (A7-0037/2012),

A. whereas Eurostat has existed since 1953 and the need for safeguarding its independence is widely recognised;

B. whereas reliable and accurate statistics are essential to allow effective economic and budgetary policy making by Member States and at Union level;

C. whereas the success of the Europe 2020 Strategy for Growth and Jobs and the economic governance package, including the European Semester, demands high-quality independent statistics;

D. whereas users of statistics should be supplied with relevant, timely and accurate data which are collected and compiled by national agencies in accordance with the principles of impartiality, objectivity and professional independence;

E. whereas statistics should be publicly accessible, easily understandable to both policy-makers and citizens and suitable for comparison on a year-to-year basis;

F. whereas the quality of European statistics is dependent on the integrity of the entire production process; whereas the ongoing modernisation of statistical production methods represents a vital public investment in streamlining the entire production chain, and requires continued commitment at EU and national level;

G. whereas the debt crisis in the eurozone has highlighted the dangers of statistical inaccuracy and statistical fraud arising from weaknesses in both the quality of upstream public-accounting data and the current statistical governance arrangement;

H. whereas statistical offices should not only be statutorily independent, but should also have mechanisms and 'firewalls' in place to ensure that statistical offices are separated from the political process and thus avoid systemic failures; at the same time, however, it is to be emphasised that the State is responsible for the correctness and authenticity of statistical data;

I. whereas the relation between Eurostat and the national courts of auditors should be strengthened;

J. whereas national statistical institutes should be reformed in the Member States to comply with the new European legislation as soon as possible;

K. whereas the approximately 350 statistical regulations applying to all Member States impose a proportionately higher statistical compliance burden on the smaller Member States;

L. whereas Eurostat will provide the economic indicators required for the surveillance of fiscal policies and for the scoreboard on macro-economic imbalances, together with new enforcement mechanisms; whereas recent legal reforms, most notably the economic governance 'six pack', have placed robust and reliable statistics at the core of economic governance at EU level;

1. Takes the view that a systemic approach to quality needs to be taken, which may require a reform of the method of producing European statistics and a gradual transition from a corrective approach to a preventive approach to the quality management of European statistics in general and public finance statistics in particular; welcomes the binding nature of the rules regarding production, and verification of the accuracy, of European statistics; considers that having independent statistical bodies is essential to maintaining the credibility of statistical data;

2. Calls on the Commission to provide assistance and expertise to Member States to help them tackle research constraints and major methodological obstacles, with a view to ensuring compliance and provision of high-quality data;

3. Supports the Commission's intention of proposing amendments to Regulation 223/2009 (Statistical Regulation) in order to establish a proactive approach to monitoring and assessing public finance data at an early upstream stage in order to allow for corrective action at the earliest possible point; seconds the proposal to establish a legal framework aimed at reinforcing the governance framework, especially as regards the professional independence of national statistical authorities and Eurostat, and requiring all Member States to formally adopt a commitment to take all necessary measures at national level to maintain confidence in statistics and to allow for more rigorous enforcement of the European Statistics Code of Practice;

4. Urges the Commission to propose to the European Parliament and the Council proposals for legislation aimed at introducing elements of the revised European Statistics Code of Practice into EU law, with a view to distinguishing clearly between the responsibilities and competences of national statistical agencies and those of Member State governments and ensure more transparent and coordinated accountability for data quality;

5. Urges Eurostat to pursue, in liaison with key data providers and data users, its efforts to modernise the European statistics production methods in order to maintain cost-effectiveness;

6. Calls on Eurostat to ensure that public accounting systems are established in all Member States in a standardised manner and that they are strengthened with both internal and external audit mechanisms, including the application of the recently revised legal framework of Regulation 479/2009, as well as further legislative proposals as deemed

appropriate; welcomes the European Commission's intention to give Eurostat greater investigative powers;

7. Emphasises that all Members States should make sure that statistics are accurate across all levels of government; encourages Eurostat to disclose publicly whether it has doubts concerning such accuracy across all types of statistics;

8. Considers that the recently adopted economic governance package requires standards regarding granular data on public-sector exposures related to guarantees and contingent liabilities, for example through public-sector guarantees and exposures to public-private partnerships (PPPs); these should be developed promptly and disclosed by Eurostat, taking all levels of government into account;

9. Welcomes the action of the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) in delivering independent supervision of Eurostat and the European Statistical System; calls on Eurostat and other statistical offices to implement the recommendations the ESGAB put forward in its 2011 annual report;

10. Emphasises the need for Eurostat to ensure transparency with regards to its own staff by publishing information regarding its officials (who are civil servants) and contract agents, and to provide information about the way in which national experts are deployed;

11. Emphasises that the independence of the statistical services must be safeguarded at both national and European level from the threat of possible political interventions;

12. Notes that the quality management system will require close coordination between Eurostat and national bodies responsible for verifying upstream public finance data; calls on the Commission to present proposals ensuring greater independence and greater coherence in the competences of the national courts of auditors in verifying the quality of the sources used to establish national debt and deficit figures and strengthening the coordinating role of the European Court of Auditors;

13. Underlines the fact that quality management of government financial statistics and other national statistical data, as well as precision and timely reporting of the data, is a prerequisite for the European Semester to function properly;

14. Recognises that providing accurate statistics can in many cases involve collecting and collating data from numerous sources; notes, therefore, that shortening timetables for publication of statistics may, in some cases, reduce the reliability or accuracy of statistics or increase the cost of data collection; recommends that, when considering best practice in this area, the balance between timeliness, reliability and cost of preparation be carefully considered;

