



Valdis DOMBROVSKIS
Vice-President of the European Commission

Marianne THYSSEN
Member of the European Commission

Brussels, - 3. 11. 2016

Dear Mrs. Lautenschläger,

There exists an excellent and long-standing cooperation between the European Central Bank and the Commission (Eurostat) as regards the production of economic and financial statistics. This is crucial to minimise the reporting burden and to ensure the necessary coherence of the European statistics production while complying with the statistical principles, bearing in mind that the production of statistics on each side is governed by different legal frameworks reflecting the respective governance structures.

That said there are still some open issues where our two Institutions could still make progress and reach a common understanding for the benefit of the overall quality of statistics in Europe.

At Union level, the European Statistical System offers the highest standards in terms of quality assurance for European statistics, based in particular on compliance with the statistical principles laid down in the Treaty and derived legislation as well as with the European Statistics Code of Practice.

Such a high level of quality assurance should be provided for statistics used for the macroeconomic imbalances procedure. Although the relevant indicators used for this procedure are provided by Eurostat on the basis of Union legislation, some underlying statistics are compiled in the Member States by National Central Banks in their capacity as members of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB). In such cases, the National Statistical Institutes and the National Central Banks are required by law to cooperate closely in accordance with national arrangements.

Considering that the ESS and the ESCB, respectively, have elaborated quality assurance frameworks which are based on similar principles, it is suggested to explicitly and mutually recognise these frameworks. The present letter and the response by the European Central Bank would constitute that mutual recognition. For that purpose it could be envisaged that the European Central Bank in response to this letter formally commits to assuring the quality of the statistical data at stake in cases where the National Central Banks are the producer in their capacity as member of the ESCB. The working arrangements for the cooperation between Eurostat and the Directorate General Statistics of the European Central Bank on quality assurance for the macroeconomic imbalances procedure statistical data could be laid down in a specific memorandum of understanding. Those arrangements could address for instance the quality monitoring procedures for the statistics underlying the macroeconomic imbalances procedure, including the possibility to undertake joint visits.

./..

Mrs. Sabine Lautenschläger
Member of the Executive Board
European Central Bank
Sent by e-mail to: office.lautenschlaeger@ecb.europa.eu

The same spirit should guide us to find a solution with regard to the more general issue of the delineation of the European Statistical System (ESS). The ESS is composed of Eurostat, the National Statistical Institutes and other national statistical authorities that have been designated by the Member States. The special situation of National Central Banks when producing statistics necessary for the performance of the activities of the Union should be acknowledged. While all Member States should inform the Commission when their National Central Banks are designated as responsible for macroeconomic imbalances procedure statistical data, it could be highlighted at the same time that the relevant quality framework is the one provided by the ESCB.

Given the existing Union law, the attached draft memorandum of understanding seeks to respond to the need for more formally documented working arrangements for our mutual benefit and seeks to reflect the special situation of National Central Banks when compiling European statistics as members of the ESCB. To that end, National Central Banks and National Statistical Institutes should also be encouraged to establish national arrangements, where needed, with a view to ensuring the production of complete and coherent European statistics and to ensure close co-operation.

We hope that these proposals can pave the way to a comprehensive and agreed quality assurance framework for European statistics that are underlying the macroeconomic imbalances procedure indicators.

Yours sincerely,



Valdis Dombrovskis



Marianne Thyssen