

European statistics

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The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs adopted a report drafted by Andreas **SCHWAB** (EPP-ED, DE) and amended the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Statistics.

The main amendments – adopted in the 1st reading of codecision procedure – are as follows:

Independence: the definition of 'professional independence' is expanded to mean free from any pressures from political or interest groups or national or Community authorities, without prejudice to institutional requirements, such as national institutional or budgetary provisions or the definition of statistical needs. In relation to the definition for 'statistical confidentiality', the committee stated that data shall not be displayed in such a way as to allow the direct or indirect identification of statistical units.

European Statistical System (ESS): Parliament's Legal Service takes the view that the Commission's proposal to set up two different bodies (ESS Committee and ESS Partnership Group) to deal with comitology and non-comitology matters is not required by law. A single body, the 'ESS Committee' should therefore deal with all relevant comitology and non-comitology matters. The ESS Committee shall be composed of the representatives of NSIs, who are national specialists for statistics. It shall be chaired by the Commission (Eurostat).

National coordination responsibilities: each Member States shall designate a body to take responsibility for coordinating all activities at national level for the development, production and dissemination of European Statistics and thereby acting as the contact point for the Commission (Eurostat) on statistical matters. That body shall be referred to as the NSI in the Regulation. The Commission, within its structure, shall designate a body entrusted with the development, production and dissemination of European Statistics and the applicable rules and procedures of the Commission. That body shall be referred to as the Commission (Eurostat).

European Statistics Code of Practice: a new article is inserted, stating that a European Statistics Code of Practice shall aim at ensuring public trust in European statistics by establishing how European Statistics are to be developed, produced and disseminated in conformity with the statistical principles and best international statistical practice. The Code of Practice has been established and shall be reviewed and updated as necessary by the ESS Committee. The Commission shall publish amendments thereto.

European Statistical Programme: the impact and cost effectiveness of the European Statistical Programme shall be assessed by external institution. The Programme shall lay down priorities concerning the need for information for the purpose of carrying out the tasks of the Community. Needs should be weighed against resources required at Community and national level to provide the required statistics, and also against the response burden and respondents' associated costs.

European Approach to Statistics: in specific and duly justified cases and within the framework of the European Statistical Programme, the European Approach to Statistics aims at: i) maximising the availability of statistical aggregates at Community level and ensuring that European Statistics are more up-to-date; ii) reducing the response burden on the respondent and the burden on the NSIs on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis.

Confidential data: confidential data obtained by the national authorities or the Commission (Eurostat) exclusively for the production of European Statistics shall be used exclusively for statistical purposes

unless the statistical unit has given its unambiguous consent to their use for any other purposes. National authorities and the Commission (Eurostat) shall apply all necessary measures to ensure the harmonisation of principles and guidelines as regards the physical and logical protection of confidential data. Confidential data transmitted in accordance with the provisions of the regulation shall be used exclusively for statistical purposes and shall be accessible only to staff working in statistical activities within their specific domain of work.