15. Urges Eurostat to look at ways to make its publications, particularly those online, more user-friendly to the average citizen and non-professionals especially with regard to the use of graphs; believes that Eurostat’s website should allow easier access to complete long-term data series and include intuitive comparative graphs in order to give more added value to citizens; adds, furthermore, that its periodic updates should provide, where possible, information on each Member State and offer year-on-year and month-on-month

series and, where possible and useful, long-term data series;

16. Emphasises that the provision of accurate, relevant, high-quality statistics is of key importance to sustainable and balanced regional development; notes that precise, accurate data constitute a basis for obtaining detailed information on individual areas such as demographics, the economy and the environment, and that they therefore play a key role in the regional development decision-making process, in particular in the context of Europe 2020 Strategy implementation;

17. Calls on the Commission to continue to address the need for reliable statistical information that enables European policies to better respond to economic, social and territorial realities at regional level;

18. Supports Eurostat's intention of establishing a legal framework for 'Commitments on Confidence in Statistics'; stresses that compliance with the data confidentiality rule within the ESS (European Statistical System), as well as with the principle of subsidiarity, will help to increase trust in statistical agencies;

19. Notes that it is essential to improve the way that public accounting systems work; asks the Commission, nevertheless, to clarify whether standardising the public accounting systems in all the Member States is necessary and possible; calls on the Commission to draw up a common methodology and implement effective, suitable, proven solutions;

20. Stresses the need to develop a coherent system for research into socio-economic processes in cross-border areas, including those in the regions located on the external borders of the European Union, together with statistics for macro-regions, in order to obtain a reliable, complete and accurate picture of the economy in terms of regional and macro-regional development, covering both the urban dimension and rural areas; believes that the research mechanisms connected with the balance of payments should be improved; notes, furthermore, that regional and national accounts should be closely monitored as part of a robust system of quality management for European statistics;

21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the national parliaments.

27.1.2012

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

for the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

on quality management for European statistics
(2011/2289(INI))

Rapporteur: Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Emphasises that the provision of accurate, relevant and high-quality statistics is of key importance to sustainable and balanced regional development; notes that precise and exact data constitutes a basis for obtaining detailed information on individual areas such as demographics, the economy and the environment, and therefore plays a key role in the regional development decision-making process, in particular within the context of Europe 2020 Strategy implementation;

2. Calls on the Commission to continue to address the need for reliable statistical information that enables EU policies to better respond to economic, social and territorial realities at regional level;

3. Supports Eurostat's intention to establish a legal framework for 'Commitments on Confidence in Statistics'; stresses that compliance with the data confidentiality rule within the ESS (European Statistical System), as well as with the principle of subsidiarity, will help to increase trust in statistical agencies;

4. Notes that it is essential to improve how public accounting systems work; asks the Commission nevertheless to clarify whether standardising the public accounting systems in all the Member States is necessary and possible; calls on the Commission to draw up a common methodology and implement effective, suitable and proven solutions;

5. Stresses the need to develop a coherent system for research into socio-economic processes in cross-border areas, including those in the regions located on the external borders of the European Union, together with statistics for macro-regions, in order to obtain a reliable,

complete and accurate picture of the economy in terms of regional and macro-regional development, covering both the urban dimension and rural areas; believes that the research mechanisms connected with the balance of payments should be improved; notes, furthermore, that regional and national accounts should be closely monitored as part of a robust system of quality management for EU statistics.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	26.1.2012
Result of final vote	+: 44 –: 0 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	François Alfonsi, Luís Paulo Alves, Catherine Bearder, Victor Boştinaru, John Bufton, Alain Cadec, Salvatore Caronna, Francesco De Angelis, Tamás Deutsch, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Brice Hortefeux, Danuta Maria Hübner, Filiz Hakaeva Hyusmenova, Vincenzo Iovine, María Irigoyen Pérez, Seán Kelly, Constanze Angela Krehl, Petru Constantin Luhan, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Riikka Manner, Iosif Matula, Erminia Mazzoni, Ana Miranda, Jens Nilsson, Jan Olbrycht, Wojciech Michał Olejniczak, Younous Omarjee, Markus Pieper, Monika Smolková, Georgios Stavrakakis, Nuno Teixeira, Michail Tremopoulos, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Oldřich Vlasák, Kerstin Westphal, Hermann Winkler, Joachim Zeller, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Evgeni Kirilov, Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, James Nicholson, Ivari Padar, Heide Rühle, Giommaria Uggias
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Julie Girling

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	6.2.2012
Result of final vote	+: 34 –: 0 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Burkhard Balz, Sharon Bowles, Udo Bullmann, Pascal Canfin, Nikolaos Chountis, George Sabin Cutaş, Leonardo Domenici, Markus Ferber, Elisa Ferreira, Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, Jean-Paul Gauzès, Sven Giegold, Sylvie Goulard, Liem Hoang Ngoc, Wolf Klinz, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Philippe Lamberts, Werner Langen, Astrid Lulling, Arlene McCarthy, Juan Andrés Naranjo Escobar, Edward Scicluna, Peter Simon, Peter Skinner, Sampo Terho, Marianne Thyssen, Corien Wortmann-Kool, Pablo Zalba Bidegain
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Sophie Auconie, Elena Băsescu, David Casa, Sari Essayah, Vicky Ford, Enrique Guerrero Salom, Thomas Händel, Anne E. Jensen, Olle Ludvigsson, Thomas Mann