

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

For information

Third meeting of the 2007/2008 Bureau  
Geneva, 12-13 February 2008

Item 13 of the Provisional  
Agenda

EU PEER REVIEWS AND GLOBAL ASSESSMENTS

Note prepared by Eurostat

BACKGROUND

1. The CES Bureau, in its meeting in October 2007 in Helsinki, expressed the wish to have an overview report on the peer reviews and global assessments done in the 10 years in the European region.

**PEER REVIEWS: ASSESSING AGAINST THE EUROPEAN STATISTICAL  
SYSTEM CODE OF PRACTICE**

**What are they?**

2. Peer reviews assess (legal) frameworks, policies and procedures at a horizontal level.
3. They do not focus on statistical processes or outputs as these would require a domain-specific approach as pursued e.g. in the framework of the ESS statistical working groups and task forces.
4. Peer reviews **also address the co-ordination role of the NSI within the national system** as a compromise between keeping the review manageable while at the same time assessing the situation in a devolved national statistical system, where the production of European statistics is shared among several authorities.
5. Peer reviews are conducted on the basis of the European Statistics Code of Practice<sup>1</sup> and address the institutional environment and dissemination parts of the Code of Practice with regard to the following principles:
  - (1) Professional independence,
  - (2) Mandate for data collection,
  - (3) Adequacy of resources,
  - (4) Quality commitment,
  - (5) Statistical confidentiality,
  - (6) Impartiality and objectivity and
  - (15) Accessibility and clarity.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the European Statistics Code of Practice please consult the Eurostat quality website:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/quality>

### How does it work in practice?

6. Peer reviews are prepared on the basis of a standard information package provided by Eurostat and the NSI. The main inputs for the preparation and conduct of the peer review are:
  - the National Statistical Institutes' reply to the Eurostat Code of Practice self-assessment questionnaire;
  - the results of a user satisfaction survey carried out prior to the review.
7. Peer review teams comprise two peers from NSIs nominated by the members of the Statistical Programme Committee, including the chair, and one Eurostat expert. Peer reviews are made during a 3-days visit on-site during which the review team meets with NSI representatives including NSI top and middle management and junior staff, as well as with the main stakeholders, comprising other data producers, various user groups and respondents' representatives.

### What is the output?

8. A **standard Peer review Report** assessing the level of compliance with the Code of Practice for each indicator following a harmonized reporting scale (fully/largely/partly/not met).
9. For each indicator for which compliance with the Code is still to be achieved, the peer review team and the NSI agree on improvement actions which are attached to the report together with an implementation plan. Further parts of the report address the NSI's co-ordination function within the national system and point out good practices observed to be further promoted in the Eurostat Working Groups and the Eurostat website respectively.
10. These peer review reports are furthermore **published on the Eurostat website**.
11. In view of enhancing the credibility of European statistics, a **reporting and monitoring system** has been put into place, of which the peer reviews build a cornerstone.

### What are the advantages?

12. Being rather formalised, pre-defined in structure and scope and following detailed checklists and evaluation standards, the ESS peer reviews assume an external audit-type function with regard to **assessing National Statistical Institutes' institutional set-up and dissemination practices against the principles and indicators of the Code of Practice**.
13. Being carried out on a system-wide scale during a relatively short time period, they provide a **unique opportunity for the identification of benchmarks and common difficulties or gaps, sharing of best practices and knowledge transfer** across the European Statistical System, thus, potentially contributing themselves to enhancing ESS compliance with the Code of Practice and the quality of European statistics.

## How many already done?

14. Peer reviews were launched in 2006. Until now, 32 reviews have been carried out in the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of the European Union<sup>2</sup>, the European Economic Area/European Free Trade Association<sup>3</sup> Member States, Switzerland and in Eurostat. Table I below provides a more detailed overview.

## GLOBAL ASSESSMENTS: ASSESSING AGAINST THE "ACQUIS COMMUNAUTAIRE"

### What are they?

15. The purpose of Global Assessments is to provide hard evidence that the systems of candidate countries comply with the provisions of the "acquis communautaire" and to assess in a comprehensive way whether the NSIs capacities are strong enough in terms of infrastructure (staff, financial resources, independence, law, IT, methodology) to meet their obligations as administrations of future Member States.

