



EFTA Statistical Cooperation & the European Statistical System

EEA Seminar
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EFTA Statistical Cooperation /1

Impartial and reliable statistical data are widely considered as a prerequisite for a democratic society and a necessary condition for the smooth running of a competitive market economy.

- **Statistics are important for policy making in a modern society**
- **Statistics are vital for monitoring the effects of policies**
- **Statistics are crucial for understanding the society around us**
- **Comparable statistics across countries and regions are a necessity in a globalised society**



EFTA Statistical Cooperation /2

- **EEA Statistical cooperation**

Developing an integrated European Statistical System (ESS) which can give coherent descriptions of all fields of cooperation covered by the EEA Treaty

- **Technical Assistance in the Field of Statistics**

Assisting countries neighbouring the EU to develop their statistical capacity and to harmonise statistical methods and standards with international norms

- **European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP)**

EFTA participation in the design and the implementation of a training programme for official statisticians of the EU and EFTA States



EEA Statistical Cooperation /1

- **Objectives of the EEA Statistical Cooperation**

Production and dissemination of comparable statistical information for describing and monitoring all economic, social and environmental policies covered by the EEA Treaty

- ① Harmonising concepts, methods, structures and technical standards in all relevant statistical fields. In this respect, Eurostat organises around 200 meetings with experts from EU and EFTA Member States
- ② Collecting data from EU and EFTA national statistical authorities and disseminating them through various channels



EEA Statistical Cooperation /2

- **Legal Basis for the EEA Statistical Cooperation**
 - Art. 76 of the EEA Agreement concerns statistical cooperation
 - Provisions for the organisation of statistical cooperation, including EFTA Statistical Office (ESO), are mentioned in Protocol 30
 - Annex XXI deals with EC legislation in the field of statistics relevant for the EEA



Technical Assistance in the Field of Statistics

EFTA and the European Union have a common interest in assisting countries neighbouring the enlarged European Economic Area to develop their statistical capacity and to harmonise statistical methods and standards with international norms.

- Joint EFTA/EU Technical Assistance programmes and actions in the field of statistics programme are based on Memoranda of Understanding (MoU).
- The next MoU should cover a three year period (2008–2010) and involve funds totalling 1.9 million euros
- The MoU foresees the secondment of two EFTA experts to Eurostat
- The MoU gives priority to countries that have concluded declarations on cooperation or free trade agreements with EFTA



European Statistical Training Programme (ESTP)

Statisticians in the ESS need continuous training in new methods, techniques and best practices to sustain and improve the quality of European statistics.

- Contributing to a high level of competence and qualification of European statisticians through theoretical and practical training
- Encouraging the exchange of best practices and experiences
- EFTA's involvement in the ESTP has been settled through an exchange of letters between the EFTA Secretariat and Eurostat and provides full participation of EFTA statisticians in the ESTP



Other EFTA Statistical Cooperation

- **Swiss Bilateral Agreement in the field of Statistics**
 - As from 1st January 2007 a bilateral agreement between Switzerland and the EU governs the statistical cooperation between both parties.
 - The Swiss Agreement shall ensure, as for other EFTA States, the full participation of Switzerland in the European Statistical System.
 - Through this agreement Switzerland will adopt European norms and standards (Annex A) whereas Eurostat will disseminate Swiss data.
 - Switzerland will contribute to the costs of its participation in the European Statistical System and of the publication of its data by Eurostat (Annex B)



European Statistical System (ESS) /1

- **Objectives and composition of the ESS**
 - Providing reliable statistics at a European level that enable comparisons between countries and regions in all fields which are relevant for the European integration.
 - Coordinating statistical activities with international organisations such as OECD and the United Nations.
 - Participating in the capacity building of national statistical systems from accessing and third countries.



