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The European Statistical System (ESS) Competence Profile for staff supporting the ESS

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1. Introduction

European statistics have become increasingly important for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of European Union (EU) policies. European statistics, therefore, make an essential contribution to building the information capacity needed to sustain the EU's strategic objectives and its underlying policies and supporting instruments.

European statistics are developed, produced, and disseminated on the basis of uniform standards and harmonised methods. The National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of the Member States collect and produce harmonised data that are compiled by Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, to construct statistics at EU level.

The *European Statistics Code of Practice*¹ aims to ensure public trust in European statistics by establishing how European statistics are to be developed, produced and disseminated to conform with its statistical principles.

In early 2007 a task force was commissioned by Eurostat's HRM/ESTP Working Group and European Statistical System (ESS) Committee to develop a sustainable long-term strategy on learning and development in the ESS.

The new *Regulation on statistics*², is also helping to drive the development of new sustainable strategies to modernise the ESS statistical production system.

A sustainable long-term strategy on learning and development in the ESS

At its first meeting the task force, facilitated by Eurostat, agreed to broaden the scope of activities beyond the provision of traditional training courses, by moving from the existing 'European Statistical Training Programme' (ESTP) towards the development of a 'European Statistical System – Learning and Development Framework' (ESS-LDF).

The ESS-LDF aims to help raise the overall quality of European statistics according to the principles stated in the *European Statistics Code of Practice*, and the new *Regulation on statistics*, and includes a variety of learning tools and activities, such as: the development of 'core' statistical competences; the development of a tool to assess the impact of learning of ESTP courses once back in the work place; the organisation of study visits for ESS junior statisticians at Eurostat; the development of a ESS-LDF portal; E-learning products; and, a process for mentoring opportunities.

¹ The *European Statistics Code of Practice* is based on 15 principles that apply to statistical authorities in the European Union. These principles cover the institutional environment, statistical processes and outputs. The full text of the *Code of Practice* is available in 29 languages together with other background documents relating to its implementation.
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/quality/documents/code_practice.pdf

² *Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and the Council of 11 March 2009 on European Statistics*

The activities emerging from the new ESS-LDF will be implemented in 2011.

Core competences at the ESS level

One of the tools, developed by the task force, for the new ESS-LDF, is the European Statistical System Competence Profile (ESSCP).

In developing the ESSCP, it was recognised that working in statistics within the European environment, **at home or abroad**, requires a different set of 'core' statistical competences (knowledge and skills) to those required at the national level.

This paper explains how the ESSCP was developed and tested, and how the ESS-LDF task force hopes it will add value across the ESS in the future.

2. Background

A framework for Eurostat – sowing the seeds

In April 2001, during a meeting of the Training of European Statisticians (TES) Working Group at Eurostat, The United Kingdom and Italy talked about their learning and development systems. Some good practice was shared, particularly around the benefits of using a competence-oriented approach to develop staff. Other NSI representatives found this good practice innovative and inspiring, and many saw the value of developing that approach within their own organisations.

Two years later, in 2003, as a result of a general re-think about Eurostat's approach to its own learning and development, a pilot group, set up by Eurostat's task force on 'Human Resources' set about developing a new strategy to support Continuing Professional Development (CPD), with particular focus on developing a statistical competence framework. It was agreed that the initial scope of the pilot group work would be limited to the 'core business' of the Member Institutes, namely the competences required for jobs/functions involving statistical work within Eurostat.

The pilot group met for the first time in May 2003, in Rome. At this meeting the group defined the initial scope and content of the project, and identified the stakeholders to involve in the consultation. The group focused its attention on compiling a first 'grid' of functions (with sub-functions) and competences central to the development, production and dissemination of statistics. The competence frameworks managed in Finland, Italy and The Netherlands helped to influence the development of this first grid. A reflection on a shared framework of values to be related to the competence grid was also undertaken.

