

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European statistical programme 2013-2017, by extending it to 2018-2020

(COM(2016) 557 final — 2016/0265(COD))

(2017/C 075/10)

Rapporteur: **Petru Sorin DANDEA**

Consultation	European Parliament, 15 September 2016 Council of the European Union, 26 October 2016
Legal basis	Articles 304 and 338 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
Section responsible	Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion
Adopted in section	29 November 2016
Adopted at plenary	14 December 2016
Plenary session No	521
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	221/1/4

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1. The EESC endorses and supports the Commission's proposal to extend the current European statistical programme (ESP) to cover the 2018-2020 period.

1.2. The EESC considers that the preferred policy option chosen by the Commission responds best to calls by data users and will also contribute to the development of statistical products useful to policymakers, who would thus have enhanced statistical support when framing policies for the European Semester.

1.3. The EESC considers that improving existing products and developing new ones is necessary to measure the EU's progress on the 17 goals and 169 targets of the UN sustainable development strategy and must be a priority for the European statistical system (ESS).

1.4. The EESC reiterates a proposal put forward previously⁽¹⁾ and recommends that the Commission seize the opportunity provided by this regulation to introduce measures to develop statistical research at EU and Member State level enabling the economic value of volunteering to be evaluated. The EESC considers that the methodological approach should be based on the International Labour Organisation's Manual on the measurement of volunteer work.

1.5. The EESC considers that the new statistical products proposed by the Commission measuring globalisation should include statistical surveys measuring the positive or negative effects on the single market, such as the impact of relocations on the EU labour market or pressure of unfair competition based on cheap labour and non-compliance with International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards on employment relationships, particularly in the European industrial and services sector.

1.6. The EESC endorses the Commission proposal to begin exploratory work on a future EU social survey. This survey should also include data on the suitability of social security systems and their sustainability in the new demographic situation.

⁽¹⁾ See EESC opinion on *Statistical tools for measuring volunteering* (OJ C 170, 5.6.2014, p. 11).

1.7. Given the increase in migration flows, the EESC recommends that shortcomings in statistical surveys on migration and asylum be identified swiftly and redressed. The programme on the integration of migration statistics needs to be implemented fully, in cooperation with national statistics institutions.

1.8. The EESC recommends that Member States step up investment in developing the ESS so that it can cope with the growing demand for statistics, which it must also be able to develop and disseminate swiftly.

1.9. The EESC reiterates the proposal put forward in previous opinions⁽²⁾, calling for Eurostat as well as national statistical institutions to have the best possible human, financial and IT resources, because this is essential to fulfilling the increasingly demanding tasks inherent in providing high-quality statistical information in an ever shorter time frame.

1.10. The EESC points out that the efforts made by the Commission and the ESS to improve the quality of statistics and to develop new statistical products must not result in an excessive increase in the administrative burden on data providers, households or businesses.

1.11. Since the social partners and civil society organisations can make a key contribution to improving statistical products so that they respond more effectively to calls for data, the EESC endorses the Commission proposal regarding the regular dialogue which should take place between data users and the ESS.

2. Proposal for a regulation drawn up by the European Commission

2.1. The European Commission's proposal for a regulation⁽³⁾ amends Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European statistical programme 2013-2017, by extending it to 2018-2020.

2.2. Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 stipulates that the European statistical programme must provide the framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics for a period corresponding to the multiannual financial framework. Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 covers only the period from 2013 to 2017, whilst the multiannual financial framework runs until 2020. Consequently, the European statistical programme must be extended until 2020.

2.3. The objective of the proposal is to extend the ESP to cover the 2018-2020 period and provide the financial support that the ESS needs in order to be able to:

- provide high-quality statistical information and close the statistical gaps that need to be addressed most urgently, focusing on a number of priority areas that reflect the Commission's 10 political priorities,
- build the permanent capacity needed to respond more quickly to emerging needs and to adapt the statistical infrastructure so as to harness the potential of new data sources, and
- strengthen partnership within the ESS and beyond in order to further increase its productivity and secure its leading role in official statistics worldwide.

2.4. Having carried out an impact assessment and consulted stakeholders⁽⁴⁾, the Commission has chosen a preferred policy option from the five initially drawn up. The chosen option 2c would have the most favourable impact on timeliness, with new actions focusing on enhanced timeliness for statistics on inequality, poverty and material deprivation, and for energy and environmental data.

2.5. The budget allocated for the extension of the programme (2018-2020) is EUR 218,1 million.

⁽²⁾ See EESC opinion on the *Community Statistical Programme 2008 to 2012* (OJ C 175, 27.7.2007, p. 8).

