Resolution on the quality of statistical data in the Union and enhanced auditing powers by the Commission (Eurostat)

2010/2728(RSP) - 17/06/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate that took place on 16 June 2010 on Oral Question O-0080/2010 to the Commission, the European Parliament adopted a resolution, tabled on behalf of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, on the quality of statistical data in the Union and enhanced auditing powers by the Commission (Eurostat).

Parliament draws attention to the tendency among Member States to keep certain liabilities off their balance sheets, in particular in respect of future payments necessitated by public-sector pensions and by long-term contracts with the private sector for the leasing or provision of public facilities. It calls for a solution that ensures consistent and open disclosure of such liabilities in national statistics.

Members underline that accurate statistics and improved verification of the reliability of aggregate data provided to Eurostat are essential prerequisites if any improved surveillance is to be effective. Members stress that **Eurostat's powers should be enhanced** and that open and transparent statistical information should be a precondition for obtaining Structural Fund support.

Referring to the Commission’s report on Greek Government Deficit and Debt Statistics, Parliament regards the Commission’s proposal as the minimum needed in the light of the case of Greece and emphasises that the reporting obligations need to be enforced in all Member States and that reporting should include details of any previous off-balance-sheet activity.

Parliament calls on the Council to:

- ensure that political undertakings in the area of statistics are honoured and to accept in full the Commission proposal and the relevant amendments tabled by the ECB and Parliament;
- strengthen the role and independence of the Commission (Eurostat); and
- increase support for OLAF's work.

Parliament calls on the Council and the Member States to:

- accept unreservedly the need for regular dialogue and in-depth monitoring visits by the Commission (Eurostat), so as to enhance monitoring of the reported data and provide permanent assurance of the quality of the data;
- accept that the Commission (Eurostat) should be given responsibility to carry out unannounced inspections in Member States to verify statistical data; and
- provide the Commission (Eurostat) with public finance data based on a standardised and internationally accepted method of accounting.

Parliament calls on the Member States to:

- end the use of off-balance-sheet debt structures of any kind;
- provide the Commission (Eurostat) and the national statistical institutions with the necessary access and resources in order to make real checks on the underlying data possible; and

- establish clear responsibilities as regards the production and compilation of statistical data; clear national responsibilities, including personal responsibilities, are a necessary requirement for the work for the Commission (Eurostat).

Parliament calls on the Commission to:

- state what powers and staff it needs to carry out effective and real monitoring of national statistics in the medium and long term;
- do its utmost to prevent methodological shortcomings and unsatisfactory administrative problems, as in the case of Greece, from appearing again in any Member State;
- propose binding legal measures to oblige Member States to end the practice of using off-balance-sheet debt structures of any kind; and
- tighten up the implementation of the European Statistical Code of Practice, which strengthens the independence, integrity and accountability of the National Statistical Institutes and of the Commission (Eurostat) with the aim of promoting the application of best international statistical principles, methods and practices by all producers of European statistics in order to optimise their quality.

It also urges the Member States which are already in or are applying for membership of the eurozone to allow the ECB to take part in unannounced inspections and to empower its staff to have access to any of their statistics. The ECB is urged to cooperate closely with the Commission (Eurostat) to ensure the consistency of the Member States' statistics.