



EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK  
EUROSYSTEM

### **Public commitment on European statistics by the ESCB**

The ESCB's statistical function is based on a legal mandate to collect all necessary and relevant data in order to produce and disseminate impartial, reliable, appropriate, timely, consistent and accessible statistics in the areas under the ESCB's responsibility. Where appropriate, these statistics comply with European and internationally agreed standards, guidelines and good practices. The independence granted to the ESCB under Article 130 of the [Treaty](#) on the Functioning of the European Union entails, among other things, that there is no political interference in the compilation and dissemination of statistical information.

The ESCB attaches great importance to the quality of its statistics. It therefore takes into consideration internationally agreed quality standards, such as those formulated in the IMF's [Special Data Dissemination Standard](#) and [Data Quality Assessment Framework](#), which are in turn rooted in the [UN's Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#). Without prejudice to the [Protocol on the Statute of the European System of Central Banks and of the European Central Bank](#) (hereinafter referred to as "the Statute"), it collaborates with the European Statistical System (ESS), which comprises Eurostat (the Statistical Office of the European Union (EU)), the national statistical institutes and other national statistical authorities, and takes account of the principles laid down in the [European Statistics Code of Practice for the National and Community Statistical Authorities](#).

The ESCB aims to perform its statistical function effectively and to use resources efficiently when collecting, compiling and disseminating statistics. In accordance with primary and secondary EU law (Article 130 of the Treaty and Article 5 of the Statute, and Council Regulation 2533/98 as amended by Council Regulation 951/2009 respectively), the aim is to collect the necessary statistical information of an appropriate quality while keeping the reporting burden on respondents to a minimum, guaranteeing their privacy and protecting the confidentiality of the non-public information they provide. The possible reuse, for administrative purposes, of confidential statistical information supplied by individual reporters to the ESCB is limited to information on businesses that would otherwise have to submit the same information to the ESCB twice (e.g. for minimum reserves purposes) and must be provided by law. In addition, the ESCB guarantees that confidential statistical information provided by an ESS authority is used for statistical purposes only.

In the performance of its statistical function the ESCB is committed to good governance and the highest ethical standards, as well as to executing its tasks in a spirit of cooperation and teamwork.

In short, and in line with the [Eurosystem Mission Statement](#), ESCB statistics are governed by a set of principles referring to the ESCB's institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical output.

## **Institutional environment**

The institutional set-up in which statistics are produced has a significant impact on their quality. The institutional environment significantly affects the integrity and credibility of the production and dissemination of statistics. The relevant principles that apply are: 1) professional independence, 2) mandate for data collection, 3) adequacy of resources, 4) commitment to quality, 5) statistical confidentiality and 6) impartiality and objectivity.

### **Principle 1: Professional independence**

“Professional independence” has two dimensions in the context of the ESCB’s statistical function. First, the independence of the ESCB is guaranteed by Article 130 of the Treaty and Article 7 of the Statute. This applies to all tasks performed by the ESCB and implies that there is to be no political interference in the ESCB’s performance of its statistical function. In accordance with the Statute, the ESCB shall not “seek or take instructions from EU institutions, bodies, offices or agencies from any government of a Member State or from any other body”. Second, the production of ESCB statistics must meet the criterion of scientific independence, which implies that the choice of sources, definitions, methodologies and statistical techniques for the development and production of ESCB statistics, as well as decisions about the timing and content of all forms of dissemination, must be guided solely by statistical considerations.

#### Indicators:

1. The independence of the ESCB statistical function from political and other external interference in developing, producing and disseminating European statistics is guaranteed by law.
2. The ESCB statistical function has responsibility for ensuring that European statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in an independent manner.
3. The ESCB statistical function has the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases.
4. The statistical work programmes are published and periodic reports describe progress made.
5. Statistical releases are clearly distinguished and issued separately from political/policy statements.
6. The ESCB, when appropriate, comments publicly on statistical issues, including criticisms and misuses of official European statistics.

### **Principle 2: Mandate for data collection**

“Mandate for data collection” means that the ESCB must have a clear legal mandate to collect information for European statistical purposes. Moreover, it is empowered to impose sanctions on reporting agents which fail to comply with their obligations.

#### Indicators:

1. The mandate of the ESCB to collect information for the production and dissemination of European statistics is specified in law.
2. On the basis of a legal act, the ESCB may compel the response to statistical surveys.

#### **Principle 3: Adequacy of resources**

“Adequacy of resources” means that human and financial resources, facilities and the IT infrastructure are used as efficiently as possible and are commensurate with the statistical work programme.

#### Indicators:

1. Skilled staff, and financial and computing resources, adequate both in magnitude and in quality, are available to meet current European statistical needs.
2. The scope, detail and cost of European statistics are commensurate with needs.
3. Procedures exist to assess and justify demands for new European statistics against their cost.
4. Procedures exist to assess the continuing need for all European statistics, to see if any can be discontinued or curtailed to free up resources.

#### **Principle 4: Commitment to quality**

“Commitment to quality” means that the ESCB statistical function is committed to quality. It systematically and regularly identifies strengths and weaknesses to continuously improve process and product quality.