⁽³⁾ COM(2016) 557 final.

⁽⁴⁾ Consultation conducted via the 'Your voice in Europe' online platform between 23 July and 15 October 2015 and publicised through Eurostat communication channels and the national statistical institutions (NSIs).

3. General and specific comments

3.1. Given that the European statistical programme needs to be aligned with the multiannual financial framework, the EESC endorses and supports the Commission's proposal to extend the current ESP to cover the 2018-2020 period.

3.2. The preferred policy option chosen by the Commission should align statistical indicators more closely with the Commission's 10 political priorities by improving current statistical instruments and developing new products. The EESC considers that this option responds best to calls by data users and will also contribute to the development of statistical products useful to policymakers, who would thus have enhanced statistical support when framing policies for the European Semester.

3.3. The EESC endorses the initiative to include surveys measuring progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the new statistical products. Improving existing products and developing new ones is necessary to measure the EU's progress on the 17 goals and 169 targets of the UN sustainable development strategy and must be a priority for the European Statistical System.

3.4. For a long time, GDP (gross domestic product) was the statistical indicator used at global level to measure development. The Commission recognised the limitations of this indicator when it came to correctly evaluating social or environmental development in a communication ⁽⁵⁾ in 2009. The EESC reiterates the proposals put forward in opinions ⁽⁶⁾ both at that time and subsequently, considering them to be highly pertinent to the Commission's proposal for a regulation.

3.5. The EESC reiterates a proposal put forward previously ⁽⁷⁾ and recommends that the Commission seize the opportunity provided by this regulation to introduce measures to develop statistical research at EU and Member State level enabling the economic value of volunteering to be evaluated. The methodological approach should be based on the ILO's Manual on the measurement of volunteer work, which defines and describes this concept, highlighting three fundamental characteristics. Volunteer work is defined as work which is: productive, unpaid, not compulsory and not beneficial to the volunteer's own household.

3.6. National accounts must take greater account of social and environmental indicators. The EESC urges the Commission to keep up its efforts in this area under the 2018-2020 ESP.

3.7. With regard to the new statistical products measuring globalisation, the EESC considers that these should include statistical surveys measuring the positive or negative effects on the single market, such as the impact of relocations on the EU labour market or pressure of unfair competition based on cheap labour and non-compliance with International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards on employment relationships, particularly in the European industrial and services sector.

3.8. The EESC considers that data users may become more confident as Member State governments implement the recommendation ⁽⁸⁾ drawn up by the ESGAB (European Statistical Governance Advisory Board) on establishing CoCS (Commitments on Confidence in Statistics).

3.9. The EESC endorses the Commission proposal to begin exploratory work on a future EU social survey. Given Europe's ageing population, this survey should also include data on the suitability of social security systems and their sustainability in the new demographic situation. Shortcomings in statistical surveys on migration and asylum should also be identified swiftly and redressed.

⁽⁵⁾ *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament — GDP and beyond: measuring progress in a changing world*, COM(2009) 433 final.

⁽⁶⁾ See EESC opinions on *GDP and beyond — the involvement of civil society in choosing complementary indicators* (OJ C 181, 21.6.2012, p. 14) and *GDP and beyond — Measuring progress in a changing world* (OJ C 18, 19.1.2011, p. 64).

⁽⁷⁾ See footnote 1.

⁽⁸⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/34693/7723121/ESGAB+Annual+Report+2016>

3.10. The EESC reiterates the proposal put forward in previous opinions⁽⁹⁾, calling for Eurostat as well as national statistical institutions to have the best possible human, financial and IT resources, because this is essential to fulfilling the increasingly demanding tasks inherent in providing high-quality statistical information in an ever shorter time frame. The EESC recommends that Member States step up investment in developing the ESS so that it can cope with the growing demand for statistics, which it must also be able to develop and disseminate swiftly.

3.11. The EESC points out that the efforts made by the Commission and the ESS to improve the quality of statistics and to develop new statistical products must not result in a significant increase in the administrative burden on data providers, households or businesses.

3.12. The EESC endorses the Commission proposal regarding the regular dialogue which should take place between data users and the ESS. Civil society organisations can make a key contribution to improving statistical products so that they respond more effectively to calls for data. In its annual report for 2016, the ESGAB made a proposal to this effect.

Brussels, 14 December 2016.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Georges DASSIS

⁽⁹⁾ See footnote 2.