

Modernisation of European Enterprise and Trade Statistics, MEETS Programme 2009-2013

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The Commission presents a report on the implementation of Decision No 1297/2008/EC on a Programme for the Modernisation of European Enterprise and Trade Statistics (MEETS), in accordance with its obligations under that Decision.

This report is the second such report to provide an overview of the progress made by the Member States and the Commission (Eurostat) in implementing the activities under the MEETS Programme since the previous reporting period. The emphasis in the first report was on the actions started and/or continued in the annual work programmes for 2009 and 2010. For these first two years, the level of implementation of MEETS operational credits was almost 80%. The principal explanation for this figure is the reduced ability of Member States to take part in EU projects after the economic and financial crisis of 2008.

This second report covers the initial main results achieved so far, as well as the major initiatives covered by the annual work programme for 2011, which was adopted in 2010.

Activities: the main pillars of the MEETS programme continue to be organised around the collaborative networks in the European Statistical System (ESS), known as 'ESSnets'. All of the eight planned ESSnets are now up and running, the last one having been launched in early 2011. As a result of the streamlining exercise, the 2011 work programme provides for a longer period of support to a number of these ESSnets in the form of multi-annual grants, in place of annual grants.

Funding has also been provided for the individual grant agreements concluded with National Statistical Institutes (NSIs), and a number of external studies were also contracted. Other projects are ongoing which have no financial implications or which are integrated into other activities.

In total, the EU budget for the 2011 work programme is set at a little over **EUR 11 million**, and it covers 19 annual actions plus the technical and administrative support needed to implement the programme. Grants, either through ESSnets or in the form of individual grants, remain the most common instrument for financing the actions (at around 90%).

The report discusses the initiatives and activities undertaken under the four main objectives. It notes that the MEETS Decision details the actions which are to be financed during the period covered by the programme. This justifies the relatively large number of initiatives undertaken in the first two years of the programme. However, one of the results of the economic and financial crisis of 2008 was a "saturation" of financing possibilities in the NSIs owing to the lack of human resources. Therefore, there was a need to streamline the programme by integrating certain initiatives and/or to focus them towards the six main areas organised through ESSnets: consistency of concepts and methods, EGR, profiling large and complex multinational enterprise groups, micro-data linking and data warehousing in statistical production, methodology for business statistics, and the use of administrative and accounting data.

The ESSnets that started in 2009 or early 2010 did a great deal of work, in particular on the EGR methodology, profiling and the use of administrative data. For the other main pillars of the MEETS programme (consistency of legal acts, data warehouse and data linking initiatives), the activities concerned preparatory work, putting the basic infrastructure in place (launching ESSnets, multi-beneficiary grant agreements, etc.) and creating networks of national experts.

In addition, financing via individual grants continued, mainly in order to accompany the progress in methodology and to test certain methodological recommendations, but also to develop tools for more efficient extraction, transmission and processing of data. A number of results are already available, but most actions are still ongoing.

It is important to regard all actions as inter-connected initiatives, so as to make the national procedures for the collection of enterprise and trade statistics more efficient. This requires a long-term commitment and constant monitoring. Further progress reports will therefore be provided in 2012 and 2013. The final evaluation will take place at the beginning of 2014.