This experience helped to pave the way for the next phase of the journey, towards the development of a 'ESS Competence Profile for all staff supporting the European Statistical System' (ESS), **from either their NSI base, or from within Eurostat.**

A Competence Profile for all staff supporting the ESS

In 2008 the ESS-LDF task force began the work on the development of the European Statistical System Competence Profile (ESSCP). The ESSCP is a key component of the ESS-LDF and it will help to underpin the other learning tools and activities being developed.

In designing the ESSCP the task force felt that any 'European' competences identified should complement, and not duplicate, those developed at the national level.

Scope of the ESSCP

The ESSCP has mainly been developed to:

- raise awareness and provide guidance to individuals and their managers about the 'core' areas of knowledge and skills considered important for people **working in, and supporting the ESS from their parent organisations** (this includes analytical professions, ICT experts, administrative staff, HR staff etc);
- serve as a useful **reference point** when developing the specific ESS needs of a job and its requirements. They will link to the various learning activities and tools included in the ESS-LDF, and help to promote common values and standards across the ESS.

The range of statistical posts across the ESS makes it impossible to produce competences detailed enough to cover every eventuality, and the team did not want the list of competences to be too exhaustive, so it was kept deliberately short and focused just on core competences appropriate to a 'EU-statistical' framework.

As a result, other competence areas like language skills, management development, IT, team working, communication skills etc, should be managed at the national level, and supported by national competence frameworks.

Developing the competences – the approach

In order to investigate the different experiences in the field of competence profiles at the national level, Eurostat invited Member States to share relevant information. Documents³ from 13 countries were received, which included frameworks that already existed in Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Sweden, and The United Kingdom. Preparatory work was also underway in Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Spain.

A smaller ESSCP project team, which included Eurostat, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Romania, and The United Kingdom, then identified the various steps to support the development of the ESSCP. These were as follows:

- Step 1 Define the aim, content, generic 'core' European competences, types of competences, main fields of application and target audience.
- Step 2 Set up a glossary of terms for the key terms used.
- Step 3 Establish the levels of professional experience for different groups of staff and areas of competences.
- Step 4 Identify the competences for each level; keep simple and practical, so that implementation is easy.
- Step 5 Launch a pilot exercise to test the first draft of competences.
- Step 6 Review the pilot, update ESSCP and develop guidelines for using it.

³ An inventory of information on competence frameworks in Eurostat and EU Member States is available under 'Staff Matters' on the ESS website 'INSite' managed by Eurostat http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/pgp_insite/pge_estat/tab_staff

3. What does the ESS Competence Profile (ESSCP) look like?

The structure

The 'ESSCP' includes two levels of 'core' experience:

1. **Contributing** level - (at least two year's experience in post).
2. **Escalating** level - (at least four year's experience in post, and/or team management responsibilities).

It is assumed that people operating at the 'Escalating' level will have already mastered the competences necessary to perform at the 'Contributing' level.

People operating at a higher level may wish to develop other competences specific to their own personal ESS development needs.

In some cases people might be exposed to ESS-related work earlier in their career, so should also find the ESSCP useful.

Knowledge and Skills

The competences are linked to two key attributes at the European level:

1. **Knowledge** – the outcome of the collection and assimilation of information through learning and development activities.
2. **Skills** – the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to carry out managerial or technical tasks and solve problems.

Specific **Attitudes** and **Behaviours** to support the competences are also included.

Competence descriptions

The competence descriptions are steered by the following important 'core' European statistical areas:

- Role and functions of the ESS (legal basis)
- European Statistics Code of Practice and the new Regulation on Statistics
- Quality declaration of the ESS
- European Commission rules and procedures
- European level networking, including the effective transfer of expertise
- European data harmonisation (legislation and methodology)
- European classifications
- European customer requirements

Annex A provides more information, and also explains how the ESSCP can be used.

4. The Pilot Study

To ensure that the 'ESSCP' was fit for purpose a pilot study was carried out in February 2010. Five countries took part in the pilot: Italy, The Netherlands, Romania, Spain, and The United Kingdom. Each country consulted a mix of junior and senior grades from different statistical fields within their statistical organisations, including home workers.

People taking part in the pilot were asked to:

1. Comment on the competences of most importance to them and their team members.
2. Identify gaps in the list of competences.
3. Share any general observations.

