Excessive deficit procedure: quality of statistical data

2010/0035(NLE) - 26/07/2010 - Final act

PURPOSE: to supplement the existing governance framework relating to fiscal statistics.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Regulation (EU) No 679/2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 479/2009 as regards the quality of statistical data in the context of the excessive deficit procedure.

CONTENT: the credibility of budgetary surveillance crucially hinges upon reliable budgetary statistics. It is of the utmost importance that data reported by Member States under Council Regulation (EC) No 479 /2009 on the application of the Protocol on the excessive deficit procedure annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community are of high quality and reliability.

The European Union governance framework for fiscal statistics has been further developed and institutional setting updated over the past years, notably with a view to improving the monitoring of the government accounts by the Commission (Eurostat).

The revised governance framework for fiscal statistics has functioned well overall and, in general, has produced a satisfactory outcome in terms of the reporting of relevant fiscal data on government deficit and debt. In particular, the Member States have predominantly demonstrated a solid record of cooperation in good faith and an operational ability to report fiscal data of high quality.

However, recent developments have also clearly demonstrated that the current governance framework for fiscal statistics still does not mitigate, to the extent necessary, the risk of incorrect or inaccurate data being notified to the Commission.

The amendments made to Regulation (EC) No 479/2009 allow the Commission and Member States to work more effectively together in improving the quality and reliability of government finance statistics.

Permanent dialogue: the Commission (Eurostat) shall ensure a permanent dialogue with Member States' statistical authorities. To this end, the Commission (Eurostat) shall carry out in all Member States regular dialogue visits, as well as possible methodological visits. When organising dialogue and methodological visits, the Commission (Eurostat) shall transmit its provisional findings to the Member States concerned for comments. The dialogue visits are designed to review actual data reported according to the Regulation, to examine methodological issues, to discuss statistical processes and sources described in the inventories, and to assess compliance with the accounting rules. The dialogue visits shall be used to identify risks or potential problems with respect to the quality of the reported data.

Methodological visits: the methodological visits are designed to monitor the processes and verify the accounts which justify the reported data, and to draw detailed conclusions as to the quality of reported data. The methodological visits shall only be undertaken in exceptional cases where significant risks or problems with respect to the quality of the data have been clearly identified.

Member States shall take all necessary measures to facilitate the methodological visits. Member States are expected to provide, at the request of the Commission (Eurostat), and on a voluntary basis, the assistance of experts in national accounting, including for the preparation and carrying-out of the methodological visits. In the exercise of their duties, these experts shall provide independent expertise.

In the framework of the methodological visits, the Commission (Eurostat) shall have the right to access the accounts of all government entities at central, state, local and social security levels, including the provision of existing underlying detailed accounting and budgetary information. In this context, accounting and budgetary information includes:

- transactions and balance sheets,
- relevant statistical surveys and questionnaires of general government and further related information, such as analytical documents,
- information from relevant national, regional and local authorities on the execution of the budget of all sub-sectors of the general government,
- the accounts of extra-budgetary bodies, corporations, and non-profit institutions and other similar bodies that are part of the general government sector in national accounts,
- the accounts of social security funds.

Member States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that institutions and officials responsible for the reporting of the actual data to the Commission (Eurostat) and of the underlying government accounts are accountable and act in accordance with principles established in Regulation (EC) No 223/2009.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 19/08/2010.