

EC statistics: legislative framework for the production of short-term EC statistics

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The European Commission has submitted a report concerning short-term statistics which also contains a summary of the quality report as required by the Council Regulation 1165/98/EC. The main findings, as of the end of 2001 are as follows: - 3 years after the adoption of the Regulation on short-term statistics the overall data situation is far from satisfactory. Although Eurostat can calculate important EU15/Euro-zone indicators, no aggregates can be estimated for 14 of the 32 demanded indicators. The situation should improve in 2002 as about 60% of the derogations will lapse during this year. However, the remaining 40% of Member States' derogations will expire only by mid-2003; - the availability of historic time series is a major concern for users. This concerns all indicators, especially retail trade and output prices. Timeliness and the issue of revisions are concerns for industrial production and particularly critical for the volume of retail sales index. Compared to these issues, the accessibility of data is considered a minor problem. Users also expressed their need for additional business cycle indicators; - to reduce publication delays any further, additional efforts are therefore needed from Eurostat and the Member States which go beyond the existing regulation; - the metadata situation is currently satisfactory. However, some areas - especially in construction, retail trade and other services - lack sufficient information. The challenge for the future is to keep the metadata-base STS-Sources up to date; - many indicators are already transmitted according to common definitions although this is not yet obligatory. Quality problems will persist for these indicators until all Member States apply the common definitions; - revision practices are not harmonised between Member States. This leads to significant problems for the users of the indicators. The evidence presented here supports strongly the case for additional steps towards a common revision policy. - as regards the selected sampling characteristics, the report states that the unweighted and weighted sample coverage compared to the overall population in percent differs widely between Member States. Most but not all Member States use size classes for different indicators. Questions arising from sampling characteristics should be studied further in order to seek common approaches; - Eurostat proposes to exchange best practices in these areas in order to reduce the burden on business; - together with Member States, this issue of the cost for national statistical system should be further explored in order to arrive at a better and more harmonised measurement, and consequently a deeper understanding of the costs involved in producing business cycle statistics.