

EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

OPINION OF THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

of 4 February 2004

at the request of the Council of the European Union concerning a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the compilation of quarterly non-financial accounts by institutional sector (COM(2003) 789 final)

(CON/2004/4)

(2004/C 42/16)

1. On 13 January 2004 the European Central Bank (ECB) received a request from the Council of the European Union for an opinion on a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the compilation of quarterly non-financial accounts by institutional sector (hereinafter the 'draft regulation').
2. The ECB's competence to deliver an opinion is based on Article 105(4) of the Treaty establishing the European Community. In accordance with the first sentence of Article 17(5) of the Rules of Procedure of the ECB, the Governing Council of the ECB has adopted this opinion.
3. The objective of the draft regulation is to provide a common framework for the contributions of the Member States to the compilation of quarterly European non-financial accounts by institutional sector.
4. The Memorandum of Understanding on Economic and Financial Statistics between the ECB's Directorate General Statistics and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), adopted on 10 March 2003, lays down that the ECB's DG Statistics and Eurostat jointly develop the area of non-financial accounts by institutional sector within the framework of national accounts statistics. The development and publication of non-financial accounts by institutional sector for the euro area at quarterly and annual frequency is a shared responsibility.
5. The ECB welcomes this draft regulation prepared by a joint ECB Directorate General Statistics and Eurostat Task Force. The draft is part of the Action Plan on Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) Statistical Requirements (hereinafter referred to as 'EMU Action Plan'), established at the request of the Ecofin Council by Eurostat in close collaboration with the ECB. The EMU Action Plan is a response to the report of the Monetary Committee on information requirements in EMU, endorsed by the Ecofin Council on 18 January 1999, and to the second progress report on information requirements in EMU, endorsed by the Ecofin Council on 5 June 2000. The fifth progress report, as endorsed by the Ecofin Council on 18 February 2003, lists the establishment of a set of quarterly sector accounts as a major outstanding item from the EMU Action Plan.
6. The ECB notes that the Joint Report of the Ecofin Council and the Commission to the European Council on Eurozone statistics and indicators, as adopted by the Ecofin Council on 18 February 2003, emphasises that high priority actions, as yet unrealised, including quarterly national accounts by institutional sector, should be speedily implemented. The quarterly national accounts by institutional sector as part of the Principal European Economic Indicators should be fully implemented by 2005.
7. The Regulation will be part of the overall aim to compile a consistent system of annual and quarterly accounts for the European Union and for the euro area. The system includes in particular the main macro-economic aggregates for the households and the corporations sectors in the financial and non-financial accounts by institutional sector. The system requires consistency between the balance of payments statistics and the rest of the world accounts. In addition to the accounts by institutional sector of the Member States, the accounts of the EU institutions and bodies are needed to complete the system of European accounts.
8. Finally, the ECB endorses the timetable for transmitting data to Eurostat at the latest 90 calendar days after the end of the quarter to which the data relate, and the provision of back data from the first quarter of 1999 onwards.

Done at Frankfurt am Main on 4 February 2004.

The President of the ECB

Jean-Claude TRICHET