

European statistical system: common classification of territorial units for statistics

NUTS

2001/0046(COD) - 04/06/2007 - Follow-up document

This report is required under Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS). It requests that three years after the entry into force of this Regulation, the Commission shall submit a report on its implementation to the European Parliament and the Council.

The report covers all of the actions undertaken in implementation of the NUTS Regulation. The first implementation exercise was carried out in 2003 following adoption of the Regulation. The frequency for updating the NUTS classification is every three years, in accordance with the provisions of the Regulation. This important operation took place towards the end of 2006. This report was therefore timed to allow a full account of it. The NUTS classification is the reference framework for all regional statistics of the EU. It is therefore pertinent in this context to report on the supply of regional statistics from Member States to the Commission, more specifically to Eurostat.

It examines whether the NUTS Regulation should continue to cover three territorial levels or if more levels should be added. The Commission submitted a communication to the European Parliament and the Council on this matter as required. On 1st May 2004 ten countries joined the European Union. The NUTS Regulation has been amended to cover these new Member States and this process is also covered by this report. Finally, in discussions with candidate countries about their regional classification, the rules in the NUTS Regulation serve as a guideline.

The report concludes that the NUTS Regulation is operational within the European Statistical System and is serving its primary purpose as a framework for regional statistics at European level. Recital 8 of the NUTS Regulation underlines the intention to maintain stability in the NUTS classification. For certain domains of regional statistics, any change in the NUTS classification creates significant problems with maintenance and recalculation of statistical data. For this reason, the Commission has taken a restrictive approach in its proposals for changes to the NUTS regions.

The question of adding further regional levels to the NUTS Regulation has been investigated in depth, including the required consultations with the Member States. A communication on this subject was submitted to the European Parliament and the Council. The conclusion was that no further level should be added to the NUTS Regulation at this time. The issue should be reassessed some time after 2008.

In discussions with candidate countries, the provisions in the NUTS Regulation have been used to encourage the countries concerned to bring their proposals into line with a more harmonised European regional classification.

Revision of the NUTS Regulation proceeded smoothly, but minor changes will be made to consolidate this process in the 2009 revision round.

Overall the process for revision of the regional classification worked well, but certain procedural changes will need to be made for the next revision in 2009. Firstly, to ensure that the intention of every Member State is absolutely clear, a specific response will be requested from each Member State, clearly indicating if they do not intend to make any revisions. This will avoid any problems with the clarity of their

intentions in the future. Secondly, and more importantly, in view of the revision of the "comitology procedure", particularly the extension of the time allowed for the European Parliament's "right of scrutiny", the revision process will have to be initiated much earlier in the year and the deadlines adjusted accordingly.