

Fiscal statistics: governance and quality of statistical data in the context of the excessive deficit procedure (amend. Regulation (EC) No 3605/93)

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In line with Council Regulation No 3605/93, as amended, the Commission (Eurostat) presented a report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the quality of the actual data reported by Member States. The report must provide an overall assessment of the compliance with accounting rules, completeness, reliability, timeliness and consistency of the data. This is the second report provided in this context.

This report is based on the main findings and results of the EDP reporting in 2007, focusing on the most up-to-date information, i.e. the latest reporting exercise (October 2007), and, where appropriate, making comparisons with the April 2007 reporting.

Member States are required to report their planned and actual deficit and debt levels to the Commission twice a year, before 1 April and 1 October. During 2007, the EDP reporting covered the years 2003 to 2007. The figures for 2007 are those planned by the national authorities, while the 2003 to 2006 figures are final, semi-finalised, provisional or estimated. Compliance with the reporting deadlines is usually good, and in the second reporting in 2007 all the Member States reported their data on, or before, 30 September except Luxembourg, which reported on 1 October. In the April reporting exercise, all the Member States reported their figures before 1 April.

Most of the Member States completed all the EDP notification tables. In the October 2007 EDP notification, eight Member States either did not provide the link between the working balance and the EDP surplus/deficit for all the sub-sectors or for all the years or reported working balances equal to the EDP surplus/deficit. Not all the Member States provided the breakdowns requested for the items loans and equity. In the October 2007 notification, five Member States did not provide the breakdown for loans and two Member States did not split equity.

All the Member States submitted their replies to the "Questionnaire related to the notification tables". Although coverage of answers improved between April and October 2007, a majority of countries still do not report all the details requested.

In order to maintain a continuous dialogue with Member States, Eurostat also makes several EDP dialogue visits during the year with the aim of reviewing reported data, examining methodological issues, discussing statistical sources and processes described in the inventories and assessing compliance with the relevant accounting rules, for example on the delimitation of general government, the time of recording and the classification of government transactions and liabilities. Recurring themes discussed during the visits included, in particular, the classification of units (including infrastructure, TV and radio, hospitals and universities), capital injections, public-private partnerships, EU flows and the recording of guarantees. No EDP methodological visits were made in 2007.

Eurostat concludes that progress on the quality of fiscal data continued in 2007. Member States have provided fuller information, both in EDP notification tables and in other relevant statistical returns, like

the questionnaire relating to the notification tables. Overall consistency of EDP data with the reported ESA95 government accounts is now satisfactory and is improving, particularly on the financial side, compared with the situation in 2006.

In this context, Eurostat expressed no reservations on the quality of the reported data in 2007.

In spite of the recognised improvements, some problems still persist linked to compliance with accounting rules and the quality of some of the statistical information provided. As in the report covering 2006, the Commission would therefore invite Member States to continue investing in the quality of government finance statistics with a view to meeting the requirements of the Treaty. This is the only way to achieve the desired level of quality as regards the compliance with the accounting rules, completeness, reliability, timeliness and consistency of government data.