



The peer review framework used in the European Statistical System (ESS)

Workshop on "Peer review mechanisms for national statistical offices in OIC member countries"

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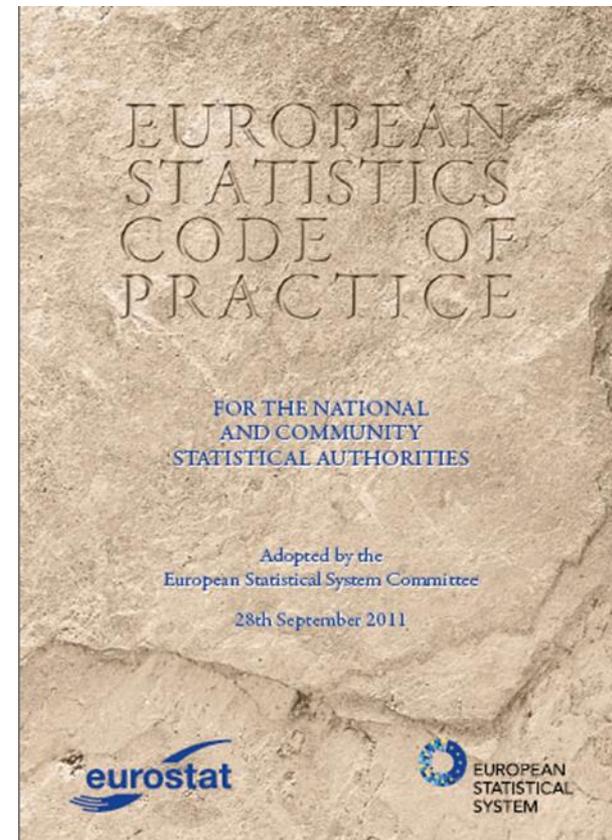
Eurostat, head of unit "Quality management; GFS"

Outline

- European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP)
- Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)
- Peer reviews in the European Statistical System (ESS)
- Rounds and developments
- Specifics of round 2
- Organisation
- Methodology
- Review Visits and reports

European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP)

- CoP adopted in 2005, revised in 2011 and 2017



CoP

- **Aim:** Setting standards for developing, producing and publishing European statistics
- 15 (now 16) Principles cover the standards applicable to
 - Institutional environment including coordination and cooperation
 - Statistical processes
 - Statistical outputs
- Indicators for each principle allow to demonstrate compliance and provide a reference for reviewing the implementation of the CoP
- Referred to explicitly in the Regulation on European Statistics (Regulation 223/2009)
- Self-regulatory: main tool for assessing progress -> **Peer Reviews**

CoP and the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)

- QAF: a guide approved together with a new version of the CoP
- adopted in May 2015
- identifies activities, methods and tools to help demonstrate compliance with the CoP



Peer Reviews (PR) in the ESS

- Peer reviews are part of the ESS policy to implement the CoP
- Objective: to enhance the integrity, independence and accountability of the statistical authorities in the ESS
- History of PR : first round in **2006-2008**
 second round in **2014-2015.**

Peer Review in the ESS 1st round (2006-08) – main aspects

- in the 31 EU Member States and EFTA/EEA NSIs and Eurostat
- covered principles 1 to 6 and 15 of the CoP (institutional environment and dissemination) and reported along these principles
- based on NSIs' replies to a self-assessment questionnaire and the results of a user satisfaction survey and other important documentation (statistical law, work programmes, etc.)

Background for 2nd round

- Limited coverage of peer reviews in 2006–2008 (Principles 1 – 6 + 15)
 - Revision of CoP
 - Quality Assurance Framework
 - New developments in statistical governance
 - European Court of Auditors Special Report
- 2012 ESSC recommendations for a new round of peer reviews**

Peer reviews in the ESS Objectives

- Assess:
 - Member States' compliance with the CoP
 - Coordination role of the NSI in the NSS
 - Cooperation and integration within the ESS

in order to:

- **further enhance the credibility of the ESS**
- **strengthen and guarantee its capacity to produce European statistics**
- **improve the quality of European statistics**

Specifics of round 2

- **Involvement of other national authorities (ONAs)**
responsible for the development, production and dissemination of specific parts of European statistics.
- limited number of ONAs selected by NSIs for the PR, based on their role in the production of European statistics
- NSIs decided whether ONAs would complete the full NSI self-assessment questionnaire on compliance with the CoP or a lighter version.
- Involved ONAs were interviewed by the peer reviewers based on replies to the questionnaires and other documentation assessed

Specifics of round 2

Involvement of users

- Representatives of the main user groups, including the scientific community, business representatives, government users, the media
- interviews helped the peer reviewers to gain an external view on the NSI and on its functioning.