The ESSCP project team found the pilot opportunity very worthwhile and the information shared about specific competences has helped to improve the first draft model.

The latest version of the ESSCP, a two page document which includes an explanatory note, is attached at Annex A. **This version has been improved by the comments made during and after the pilot.**

Annex B shows how the competences can be mapped to different learning activities. This tool will also be useful when line managers and individuals discuss together the different options that might be available to fill a ESSCP related learning gap.

A selection of general comments made by those taking part in the first pilot follow:

- "I consider this profile a useful tool for identifying what knowledge, skills, and attitudes are needed at the European level. I intend to use this profile as a reference point in order to improve my professional competence. This is a timely exercise and will help to pinpoint learning and development needs. I would be happy to cascade this approach to my colleagues. The tools can be easily integrated into our performance management system."
- "I found the content of the profile useful, but I felt the presentation made it difficult to use."
- "I think it will be useful if it manages to successfully differentiate competences related to national statistical work from those required at the EU level."
- "I mainly supply data to Eurostat via the eDAMIS⁴ system, so most of these competences do not apply to me."
- "I find it useful to have one profile for the European domain. However, it is difficult to share and use it. Based on what grounds do you measure a person? Are the 'Escalating' categories based on your experience, knowledge and skills, or because you have been in your position for four years? Which matters more? And how do you make sure people all over Europe use this profile in the same way? Some hints and tips or measuring methods might help."

The constructive criticisms highlighted above, will influence the way we develop guidance to support the ESSCP. In particular, we felt that the last bullet point would be helped by developing some case studies/pen pictures to show how the ESSCP can be used in different circumstances at different stages of a person's career.

⁴ eDAMIS is a modern communications management system allowing easier and more accurate transfer of data between various national, EU institutions and Eurostat. For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/en/document/3537/5644#what>

5. Summary of task force's observations from the pilot

A summary of the project team's observations from the pilot, with recommendations, as a result of the comments made, follow:

1. The ranking of the competences exercise was very subjective and '**one size does not fill all**'. There is no need to rank, just to make sure that the competences are 'core' and relevant to the ESS. It is also important to include competences for people to aspire to in the future (for example they may wish to prepare for a future job/promotion that requires a certain competence).
2. The purpose is to **set a sustainable European standard** for people to compare themselves with (a good practice reference point). People are not being compared with each other as learning needs will be different, at different stages of an individual's career, therefore some people may need to pick and mix from the list. On the other hand, as part of their continuing professional development, individuals may want to be fully competent at the standard being recommended, and will want to develop in all the core areas – this is particularly relevant in the competence areas of **Knowledge**.
3. The comments and suggestions made by individuals, especially areas where there might be gaps, were very useful and have helped to make improvements. It was good to see that a number of people found the ESSCP a useful tool, and will use it.
4. It needs to be kept **simple** and not over complicated.
5. We need to encourage people to consider their **future learning needs** too, if they are not currently involved in some of the competence areas. Also it may help somebody who might be working on a specific ESS area to think more widely (eg develop an awareness), so that they have a broader understanding of international issues which might relate to their current area of work.
6. We need to explain in different ways how the ESSCP can be used in different situations and develop some **guidance**, with case studies, to help to bring the ESSCP to life.
7. We will also pilot the next phase – which will ask people to experiment with the ESSCP, either to map against their job descriptions, or to use as a tool to support their own or their team's development.

6. The next steps

The Task Force met on 29-30 June 2010 to share progress and agree the next steps in the development of this work. The following was agreed:

1. Link ESSCP to the new high level vision in support of a more efficient ESS, and map competences against the requirements for a more efficient ESS to see if there are any gaps that need to be included in the list of competences. (This has been done and the current version at Annex A reflects these changes).
2. Add a new 'skill' to support the effective transfer of expertise into another environment, eg the process of 'twinning'. (This has been done and the current version at Annex A reflects this – see 'SE7').
3. Develop guidance, including case studies to show how the ESSCP can be used.

