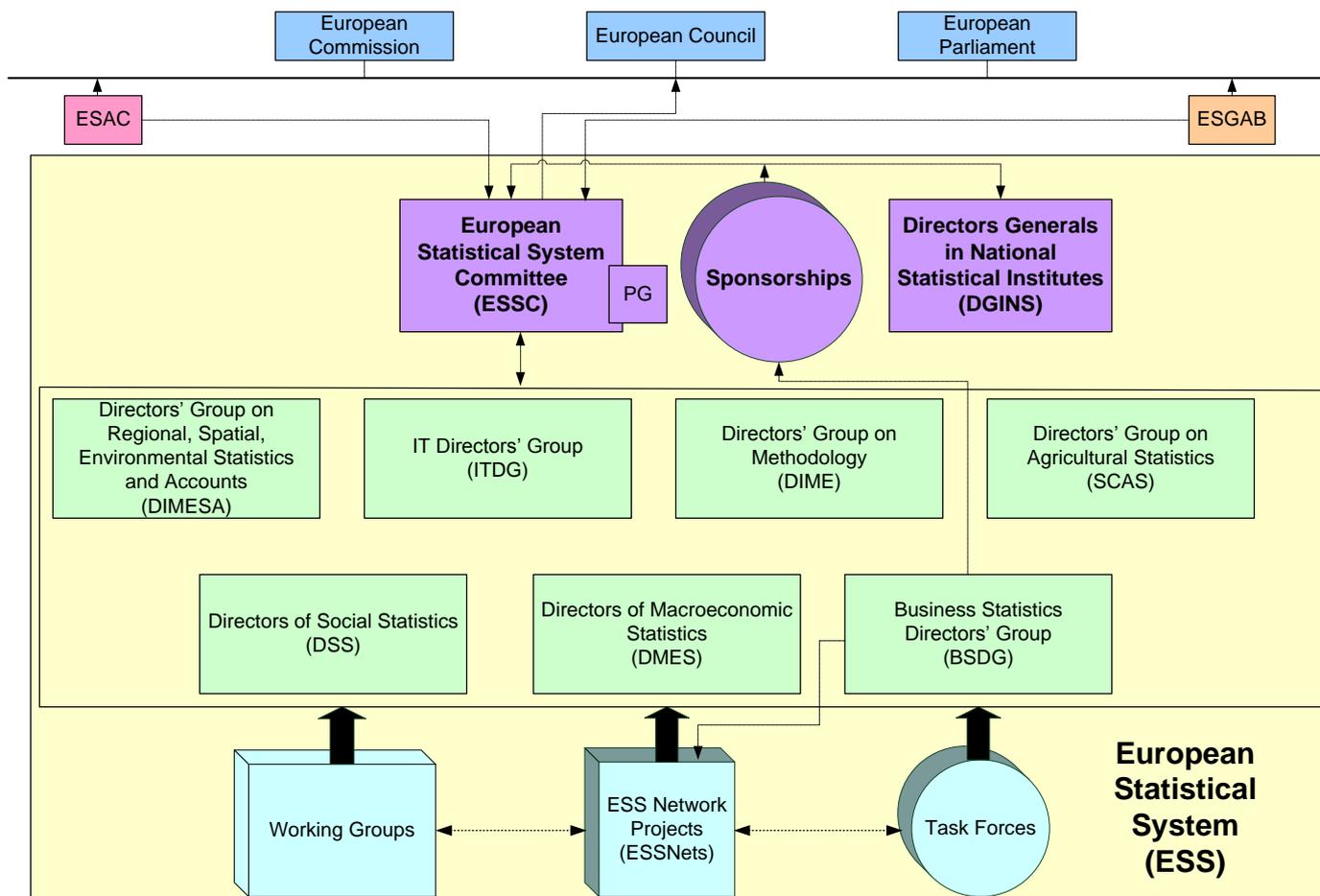


The European Statistical System in a nutshell



The European Union

- The European Union only exists through Treaties and laws, and therefore almost everything it does is determined by Directives and Regulations. It is a truism that the EU is a legal bureaucracy. (See International StatNet -> The European Statistical System in a nutshell -> EU Glossary of Technical Terms).

The Commission - the government of the EU

- The Commission is the government of the EU. It has a Cabinet of 27 Commissioners, one from each country. Baroness Ashton is the UK's Commissioner. One of the 27 Commissioners is selected by the Heads of States of the EU (as The European Council) to be President of the Commission. This is currently Mr Jose Manuel Barroso of Portugal. Like all governments, the Commission has a civil service. There are 33 departments (called Directorates General) of which Eurostat is one. The Commission has the sole right to propose new EU law.
- With only limited (delegated) exceptions, the laws are made jointly by Council and by European Parliament.

