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

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In accordance with the requirements of Decision No 1297/2008/EC on a Programme for the Modernisation of European Enterprise and Trade Statistics (MEETS), the Commission presents its **third annual report** on the implementation of the MEETS Programme.

It recalls that the emphasis in the first report was on the actions started and/or continued in the annual work programmes for 2009 and 2010. The second report covered the initial main results achieved, as well as the major initiatives covered by the annual work programme for 2011, which was adopted in 2010. For 2011, the level of implementation of MEETS operational credits was 97%.

This third report provides an overview of the progress made by the Member States and the Commission (Eurostat) in implementing the activities under the MEETS Programme during 2012. All MEETS activities are in line with the strategy set out in the Communication of August 2009 from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the production method of EU statistics: a vision for the next decade.

Activities in 2011: in 2011, consideration was given to streamlining the MEETS Programme as part of the wider discussion on negative priorities within the European Statistical System (ESS). This resulted in a number of MEETS actions being integrated.

The collaborative networks in the ESS, known as ‘ESSnets’, remain a major means of implementing the objectives of the MEETS Programme. ESSnets are a way to develop new projects where a few Member States interested in a specific field actively collaborate on common tasks and then disseminate the results to the non-participating Member States. This helps to harness synergies, save costs and share best practices, while developing specific actions that are beneficial for the ESS as a whole.

- All the ESSnets operating within the MEETS Programme were launched during the first three years of the Programme. The annual work programme for 2012 continued the actions started by these ESSnets for the modernisation of enterprise and trade statistics.
- In addition, further action was initiated in 2012 to help Member States achieve the goals of reducing the burden on businesses and, at the same time, enable the ESS to respond to new needs for statistical information.

Budget: in total, the EU budget for the 2012 work programme is set at nearly **EUR 9 million**, and it covers **17 annual actions**, plus the necessary technical and administrative support to implement the programme. Grants, either through ESSnets or in the form of individual grants (at 82%), remain the most common instrument for financing the actions.

The MEETS Decision details the actions that are to be financed during the period covered by the programme. This substantiates the relatively large number of initiatives undertaken in the first two years of the programme. However, one of the outcomes of the economic and financial crisis of 2008 was a **"saturation" of financing possibilities** in the NSIs, due to the lack of human resources.

Therefore, there was a need to streamline the programme by integrating certain initiatives and/or focusing them on the six main areas organised through ESSnets, which are: (i) consistency of concepts and methods; (ii) Euro Groups Register (EGR); (iii) profiling large and complex multinational enterprise

groups; (iv) micro-data linking and data warehousing in statistical production; methodology for business statistics; and (v) the use of administrative and accounting data.

Assessment:

- **The ESSnets, especially those that started in 2009 and early 2010, have done sterling work**, in particular on the EGR methodology, profiling and the use of administrative data. As far as the other main pillars of the MEETS programme (consistency of legal acts, data warehouse and data linking initiatives) are concerned, these activities are also now well on track. Whereas in 2011 they were still dealing with preparatory work, putting the basic infrastructure in place (launching ESSnets, multi-beneficiary grant agreements, etc.) and creating networks of national experts, in 2012, **they have already started to produce practical results**.
- In addition, **financing through individual grants** has continued, mainly in order to accompany the progress in methodology and to test certain methodological recommendations, but also to develop the tools to make extraction, transmission and processing of data more efficient. 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 ensure that the national procedures for the collection of enterprise and trade statistics become more efficient. This demanded a long-term commitment and constant monitoring.

The 2012 report is the last annual report of the MEETS programme. 2013 will be the last operational year of this programme. All actions will be finalised, and all of the concrete final results have to be available by 31 December 2013. The final report on the implementation of the MEETS programme to be submitted to the European Parliament and the Council by 31 July 2014 must therefore also include all of the actions and results of 2013. Furthermore, in the light of the expenditure incurred by the Community, the final report is required to assess the benefits of the actions that accrue to the Community, Member States and providers and users of statistical information, in order to identify areas for potential improvement.