

Annex 1

Principles for a common revision policy for European Statistics

This annex presents the principles for an ESS revision policy which should be applied to data revisions at Eurostat and at ESS level. Revision policies compliant with these principles should be defined at institutional and domain level, taking care of data specific characteristics for each production process when considering domain revision policies.

The principles presented in this annex are structured in two groups: general principles and principles related to the data production process at Eurostat and Member States level. The general principles aim to identify the pillars of the set of principles, defining its scope, limits and main characteristics. The second group includes more operational principles related to the implementation of revision policies at domain level.

1.1. General principles

The following three general principles describe the foundation of an ESS revision policy. They can be considered the essential core of a general and transparent revision policy.

Principle 1 – General and domain specific revision policies

Each statistical institution within the ESS defines, communicates and publicly releases well documented general revision policies and domain specific ones applicable to European statistics under its responsibility.

Description: The general revision policy should be applicable to all European statistics. It should be adaptable to the characteristics of different statistics and allow the definition of domain specific revision policies, compliant with the general principles. The domain specific revision policies should be defined at the level of statistical domain taking into account data specificities as well as constraints deriving from existing legal acts.

The general revision policy and the domain specific ones should be documented and disseminated by Eurostat as well as by other ESS statistical organisations on their websites. The information to be compiled for domain specific revision policies will be incorporated in the ESMS metadata structure. Effective communication with the media and with the public has to be ensured through appropriate means, e.g. press releases, online documents, publications and so on.

Principle 2 – Consistency and stability of domain specific revision policies

Domain specific revision policies should be kept consistent across statistical domains and countries as far as possible and stable over a sufficiently long time period.

Description: When laying down the revision policies for statistical domains, as much consistency as possible should be searched across statistical domains and countries. Users should know in advance when future revisions will take place. Once the domain specific revision policies are defined, they should be kept stable over time. Changes to domain specific revision policies should be pre-announced, well documented and justified.

Principle 3 – Communication of revisions

Statistical institutions within the ESS should define a common strategy for each statistical domain to communicate qualitative and quantitative information on data revisions of European statistics.

Description: Statistical institutions within the ESS should define a communication strategy on data revisions at domain level, taking in consideration the characteristics of the data generating process. Such strategies should complement the information disseminated on

revision policy with quantitative information on data revisions and be harmonised as far as possible.

1.2. Principles related to the data production process

The following principles are directly related to the revisions process.

Principle 4 – Routine and annual revisions

Routine and annual revisions should be published in the framework of well defined, synchronised and regularly updated release/revision calendars at national and European level. Releases of European and national data aggregates should be synchronized as far as possible.

Description: It is important that for relevant data, such as PEEIs first and progressively other European statistics, the users are informed in advance on when data will be released. When a public release calendar is available, then it will also play the role of revision calendar; otherwise a public revision calendar has to be established. The full harmonisation of release dates at national and European level will improve the quality of European aggregates.

Principle 5 – Major revisions

Major revisions should only take place in larger intervals. They should be pre-announced, backwards implemented and coordinated across statistical domains and institutions.

Description: Major revisions are often linked to changes in definitions, classifications, etc. They normally take place in intervals of 5 years or more. Major revisions should be announced widely in advance and included in the release/revision calendars at national and European level. Reasons for major revisions should be clearly explained to the public together with, if possible, their potential impact on the most important data. After the revision, an analysis should be published showing the impact of the changes that have been made.

Principle 6 – Non-scheduled revisions

Non-scheduled revisions should be reduced over time to the case of errors and unforeseeable accidents occurring in the production process. Correction should be released without waiting for scheduled revisions. They should be accompanied by appropriate explanation.

Description: When an error or an unforeseeable event occurs, its impact on data should be assessed before revising; if necessary additional information on the non-scheduled revision should be published, in particular on the reason of this on-scheduled revision.

Principle 7 – Definition of domain specific revision policies

Domain specific revision policies should rely on sound and homogenous methodological choices covering i.a. scheduling of revisions, possible use of thresholds, length, depth, and seasonal adjustment whenever applicable.

Description: When defining domain revision policies, particular attention has to be paid to the choices made concerning the scheduling of revisions (e.g. concurrent versus current approach, see Annex 2 for more details), the adoption of a significance threshold, the extent of revisions in terms of periods back in time, and the consistency between the revision of an aggregate and the revisions of its components. Moreover, choices concerning the revisions of seasonally adjusted data must comply with the ESS guidelines on seasonal adjustment. Eurostat and Member States have to agree as much as possible on such issues in order to ensure the maximum possible consistency at domain level.

Principle 8 – Data vintages and monitoring of revisions

As far as appropriate, each statistical institution within the ESS carries out and disseminates regular revision analysis at statistical domain level. For this purpose the adequate vintage databases consistent with release/revision calendars should be implemented, maintained and disseminated.

Description: The availability of historical information on revisions represents the main requirement for a regular monitoring of the revision process and for the production of revisions analysis. Member States and Eurostat have to identify the most appropriate way to manage such historical information as well as the suitable level of breakdown. For certain statistical domains it could be useful that the various versions of the data produced are made available to the public. This will apply mainly to infra-annual statistics and other selected European statistics. Revisions analysis should be regularly performed and disseminated.