The Council and its configurations (ECOFIN - COREPER - UKREP - Council Working Party for Statistics) - The European Parliament

- The Council is made up of the Ministers of Member States. It has a number of configurations of which ECOFIN (Economic and Financial Affairs Council, the finance ministers) is relevant to statistics. Much of its work is done by the permanent representatives of the Ministers, known as COREPER (the Committee of the permanent representatives). UKREP is the name given to our permanent representation.
- The Council has a rotating Presidency, changing every six months. The Presidency organises working parties to scrutinise, negotiate, and amend the Commission's legislative proposals. There is therefore a Council Working Party for Statistics. Delegates at CWPS are representing the government of their Member State, and negotiate on the basis of a mandate agreed between government and the national parliament.
- The European Parliament is directly elected. Its legislative work is carried out by its Committees. A Committee of EP can propose amendments to the text of the Commission's proposal. The MEPs for a member state are briefed on each legislative proposal in advance.
- Just like in the UK, legislation is only passed when both houses agree on the text of the proposal. This is the Co-decision procedure. When finally agreed, the proposal becomes a Regulation of European Parliament and Council. The five year work programme for European statistics is a Basic Act. There are approximately 300 Regulations relating to European statistics. In 2011 alone 23 new Regulations were made.

The European Statistical System

- The European Statistical System is the partnership of the statistical producers of Member States and the Commission.
- The ESSC is the senior committee made up of the Heads of NSIs and is chaired by Eurostat. It meets four times per year. It has three main roles. It decides ESS statistical policies, it advises Eurostat on its legislative proposals, and it makes comitology decisions on implementing acts.
- The Partnership Group is a sub group of heads of NSIs which meets four times a year, between ESSC meetings. Its purpose is to better facilitate the work of ESSC by identifying issues, discussing contentious matters, and suggesting change.
- European Statistical Programme 2013-2017 - Financial provisions - useful information about how Eurostat grants et al will operate through the next five years and beyond can be found on the International Knowledge Station (IKS) on StatNet.

Directors General of National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) - Sponsorship Groups - Directors Groups

- DGINS is an annual conference of the Directors General of NSIs, and dates from 1953. The Chair

rotates, and hosts the conference. A significant output is the DGINS memorandums. The 2011 Wiesbaden Memorandum called for a new and more standardised conceptual design for European household and social statistics. The effect of such memorandums is that they are likely to become part of the multiannual work programme for European statistics.

- Sponsorship Groups are ad-hoc with a varying membership, established to examine a statistical or organisational issue. An example is the 'Sponsorship Group on Measuring Wellbeing'. The reports of Sponsorship Groups are presented to ESSC for adoption. Eurostat will take the proposals of a Sponsorship Group into account when making legislative proposals.
- The new Directors Groups are a response to the changes required by the Lisbon Treaty and to a demand for a more streamlined committee structure that can deal with the challenge of the Vision. The role of the Directors Groups is to prepare decisions to be made at ESSC, assist with the development of new legislation, address technical issues arising from statistical policy and law, and represent the consolidated view of the member state on the matter at hand.
- Each Directors Group is technically an 'Expert Group' operating in support of ESSC. As an expert group, a Directors Group cannot make binding decisions.

Working Groups - Task Forces - ESSNets and Vision Infrastructure Projects

- Working Groups are made up of technical experts, usually in topic or themed areas of work. They prepare the detail of statistical policies and may initiate the development of a statistical law. For example, the 'Working Group on Statistical Confidentiality' meets annually to consider access to micro-data and disclosure control issues, and advise ESSC on methodological issues. There are working groups for most statistical themes. Every member state is invited to be represented in working groups.
- Task Forces are ad-hoc, and exist only for as long as the job at hand. Member States are invited to participate but the TF does not need representation from every state. They exist to develop a particular solution to a statistical problem. For example, the 'Task Force for the reform of the research data access rules'.
- ESSNets are collaborative networks of experts in Member States. Their work may be wholly or partly funded by Eurostat grants. (Vision Infrastructure Projects – VIPs also help to test the feasibility and implement aspects of the 'Vision' based on Eurostat initiatives. These projects aim to develop new mechanisms of work inside Eurostat, involving systematically business process owners and service providers like IT specialists and methodologists. They are also the key for redistributing resources among Eurostat).

European Statistical Advisory Committee

- ESAC is the European Statistical Advisory Committee. It has 24 members representing users and other stakeholders of the ESSC. Its opinion is sought on most legislative proposals and policy

Communications.

European Statistics Governance Advisory Board

- ESGAB is the European Statistics Governance Advisory Board. It has seven independent members with the role of providing oversight on the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice.

Eurostat Vision - background

In August 2009, Eurostat presented a 'Communication on the production method of EU statistics: A vision for the next decade' which was adopted by the EC. The Commission outlines how the ESS should be modernised in the longer term to meet the challenges that statistical producers are faced with at national and European levels.

Summary

It is a complex system with very many players, with by necessity a binding legal framework running throughout. An official in a NSI may have frequent contact with one or two of these boxes, but few will have a working level relationship with more than that. Therefore internal coordination is essential if those roles are to be carried out effectively. External coordination is also essential. We are just one partner of 27, so we need to know what others think and get them on board if we are to win an argument.

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