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**Economic Commission for Europe**

## Conference of European Statisticians

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**Response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals****Eurostat's role in the development and implementation of a comprehensive monitoring framework for Sustainable Development Goals****Note by Eurostat***Summary*

The paper describes Eurostat's role in monitoring the European Union Sustainable Development Strategy since 2006 and coordinating activities within the European Statistical System. The paper also outlines the role that Eurostat expects to play once the Post-2015 Development Agenda will be formally adopted.

The paper is presented for discussion to the second session of the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar "Response by official statistics to the Sustainable Development Goals".

## I. Eurostat's activities related to measuring sustainable development

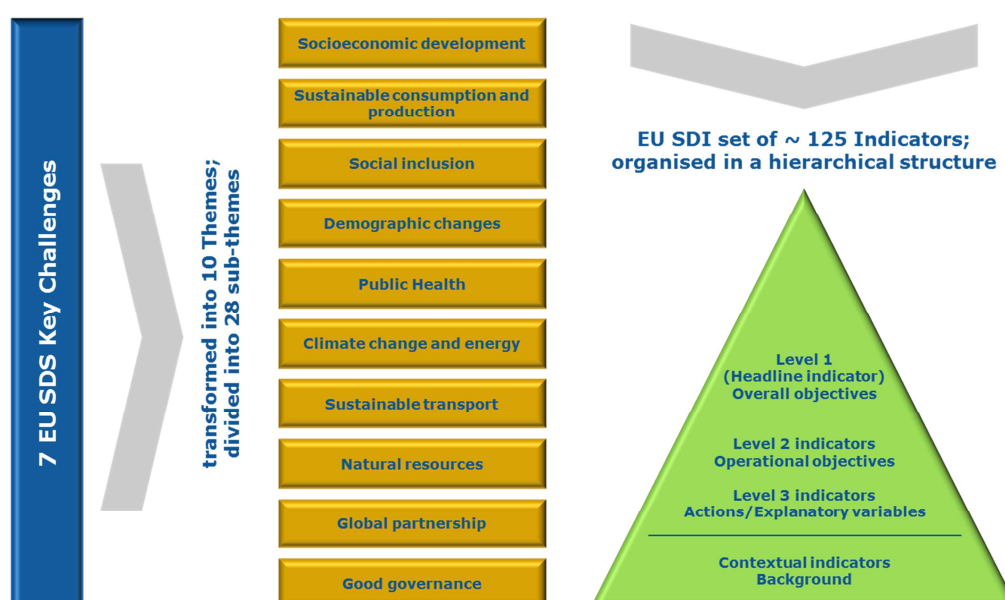
1. In recent years, Eurostat has contributed in various ways to the on-going work on the Post-2015 Development Agenda by cooperating with the United Nations and participating in the Friends of the Chair Group (FoC) on broader measures of progress. Eurostat is fully committed to contributing to the process of establishing a new monitoring framework for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. To support the monitoring of SDGs, Eurostat can rely on its many years of experience in monitoring sustainable development at the level of the European Union, which is an important part of the European Statistical Programme as well as of the system of methodologies for statistics, accounts and indicators.
3. Eurostat has a consolidated monitoring experience, based on the activities it carries out since several years to assess progress towards the targets of European strategies such as the European Union Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) and Europe 2020. Activities to measure well-being beyond GDP and Quality of Life also contribute to Eurostat's expertise when it comes to defining a monitoring framework for SDGs.

### 1. Monitoring the European Union Sustainable Development Strategy

4. The EU SDS was adopted in 2001 by the European Council and reviewed in 2006. Eurostat regularly monitors this strategy and publishes biennial monitoring reports since 2005. The last edition of the SDS monitoring report dates from December 2013. A new edition will be published in the first week of September 2015.
5. The indicator framework for monitoring the EU SDS, and the EU Sustainable Development Indicator set, includes 125 indicators covering 10 themes structured in 3 levels as shown in the figure 1.

Figure 1

#### The structure of the EU SDI set managed by Eurostat





### 3. Eurostat's activities on GDP and beyond and Quality of Life

13. At the origin of the current Eurostat activities on GDP and beyond are the recommendations of the Report of Sponsorship Group on Measuring Progress, Well-Being and Sustainable Development (2011). GDP and beyond was reflected in the European Statistical Programme and the recommendations of the Sponsorship Group are operationalised in Eurostat's Annual Work Programmes.

14. Actions are focused on the 3 main pillars: *strengthening the household perspective & distributional aspects; multidimensional measurement of Quality of Life; environmental sustainability.*

15. The measurement framework of Quality of Life (QoL), which is one of the three pillars of GDP and beyond, covers 9 dimensions: Material living conditions, Health, Governance and basic rights, Productive or main activity, Education, Leisure and social interaction, Economic and physical safety, Natural and living environment, Overall life experience. Measurement of the nine dimensions is carried out through a scoreboard of approximately 90 indicators. 14 headline indicators have been selected to facilitate communication to users. In March 2015 data on the subjective dimension of QoL have been released for the first time.

