EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 3.9.2024
COM(2024) 390 final

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

on the 'Commitments on Confidence in Statistics' by Member States as required by Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics

This is the fourth report drawn up in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics[1], in particular Article 11(4), which set outs that:

'The Commitments by Member States shall be monitored regularly by the Commission on the basis of annual reports sent by Member States and shall be updated as necessary.

...

The Commission shall report to the European Parliament and the Council on the published Commitments and, where appropriate, progress reports, by 9 June 2018 and every 2 years thereafter.'

The first report was published in 2018[2], the second in 2020[3] and the third in 2022[4].

Commitment on Confidence in Statistics

The Commitments on Confidence in Statistics (the 'Commitments') were established as part of the objective to strengthen the framework for quality management in the field of statistics. They were first presented in a Commission Communication in 2011[5]. The concept serves as a mechanism to involve governments continuously in taking responsibility for their country's compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice ('the Code of Practice')[6].

The Code of Practice created the benchmark for developing, producing and distributing European statistics. It encompasses 16 principles that cover the institutional framework, statistical processes and output. Its major objective is to ensure that the statistics produced within the European Statistical System do not only correspond to quality criteria, amongst which can be mentioned relevance, timeliness and accuracy, but also satisfy the principles of professional independence, impartiality and objectivity.

The Commitments are an important link between the Code of Practice and Member State governments.

According to Article 11(3) of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009, the Commitments are instruments that '*shall further aim to ensure public trust in European statistics and progress in the implementation of the statistical principles contained in the Code of Practice.*'

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[1] Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 and repealing Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1101/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the transmission of data subject to statistical confidentiality to the Statistical Office of the European Communities, Council Regulation (EC) No 322/97 on Community Statistics, and Council Decision 89/382/EEC, Euratom establishing a Committee on the Statistical Programmes of the European Communities (OJ L 87, 31.3.2009, p. 164).

[2] COM(2018) 516 final.

[3] COM/2020/278 final.

[4] COM/2022/333 final.

[5] COM (2011) 211 final.

[6] European Statistics Code of Practice – revised edition 2017 - Products Catalogues - Eurostat (europa.eu).

Recital 17 of the amending Regulation, (EU) No 2015/759[7], states that '*The quality of European statistics could be strengthened and the confidence of users reinforced, by involving national governments in the responsibility of applying the European Statistics Code of Practice (the Code of Practice). To that end, a 'Commitment on Confidence in Statistics' (Commitment) by a Member State, taking account of national specificities, should include specific undertakings by the government of that Member State to improve or maintain the conditions for the implementation of the Code of Practice. The Commitment, which should be updated as necessary, could include national high quality assurance frameworks, including self-assessments, improvement actions and monitoring mechanisms.*'

European Statistical System (ESS) peer reviews

The European Statistical System (ESS), in which Eurostat and the national statistical authorities of the EU Member States and EFTA countries cooperate, aims to produce high-quality European statistics. To guarantee good quality statistics, the ESS members created a common quality framework with the Code of Practice as its cornerstone. Compliance by national statistical authorities with the full set of principles and indicators of the Code of Practice plays a major part in ensuring the quality of European statistics. This compliance is periodically assessed through ESS peer reviews.

The ESS peer reviews follow a detailed methodology and involve evidence-based self-assessments, country visits and peer-review reports drawn up by expert teams. The reports include recommendations for improvement and are followed up by action plans for improvement, which Eurostat monitor annually. Previous peer reviews were carried out from 2006 to 2008, and from 2013 to 2015. The third round of peer reviews, covering the 2021 to 2023 period, has been finalised and the Commission presented its results in a final report[8]. The individual peer-review reports can be found on Eurostat´s website[9].

In that regard, the Commitments involving governments have a complementary role to the ESS peer reviews involving national statistical authorities.

2. OVERVIEW OF COMMITMENTS ON CONFIDENCE AND REPORTS BY MEMBER STATES

2.1. General Provisions

According to Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009, Member States and the Commission must take all the necessary measures to maintain confidence in European statistics. To this effect, ´Commitments on Confidence in Statistics´ shall further aim to ensure public trust in European statistics. In the absence of the publication of a Commitment, a Member State is required to submit to the Commission and make public a progress report on the implementation of the Code of Practice and, where applicable, on the efforts undertaken towards the establishment of a Commitment.

