

European statistics

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OPINION OF THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK at the request of the Council of the European Union on a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European statistics.

On 8 November 2007, the European Central Bank (ECB) received a request from the Council of the European Union for an opinion on a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European statistics.

The ECB welcomes the proposed regulation as it acknowledges the existence of **two parallel and complementary regimes** for the production of European statistics and, at the same time, recognises the European System of Central Banks' (ESCB) independence in the pursuit of its statistical functions. The ECB also welcomes the reference to the important advisory role played by the Committee on monetary, financial and balance of payments statistics (CMFB).

The ECB also notes with satisfaction that the proposed regulation recognises the need for **close cooperation between the European Statistical System (ESS) and the ESCB** in the development, production and dissemination of European statistics produced by both systems. In this respect, the ECB notes that the requirement for the ESS and the ESCB to cooperate closely will operate within the primary law framework applicable to the ESCB under the Treaty.

Furthermore, the ECB welcomes that the proposed regulation addresses the issue of the **exchange of confidential data**, for statistical purposes only, between the ESS and the ESCB. It is widely accepted that an enhanced exchange of confidential information between the ESS and the ESCB is increasingly necessary to ensure the quality and consistency of European statistics, while minimising the burden on respondents. However, the ECB is of the view that, contrary to what is currently stated in the proposed regulation, such an exchange should not be made dependent on the enactment of further, sectoral legal acts that would need to explicitly authorise such exchanges of confidential statistical information.

Moreover, the ECB underlines that it is important to obtain **full legal access to all required existing data** in order to reduce the burden on respondents. However, it suggests that the legal framework needs to provide for the determination of practical arrangements and 'modalities' for achieving effective access, rather than the 'limits and conditions', as that suggests an unwarranted restriction of such access.

Lastly, Article 253 of the Treaty provides that regulations adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council must refer to any opinions which were required to be obtained pursuant to the Treaty. The ECB would therefore suggest that the recitals to the proposed regulation have regard to this opinion of the ECB.