



The European Advisory Committee on Statistical Information in the Economic and Social Spheres  
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**MINUTES**  
**SECOND MEETING OF THE SPC/CEIES TASK FORCE ON THE FUTURE OF CEIES**  
**HELD ON 14 MAY 2004, BRUSSELS**

**Present:** Mr Decand (chairman, Eurostat), Mr Lh eritier (INSEE, France), Mr Hughes (ONS, UK), Mr Fischer (CSO Czech Republic), Mr Garvey (CSO Ireland), Mr Heilemann (Vice-president of CEIES, Germany), Ms Ruane (CEIES member, Ireland), Ms N aslund (Eurostat)

**Excused:** Mr Renard (CEIES member, France), Mr Trivellato (CEIES member, Italy)

Mr Decand opened the meeting by explaining that following the retirement of Mr Jensen he had been asked to chair the Task Force.

**1. Recap of conclusions from the first Task Force meeting**

Mr Decand briefly outlined the main conclusions from the first meeting of the Task Force. There were only a few comments:

- The organisation of seminars should continue, however only if useful.
- The new body should be advisory to the ESS, rather than to Eurostat and the NSIs, as well as to the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament.
- Some doubts were expressed as to whether the European Parliament would really accept the role of being obliged to consult the CEIES. Mr Decand said that if a change in this direction, thus implying hearings with the European Parliament, would be proposed it would probably have to go through the co-decision procedure meaning that the European Parliament would be consulted and requested to adopt the proposal (together with the Council).
- The new body should not only include all categories of users, but also providers.
- Several participants held the view that the CEIES should be consulted on **all** legal acts adopted by co-decision (in average only a few per year), not only the five-year work programme.

## 2. Main issues to be discussed

Mr Decand introduced the working document that had been distributed by explaining that it was to be considered as a basis for the discussion. The main questions which still needed to be resolved were the definition of the user body's tasks, the composition and selection of members and the financing. Apart from these issues, the organisation of seminars, the name of the new user body and its internal rules of procedure should also be discussed.

The participants went through the Council decision, and the proposed modifications, article by article. The discussion can be summarised in the following points:

- Some participants were of the opinion that the Committee should remain an advisory committee and that the formulation proposed in article 2, "...the Committee shall have a strategic role...", would be too strong. It was agreed that the wording "shall play a strategic role" should be used instead and that the fields covered by this "strategic role" should be specified (integration, improving cohesion, cross-connection). This sentence should be included in **article 1**. Moreover, in addition to the task of assisting the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission in the *coordination* of the objectives of the Community's statistical information policy, its task should be the *formation* of objectives and this word should therefore be added in article 1.

- **Article 2** would be restructured and the wording slightly modified: The word "development" should be included in addition to "integration" in the first dash. It was also agreed to use ESS instead of "Community statistical infrastructure". The "sufficiently early stage", mentioned in article 2, would be moved to article 3 and specified. The sequence of the tasks mentioned should be modified so that "deliver an opinion on the Community's statistical programme", mentioned in the proposal as the Committee's main task, instead becomes the third dash. The paragraph on the costs of the statistical programmes should be the last dash.

- The role of the Committee was considered too passive as described in **article 3**. The first sentence would therefore simply be changed into the active voice. The mention of data quality should be moved to article 2 and it should be underlined that the aim is to *promote* data quality. In addition to the statistical work programmes, the Committee should also be consulted on all other regulations. Moreover, it was suggested that the obligation for the Commission to regularly report back to the Committee on its recommendations should be added to reinforce the Committee's role.

- Concerning the composition of the Committee (**article 4**), the participants felt that 12 members would be too few. It was however agreed that the number of members should not exceed 20 and that the number of "private users" should outnumber the number of "institutional users". Eurostat should be a full member. There was no agreement as to whether the ECB or the CMFB should be a member, but it was generally felt that if the ECB is a full member of the CMFB it should be the ECB rather than the CMFB that participates. After discussion there was agreement on a combination of the two options proposed, i.e. option 2 with in addition "private users" (economic or social analysts, researchers, providers, ...). It was also agreed that an institution dealing with environmental questions should be included as a member in order to reflect the importance given by the EU to sustainable development and environmental issues. The question whether another Commission user or a Directorate-General with an influence on the allocation of resources should be a member was left open.

- The Council should appoint the President and the “private users” (**article 5**); the other members should be appointed by each Institution. Although one participant was of another opinion it was agreed that the President of the Committee should be appointed by the Committee from among the Member States’ proposals for “private user” members. The rotational scheme would be divided into two rounds, whereby the first would be designated for four years and the second for six years.

- Concerning financing (**article 6**) of the user body, the NSIs participating in the meetings were doubtful as to whether they would be able to contribute other than marginally to the staffing of the Committee. It was also pointed out that if there would no longer be at least one member per Member State on the Committee, it would not be realistic to expect funding from the NSIs. It was suggested that a specific budget line, allowing good advance planning of the Committee’s activities and a clear insight into its full costs, would be required. Moreover, the budget requested should not be presented in an apologetic or defensive way, as it in any case would be minimal in the context of the entire Eurostat budget. Seminars, which would still be part of the new user body’s tasks, could not continue to be organised as now; they should be organised by the support staff of the new user body and within the proposed budget line.

- As a compromise it was agreed that the Committee should meet at least three times a year, instead of four times as proposed (**article 7**).

- In **article 8**, the mention “including Commission Directors-General” would be suppressed.

Finally, the participants discussed whether or not to keep the current name “CEIES”. Those in favour of keeping “CEIES” argued that the name was already well established. Those in favour of changing it argued that a change would give the new body a fresh start and mark the change as compared to the “old” CEIES. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the current name does not reflect changes which have taken place in EU policy priorities since the creation of CEIES, by which sustainable development and environmental issues have become one of the top priorities. The “European Statistical Advisory Board” was put forward as a proposal for a new and broader name. Participants were asked to put forward any other proposals to the Secretariat.

### 3. Next Steps

Mr Decand said a report containing proposals for a new user body based on the discussions that had taken place in the Task Force would be prepared and circulated before the summer holidays. This report would then be discussed by the Partnership Group in its next meeting (15 September 2004) before being put forward to the November SPC meeting. The CEIES Bureau would of course also discuss the report informally. It was agreed that the report should be very open in its proposals in order not to miss out on any potentially crucial issues that the Task Force might have omitted in its reflection.

As for the time horizon of the establishment of the new body, Mr Decand said that if the adoption of the new legal act would require a co-decision procedure, the new body would be created only some time in 2006.