The Commission is required to report to the European Parliament and the Council on the published Commitments and, where appropriate, progress reports, by 9 June 2018 and every two years thereafter.

[7] Regulation (EU) 2015/759 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics (OJ L 123,19.5.2015, p. 90).
[8] Register of Commission Documents - SWD(2024)136 (europa.eu).
[9] Current round (2021-2023) - Eurostat (europa.eu).

2.2. Form of the Commitment

The Regulation does not set rules on what form the Commitment should take. However, the objective of raising public trust by means of governmental commitment to provide the conditions for high-quality statistics must be achieved.

As was presented in the first report[10], most Member States consider certain parts of their respective legislation to constitute the Commitment. However, over the years, the number of Member States which have drawn up 'stand-alone' Commitments has increased. This report presents a general overview of the current situation, including situations covered in previous reports and new developments.

The report is based exclusively on national contributions received for the purpose of this report. Eurostat invited the Member States to report on the period between 1 January 2022 and 31 December 2023.

National laws constituting the Commitment

The Member States that consider certain parts of their national law to constitute the Commitment have referred to the legal provisions that are relevant for improving or maintaining the conditions for the implementation of the Code of Practice and reported on relevant developments.

Austria: Statistics Austria considers the Commitment to be constituted by national law, namely by the Federal Statistics Act. Austria reported that there were no major changes since the previous reporting period.

Croatia: As also mentioned in the report sent by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (CBS) to Eurostat, the Official Statistics Act that entered into force in 2020 provides for the legal basis for the Commitment by giving the national statistical institute, the CBS, the professional independence and support to maintain and improve the conditions for implementing the Code of Practice. The CBS has overall responsibility for coordinating and developing the national statistical system. Other producers of official statistics are responsible for developing, producing and disseminating official statistics as part of their work. The CBS strives to provide timely statistical data that will meet the users' needs. To achieve this, the CBS conducted the User Satisfaction Survey at the end of 2022. The survey results are used to help with future planning of the CBS's activities.

Czechia: The Commitment in Czechia[11] was published on 28 February 2018 on the national statistical authority's website. The Commitment sums up the respective provisions of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009, and states, as it was confirmed in the report sent by the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO) to Eurostat, that it is already fulfilled by valid legislation setting out the activities of the Czech statistical service. It first refers to the act No 89/1995 on the state statistical service, as well as the Constitution or the rules of procedure of the government. This system of regulations provides the conditions necessary to fulfil all principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice concerning the institutional environment. The CZSO reported on further developments including improvements in quality management.

[10] COM(2018) 516 final.
[11] Summary of Czech legislation in the context of the Commitment on Confidence on the website of the Czech Statistical Office.

Germany: The Commitment is considered to be constituted by national law. As the German Federal Statistical Office (FSO) stated in its report to Eurostat, Germany has a good level of compliance with the Code of Practice, confirmed also by the peer-review report. At the same time, the peer review identified areas with room for improvement and appropriate measures were recommended in the report. The most important actions cover cooperation and coordination within the German statistical system, introducing uniform quality standards, programme planning and innovation. Furthermore, the report sent to Eurostat highlights that the addition of new register-related components to the FSO's business areas represents good progress.

Estonia: The Commitment is laid down in the Official Statistics Act, specifically in Article 7(1), according to which official statistics are produced in line with statistical principles and quality criteria included in Regulation (EC) No 223/2009. The Official Statistics Act entered into force in August 2010 and the report sent to Eurostat confirmed that no major amendments have been made since then.

Finland: The Finnish Commitment on Confidence is based on national statistics legislation. The report sent to Eurostat on the current reporting period highlights that the Statistics Finland Act was recently amended. One of these amendments included assigning a new task to Statistics Finland, namely collecting and providing micro data for research and statistical analysis purposes. The revised Act also clarifies the rules that apply when providing access to data for research and analysis.