#### Indicators:

1. Quality policy is defined and made available to the public.
2. Procedures are in place to plan and monitor the quality of the statistical production process.
3. Product quality is regularly monitored, assessed and reported upon according to the ESCB quality criteria.
4. There is a regular and thorough review of the key statistical outputs.

#### **Principle 5: Statistical confidentiality**

“Statistical confidentiality” means the protection of confidential statistical information that relates to single statistical units and is collected by ESCB members either directly from reporting agents or indirectly from ESS authorities or other national/international entities. Confidential statistical information that is transmitted between an ESS authority and an ESCB member should not be used for purposes that are not exclusively statistical, such as for administrative or tax purposes, for legal proceedings or for verification or sanctioning in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of Council Regulation 2533/98. Such information should only be accessible to those staff performing statistical tasks within the specific domain to which the information relates. Moreover, the ESCB must take all regulatory, administrative, technical and organisational measures that are necessary to protect confidential statistical information from unlawful disclosure or use.

### Indicators:

1. Statistical confidentiality is guaranteed by law.
2. Staff sign legal confidentiality commitments on appointment.
3. Penalties are prescribed for any wilful breaches of statistical confidentiality.
4. Guidelines and instructions are provided to staff on the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes. The confidentiality policy is made known to the public.
5. Physical, technological and organisational provisions are in place to protect the security and integrity of statistical databases.
6. Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.
7. At least once a year the ECB decision-making bodies publish a report on the application of the principle of statistical confidentiality.

### **Principle 6: Impartiality and objectivity**

“Impartiality” means that ESCB statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a neutral manner. Furthermore, they must be equally accessible to all users in order to maintain public confidence in the integrity of the policy decisions of which they form the basis.

“Objectivity” means that ESCB statistics must be developed, produced and disseminated in a systematic, reliable and unbiased manner. It implies adherence to professional and ethical standards and that the policies and practices followed are transparent to users and respondents.

### Indicators:

1. Statistics are collected, compiled and disseminated on an objective basis determined by statistical considerations.
2. Choices of sources and statistical methods as well as decisions about the dissemination of statistics are informed by statistical considerations.
3. Errors discovered in published statistics are corrected at the earliest possible date and publicised.
4. Information on the methods and procedures used is publicly available.
5. Statistical release dates and times are pre-announced.
6. Advance notice is given on major revisions or changes in methodologies, source data and techniques.
7. All European statistics are made available to all users. Any privileged pre-release access is limited, controlled and publicised. In the event that leaks occur, pre-release arrangements are revised so as to ensure impartiality.
8. Statistical releases and statements made in press conferences are objective and non-partisan.
9. Special press briefings are held to announce and explain major new statistical releases.

## **Statistical processes**

The processes used for the development, collection, processing and dissemination of statistics constitute the core of all statistical systems. The relevant principles are: 1) sound methodology, 2) appropriate statistical procedures, 3) minimisation of the reporting burden and 4) cost-effectiveness.

### **Principle 7: Sound methodology**

“Sound methodology” means that, in developing and compiling statistics, the ESCB shall use a sound statistical methodology based on ESCB and EU legislation and standards, and/or internationally agreed standards, guidelines or best practice.

#### Indicators:

1. The overall methodological framework used for European statistics follows European and other international standards, guidelines and good practices. It takes account of the views of ESCB users.
2. Procedures are in place to ensure that standard concepts, definitions and classifications are consistently applied to European statistics.
3. The ESCB data collection systems are regularly evaluated and adjusted if necessary in order to ensure high quality.
4. Graduates in the relevant academic disciplines are recruited.
5. A policy of continuous vocational training is implemented for staff.
6. Cooperation with the scientific community is organised to improve methodology and the effectiveness of the methods implemented and to promote better tools when feasible.

### **Principle 8: Appropriate statistical procedures**

“Appropriate statistical procedures” means that effective and efficient statistical procedures are implemented throughout the statistical production chain.

#### Indicators:

1. When European statistics are based on administrative data, the definitions and concepts used for administrative purposes must be a good approximation of those required for statistical purposes.
2. In case of statistical surveys, questionnaires are systematically tested prior to the data collection.
3. Survey designs, sample selections and estimation methods are well based and regularly reviewed and revised as required.
4. The processes used for the development, collection, compilation and production of European statistics are well documented and regularly reviewed to assess their efficiency and effectiveness. They allow published data to be linked with raw data and the quality adjustment and other statistical estimates made during the production process to be retrieved.
5. The information systems dedicated to statistics are provided with the appropriate tools for all statistical activities.
6. Revisions follow standard, well-established and transparent procedures.

7. The ESCB is involved in the design of administrative data in order to make these data more suitable for statistical purposes.
8. Agreements are made with owners of administrative data which set out their shared commitment to the use of these data for statistical purposes.
9. The ESCB cooperates with owners of administrative data in assuring data quality.

### **Principle 9: Minimisation of the reporting burden**

“Minimisation of the reporting burden” means that the ESCB must establish appropriate procedures to enable user requirements to be met while minimising the burden on reporting agents and without compromising the quality of ESCB statistics.