16. Global Assessments are made, based upon the existing EC regulation on the European Statistical System (which includes the so-called statistical law and the Compendium of Statistical Requirements) and upon all relevant national information (organisation chart of the entity to be assessed, publications, descriptions of the systems, national laws on statistics, annual and multi-annual programmes, etc.).

17. In all countries, the assessment covers the different statistical domains, the organisation and horizontal issues, e.g. registers and classifications.

### How does it work in practice?

18. General assessments are conducted by two experts of high professional standing in statistics, well acquainted with both EU statistics and National Statistical Systems of traditional Member States, representing a good mix of statistical systems i.e. centralised/decentralised, small/large country, south/north, etc.

19. The experts prepare beforehand on the basis of the documentation provided by the country and make two visits on-site:

- first for 5 days, to discuss the system in detail and to learn about potential remaining issues, not apparent through the papers but worth to be highlighted;
- secondly, approx. 6 weeks later, to discuss the draft report prepared using the knowledge gathered through the first visit, to clarify the outstanding points and to agree on the Global Assessment Report.

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<sup>2</sup> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, United Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein

### **What is the output?**

20. All Candidate Countries receive a **Global Assessment report**.
21. A synthesis of all reports was disseminated in a **special publication**, providing traditional Member States with information on the way National Statistical Systems were organised in the Candidate Countries on the eve of accession.
22. On the basis of all GA assessments, short summaries in the form of a chapter per country were produced providing for a quick overview.

### **What are the advantages?**

23. By producing a global overview of the situation, **the major areas for improvement in the short and medium term are identified** by using EU and international standards as benchmarks.
24. The possibility to have **interesting and direct discussions with peers in statistics, looking at the national system from outside**, which benefits management, planning, priorities, etc.

### **How many done in the last 8 years?**

25. Currently, a total number of 28 Global Assessments were made (14 new Member States and the countries listed below in Annex II).
26. Because of the success of Global Assessments for Candidate Countries, its geographical scope was extended to the Western Balkan Countries and later, to the TACIS Countries but a special emphasis on compliance with the “Acquis Communautaire” remained.
27. Finally, a rather similar approach although less stringent, was used for assessing the Mediterranean countries in 2006 at the beginning of the implementation of MEDSTAT II programmes. The "Country Statistical Situation Reports", which can be seen as "light" Global Assessments, were produced for all MEDSTAT partners with the aim to have an informative basis for the preparation of future Road Maps.

**Table I. Overview on the timing of the ESS peer reviews**

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Timing</b>
<b>CZ</b>	29-31 March 2006
<b>NL</b>	4-6 April 2006
<b>IT</b>	23-25 October 2006
<b>EE</b>	6-8 November 2006
<b>AT</b>	22-24 November 2006
<b>CY</b>	13-15 December 2006
<b>IE</b>	22-24 January 2007
<b>FR</b>	24-26 January 2007
<b>LV</b>	7-9 March 2007
<b>IS</b>	21-23 March 2007
<b>SE</b>	14-16 March 2007
<b>BG</b>	18-20 April 2007
<b>PL</b>	25-27 April 2007
<b>LT</b>	25-27 April 2007
<b>SI</b>	14-16 May 2007
<b>DK</b>	29-31 May 2007
<b>HU</b>	30 May - 1 June 2007
<b>NO</b>	4-6 June 2007
<b>SK</b>	2-4 July 2007
<b>BE</b>	2-4 July 2007
<b>FI</b>	8-10 August 2007
<b>UK</b>	24-26 September 2007
<b>Eurostat</b>	24-26 October 2007
<b>EL</b>	29-31 October 2007
<b>RO</b>	29-31 October 2007
<b>ES</b>	19-21 November 2007
<b>CH</b>	21-23 November 2007
<b>MT</b>	21-23 November 2007
<b>DE</b>	3-5 December 2007
<b>LI</b>	3-5 December 2007
<b>LU</b>	17 -19 December 2007
<b>PT</b>	16-18 January 2008

**Table II. Global Assessments in Western Balkan Countries and TACIS Countries**

<b>Country/entity</b>	<b>Year</b>
Albania	2005
Albania	2001
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2003
Croatia	2004
Croatia	2001
Kosovo/UNSCR 1244	2002
Montenegro	<i>See Yugoslavia</i>
Serbia	<i>See Yugoslavia</i>
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2004
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2001
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of	2002
Kazakhstan	2004
Russia	2003
Ukraine	2003
Moldova	2007
Belarus	2007

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