16. Data come from several sources from within the European Statistical System (ESS), in particular statistics on income and living conditions (SILC), labour force survey (LFS), European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) and administrative sources. In case no data are available from within ESS, external links to non-ESS sources, such as the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), are used as placeholders.

17. Dissemination of information on QoL, similarly to Europe 2020, includes wiki articles (Statistics Explained) and a detailed online database. A statistical book is foreseen to be published in June 2015, in which data on objective and subjective indicators will be complementarily used for the evaluation of the different dimensions.

## II. Support to the Post-2015 Development Agenda

18. For the 46<sup>th</sup> United Nations Statistical Commission session (UNSC) on 3-6 March 2015, Eurostat coordinated an EU common position on data support of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the main points of which were retained by UNSC. The common EU position encompasses several elements which shape the line of activities of Eurostat such as:

(a) **Ensure independent monitoring:** The future SDG monitoring framework should use rigorous indicators and reliable, timely data-sets produced by the national statistical authorities. The role of the national, supranational (e.g. Eurostat) and regional statistical authorities should be as strong as possible, to ensure independent monitoring;

(b) **Use of existing frameworks:** The indicator set for the SDGs should be based on frameworks to measure sustainable development already in place in several parts of the world and taking into account the Conference of European Statisticians' (CES) *Recommendations on measuring sustainable development* established by a joint UNECE-Eurostat-OECD Task Force. The indicators should meet the statistical standards;

(c) **Filling data gaps:** Work is needed to fill data gaps, even in the developed countries. At ESS level, we already develop new statistics and explore new data sources. However, developing new indicators of sufficient quality requires significant resources and is a medium-term work;

(d) **Monitoring at different levels:** The focus of SDG monitoring should be at the national level, but complementary monitoring will also occur at regional and global levels using core sets of global and regional indicators. Furthermore, thematic monitoring looking at specific aspects of various territorial details should also be carried out;

(e) **Open to innovations:** The development of a robust and high-quality indicator framework is a technical process that requires time and needs to be conducted in stages, including the possibility of future refinements as knowledge evolves and data availability improves (see point 3).

19. The FOC roadmap – approved by the 46<sup>th</sup> UNSC session and acknowledged by the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN)<sup>1</sup> on 23-27 March 2015 – foresees the creation of an Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDG). At the moment, the group is in process of establishment and Eurostat will be part of the IAEG-SDG as an observer.

20. With regard to SDGs, Eurostat will continue to fulfil its role to coordinate the statistical activities of the institutions and bodies of the European Union, in particular to ensure consistency and quality of the data and minimise reporting burden. While waiting to see what impact the SDGs will have on the EU sustainable development and the Europe 2020 strategies and what mandate will Eurostat have to monitor the revised strategies, Eurostat is currently working on a last monitoring report of the EU SDS, to be published in early September 2015.

### III. The challenge of developing an indicator framework

21. The challenge of developing an SDG indicator framework is mainly due to the high number and the wide scope of goals and targets proposed by the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup>. The OWG proposal is structured in a long list of goals and targets, differently from the Europe 2020 strategy which includes a few "headline topics" and from the EU Sustainable Development Strategy which is theme-oriented.

22. To tackle this challenge, Eurostat considers that the term "Indicator framework" should refer to a coherent set of indicators that addresses the overall requirements of the Post-2015 Development Agenda based on a conceptual structure. Just associating indicators to targets would end up with a very long list of indicators, as the experience of the list of 300 proposed preliminary indicators<sup>3</sup> prepared by the UNSC for the IGN meeting in March 2015 shows.

23. The development of an SDG indicator framework should therefore not only entail the selection of appropriate indicators, but also – and primarily – a deeper analysis of inter-linkages and overlaps between goals and targets of the current OWG proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN), under the coordination of two co-facilitators, the Ambassadors of Ireland and Kenya to the UN, are taking place on a monthly basis from January to July 2015 with the goal to agree on a package for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, to present at the September UN General Assembly for approval.

<sup>2</sup> Referring to the UN IGN process, we can assume that the current OWG proposal on SDGs including 17 goals and 169 targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda will not be further modified in a substantial way until their adoption by the UN assembly in September 2015 even if there are currently discussions about some targets.

