

European statistics

2007/0220(COD) - 16/10/2007 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to revise the existing legal base for European statistics.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: official statistics play a fundamental role in today's society. Institutions, policy makers, economic operators, markets and individuals rely heavily on high quality statistics to describe as accurately as possible economic, social, environmental and cultural developments. The availability of impartial and objective statistical information is essential – especially at a European level where statistics are increasingly relied on in the field of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Further, reliable information is vital to ascertain economic growth.

Currently, the production and dissemination of European statistics is achieved through the European Statistical System (ESS). A system, which is effectively an operational partnership between Eurostat and National Statistical Institutes (NSIs). Some European statistics are also produced by the European Central Bank and by the European System of Central Banks (ESCB). Evaluations show that the ESS operates efficiently and satisfies the requirements of independence, integrity and accountability. However, recent developments indicate the need to consolidate Community law and the institutions structure of the ESS in order to clearly define responsibilities as well as to simplify underpinning structures.

CONTENT: the purpose of this proposal, therefore, is to revise the existing legal framework that governs the development of EU statistics in order to meet future needs and challenges. In order to do so, the Commission is proposing to:

- adapt definitions to Treaty requirements;
- consolidate ESS activities into Community law;
- clarify the role of the NSI's;
- clarify the role of Eurostat;
- strengthen reference to existing European Statistics Code of Practice;
- recognise the European approach to statistics; and
- reinforce the quality of European statistics.

The proposal also addresses the operation of the ESS notably through the establishment of the ESS Committee and the ESS Partnership Group. It addresses the matter of enhanced cooperation with other bodies of the ESS as well as with the ESCB.

Planning and implementation of the multi-annual programmes are also revised so that individual statistical actions may be carried out by the Commission under less restrictive conditions.

On a final point, the Commission is proposing to introduce more flexibility on statistical confidentiality whilst preserving a high level of data protection.