France: According to the French National Statistical Institute, the Annual Report of the Official Statistics Authority[12] monitors the compliance with the Code of Practice and is made public in both French and English versions. The report sent to Eurostat does not refer to any stand-alone Commitment by the French government.

Hungary: As also mentioned in the report sent to Eurostat on the current reporting period, the Commitments drawn up by the Hungarian government have been laid down in the national law on statistics that entered into force on 1 January 2017. There have been no major amendments since then.

Italy: There is no stand-alone Commitment established in Italy. The Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) reported about recent developments in the application of the principles of the Code of Practice. ISTAT approved its new quality policy which provides for the compliance of traditional processes, such as surveys, to be evaluated with sound methodologies and practices. To this end, a checklist was introduced to all ISTAT traditional processes in the period between October 2022 and January 2023. Each part of the checklist serves to identify weaknesses and therefore to tailor the improvement actions to be implemented. Audits are scheduled within a 3-year period, as an updated checklist should be drawn up every 3 years.

Latvia: The Commitment is established in national law – the Law on Statistics. There have been no major changes in the law during this reporting period.

Lithuania: The Commitment is established in national law. The report about the current reporting period highlights some recent developments. On 1 January 2023, a new law on official statistics and state data governance entered into force, expanding the role and functions of Statistics Lithuania. According to the new law, Statistics Lithuania has become a

[12] Annual Report of the Official Statistics Authority 2022 .

State Data Agency, responsible not only for producing official statistics but also for state data governance. The new law retains the obligation to implement the Code of Practice in the preparation of official statistics.

Luxembourg: As confirmed also by the report sent to Eurostat, Luxembourg considers the Commitment to be constituted by the national law. It has no changes to report for the period from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023.

Netherlands: The Commitment is established in national law. No major amendment to the national law was reported. Since the previous peer review, several improvements have been made, in particular those related to stabilising the institutional environment and strengthening quality management and assurance. Further reforms were carried out in the areas of human resources and performance measurement. Statistics Netherlands has started working on the recommendations that resulted from the most recent peer review.

Norway: The commitment to the principles in the Code of Practice is set out in the Norwegian Statistics Act, that entered into force in January 2021. The first two reports on compliance with the quality principles in the Statistics Act and the Code of Practice were published on the Statistics Norway website[13]. The report sent to Eurostat mentions the action plan for improvement following the peer review of the Norwegian statistical system.

Poland: The report sent by Statistics Poland to Eurostat confirmed that the national law, more precisely, the Act of 29 June 1995 on Official Statistics, is considered as the Polish Commitment. Since the last reporting there has been no revision of the provisions in the Act on Official Statistics, which implements the principles of the Code of Practice.

Portugal: As also mentioned in the report sent to Eurostat, the Commitment is established in national law, namely the Decree-Law No 136/2012. This Decree-Law is understood as being the political commitment by the Portuguese government. The Decree-Law contains provisions, among other things, to improve or maintain the conditions for implementing the Code of Practice, and to allocate the necessary budget and the powers to carry out all activities provided for under the law.

Slovakia: The report sent to Eurostat confirmed that no stand-alone Commitment was established. In the current reporting period several normative, organisational and methodological documents were adopted and implemented by the national statistical system, as part of the implementation of the Code of Practice[14].

Spain: The report sent to Eurostat describes several steps taken in 2022-2023 related to improved implementation of the Code of Practice. The Public Statistical Law was amended, by which the commitment to comply with the Code of Practice is extended to statistical production under the national statistical plan, not limited to the European statistical plan. The same law recognised the Spanish National Statistics Institute as the national statistical authority.

'Stand-alone' Commitments on Confidence

The 'stand-alone' Commitments that have been drawn up take different forms, each one reflecting the specific features of the national statistical system concerned.

[13] Report on the quality of official statistics, 2022 and Report on the quality of official statistics, 2023.
[14] See also the considerations on the amendments to the Competence Act widening the power of the Government to appoint and dismiss heads of certain independent bodies, in the Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Slovakia (SWD(2024) 825 of 24 July 2024).