4. Pilot again during September 2010 to test the guidance and practicalities of working with the ESSCP. (France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and The United Kingdom have volunteered to take part in the second pilot – a maximum of five people per country will be consulted). We have already started to think about scenarios for testing the ESSCP as follows:

A person who:

- contributes data to Eurostat
- attends international meetings
- leads an international team
- works in a Human Resources Development (HRD) area
- wants to build knowledge for a future role
- wants to map competences to a job description
- wants to plot a learning path for staff

Experienced staff taking part in the pilot will be asked to work with the ESSCP retrospectively, for example, if they were starting their careers again how useful would the tool be?

The team will report back to the ESTP Working Group in October 2010. The report will include recommendations on how to launch the ESSCP, including links to other tools and activities being developed as part of the ESS Learning and Development Framework (ESS-LDF).

We are hoping to launch across the ESSCP in early November 2010.

16 August 2010

ESS Competence Profile (ESSCP) - for NSI staff supporting the European Statistical System

The aim - this competence profile aims to improve consistency of approach across the European Statistical System (ESS). It will allow managers to set the requirements of a post in a ESS context, and to judge when people are suitable to meet these requirements. It provides a common 'good practice' reference point to individuals and their managers about the 'core' ESS competences they should develop to be effective at two different levels.

The content - the wide range of statistical support to the ESS makes it impossible to produce competences detailed enough to cover every eventuality. Instead, this profile shows the 'core' areas of knowledge and skills that are considered important to performing effectively within the ESS, **from your parent department or at Eurostat**. It has been designed as a flexible reference tool, and has been kept deliberately short and simple.

What the ESSCP does not cover - the ESSCP does not cover non-statistical competences, eg language skills, IT skills, team working, management skills, communication skills, consultancy skills, etc, as these should be managed at the national level. The ESSCP can, however, be used in tandem with any national competence frameworks.

The levels - the ESSCP shows the knowledge and skills that are useful for people working in a ESS context at two levels:

- **Level 1 (Contributing)** applies to people with at least two year's experience in post;

and

- **Level 2 (Escalating)** applies to people with at least four year's experience in post, and/or team management responsibilities.

How can it be used?

- To compare with your job description if it has a ESS aspect.
- To design a new job which needs ESS content.
- To include in a job advertisement with ESS content.
- To identify and develop suitable learning activities or tools to support the development of ESS competences.
- To identify and develop core ESS competences in advance, if you want to prepare for a future role.
- To gauge an organisation's ESS capability with regard to core knowledge, skills, behaviours.

ESS Competence Profile (ESSCP) - for NSI staff supporting the European Statistical System