#### Indicators:

1. The reporting burden for providers of European statistics is minimised.
2. A merits and costs analysis is carried out before new or substantially enhanced statistics are put into regular production.
3. The information sought from businesses is, as far as possible, readily available from their accounts and electronic means are used where possible to facilitate its return.
4. Administrative sources are used whenever possible to avoid duplicating requests for information.
5. Data sharing is generalised in order to avoid multiplication of surveys.
6. Measures that enable the linking of data sources are promoted in order to reduce the reporting burden.

### **Principle 10: Cost-effectiveness**

“Cost-effectiveness” means that the costs of producing ESCB statistics must be in proportion to their merits and that resources must be used optimally. Where appropriate, the information to be collected must be extracted from available records or sources.

#### Indicators:

1. Internal and independent external measures monitor the use of resources.
2. Major innovations in statistical processes or information technology are introduced in all steps of the production and dissemination of statistics.
3. Proactive efforts are made to improve the statistical potential of administrative data and limit recourse to direct surveys.
4. The ESCB promotes and implements standardised solutions that increase effectiveness and efficiency.

## **High output quality**

“High output quality” encompasses the following five principles: relevance; accuracy and reliability (including stability); consistency (or coherence) and comparability; timeliness (including punctuality); and accessibility and clarity.

### **Principle 11: Relevance**

“Relevance” means that ESCB statistics must fulfil stated or implied user needs. These needs may alter over time as a result of changes in the economic environment.

#### Indicators:

1. Processes are in place to consult users, monitor the relevance and utility of existing statistics in meeting their needs, and consider their emerging needs and priorities.
2. Users’ needs are prioritised and priority needs are reflected in the work programme.
3. User satisfaction is monitored on a regular basis.

### **Principle 12: Accuracy and reliability (including stability)**

“Accuracy and reliability (including stability)” means that ESCB statistics must provide accurate and reliable information on the phenomenon that they are intended to measure. “Accuracy” can be defined as the closeness of the statistical output to the (unknown) true value of the variable that is being measured, while “reliability” refers to the closeness of revised estimations of a specific statistic to the initial value released.

#### Indicators:

1. Source data, intermediate results and statistical outputs are regularly assessed and validated.
2. The ESCB applies sound data collection systems, compilation procedures and estimation methods.
3. Revisions are regularly analysed in order to assess the stability of the data and to improve statistical processes.
4. When one or more events has a substantial impact on the statistical output, the reasons for the presence of such outliers are explained, unless this is prevented by confidentiality considerations.
5. The ESCB explains the reasons for sizeable revisions.

### **Principle 13: Timeliness (including punctuality)**

“Timeliness (including punctuality)” means that ESCB statistics must be timely and punctual, whereby “timeliness” refers to the time lag between the availability of the information and the event or phenomenon to which it relates and “punctuality” refers to the time lag between the actual date of release of the data and the date by when the data should have been released.

#### Indicators:

1. As a minimum, timeliness meets the European and international release standards.
2. A standard daily time for the release of European statistics is made public.

3. The periodicity of European statistics takes into account user requirements as much as possible.
4. Divergence from the dissemination time schedule is publicised in advance and explained and a new release date is set.

#### **Principle 14: Consistency and comparability**

“Consistency and comparability” means that ESCB statistics must be consistent: (1) over time, (2) within the dataset that is published in a single release, (3) across datasets and (4) across different frequencies for the same dataset, and that, where appropriate, they must be (5) comparable with statistics of other regions and countries. In this context, the coherence of statistical information refers to the degree to which it can be successfully combined with other statistical information within a broad analytical framework and over time. Consistent statistics also facilitate international comparisons. The use of standard concepts, classifications and target populations promotes coherence, as does the use of a common methodology across surveys.

##### Indicators:

1. Statistics are internally coherent and consistent (i.e. arithmetic and accounting identities are observed). Flows and changes in stocks are reconcilable.
2. Statistics are consistent or reconcilable over a reasonable period of time.
3. Statistics are compiled on the basis of common standards with respect to scope, definitions, units and classifications in the different surveys and sources.
4. Statistics from the different sources and of different periodicity are compared and reconciled.
5. Statistics are based on internationally agreed concepts and definitions, insofar as relevant, in order to enable international comparisons to be drawn. Conceptual differences, if any, are made public.

#### **Principle 15: “Accessibility and clarity”**

“Accessibility and clarity” means that information on data and metadata must be presented in a clear and understandable form, as well as easily and readily available to all users.

##### Indicators:

1. Statistics and the corresponding metadata are presented in a form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons.
2. Dissemination services use modern information and communication technology. Key statistics are released by means of a press release.
3. Access to microdata is allowed for research purposes and is subject to specific rules or protocols.
4. Metadata are documented according to standardised metadata systems.
5. Users are kept informed about the methodology of statistical processes including the use of administrative data.
6. Users are kept informed on the quality of statistical outputs, as defined in these ESCB quality criteria.
7. The ESCB statistical function provides assistance to users in accessing and understanding the data.