The first three Commission reports from 2018, 2020 and 2022 on the Commitments presented the following Member States' 'stand-alone' Commitments.

Belgium: On 31 May 2017, the Belgian Commitment on Confidence[15] was approved by the Consultation Committee, where the federal government and the governments of the regions and communities are represented, and subsequently published on the websites of the Belgian federal statistical institute and the regional statistical authorities. Progress was made in implementing the Commitment as part of the improvement actions of the third round of peer reviews, carried out in 2022 and 2023. The report sent to Eurostat highlighted achievements made regarding coordination, cooperation and adequacy of resources. Furthermore, a dissemination and communication strategy was developed, tailored to different users.

Bulgaria: In its report sent to Eurostat, the National Statistical Institute confirmed its previous report stating that on 8 December 2021 the Bulgarian government signed the Commitment[16]. The government made commitments to, among other things: (i) provide appropriate conditions for developing, producing and disseminating statistics; (ii) guarantee the rights and obligations of the President of the National Statistical Institute; (iii) give sufficient resources to improve and maintain the quality of official statistics; and (iv) ensure access to administrative and other data sources for the National Statistical Institute.

Cyprus: The Commitment was approved by the council of ministers in 2018[17]. The Commitment was published along with a citizen's summary. The report sent to Eurostat explained that the new Official Statistics Law of 2021 (Law No. 25(I)/2021) contains explicit references to the statistical principles (including professional independence, impartiality and objectivity), the quality criteria and the implementation of the Code of Practice to ensure public trust in statistics.

Greece: The Greek Commitment[18] was signed on 29 February 2012 by the Greek Prime Minister and the Member of the European Commission responsible for taxation and customs union, audit and anti-fraud. It is available on the Hellenic Statistical Authority's website. As also reported, there have been no further developments since then. This Commitment is still in force and applicable.

Iceland: A 'stand-alone' Commitment was published in November 2019[19]. The report sent to Eurostat by Statistics Iceland underlined that the text on the Commitment was inserted in the documents of the budget plan 2020-2024 and approved by the Parliament. The Commitment reaffirms that the credibility of public statistics is one of the prerequisites for trust in economic and social statistics used for policy making and to assess the impact of government decisions in a neutral way. The Commitment reaffirms professional independence and the working environment needed to enforce rules to ensure that Statistics Iceland can implement new projects, collect data, and process and disseminate official statistics.

Ireland: In 2017, the government of Ireland adopted the Commitment[20]. In doing so the government reconfirmed its commitment to: (i) guarantee the independence of the Central

[15] Commitment on Confidence of the Belgian governmenthttps://statbel.fgov.be/en/about-statbel/quality/commitment-confidence (available in English, French, German and Dutch).
[16] Commitment on Confidence of the Bulgarian government.
[17] Commitment on Confidence of the Cypriot government; Council of Ministers Decision no. 85.964.
[18] Commitment on Confidence of the Greek government.
[19] Commitment on Confidence of the Icelandic government (available in Icelandic).
[20] Commitment on Confidence of the Irish government (available only in English).

Statistical Office (CSO); (ii) support the CSO in ensuring compliance with the Code of Practice; and (iii) help develop the broader Irish Statistical System under the CSO's direction. As also mentioned in the report that the CSO sent to Eurostat, the Commitment approved by the government is a further declaration of support for the existing laws and for those policies and practices that the CSO established to meet its obligations under the Code of Practice.

Malta: In Malta, the Commitment was signed by the Prime Minister on 17 May 2018[21]. As also outlined in the report that the Maltese National Statistics Office (NSO) sent to Eurostat, since then the government continued to fully observe the principle of professional independence of the NSO. Moreover, to further strengthen its independence in line with the Commitment, the NSO has been working on a new act that will repeal the current Malta Statistics Authority Act. All the changes being proposed aim to streamline statistical processes to make the production of statistics more robust, efficient, transparent and timely.

Romania: The Romanian Commitment on Confidence was adopted by the Romanian government at its meeting of 9 June 2017[22]. As explained in the report that the Romanian National Institute of Statistics sent to Eurostat, the salaries of employees of the national statistical system have been improved and dialogues with key stakeholders have continued to boost confidence regarding statistics.