European Statistical System (ESS) /2

- **Legal Basis of the ESS**

- **Constitutional Basis:**

- Article 338 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

- **Statistical Law:**

- Regulation (EC) No 223 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics defining the responsibility between national and Community statistical authorities according to the principle of subsidiarity

- **Acquis communautaire:**

- Corpus of binding decisions (legal acts) and non binding decisions (gentlemen's agreements) in the field of statistics. legal acts which are EEA relevant are incorporated in the Annex XXI of the EEA Agreement by a Joint Committee decision



European Statistical System (ESS) /3

- **Members of the ESS**

The ESS is a network comprising:

- Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Community
- National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of the EU Member States
- NSIs from EFTA States: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland
- Other ministries, agencies and central banks of EU and EFTA States that provide official statistics at European level



European Statistical System (ESS) /4

- **European Statistical Programme Committee (ESSC)**

- The ESSC is the management body of the ESS. The ESSC discusses and agrees on the objectives and actions of the ESS.
- It has comitology functions in all issues delegated to the Commission by the Council and the Parliament.
- The ESSC and the EEA statistical conference are organised in combined meetings
- The ESSC is chaired by Eurostat and brings together the Heads of all EU and EFTA National Statistical Institutes (NSIs).



European Statistical System (ESS) /5

- **Eurostat**

- Eurostat is a Directorate-General (DG) of the Commission headed by a Director-General, assisted by a Deputy Director-General and seven Directors
- About 900 people work at Eurostat of which 80 are Seconded National Experts (SNEs). Eurostat's budget is about €110 million.
- Harmonising concepts, methods, structures and technical standards in all relevant statistical fields. In this respect, Eurostat organises around 200 meetings with experts from EU and EFTA Member States
- Collecting data from EU and EFTA national statistical authorities and disseminating them through various channels



European Statistical System (ESS) /6

- **National Statistical Institutes**

- **Principle of Subsidiarity:** National statistical institutes (NSIs) and other national statistical authorities collect, verify and analyse harmonised national data and send them to Eurostat.
- **Decision-shaping:** Experts from NSIs and other national statistical authorities are invited to participate actively in working groups and other task forces organised by the ESS and chaired by Eurostat.
- **Decision-making:** EFTA NSIs do not take part in the formal voting procedure but the Commission has to take note of the opinion of the EEA EFTA and Switzerland



National Experts Seconded to Eurostat

- 4 EEA EFTA experts. Seconded via the EEA agreement as stated in Protocol 30. Experts from the EEA EFTA countries can apply.
- 2 EFTA experts in technical assistance. Seconded via the MoU on technical assistance with Eurostat. Experts from all 4 EFTA countries can apply.
- 3 Swiss experts. Seconded via the bilateral CH-EU agreement in statistics. Swiss experts can apply.



Role of the EFTA Statistical Office (ESO)

The EFTA Statistical Office (ESO) was created in 1991 as a liaison office between Eurostat and the EFTA national statistical institutes and is located on the premises of Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, in Luxembourg

ESO's objective is to support the general cooperation process between EFTA States and the EU for the provision of harmonised and comparable statistics in Europe. The cooperation also entails technical cooperation programmes with third countries and training of European statisticians.



What are the next challenges for official statistics /1

- **Main concerns about official statistics:**
 - Do official statistics fail in measuring market disturbances and imperfections ?
 - Do official statistics pay enough attention to the long term and sustainability ?
 - Do official statistics give priority to economic growth instead of the distribution of income and wealth in our societies ?
 - Are official statistics quick enough to capture changes in the economy and the society ?
 - Do official statistics communicate appropriately with users ?



What are the next challenges for official statistics /2

- **International initiatives to reshape official statistics:**
 - **GDP and Beyond (EU Commission):**
to complement GDP with statistics covering other economic, social and environmental issues, on which people's well-being critically depends
 - **OECD Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies:**
to foster the development of sets of key economic, social and environmental indicators to provide a comprehensive picture of how the well-being of a society is evolving
 - **Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report (French President Sarkozy):**
to assess the feasibility of alternative measurement tools for economic performance and social progress and to discuss how to present statistical information in an appropriate way



Thank you for your attention