General government: quarterly non-financial accounts, ESA 95 categories

2001/0056(COD) - 29/06/2006 - Follow-up document

In accordance with Article 8 of Regulation 1221/2002/EC, the Commission (Eurostat) is obliged to submit to the European Parliament and the Council a report containing an assessment of the reliability of quarterly data delivered by Member States. The present document comprises the quality report according to Regulation 1221/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 June 2002 on quarterly non-financial accounts for general government.

By way of conclusion, the report states that significant progress has been achieved and quarterly non-financial accounts for general government have been further developed since the first transmissions. Data for most countries are of appropriate quality and useful for analytical purposes, and they should accordingly be disseminated. Some Member States must implement specific measures for improving the quality of the reported data. In some cases, the improvement could be achieved by complying with the Community obligation of reporting time series to Eurostat. This would, on the other hand, prevent the Commission from initiating an infringement procedure under the Treaty in order to ensure full respect of Community regulations.

The observed revisions are similar to those of other short-term (quarterly) statistics. The publication of quarterly non-financial accounts for general government should be promoted, with appropriate guidance to users. This will mean providing appropriate metadata to reflect national practices and to warn users of the volatility of these quarterly figures, particularly for certain Member States. Publication will be a stimulus for quality, and Eurostat plans to disseminate these statistics at the beginning of 2006 in consultation with Member States.

Experience shows that, at national level, users are becoming more familiar with these statistics, more accustomed to dealing with the volatility of quarterly statistics and are developing a better understanding of them over time.

It is recommended that this assessment be continued over time in order to monitor further progress achieved by Member States and to improve quality. Some more specific recommendations by Member State are described below:

• Belgium: further progress is needed as regards coverage of direct sources, particularly for D62, for which the 90% criterion is not fulfilled (87%).

• Czech Republic: consistency between quarterly and annual data must be ensured. Interest is to be consolidated on a quarterly basis over all time-series. The progress in gradually incorporating improved quarterly basic sources is welcomed.

• Denmark: no specific remarks, other than the need to ensure consistency between quarterly and annual statistics over time.

• Estonia: data have been transmitted very recently. Eurostat is currently analysing the information provided and will revert if quality problems are identified.

• Greece: it is recommended that basic sources be further developed and quality improved. The impact of revisions has been significant after two years, and also in the fourth quarter for the three preceding quarters.

• Spain: missing time-series must be reported to Eurostat, and an action plan needs to be drawn up in this respect.

• France: further progress is expected so as to increase the coverage of direct sources. For D.62, there is 85% coverage of direct information. For the other ESA 95 transactions covered by Regulation 1221/2002, direct sources are mostly used, among others, for D.1, D.4 (expenditure) and P.1.

• Ireland: the methodological description of the national practices for the ESA 95 transactions covered by Regulation 1221/2002 should be supplied to Eurostat. Further progress is expected in widening the coverage of direct sources. The 90% criterion of Regulation 264/2000 is not met for the social benefit category, D62 (75%). Consistency between quarterly and annual data must be ensured.

• Italy: further progress is expected as regards the coherence between provisional and final statistics.

• Cyprus: missing time-series should be supplied to Eurostat and an action plan must be drawn up for this purpose. Further progress is expected in developing the availability of quarterly basic sources for local government.

• Latvia: further progress is to be achieved as regards coherence between provisional and final statistics.

• Lithuania: missing time-series have to be provided to Eurostat, and plans must be drawn up accordingly. The timeliness of transmissions should be further improved.

• Luxembourg: missing time-series have to be provided to Eurostat, and an action plan needs to be established. Further progress is expected in order to increase the collection of quarterly basic sources for local government. The impact of revisions has been significant after two years, and also in the fourth quarter for the three preceding quarters. Quality should be stepped up in this area.

• Hungary: missing time-series must be provided to Eurostat, and an action plan needs to be established. Timeliness in transmission should be further improved. Further developments are to be expected in the collection of quarterly basic sources from local government. The impact of revisions has been significant when analysing revisions made in the fourth quarter of the three preceding quarters and quality in this area should be reinforced.

• Malta: missing time-series must be provided to Eurostat, and an action plan needs to be drawn up.

• Netherlands: further progress is expected in order to gradually incorporate improved quarterly basic sources.

• Austria: the impact of revisions has been significant after two years and also in the fourth quarter for the three preceding quarters. Quality should be improved in this respect. Further progress is expected in order to gradually incorporate improved quarterly basic data sources.

• Poland: there is a need to ensure consistency between quarterly and annual data over time. There are significant inconsistencies for almost all variables for the years 1995-2000. Further improvement is expected in increasing the collection of quarterly basic sources. The impact of revisions has been significant in the fourth quarter for the three preceding quarters, and quality should be improved in this respect.

• Portugal: further improvement is needed in collecting quarterly data from regional and local government, and particularly in respect of collection for P.51.

• Slovenia: missing ESA 95 transactions have to be provided to Eurostat and plans to transmit this information in 2006 should be implemented.

• Slovakia: consistency should be ensured between quarterly and annual data and in particular D4, D7 and D9 should be consolidated. Further improvements are expected in estimating accrual data on a quarterly basis.