Knowledge	Competence	
Level 1 (Contributing)	KC1	is aware of the technologies, tools and standards for European data collection and transmission.
	KC2	Is aware of the methodologies and tools used for European statistical analysis
	KC3	is aware of European legislation and methodologies, including data harmonisation
	KC4	Is aware of the ESS quality reporting requirements, linked with the more general TQM/EFQM framework
	KC5	Is aware of the European Classifications and Nomenclatures
	KC6	Is aware of the mandates and working modalities of relevant committees in Eurostat, including EU working groups, task forces, leadership groups, sponsorship groups, Essnet groups etc of the Commission and the Council
	KC7	Is aware of the European Statistics Code of Practice and peer review process
	KC8	Is aware of Eurostat's mission and its operational structures and activities
	KC9	Is aware of the administrative procedures applicable in the Commission and at Eurostat
	KC10	Is aware of the history of the EU and the interests of its institutions
	KC11	Is aware of and uses key EU communication tools, eg CIRCA, Eur-lex
	KC12	Understands the tasks and modes of operation for the EU institutions
	KC13	Is aware of the statistical modernisation agenda (of the production methods of EU statistics?) and its associated strategies
Level 2 (Escalating)	KE1	Understands ESS norms, regulations and laws relating to contracts, calls for tender, grants
	KE2	Understands which EU policies support the ESS and how they are applied
	KE3	Understands the relationships between the ESS and third parties, eg ESCB, IMF, OECD, UN, EU Council etc
	KE4	Understands ESS administrative rules and procedures related to budget requirements, location, monitoring and reporting
	KE5	Understands the main peculiarities of a country partner (or groups of countries) in order to improve relationship building
	KE6	Understands the impact that statistical modernisation will have on the ESS
Skills	Competence	
Level 1 (Contributing)	SC1	Applies tools and standards for the European statistical production cycle
	SC2	Presents quality information to the users in the statistical framework
Level 2 (Escalating)	SE1	Coordinates the national participation in ESS meetings, EU policies and institutions
	SE2	Applies methodologies related to harmonisation and comparability of data
	SE3	Uses the appropriate tools for European statistical analysis and relevant statistical methods (calculation, aggregation, time-series, interpretative and comparative analysis)
	SE4	Implements the European classification systems
	SE5	Uses European dissemination methods and elaborate dissemination strategies
	SE6	Responsibly defends/expresses the national interests/opinions at EU forums, balancing with the EU-vision
	SE7	Effectively transmits expertise into another environment, to promote European standards with developing countries through twinning etc
<p>The following Attitudes and Behaviours will also help you to be effective when operating at the ESS level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • integrate effectively within the ESS' organisational culture and build effective relationships with colleagues from across the multicultural environment to ensure effective ESS-networking, sharing of good practice and linking; • support international activities in a proactive way; • influence the development of key European strategies; • take a responsible attitude towards complying with EU rules and regulations; • promote and strengthen the ESS without compromising national integrity – a balanced approach; • reflect an attitude of empathy when communicating with international colleagues, and mindful of the needs of interpreters and those working in a non-native language; • an appreciation for other cultures. 		

Note:

- Level 1 – generally applies to people with at least two year's experience in post.
- Level 2 – generally applies to people with at least four year's experience in post, and/or team management responsibilities.
- It is assumed that people operating at Level 2 will have already mastered the competences necessary to perform at Level 1.
- It is recognised that people operating at a higher level may wish to develop other ESS competences specific to their own development needs.
- In some cases people might be exposed to ESS-related work earlier in their career, so will also find the ESSCP useful.

Mapping the competences to a variety of learning opportunities (template example)

Knowledge	Competence		Learning in the classroom	Learning by surfing the web	Learning by sharing and exchange of good practice	Learning by mentoring
Level 1 (Contributing)	KC1	is aware of the technologies, tools and standards for European data collection and transmission	1. Course A 2. Course B 3. ...	Link to A: Document on... B: e-learning issue... C: website... eg UNECE website http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/TRAINSTATS/Welcome+to+the+library+of+training+materials+on+statistics	Consult portals and websites where information is stored Attend conferences	For further in-depth info & analysis, contact ...@... Phone...
	KC2	is aware of the methodologies and tools used for European statistical analysis	1. Course A 2. Course B 3. ...	Link to A: Document on... B: e-learning issue... C: website... eg UNECE website http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/TRAINSTATS/Welcome+to+the+library+of+training+materials+on+statistics	Consult portals and websites where information is stored eg UNECE website Attend conferences	For further in-depth info & analysis, contact ...@... Phone...
	KC3	is aware of European legislation and methodologies, including data harmonisation (European Classifications and Nomenclatures)	1. Course A 2. Course B 3. ...	Link to A: Document on... B: e-learning issue... C: website... http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/TRAINSTATS/Welcome+to+the+library+of+training+materials+on+statistics	Consult portals and websites where information is stored eg UNECE website Attend conferences	For further in-depth info & analysis, contact ...@... Phone...
	KC4	Is aware of the ESS quality reporting requirements, linked with the more general TQM/EFQM framework	1. Course A 2. Course B 3. ...	Link to A: Document on... B e-learning issue... C: website... eg UNECE website http://www1.unece.org/stat/platform/display/TRAINSTATS/Welcome+to+the+library+of+training+materials+on+statistics	Consult portals and websites where information is stored eg UNECE website Attend conferences	For further in-depth info& analysis, contact ...@... Phone...

Level 2 (Escalating)