National Central Banks (NCBs)

- NCBs also contribute to some specific parts of European statistics governed by legislation adopted
- NCBs are subject to a parallel peer review based on the European Statistics of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB), similar to the European Statistics CoP, and on their current audit procedures. Depending on the country NCBs were also involved.

Organisation

2013

- Internal Task Force Peer Reviews in Eurostat
- External Task Force (to prepare PR methodology)
 - 6 meetings of members (14 representatives of NSIs)
 - Preparation of documentation, self-assessment questionnaires, reports to governance bodies (ESSC and other)

2014 Launch of review exercise



European
Commission

Actors

ESSC

**ESS Task Force Peer
Reviews**

Eurostat

Task Force Peer Reviews:
Managing and monitoring the
peer reviews

Observers:
Participating in peer review
visits in order to ensure that
methodology respected

Member States

NSI ONAs:
Questionnaires & core documents

National Coordinators:
Organising at national level

Contractor

Coordination Desk:
Engaging peer reviewers &
organising peer reviews
Peer Reviewers:
Conducting the peer reviews &
preparing reports
Senior Statistician:
Harmonisation & quality assurance

Methodology

Developed by ESS Task Force Peer Reviews, endorsed by the ESSC in November 2013:

➤ **Audit-like approach:**

- **independent external** peer reviewers
- **standardised** procedures, agenda, self-assessment questionnaires and reports
- **evidence** by respondents
- peer reviewers '**owners**' of the reports
- Peer reviewers provide recommendations
- NSIs formulate improvement actions (SMART)
- Right for diverging views (published along with the report)

Methodology

➤ Tools:

- **Self-assessments questionnaires** for NSIs on
 - the implementation of the CoP compliance along the principles and indicators, with elements of the quality assurance framework
 - the Coordination role of the NSIs
 - cooperation/level of integration achieved by the ESS
- **Self-assessment questionnaire (light version) for the other national authorities** selected on agreed criteria
- Core documentation
- Other relevant material
- Website

Peer review visits

- Pilot peer review visits to Slovakia and Iceland in 2013 by ESS Task Force pilot team
- 30 five-day peer review visits from end August 2014 to mid-June 2015
- By three-member peer review teams
- Default language EN, interpretation organised by NSIs where needed
- Eurostat observer at each visit

Reports

For each country:

- **A report on compliance with the Code of Practice and the coordination role of the National Statistical Institute**
 - published at the Eurostat website
 - material for a Commission report to the Council and the European Parliament
- **A report on cooperation/level of integration within the European statistical system**
 - material for a summary report to the ESSC

Improvement actions

Improvement action plans **in response to recommendations** within four weeks of the publication of reports

- In response to peer reviewers' recommendations, NSIs elaborated improvement actions plans that are monitored annually. The actions plans are available on the Eurostat website.
- The reports on integration and cooperation within the ESS are included in a Eurostat summary report to the ESSC
- Implementation deadline **end 2019** to ensure:
 - concrete progress
 - meeting the ESS' commitment to fully comply with the CoP

Final reports on the reviews

- To the ESSC of February 2016:
 - **a Commission report to the European Parliament and the Council on the ESS' compliance with the Code of Practice, including coordination**
 - **a report to the ESSC on the cooperation and level of integration of the ESS**
- Adoption of the EP and Council report by the Commission: March 2016

Lessons learned

- Internal versus external objectives
- Audit-inspired approach worked
- Comparability
- Involvement of other producers and need to define the NSS and official statistics
- Self-assessment questionnaires
- Involvement of external peer reviewers
- Recommendations

