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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	EU Statistics
	- Council conclusions (8 November 2016)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on EU Statistics, adopted by the Council (ECOFIN) at its 3495th meeting held on 8 November 2016 in Brussels.

Council conclusions on EU statistics

ECONOMIC and FINANCIAL AFFAIRS Council meeting

Brussels, 8 November 2016

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Following the priorities set in the previous ECOFIN Council Conclusions on priority setting, robust quality management, the EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in EMU and the EPC report on Requirements for structural statistics, 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.

Quality assurance of key statistical output

- The Council TAKES NOTE of the Commission report on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice and coordination within the European Statistical System (ESS), AGREES with its main conclusions and CALLS UPON the Member States and the Commission to implement the improvement actions following the second round of peer review in the ESS according to the plan.
- The Council WELCOMES the recent Quality Declaration of the ESS and invites ESS partners to actively promote this Declaration to all relevant stakeholders.
- The Council WELCOMES the Commission initiatives related to the quality assessment of macroeconomic statistics, with the aim of establishing, for users, an integral and harmonised system of quality reports in the areas of national accounts and balance of payments.

- The Council EMPHASISES that strict respect of the expiration of ESA 2010 derogations by Member States concerned is a prerequisite for ensuring availability of all sets of data underpinning the macroeconomic and monetary analysis at national and EU levels.

The 2016 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in EMU

The Council TAKES NOTE of the developments described in the 2016 EFC Status Report on Information Requirements in the EMU. In particular, the Council:

- WELCOMES the progress in availability of Principal European Economic Indicators (PEEIs), where the quality of several of the indicators has been positively influenced by improved coverage by countries.
- APPRECIATES the advancement of the European quarterly GDP flash estimates by 15 days to t+30 days.
- WELCOMES the release of a reliable HICP flash estimate for the euro area on time, at T+0 or shortly after but NOTES that a harmonised indicator on house sales at quarterly frequency is not yet fully available.
- WELCOMES the reinforced institutional framework for statistical work at G-20 level and CALLS UPON all stakeholders to promote the regular flow of comparable and high quality data across the G-20 economies in the second phase of the Data Gaps Initiative. The Council ENCOURAGES Member States to make further efforts to adhere to the SDDS Plus initiative.

Statistics for the Excessive Deficit Procedure

- The Council ENCOURAGES the Commission and the EFC, in the framework of existing forums, to further improve the governance of EDP statistical processes. This includes ensuring a structured process of conceptual development and implementation of methodology underpinning EDP data which takes into account consistency with other national accounts data. The Council INVITES the Commission to report on progress in the first half of 2017 in the framework of EFC follow-up on these governance issues.
- Without prejudice to the timeliness of EDP statistics, the Council acknowledges that the implementation of guidance clarifying statistical rules usually requires time as well as resources and therefore INVITES the Commission to give adequate and defined lead times to national statistical authorities for their effective implementation. The Council ENCOURAGES the ongoing work on harmonised revision policies.
- The Council WELCOMES the recent initiatives by the Commission in relation to the Investment plan for Europe and in particular the clarification of the statistical rules for investment and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). The Council APPRECIATES the recently published guide on the statistical recording of PPPs and UNDERLINES the necessity to enhance the understanding of these rules among PPP practitioners.

Structural and Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP) statistics

- The Council RECALLS that the MIP must rely upon sound and harmonised official statistics and has emphasised since 2011 the importance of close cooperation between the ESS and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) in assessing the reliability of the statistics underlying the MIP and improving their quality. The Council ACKNOWLEDGES that these requirements are covered by the specific Quality Assurance Framework for MIP elaborated jointly by the ESS and the ESCB and WELCOMES the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Eurostat and the ECB/Directorate General Statistics.

Social statistics

- The Council TAKES NOTE of the Commission's proposal to integrate social surveys under a common framework regulation.
- The Council RECOGNISES the importance of timelier, better and integrated data on inequalities and poverty, including distributions of income, consumption and wealth, as well as on major components of social expenditures.
- The Council ACKNOWLEDGES the plan for the development of the new population projections and their annual updates coordinated by Eurostat in close cooperation with the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs), in line with the ECOFIN Conclusions of 12 May 2015, and ENCOURAGES Member States to take a proactive role by proposing models, assumptions and tools for the calculation of the projections.

- The Council **UNDERLINES** the challenges related to migration and migrants' integration and encourages the Commission and Member States to continue to develop a comprehensive statistical and data information basis.
- The Council **CALLS UPON** the ESS to monitor progress towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Globalisation

- The Council **UNDERSTANDS** the challenges of globalisation for statistics, especially in the light of recent developments, and **SUPPORTS** the development of further concrete work in this area through enhanced cooperation between countries. This could include activities on profiling, information exchange, and support for unique identifiers for enterprises.

Investment in and maintenance of statistical infrastructure

- The Council **RECOGNISES** that the European Statistical System is faced with a number of challenges and opportunities; including increasing demands for data, the digital data revolution, the emergence of new information requirements, and the limits on resources available for the provision of quality statistics.
- The Council **TAKES NOTE** of the Commission Proposal to extend the ESP for the period 2018-2020 to align it with the remaining duration of the current Multiannual Financial Framework and to close the most urgent data gaps in relation to the political priorities of the European Union, increase timeliness and build a capacity to respond faster to new emerging information needs, based on continued modernisation of the ESS.

- The Council APPRECIATES the progress made in modernisation of European Business Statistics and Agricultural Statistics in 2016, and TAKES NOTE of the Commission plans to submit the relevant framework regulations to the Council and to the European Parliament by the end of 2016 or early 2017.
- The Council REITERATES its position that the European Statistical System should be provided with adequate financial resources, including for investment in and maintenance of statistical infrastructure, in order to meet the need for regular, high quality, official statistics at Member State and EU level. The Council UNDERLINES that prioritisation of existing and new data requirements should be undertaken.
- In conclusion, the Council INVITES Eurostat, in cooperation with the ECB for the EFC Status Report and the ESS-ESCB quality assessment Report on statistics underlying the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure, to provide a Statistical Package to the Council in autumn 2017.

Eighth report by the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB) on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice

- The Council WELCOMES the eighth report of the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board (ESGAB), providing an independent overview of Eurostat and of the European Statistical System as a whole as regards the implementation of the Code of Practice and TAKES NOTE of ESGAB's proposal to revise the Code of Practice to take into account private data providers and multiple data sources.
- The Council SUPPORTS ESGAB's recommendation to improve data on the costs of statistical production, the importance of good coordination of providers of European statistics within national statistical systems and ESGAB's call for progress regarding NSIs' access to administrative data.