Fiscal statistics: governance and quality of statistical data in the context of the excessive deficit procedure (amend. Regulation (EC) No 3605/93)

2005/0013(CNS) - 12/12/2005 - Final act

PURPOSE: to improve the quality of data and to ensure a timely transmission of statistics within the context of the excessive deficit procedure.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Regulation 2103/2005/EC amending Regulation 3605/93/EC as regards the quality of statistical data in the context of the excessive deficit procedure.

CONTENT: Council Regulation 3605/93 on the application of the Protocol on the excessive deficit procedure lays down a time-table for the reporting to the Commission of annual government deficits and debt. It does not, however, contain any provisions concerning the assessment of the quality of data reported by the Member States. There appears to be a need for the streamlining of procedures and the issuing of data relating to government debt relating to the "excessive deficit procedure". The purpose, therefore, of this act is to revise Regulation 3605/93 by changing the deadlines for reporting data so that they are consistent with the deadlines of the ESA transmission programme on government expenditure and revenue, financial balance sheets, financial transactions and debt. In addition, and given that the credibility of budgetary surveillance hinges upon reliable budgetary statistics, it is important that the statistics forwarded by the Member States are of the highest quality. A further purpose of this act, therefore, is to specify the measures needed to improve the quality of the actual government data reported. The measures outlined are based on existing best practices, which allow both the Council and the Commission to perform their duties under the Treaties.

In summary, the main revisions to Council Regulation 3605/93 are as follows:

On the deadlines for forwarding data:

- The figures forwarded on planned government deficit and debt level figures should mean the figures for the current year. They should be the most recent official forecasts and should be produced in as short a time as possible before the reporting deadline.

- As from 1994 onwards, Member States are obliged to report their planned and actual government deficit and levels of government debt twice a year. The first being before 1 April of the current year and the second being before 1 October.

- The Member States will be obliged to inform the Commission, as soon as possible, of any major revision in their actual and planned government deficit and debt figures already reported.

- The Member States will be obliged to make public the actual deficit and debt data for past years.

On the quality of data:

- Eurostat will be responsible for regularly assessing the quality both of actual data reported and of the underlying government sector accounts. Assessments will focus, for example, on the

delimitation of the government sector, the classification of government transactions and liabilities and the time of recording.

- Member States will be obliged to provide Eurostat with the relevant statistical information including data from national accounts, inventories, EDP notification tables and additional questionnaires and clarification related to the notifications.

- Member States will be obliged to provide Eurostat with a detailed inventory of the methods, procedures and sources used to compile actual deficit and debt data and the underlying government accounts

- Eurostat will report regularly to the European Parliament and to the Council as well as maintaining an on-going dialogue with the Member States.

On the provision of data by the Commission:

- Eurostat will provide the actual government deficit and debt data for the application of the Protocol on the excessive deficit procedure within three weeks after the reporting deadlines. Eurostat may not delay the provision of the actual government deficit and debt data in cases where a Member State has not reported its own data.

- Eurostat may express a reservation on the quality of the actual data provided.

- In cases where Eurostat feels that the data received does not comply with the requirements of this Regulation it may amend the actual data – even though a justification of this amendment must be made.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 23 December 2005.