



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EUROSTAT

Directorate B: Quality, methodology and information systems
Unit B-1: Quality; Classifications



Version Rev 2
20 November 2009

PROTOCOL ON IMPARTIAL ACCESS TO EUROSTAT DATA FOR USERS

With the adoption of the [European Statistics Code of Practice](#)¹, Eurostat has committed itself to an all-embracing approach towards high-quality statistics. The Code of Practice builds on relevant international standards and a common European Statistical System definition of quality in statistics. Its 15 principles target all relevant areas, ranging from the institutional environment, through the statistical production processes to our output: European statistics.

In line with the Community legal framework and principle 6 (impartiality and objectivity) of the Code of Practice, Eurostat produces and disseminates European statistics respecting professional independence and in an objective, professional and transparent manner in which all users are treated equitably.

This protocol sets out how Eurostat fulfils its responsibilities in respect of impartial access to European statistics for users. It is addressed:

- *for information*, to users accessing our data, showing them that Eurostat is impartial;
- *for implementation*, to Eurostat staff, providing them with guidance for putting impartial access for users into practice;
- *for implementation*, to our partners in the production of European statistics, defining the scope of and procedures for our cooperation.

Observance of this protocol is promoted by the Director-General of Eurostat. Any non-compliance reported will be immediately followed up.

¹ In its current version, exceptions to the application of the Code of Practice and thus the principle of impartiality stem from administrative tasks entrusted to Eurostat such as in the areas of the Excessive Deficit Procedure, own resources and remunerations and pensions. A respective amendment of the Code of Practice is envisaged in the future.

1. EUROSTAT FREE DISSEMINATION POLICY

Dissemination of statistics in a format convenient for the widest range of users Eurostat provides its data free of charge in the [Eurostat dissemination databases](#) and in other data formats on the Internet in a way that facilitates access by a wide range of users and further processing of the information. A broad spectrum of publications that can be downloaded in pdf format supplement the Eurostat product range. In addition, hard copies are available either free of charge or for sale via the [European Union Bookshop](#).

Custom-designed analyses and extractions are provided when feasible and made public The results of work relating to European statistics requested or paid for by third parties are not made available exclusively to those third parties. They are included in the Eurostat dissemination databases. Where this is not possible, a description of the available statistical data is published on the Eurostat website and can be obtained on request through Eurostat user support in cooperation with the competent Eurostat production unit.

In the case of Eurostat trade statistics detailed data are made available on a restricted basis if required for the implementation of Article 133 of the Treaty establishing the European Community.

Prices and weights data to be used for the calculation of purchasing power parities can be made available in line with the procedure agreed with National Statistical Institutes which have provided the data.

Micro-data access for scientific purposes Confidential data is not disclosed by Eurostat. Access to microdata for scientific purposes may be granted on the basis of [Commission Regulation 831/2002](#) and [Regulation 223/2009 of the European Parliament and the Council on European statistics](#). Further information is available on the [Eurostat website](#).

No data without metadata Eurostat disseminates its statistics with comprehensive reference metadata following the [Eurostat metadata standard](#), comprising information inter alia on concepts and definitions, data coverage, periodicity, compilation practices and procedures, revisions, data quality as well as release policy. Where applicable, references to supplementary methodological documents or manuals are included.

The Eurostat reference metadata in the Eurostat standard format published on the Internet is supplemented by a [database on concepts and definitions](#) as well as a collection of [methodological reference documents](#). Other metadata (e.g. keywords, footnotes, or flags linked to a code list) is directly attached to a value in the Eurostat dissemination databases.

Access for everyone to the same information at the same moment in time Statistics are disseminated in the Eurostat free dissemination database as early as possible after they have been compiled.

Statistics released according to a Euro-indicators news releases are announced in the Eurostat [release calendar](#) notifying releases up to 12 months ahead. For all other news

pre-announced schedule releases and Eurostat publications a provisional release calendar is published.

All Eurostat news releases are issued at 11:00 CET on the Eurostat website and are sent directly by e-mail to journalists who have [subscribed to that service](#).

Statistical releases are objective and non-partisan Eurostat releases are objective and free from political statements. Eurostat reserves the right to respond, in an impartial manner, to any misunderstandings or misleading interpretations of its outputs.

2. PRE-RELEASE ACCESS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND JOINT PRODUCTION OF STATISTICS

Pre-release access for quality assurance purposes and for joint production of European statistics In the production and dissemination of European statistics, Eurostat cooperates closely with its data producing partners in the [European Statistical System](#), other Commission departments, the Commission Joint Research Centres and European Agencies, and the statistics divisions of the European Central Bank and of international organisations. For quality assurance purposes and where European statistics are produced jointly or for joint publications it is vital that results are checked and exchanged with the relevant statistical experts and data providers before any other access is granted.

All institutions and persons involved must agree to be bound by the same obligations as Eurostat staff to ensure the impartiality of dissemination in respecting a Eurostat embargo and in ensuring that no data is communicated any further, i.e. either internally within the institution or externally, prior to official Eurostat release. Eurostat staff keep track of who had been given access by Eurostat to what information and when.

3. PRE-RELEASE ACCESS FOR INFORMATION

Early access by Commission departments and the European Central Bank Commission departments whose policies are based upon European statistics and the European Central Bank in order to carry out their tasks under the Treaty may have early access to selected statistical releases under embargo the evening before on a strictly regulated basis. The sole purpose is to allow those Commission departments and the European Central Bank to respond fully when questions arise at the time of release. Early access is subject to a signed agreement laying down the rules for dealing with data accessed prior to official release.

Information on this pre-release access, specifying the kind of data and the period during which early access is granted, is publicised on the Eurostat website (please refer to the release policy part of [Eurostat metadata](#)).

Procedures for Eurostat news releases

All news releases are transmitted under embargo and for information to the Cabinet and the Spokesperson of the Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs the working day before their dissemination to the public, in order for them to be prepared for any questions that may be put by journalists. No public comment on the data issued in a news release is made as long as these data are not accessible to all users. Eurostat publications are sent for information to the Cabinet and the Spokesperson 24 hours in advance of publication.

Use of embargoes for National Statistical Institutes

Data releases are transmitted under embargo two hours before official release to the National Statistical Institutes of Member States.

Use of embargoes for accredited news agencies

All Euro-indicator news releases are transmitted under embargo one hour before official release to accredited news agencies in Brussels with the exception of the Flash estimates of HICP and GDP which are sent 30 minutes before official release.