Slovenia: The Slovenian government adopted the Commitment on 5 January 2017[23]. It was subsequently published, together with the corresponding citizen's summary on the Statistical Office's website. The report sent to Eurostat did not include further developments in this regard.

Sweden: The Commitment was presented in the Swedish government's budget bill for 2017.[24] Subsequently, it was also published on the website of the Swedish Statistical Office (SCB). - Furthermore, the SCB reports annually on quality requirements in statistics. As illustrated in the report sent to Eurostat by the SCB, the results are mainly positive in the current reporting period with some areas identified where there is room for further improvement.

It is also worth mentioning that, although outside of the ESS, three candidate countries also formally adopted Commitments: **Albania** on 10 November 2017, **Montenegro** on 22 February 2018 and **North Macedonia** on 17 October 2018.

Furthermore, the Commission was informed about the following developments that occurred outside the current reporting period:

Liechtenstein: As also informed by the report sent to Eurostat by the Statistical Authority, the government of Liechtenstein confirmed on 27 February 2024 its commitment to protect independent and reliable statistics, in line with Regulation (EC) No 223/2009[25]. The government committed itself to ensure: (i) the independence of the Statistical Authority; (ii) the quality of official statistics by implementing international and European standards on statistical data; and (iii) that adequate and permanent resources are provided to ensure the quality and relevance of official statistics. Furthermore, the government committed itself to

[21] Commitment on Confidence of the Maltese government (available only in English).
[22] Commitment on Confidence of the Romanian government (available only in Romanian).
[23] Commitment on Confidence of the Slovenian government (available in English and Slovenian).
[24] Commitment on Confidence of the Swedish government. Published in English in Annual report 2017 **of Official Statistics of Sweden.**
[25] Commitment on Confidence of the government of Liechtenstein.

provide access for statistical authorities to administrative data and ensure the rights of respondents and statistical confidentiality.

Switzerland: The Federal Statistical Office (FSO) reported to Eurostat that on 24 January 2024, the Swiss Federal Council adopted and published the federal government's public statistics programme for the coming years (2024-2027). The report provides an overview of the statistical objectives, priorities and activities and includes the Commitment[26]. In the Commitment, the government confirms it aims to: (i) observe the international principles for collecting, compiling and disseminating official statistics; (ii) guarantee the professional independence of the FSO and other national authorities (ONAs); (iii) support FSO and ONAs in taking the necessary measures to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice; and (iv) further develop the federal statistical system under the FSO's leadership of the FSO.

3. CONCLUSION

As stipulated in Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics, the Commitments help ensure that there is public trust in European statistics and that progress is made in implementing the statistical principles contained in the Code of Practice.

A growing number of countries publish stand-alone Commitments. This trend is welcome and fully supported by the Commission. Many Member States consider their national law, and specific provisions contained within it, to already constitute a Commitment. In that regard, some Member States reported that their respective national law strengthened the role of their national statistical institute as a central statistical authority. Permanent monitoring of relevant developments and adaptation to changing users' expectations and needs are necessary to meet public trust and quality requirements in statistics.

National statistical institutes implement various means of quality management and performance measurement. It has been confirmed during the current reporting period that external evaluations are indispensable in objectively assessing the performance of statistical institutes. Peer reviews remain a key instrument in that regard. They provide valuable insights related to confidence in statistics from external stakeholders with relevant knowledge and experience in the field.

Maintaining public trust in official statistics is vitally important for the relevance and credibility of the ESS as a whole. It also helps the EU and EU Member States' governments respond to major current and future challenges using methods based on objective data and facts, underpinning democratic legitimacy of policy decisions. The Commission follows up instances where governments fail to ensure professional independence of their respective National Statistical Institutes, for example by amending national law in a way that puts in doubt its compliance with the principle of professional independence, or by removing the Head of the Institute before the end of mandate or without a clear justification. The Commission will continue monitoring relevant developments and assist Member States achieve their ambition of maintaining and improving public trust and confidence in statistics.

[26] The programme, including the Commitment on Confidence of the Swiss federal government.