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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: COREPER II and Council
Subject: Draft Council conclusions on EU Statistics

Delegations will find attached the draft Council conclusions on EU statistics, as prepared by the Economic and Financial Committee

Draft Council conclusions on EU statistics***ECONOMIC and FINANCIAL AFFAIRS Council meeting******Brussels, 7 November 2014***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Following the priorities set in the previous ECOFIN Council Conclusions on statistical governance, priority setting, robust quality management, the Status Report on Information Requirements in EMU and the EPC report on Requirements for structural statistics 2014, and taking into consideration the statistical needs that must underpin the procedures of economic governance, the ECOFIN Council has reviewed the progress made in these areas.

EU Statistical Governance

- The Council **RECALLS** that the economic governance in place in the euro area and in the EU requires regular, high quality, official statistics.
- The Council **ACKNOWLEDGES** the modernisation of the European Statistical System (ESS) accomplished since 2009 and **INVITES** the Commission and Member States to pursue these efforts in order to enhance, wherever and as appropriate, shared standards of professional independence and good governance at all layers of the ESS.
- The Council **ACKNOWLEDGES** that there is a particular need to secure the credibility of European statistics by strengthening the professional independence of Eurostat and of national statistical institutes, in full compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice, and clarifying their coordinating role within their respective statistical systems, while fully taking into account subsidiarity and national specificities and without prejudice to Article 5 of the Protocol on the Statute of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) and of the European Central Bank. The Council **RECALLS** that discussions are ongoing at the European Parliament and the Council on the proposal for amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics.

- The Council WELCOMES the endeavour of the ESS to conduct for the second time Peer Reviews of European Statistics, which will cover the entire European Statistics Code of Practice, many relevant producers and the portfolio of statistical products. The Council also WELCOMES the commitment to conduct a similar exercise within the ESCB.
- The Council TAKES NOTE OF the sixth report of the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB), this year in particular providing the Peer Review for Eurostat. The Council TAKES NOTE of the importance placed by ESGAB on the need for independent peer reviews carried out in the ESS and of ESGAB's assessment of Eurostat.

Quality assurance of key statistical output

- The Council TAKES NOTE that the ten policy areas set out in the new Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change may entail new needs for additional, high quality statistics, which could exacerbate existing resource constraints within the ESS.

The Council WELCOMES the efforts made by Eurostat to further strengthen EDP verification procedures.

- Beyond the realm of European Statistics, the Council IS AWARE OF the plans to develop accrual-based European Public Sector Accounting Standards (EPSAS) applicable to public sector entities and ENCOURAGES the Commission to continue work on this project, while respecting subsidiarity and national competences and the proportion between potential costs and benefits.

The 2014 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in EMU

The Council ENDORSES the 2014 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in the EMU. In particular, the Council:

- WELCOMES the progress since 2013 in terms of availability of Principal European Economic Indicators (PEEIs) generally, while the quality of several of the indicators has been positively influenced by improved coverage by countries. However, timeliness of the PEEIs remains similar to 2013, and a harmonised indicator on house sales (quarterly) is not yet fully available.
- WELCOMES the efforts of EU Member States to adhere to the IMF Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) Plus initiative at an early stage.

- WELCOMES the reinforced institutional framework for statistical work at G20 level as endorsed by the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors and CALLS UPON all stakeholders to promote the regular flow of comparable and high quality data across the G20 economies in a second phase of the Data Gaps Initiative. Furthermore, the Council TAKES THE VIEW that the provision of G20 aggregates, in addition to quarterly GDP and monthly CPI, fulfilling the data quality frameworks in place, would be required.
- INVITES Eurostat and the ECB to provide a draft updated EFC Status Report on the fulfilment of the updated EMU statistical requirements in 2015.

Statistics for the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure and structural statistics

- The Council WELCOMES the close cooperation of the ESS and the ESCB, using existing fora, in ensuring the reliability of the statistics underlying the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP) and their comparability and ENCOURAGES the two statistical systems to give high priority to taking forward the joint Communication and work programme.
- The Council RECALLS that the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure must rely upon sound and harmonised official statistics, including in the scoreboard, and TAKES NOTE of the discussions at the European Parliament and the Council on the proposal of a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision and quality of statistics for the macroeconomic imbalances procedure (COM(2013) 342 final).
- The Council WELCOMES progress made to meet the needs on structural statistics and TAKES NOTE of the need for further work in this area, as outlined in the EPC Report.
- The Council WELCOMES the development of an action plan for improving the quality and timeliness of statistics on inequality, poverty, income and social exclusion.

Efficiency and priority setting: European Statistical System Modernisation

- The Council WELCOMES the progress achieved towards the modernisation of the ESS and actions to improve the efficiency of the production processes for European statistics and with due regard for national statistical needs. The Council UNDERLINES that the long-term strategic modernisation goals have to be shared by the ESS partners, and be accomplished by short-term achievements in specific statistical areas, as identified in close cooperation between ESS members.

- The Council RECOGNISES that information demands increase as a consequence of evidence-based decision-making. The need therefore arises to balance new statistical demands with efficiency gains and effective priority-setting, with a greater focus on limiting the overall burden of regulation at EU and national level. Therefore, the Council LOOKS FORWARD to co-operation between the ESS and policy makers on the overall limitation of cost and burdens of statistical requirements, including negative priority setting, in order to accommodate new priorities.
- The Council WELCOMES the objectives of the ESS Vision 2020 as a response to these challenges, and SUPPORTS continuing work on appropriate Vision Implementation Projects (ESS-VIPs) aimed particularly at realising the ESS vision in the coming years.
- Therefore, the Council ENCOURAGES the ESS to work on measures to implement the agreed Vision 2020 and CALLS UPON Member States and the Commission to secure and prioritise resources, while recognising that the resources available in Member States and the Commission to achieve this are limited. The Council STRESSES that success will depend on stabilising the overall level of demands on statistical producers."