Eurostat peer review

- Conducted by ESGAB
- Same methodology with some adaptations
- Interviews with Commission top management and external stakeholders in March 2014
- Peer review visit in April 2014, two ESS observers
- Final report in October 2014 and improvement action plan in November 2014

Eurostat's peer review report and improvement actions

➤ **16 recommendations:**

- Legislation underpinning the recruitment and dismissal of Eurostat's senior management - 4 recommendations
- Implementation of the legal architecture' – 1 recommendation
- Coherence of European statistics – quality, methodology and procedures - 4 recommendations
- Dissemination – release calendar and pre-release rules – 2 recommendations
- Communication and users - 1 recommendation
- Coordination - 4 recommendations.

➤ **Diverging view on 4 recommendations**

➤ **17 improvement actions**

- implementation by Eurostat end 2017 or earlier.
- annual monitoring reports to ESGAB, first one in May 2015



Follow-up of the Peer Reviews

Outline

- Improvement actions (IA)
- Monitoring process
- Monitoring and reporting
- Monitoring tool – template
- Results 2016
- Key messages
- Conclusions and reflections

Improvement actions (IA)

Improvement action plans **in response to the recommendations** provided in the peer review report (within four weeks from publication of reports)

➤ **SMART** approach:

- **S**pecific (What, Why, Who, Where, Which)
- **M**easurable (How much/many, how to know when accomplished?)
- **A**ttainable (How?)
- **R**elevant
- **T**ime-bound (When?)

Implementation deadline **end 2019** in order to ensure:

- concrete progress
- meeting the ESS' commitment to fully comply with the CoP

Monitoring process

Eurostat monitors the implementation of the IA resulting from the PR in NSI

NSIs: Annual progress reports on implementation to Eurostat (each spring as of 2016):

- report template by ESS Task Force Peer Reviews
- in-built flexibility to account for developments impacting implementation, e.g. resource cuts

Monitoring process

- National progress reports: April 2016
- Reports to ESGAB:
 - ✓ **on Eurostat: March 2016**
 - ✓ **summary on NSIs: end of May 2016**
 - **NEW: submission of national progress reports – with NSI consent – but only to help forming a more in-depth understanding of situation at ESS level**
- Report to the ESSC:
 - ✓ **17 November 2016 ESSC**
- As of 2017: launch in January, report in May

Monitoring and reporting

- Annual reports **to the ESSC**
- Material for ESGAB's annual reporting to the European Parliament **(EP) and the Council**
ESGAB responsible for the annual monitoring of implementation in Eurostat and assessment of the implementation of the CoP in the ESS as a whole.
- A final progress report by **Eurostat to the ESSC** in spring 2020
 - pending issues
 - recommendations for potential follow-up action

Monitoring tool

Template for IA progress by NSIs

- The first eight columns, pre-filled-in by Eurostat, cover information on the country, the recommendations, the IA and the timelines
- For each IA proposed by the NSIs to respond to the PR recommendations, NSIs are requested to provide the status

Monitoring template – IA state of play

1. **Completed**
2. **Closed** because included in a new actions
(please provide details and link to the new action)
3. **Closed** and no further work is planned
(please justify and explain)
4. **In progress** as scheduled (please explain)
5. Expected **to start** as planned
6. Further progress **depends on authorities outside** of NSI
(please explain and name the authorities)
7. The work has been **delayed**
(please explain the state of play, the reasons for delay
and indicate the new completion date)
8. **Continuous task** (please explain)

