

European statistics: professional independence of national statistical authorities

2012/0084(COD) - 21/11/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 517 votes to 20 with 65 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics.

Parliament adopted its position in first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure. The amendments adopted in plenary were the result of a compromise between Parliament and Council. They amend the Commission proposal as follows:

Independence: the amendments adopted aimed to ensure the independence of the authorities in relation to possible political pressure at national and Union level and to ensure high quality statistical information.

To that end, the procedures for **recruitment, transfer and dismissal** of heads of national statistical institutes (NSIs) and, where appropriate, statistical heads of other national authorities producing European statistics, should be: (i) transparent; (ii) based only on professional criteria; (iii) be free of political pressure; (iv) have due regard to equal opportunity and, in particular, to gender balance. These procedures must be made public. Member States may establish a **national body** for assuring the professional independence of the producers of European statistics in the Member State.

Furthermore, the **independence of Eurostat** must be consolidated and guaranteed by means of effective parliamentary scrutiny and control.

Director General of the Commission (Eurostat): the statistical office of the Commission (Eurostat) shall be headed by a Director-General **appointed by the Commission**, for a non-renewable term of office of seven years, after consultation with the European Parliament and Council.

The Director General shall

- have sole responsibility for deciding on processes, statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases and publications for all statistics produced by the Commission;
- be empowered to decide on all matters regarding the internal management of the Commission (Eurostat);
- appear annually in the framework of Statistical Dialogue before the relevant committee of the European Parliament.

Before imposing any disciplinary measure on the Director-General, the Commission shall consult the European Parliament.

Coordination: Parliament clarified the scope of the coordinating role already attributed to the NSIs for European statistics produced through the European Statistical System (ESS). It also recommended strengthening coordination and collaboration between the NSIs and Eurostat. Furthermore, the ESS and the ESCB should closely cooperate to ensure production of complete and coherent European statistics.

Access to statistics : European statistics should be easy to compare and to access and should be updated promptly and regularly so as to ensure that Union policies and funding initiatives take full account of developments in Europe, in particular with regard to the consequences of the economic crisis.

Commitments regarding trust in statistics : this would aim to ensure the confidence of the public in the quality of European statistics to rigorously apply the European Statistics Code of Practice (the Code of Practice). To that end, **Member States and the Commission shall establish and publish on their websites, specific policy commitments** moving towards overall confidence in statistics, including a citizen's summary

The Commitments by the Commission (Eurostat) shall be regularly monitored by ESGAB on the basis of an annual report sent by the Commission.

Quality of data: the Commission shall adopt implementing acts laying down the arrangements, structure and periodicity of quality reports provided for in sectoral legislation.

Where sectoral legislation provides for fines in cases where Member States **misrepresent statistical data**, the Commission may initiate and conduct investigations as necessary, including, where appropriate, on-site inspections in order to establish whether such misrepresentation was serious and intentional or grossly negligent.

Where the Commission considers that a Member State has failed to fulfill its obligations under the Regulation or under the applicable sectoral legislation as regards the representation of the statistical data, it shall act in accordance with Article 258 TFEU.