

HUNGARIAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION 90th ANNIVERSARY

Balatonöszöd, 15.-16.November 2012

ESGAB PROFESSIONAL INDEPENDENCE IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS

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!HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



WHAT

1. Introduction with a preamble,
2. ESGAB
 - findings & recommendations,
3. Independence
 - arguments for discussion.

The opinions expressed in the presentation are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Austrian Statistical Society or ESGAB.

PREAMBLE

“**Neutral statistics** observing the real developments of the past – whether in line with the policy aims or not – are a basis on which sound decisions about the future can be built.¹⁾

The European Court of Auditors²⁾ states:

'Public confidence in European statistics is essential in an Union where political decisions need to be evidence-based and where an increasing number of decisions are directly triggered by statistical data or by indicators derived from them.'

Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that statistical offices operate **independently** from the political agenda.”

1) ESGAB, report 2012; 2) European Court of Auditors, Special report 12/2012.

ESGAB – THE BOARD

The **E**uropean **S**tatistical **G**overnance **A**dvisory **B**oard:

- **Established:** 2008 by the EP and the EC to provide an independent overview of the ESS with regard to implementation of the European Statistics CoP.
- **Aim:** enhance professional independence, integrity and accountability in the ESS and the quality of European statistics.
- **Composition:**
 - 7 members, not remunerated;
 - Eurostat observer.
 - Expenses secretariat + meetings -> EC
 - More at: ec.europa.eu/esgab

ESGAB – EVALUATIONS

Annual report to the EP and the EC on

- the implementation of the CoP insofar as it relates to the Commission (Eurostat), including an
- assessment of implementation of the Code in the ESS as a whole.

Advising the Commission (Eurostat) on

- appropriate measures to facilitate the implementation of the Code,
- how to communicate the Code to users and data providers,
- an updating of the Code and
- questions related to user confidence.

ESGAB – ANNUAL REPORT 2012

The report deals mainly with:

- **Governance** issues in the ESS,
- **Efficiency** and **resources**,
- **Future** work.

With following utmost concerns:

- a. Resources,
- b. Independence,
- c. Quality,
- d. Coordination.

ESGAB–REPORTS

1. **Progress** has been seen in compliance with the CoP, together with new initiatives to strengthen the governance structure of the ESS and the quality of official statistics.
2. But: ESGAB as well as Court of Auditors state, that the CoP has only been partly implemented. The **process has lost momentum**.
3. Some aspects of the CoP are in the hands of political decision makers, are a **matter of political will**. Not only statistical offices are seen as being responsible for implementing the CoP any longer, a determined action both by governments and statistical producers is required in this respect.

ESGAB – RECOMMENDATIONS 2012

GOVERNANCE

- 1.The principle '**professional independence**' of the CoP must be fully respected,
- 2.The **co-ordination** role of the NSIs and Eurostat in the production of European statistics must be enforced and supported by legislative changes, where necessary,
- 3.ESGAB recommends the establishment of an **independent board** at national level to oversee the implementation of the CoP,
- 4.Clear and public **appointment and dismissal rules** for heads of statistical offices are to be ensured with open transparent competitions and fixed terms in line with the CoP,
- 5.The **working arrangements** between statistical producers and the entities to which they are linked (such as ministers) should be publicly available at national level,
- 6.The **equal access** to statistics must be safeguarded.

ESGAB – RECOMMENDATIONS 2012

EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES

1. Statistical offices need to be able to **exchange micro-data**.

2. Use of **administrative data** is a source of economies for many NSIs.

3. The on-going revision of the ESS **governance structure** must be completed in order to streamline the decision making channels.

ESGAB – FINDINGS 2012

MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH THE COP – FUTURE

1. A new round of **peer reviews**,
2. The **Commitments on Confidence** to better involve policy makers and statistical professionals are needed,
3. ESGAB's **monitoring role** needs to be defined as complementary to that of Eurostat.

INDEPENDENCE & AUTONOMY

- **Independence:** self-government by professionals exercising sovereignty,
- **Autonomy:** kind of independence granted by an overseeing authority that retains ultimate authority,
- **Integrity:** quality of having a sense of honesty and truthfulness in regard to the motivations for one's actions.

PROFESSIONAL INDEPENDENCE – 8 ARGUMENTS TO PROMPT DISCUSSION

Independence in official statistics is essential, because

1. the **functional separation** from policy making is a precondition for credibility in policy-monitoring evaluation and control,
2. it is a sine qua non for the independence of **statistical policy**, involving responsibility and accountability,

INDEPENDENCE IN STATISTICS 2

is a precondition, because

3. of the **authority** of an independent scientific institution.
4. official information must not only be of good quality and produced with complete autonomy, it must be „**certified**“ or „**validated**“, so its legal and administrative consequences can be accomplished.
5. one main consequence is the quasi-judicial task of a „**data-magistracy**“ for validation and certification,

INDEPENDENCE IN STATISTICS 3

is essential, because

6. of the importance that official statistics has in the context of development, compliance and monitoring of **statistical quality** in the public domain,

7. it safeguards **free access** to data to the same extent at the same time for everybody,

8. finally and in summary because on account of **credibility**: independence should/could help to create a stamp of credence per se.

CONCLUDING WORDS & A VISION

“The core mission of official statistics is inherently linked to **trust**, creating **trust**, disseminating **trust**, and maintaining **trust**. The official statistician is an agent of **trust**, because he is **trusted** and promotes **trust** through the information infrastructure.

And **trust** is the public good output of statistics in a world of increasingly intangible production. The essence of statistical activity in fact is the *production of **trust** by means of **trust*** (...).

The production process in public statistics is shifting from the production of data to the production of knowledge and **trust**. It falls therefore within the framework of building the social capital of a nation. And it is not an art, but a science!” Garonna, 1999.