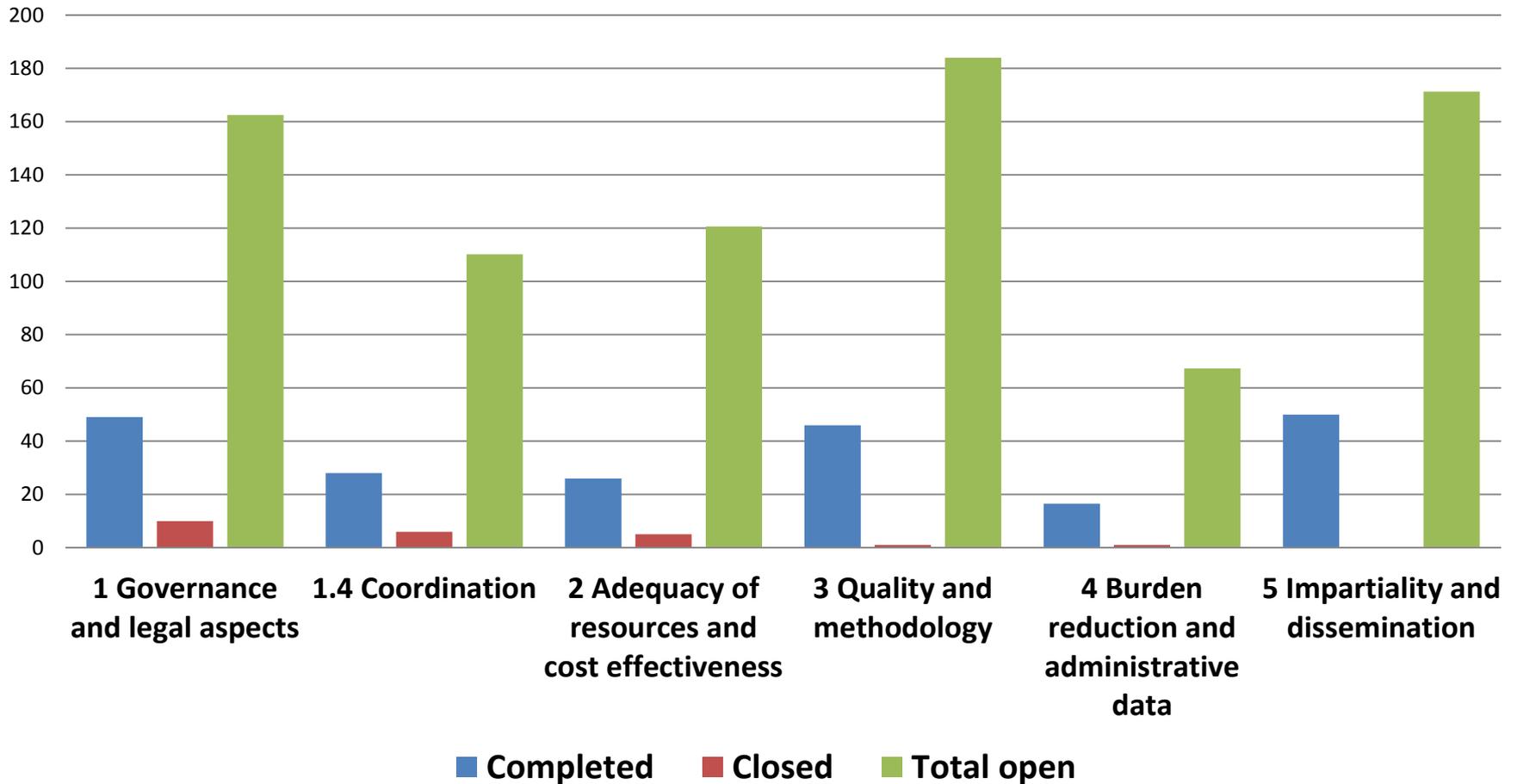
Results March 2016

Summary of status of NSI improvement actions emanating from peer review 2013-2015