<sup>3</sup> See "Technical report by the Bureau of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) on the process of the development of an indicator framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda"

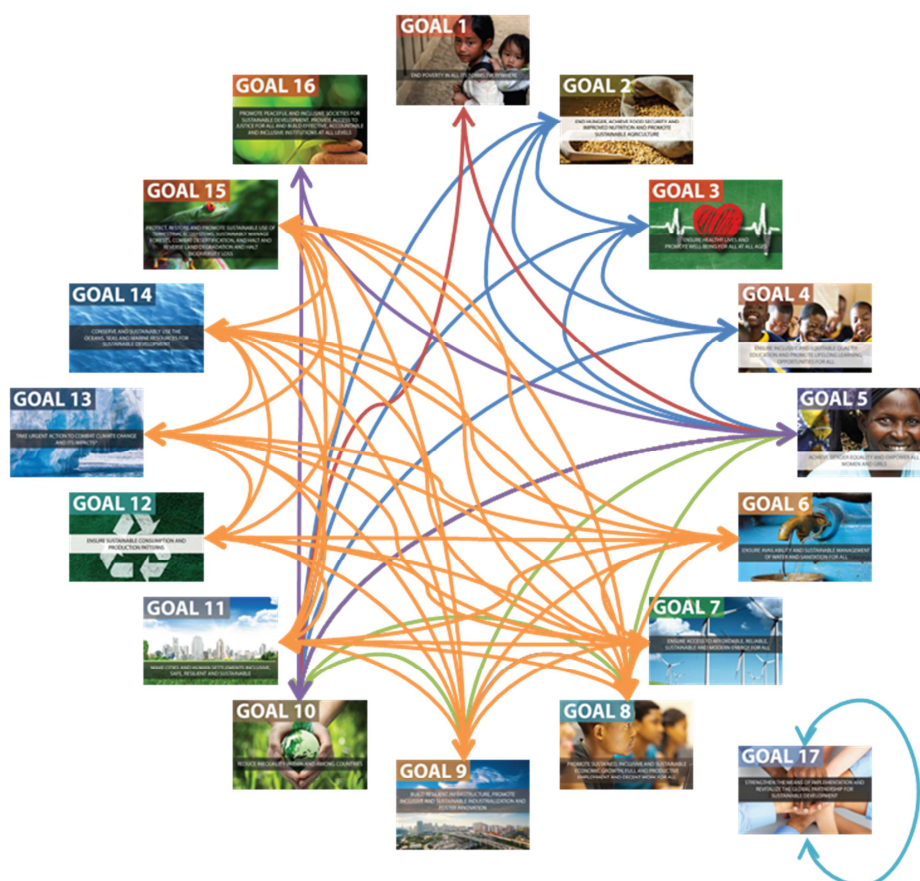
24. Attempts to look at inter-linkages and overlaps between goals and targets of the OWG proposal had already been undertaken by Sustainable Development Solution Network (SDSN)<sup>4</sup> and others, but more work is needed in this direction.

25. Eurostat is currently undertaking a thorough mapping between the goals and targets of the OWG proposal and two existing conceptual frameworks, the one proposed in the CES *Recommendations on measuring sustainable development* and the current EU SDI set.

26. As this work has just started, Eurostat is not yet able to anticipate any possible results. But the figure below may serve as a visualisation of the expected outcome of this exercise. It shows the relations between the “Six essential elements for delivering the sustainable development goals” cited in the UN Synthesis report<sup>5</sup> and the goals of the OWG proposal.

Figure 3

**Relations between the “6 elements for delivering the SDGs” taken from UN Synthesis report and the 17 goals of the OWG proposal (mapping informally shared between UK Office for National Statistics and Eurostat)**



<sup>4</sup> SDSN is a UN initiative launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in August 2012. SDSN published the most recent version (version 7) of its report on “Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a data revolution for the SDGs” in March 2015.

<sup>5</sup> The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet; Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Development Agenda; December 2014

27. Mapping goals and targets against existing frameworks is a way to identify the already available appropriate indicators and at the same time the remaining data gaps. In addition, this approach allows identifying multi-dimensional indicators which can be used to measure several (interlinked or overlapping) targets. In this sense the results of such an exercise can serve two important purposes:

(a) **Limited number of indicators:** Experience in monitoring sustainable development strategies suggests that the overall number of indicators should remain limited to around 100. A larger set would be difficult to manage and to communicate;

(b) **Hierarchy of indicators:** Eurostat suggests defining a smaller set of core or headline indicators, and a larger set of supplementary indicators. The former would be the most representative for each goal, while the latter would provide more detail or contextual information.

28. To achieve a complete picture of interlinks and overlaps between the goals and targets of the OWG proposal, further frameworks coming from national and international institutes can be added to the exercise and shared within the forthcoming work of the IAEG-SDG.

## IV. Conclusions

29. Eurostat is fully committed to contribute to the process of establishing a monitoring framework for SDGs according to the roadmap approved by the 46<sup>th</sup> UNSC.

30. Eurostat will actively contribute to the work of the IAEG-SDGs in cooperation with other Directorate Generals of the European Commission and in cooperation with its partners in the European Statistical System.

31. Eurostat supports the idea of establishing a robust and high-quality indicator framework which serves to monitor SDGs at different levels and is kept open to innovation.

32. Based on such an SDG indicator framework and in accordance to the UNSC roadmap, Eurostat intends to produce a first (pre-) report on the EU situation concerning SDGs by the end of 2016.

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