



## EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

### PRESS RELEASE

ECA/12/33

For immediate release

Luxembourg, 21 September 2012

#### “European Statistics Code of Practice still not fully implemented by Eurostat and Member States” - EU Auditors

**Reliable and credible statistics are vital for the functioning of the European Union. Statistics are used in almost all areas, for formulating EU policies, for the collection and allocation of EU funds, and for monitoring performance. More and more European policies depend on statistics to trigger decisions or sanctions.**

The Court’s audit found that the Commission and Eurostat have not yet achieved the full implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice. The Code sets demanding standards but lacks strong verification and enforcement tools to ensure adherence to the standards throughout the ESS.

“The Commission, Eurostat and Member States share a common responsibility for maintaining public trust and confidence in European statistics.” said **Louis Galea**, the ECA Member responsible for the report. “The Commission’s recent initiatives to give new momentum to achieving full compliance with the Code go in the right direction, but are not sufficient to address all concerns. Ambiguity on which elements of the Code are legally binding persists, making verification and enforcement more difficult.”

As to the European statistical programme 2008 to 2012, the audit found that Eurostat had not designed it as an effective planning, monitoring and accountability tool. Reprioritisation of statistical activities towards new challenges was behind schedule. Regarding the financial management of the programme, the audit found that Eurostat’s grant management improved, but weaknesses in procurement persisted. The draft programme 2013 to 2017 provides an opportunity to reengineer the ESS in order to make it more efficient and flexible provided that it is supplemented by precise targets and milestones.

The Court makes a number of recommendations to improve this area:

- strengthening the system of European statistics to ensure professional independence, sufficient resources, effective supervision, with sanctions and swift improvement measures for cases where quality standards are not respected;
- achieving the full implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice by amending the regulatory framework and ensuring legal certainty about the nature of the obligation to adhere to the Code;
- enhancing the professional independence of the Chief Statistician of the European Union by appointing her/him for a fixed-term mandate after having received a favourable opinion from European Statistical Governance Advisory Board and an endorsement by the European Parliament and the Council;
- ensuring a systematic review of statistical priorities and encouraging statistical innovation;
- simplifying Eurostat’s grant management and enhancing competition in procurement procedures.

*The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors. The full report is on [www.eca.europa.eu](http://www.eca.europa.eu).*

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*Notes to the editors:*

European Court of Auditors special reports are published throughout the year, presenting the results of selected audits of specific EU budgetary areas or management topics. This special report 12/2012 (“Did the Commission and Eurostat improve the process for producing reliable and credible European statistics?”) examines

- whether the Commission and Eurostat have taken all steps necessary to fulfil their role in achieving the implementation of the Code of Practice throughout the European Statistical System; and
- whether Eurostat manages the European statistical programme as a tool for improving the production of European statistics well.

Since 2005, efforts have been made to enhance the European Statistical System (ESS), the framework within which European statistics are developed, produced and disseminated. The ESS is a partnership between the Union statistical authority (Eurostat) and National Statistical Institutes within Member States. NSIs collect and verify national data and send them to Eurostat which consolidates these figures with a view to ensuring that they are comparable.

The European Statistics Code of Practice, introduced in 2005 and amended in 2011, sets the standards for developing, producing and disseminating European statistics. The Code is meant to ensure that European statistics meet user needs through an efficient production process taking place in a credible institutional environment which guarantees professional independence.

The European statistical programme sets the objectives for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics. The current 2008 to 2012 programme has planned expenditure of 274 million euro.

The audit of the Court focussed on the process of producing European statistics. It did not assess the reliability of specific statistical outputs.

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