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Subject: Council conclusions on EU Statistics 2020

Delegations will find in annex the Council conclusions on EU statistics 2020, which were approved by the Council by written procedure, which was completed on 6 November 2020 (CM 4515/20).

Council conclusions on EU statistics

Following the priorities set in the previous Council Conclusions on EU statistics of November 2019, notably on the EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in EMU, and taking into consideration the political guidelines for the Commission 2019-2024, the statistical needs that underpin the economic governance, and the exceptional situation in 2020 with regard to COVID-19, the Council has reviewed the progress related to information requirements in EMU, statistics for the EDP and surveillance of macroeconomic imbalance, and structural statistics.

The statistical response to COVID-19

The Council WELCOMES the rapid response of the European Statistical System (ESS) and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) to the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that key existing official statistics continued to be published to deadline, alongside clear information for users on impacts of the pandemic on statistical production. The ESS also developed new, highly relevant statistics, often on an experimental basis. In the process, access to new data sources and development of new statistical techniques was fundamental.

The Council HIGHLIGHTS the importance of increased and sustained access for National Statistical Institutes to administrative sources and to new data sources, and in this context, urges the ESS to continue to explore new data sources and technologies and develop innovative methods for producing high quality, richer and faster European statistics.

The Council WELCOMES the initiative of the German Statistical Office (Destatis) and the work by Destatis and Eurostat to develop and release an ESS dashboard of existing indicators that are highly relevant for monitoring the economic and societal trends in the recovery phase from COVID-19.

The Council WELCOMES Eurostat's efforts to provide early clarification of the statistical rules applicable to COVID-19 related interventions in close cooperation with Member States, RECOGNISES the development of a joint and fully coordinated template by Eurostat and the ECB and ENCOURAGES Member States to strive to provide the statistical data and information necessary to monitor the effect of COVID-19 related government and public sector interventions on the relevant public finance indicators.

Statistical infrastructure

The Council HIGHLIGHTS the need to ensure adequate investment in and maintenance of statistical infrastructure at European and national level, including IT infrastructure and digitalization, in order for the European Statistical System (ESS) to meet the need for regular, high quality, official statistics at Union, national, regional and local level in the context of advances in technology as well as fast changing data requirements and statistical challenges related to the pandemic and its aftermath.

The Council RECALLS the importance of minimising burden on respondents and the need to balance new statistical demands with efficiency gains and effective prioritisation.

Statistics in relation to Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Deal

The Council WELCOMES Eurostat's efforts to provide statistical inputs for the monitoring of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at European Union level in the context of the European Semester, and ENCOURAGES Eurostat to continue work on monitoring progress towards SDGs at the European level.

The Council ENCOURAGES the ESS to respond to the emerging information demands from the European Green Deal, including as regards the review and enlargement of the programme of European environmental economic accounts and the further development of timely indicators.

The 2020 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in EMU

The Council TAKES NOTE of the developments described in the 2020 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in the EMU. In particular, the Council:

APPRECIATES the further improvements in country coverage, timeliness, length of time series and overall quality of the Principal European Economic Indicators (PEEIs).

WELCOMES the significant improvement in availability of ESA 2010 data as the ESA 2010 derogations expire, and the publication by Eurostat from July 2020 of house sales indicators at quarterly frequency.

UNDERLINES the continuing important role played by the PEEIs as a basis for monitoring short-term economic developments and LOOKS FORWARD TO further progress to close remaining gaps.

Real estate statistics for macroprudential and other purposes

The Council WELCOMES the ongoing initiatives by both the ESS and the ESCB to progress on the conceptual and practical work on commercial real estate indicators. The Council ENCOURAGES both the ESS and the ESCB to continue to attach the necessary importance and urgency to this issue.

Statistics for the Stability and Growth Pact and the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP)

The Council WELCOMES the progress on quality assurance of statistics underlying the MIP, and APPRECIATES the annual ESS-ESCB quality assessment report on MIP statistics by Eurostat and the ECB, TAKING NOTE of the actions identified therein.

The Council CALLS ON Member States to ensure that all statistical data needed for the application of the expenditure benchmark of the Stability and Growth Pact, including data on government revenue in the form of EU funding, are reported to Eurostat.

Demographic statistics and population projections

The Council WELCOMES the publication of population projections (EUROPOP 2019) in April 2020, which will serve as demographic input to the Ageing Report 2021, and APPRECIATES the preparation of regional population projections by Eurostat which provide a more detailed picture of population ageing and territorial diversity.

The Council also ENCOURAGES Eurostat and the Member States to improve the statistical coverage of long-term care, as regards health and social expenditure, public or private, and beneficiaries, in order to facilitate the investigation of affordability trends and public finance impacts.

Social statistics

The Council WELCOMES the progress on the modernisation of social statistics in particular its contribution to the Social Scoreboard for the European Pillar of Social Rights by providing data on a broad range of indicators. The Council ENCOURAGES progress towards completing the plan to modernise population statistics, making detailed data available more frequently. The Council STRESSES the importance of statistics on the income, consumption and wealth of households.

The Council WELCOMES the progress on implementing and delegated acts covering detailed data requirements, the definitions of statistical variables and additional technical specifications with respect to the Integrated European Social Statistics Framework Regulation (IESS) and UNDERLINES the importance of implementing improved statistics under this Regulation.

The Council ENCOURAGES Eurostat to develop further experimental statistics, including the now-casting of social indicators that could be relevant especially in the context of the European Semester.

Business statistics and globalisation

The Council WELCOMES ongoing improvements in European business statistics, including better coverage of SMEs in Structural Business Statistics, additional and more frequent statistics for services, greater detail for trade (particularly for trade in services), innovative steps in cooperation with platform accommodation suppliers for tourism statistics, and better measurement of digitalization.

The Council ACKNOWLEDGES the work undertaken to address the challenges of globalisation for statistics, also thanks to enhanced cooperation within and between the ESS and the European System of Central Banks. The Council SUPPORTS initiatives to overcome unnecessary constraints on the sharing of relevant information between statistical compilers.

The Council NOTES the progress with implementing and delegated acts with respect to the European Business Statistics Regulation (EBS) and UNDERLINES the importance of improved statistics under this Regulation.