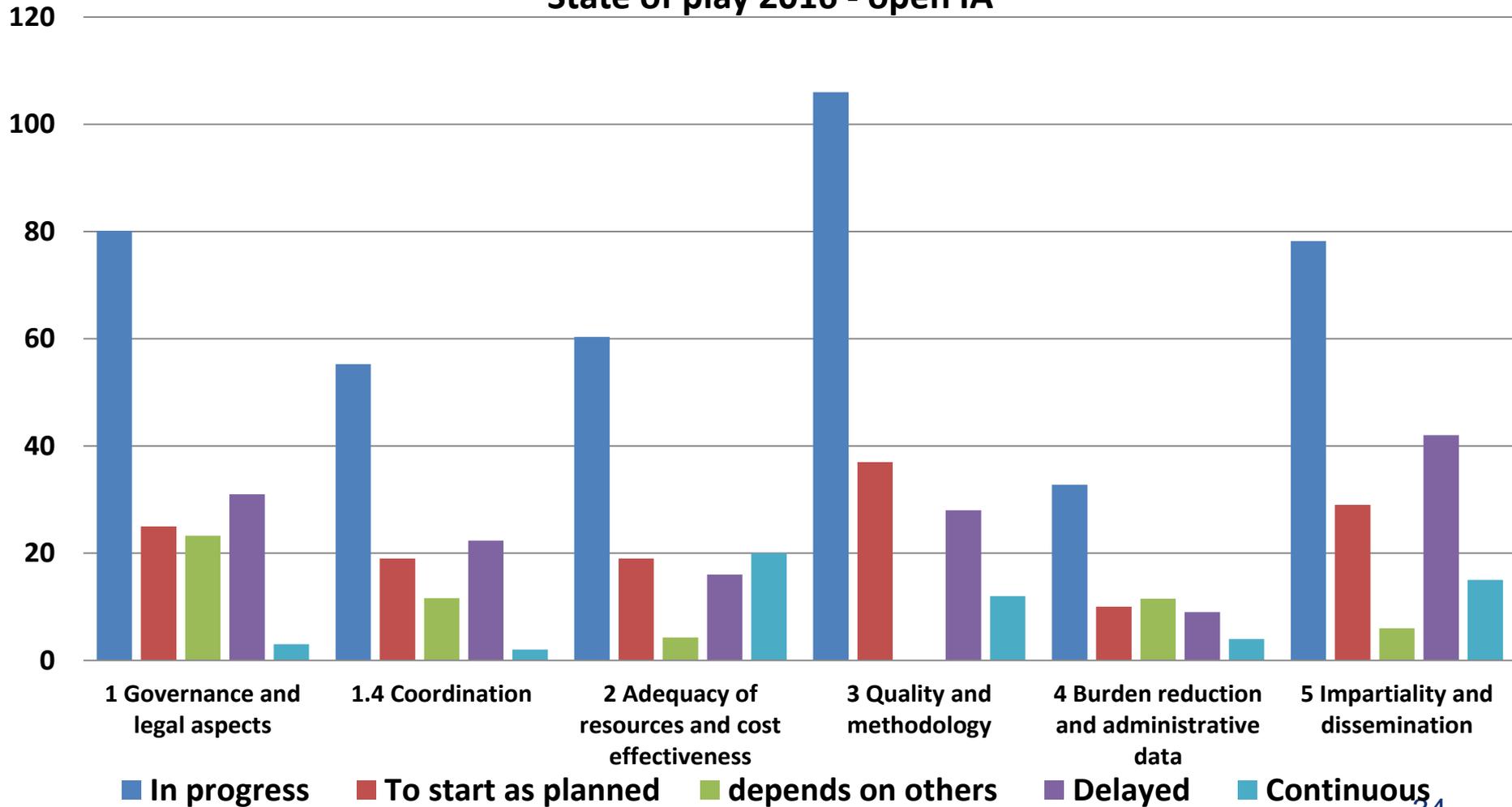
Grand Total	Completed	Closed	Total open	In progress as scheduled	Expected to start as planned	Progress depends on others	Delayed	Continuous action	New action
910	188	17	706	358	120	45	126	54	3
100,0%	20,6%	1,9%	77,5%	39,3%	13,2%	4,9%	13,8%	5,9%	0,3%

some of the improvement actions reply to more than one recommendation

State of play 2016 - Implementation



State of play 2016 - open IA



Key messages

- Strong support from the ESSC for NSIs where improvement actions are awaiting a decision by a government body;
- Improvement actions which are delayed or decisions not to pursue the action could undermine the credibility of the exercise;
- Actions considered as closed/completed, but with a follow-up action (e.g. adoption of a law) should be monitored internally by the NSI;
- Importance of concise and consistent reporting by the NSIs.

Reports and improvement action plans

Reports on compliance with the CoP and improvement action plans available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/peer-reviews>



European
Commission

Thank you for your attention!