

Community statistics: 2003-2007 programme

2001/0281(COD) - 13/01/2009 - Follow-up document

Decision No 2367/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Community statistical programme 2003 to 2007 (CSP) was adopted on 16 December 2002. The programme was to be guided by the principal Community policy priorities of economic and monetary union, European Union enlargement and competitiveness, sustainable development and the social agenda. It was structured around the objectives of Eurostat's mission statement, of high-quality statistics for all EU-policy purposes and of the efficient use of resources and budgetary implementation.

This document constitutes the required evaluation report on the implementation of the programme. It is based on the mid-term evaluation prepared by Eurostat in 2006 and on a report provided by an external evaluation company as required in Article 4 of the CSP.

The report presents the main findings concerning the achievements of the objectives stated in the programme. The Commission points out that **almost all the objectives were accomplished**. It emphasises the demonstrated ability of the European Statistical System (ESS) to ensure that new and emerging policy needs were underpinned with additional statistical information. Furthermore, a multiannual programme on the modernisation of European Enterprise and Trade statistics was prepared. This progress was possible due to intensive work on issuing new or revising legislation and by developing and implementing new methodologies and tools. A relatively large number of activities concentrated on quality assurance and on the development of the ESS as well as the development and implementation of the Code of Practice, the opening of free access to all Eurostat statistical data on its web-site and actions linked to better priority setting and reducing the response burden.

In this context, the following **recommendations** were drawn up by the independent experts during the evaluation of this CSP:

Improve the link between the CSP and annual work programmes: the CSP is designed to be a framework programme formulating a strategic vision for five years and ensuring, together with the annual work programmes, the CSP's flexibility and relevance over the entire period. In using the CSP as a reference, the annual work programmes should make explicit mention of and be based on the respective CSP. Key objectives included in the CSP should be reflected in corresponding hierarchical objectives in the annual programmes. This will make it possible to use the full potential of both kinds of programme and ensure better monitoring of the strategic objectives.

Improve the monitoring of CSP implementation: a number of monitoring instruments already exist in Eurostat, such as monitoring of data quality, the website, compliance with legal acts, user satisfaction surveys and staff opinion surveys. However, these instruments are not part of an integrated system yet and, moreover; there is no monitoring of the CSP in terms of objectives. Overall monitoring of the CSP should be implemented by defining a key set of indicators that provide sufficient information on the achievement of operational and strategic objectives over the programme period. Monitoring activities in place should be streamlined and integrated into a system of monitoring.

Balance demand and resources: Eurostat has the task of being the intermediary between the main users at the European level (mainly other Commission services) and NSIs and other providers of national information. Together with those, many instruments were put in place to increase the efficiency of working together. The demand for frequent and detailed data expressed by users will increase in the future because of the launch of new policies and the monitoring needs for implementation and evaluation of ongoing policies. However, there is a limit to using further productivity gains in the ESS to continuously

fulfil the increasing demand for sophisticated and complex data. This situation requires strategic reflection regarding demand, combined with modernisation of production systems and further harmonisation of processes and possibly an increase in (human and financial) resources throughout the ESS. Efforts should be deployed to address this ESS-wide challenge by improving priority-setting, simplifying legislation, evaluating the impacts of new demand beforehand and reviewing resource needs.

Further enhance trust and partnership in the ESS: trust and partnership between the different stakeholders is crucial for the well functioning of the ESS. Eurostat as the intermediary between the NSIs and the Commission services is faced with sometimes opposing interests from the different actors in the system. Several bodies and institutionalised instruments exist to stimulate dialogue among all actors and thus create trust and foster partnership. This trust and partnership form the cornerstone of the system and Eurostat should continue to reinforce them in the future.