



Annual Activity Report 2023 ESTAT

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EUROSTAT IN BRIEF

Eurostat is the statistical authority of the European Union. Its mission is to provide high-quality statistics and data on Europe. To this end, Eurostat develops and promotes standards, methods and procedures that allow the cost-effective development, production and dissemination of European statistics. Eurostat's activities are governed by professional independence, impartial treatment of all users, objectivity, reliability, statistical confidentiality and cost-effectiveness.

European statistics are developed, produced and disseminated in accordance with the principles enshrined in Article 338 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and further elaborated in Regulation (EC) 223/2009 on European statistics¹, as well as the European Statistics Code of Practice². By providing reliable and comparable statistical information, Eurostat supports evidence-based EU policy making and the implementation of the Commission's political priorities³. Eurostat produces European statistics in partnership with the EU Member States based on harmonised statistical standards, methods, procedures, practices and tools. The Member States' National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) and other national authorities designated to produce official statistics constitute the European Statistical System (ESS). European Economic Area countries and Switzerland participate in the ESS under specific agreements.

Commission Decision (2012/504/EU) defines the role and responsibilities of Eurostat within the internal organisation of the Commission. Eurostat also manages the inventory of statistics produced by other DGs. In addition, Eurostat cooperates very closely with the European Central Bank and other international organisations. In particular Eurostat plays a key role in developing international standards to ensure the comparability of statistics across the globe.

Eurostat verifies public finance statistics and is also involved in the process of EU own resources verification. Furthermore, Eurostat supports DG Budget in the verification of the VAT statements provided annually by the EU Member States.

The EU's statistical priorities are defined in the multi-annual statistical programme proposed by the Commission and adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. Eurostat implements the budget of the statistical programme through grants and public procurement contracts. In 2023, Eurostat managed a total of 88.35 million Euro (implemented budget) made up of operational and administrative budget commitments, with both own and subdelegated appropriations. As of December 2023, Eurostat had 637 staff members (officials, temporary agents and contract agents), as well as 58 members of other personnel (seconded national experts, interim agents and trainees).

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EC) 223/2009 of the European Parliament and the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics, OJ L 87 of 31.3.2009.

⁽²⁾ The European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) adopted the revision of the European Statistics Code of Practice in November 2017.

⁽³⁾ 'A Union that strives for more' Political guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en_0.pdf

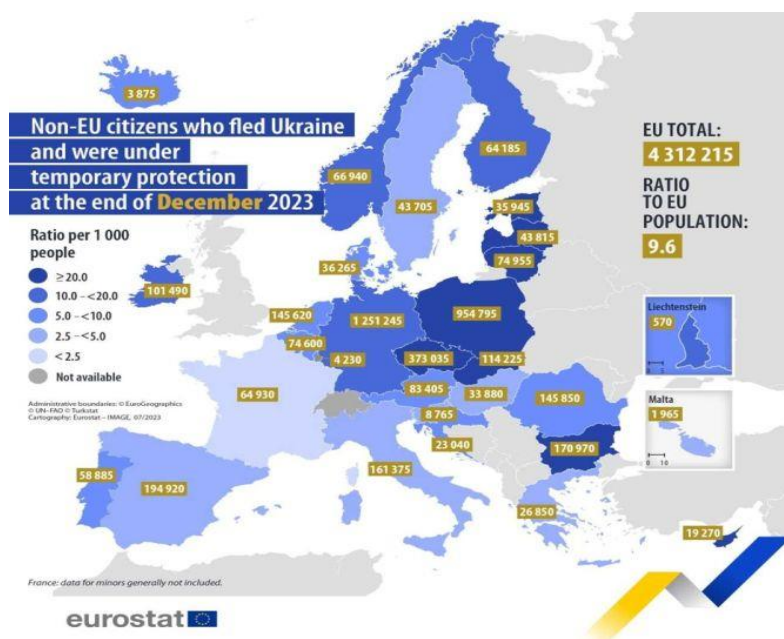
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual activity report is a management report of the Director-General of Eurostat to the College of Commissioners. Annual activity reports are the main instrument of management accountability within the Commission and constitute the basis on which the College takes political responsibility for the decisions it takes as well as for the coordinating, executive and management functions it exercises, as laid down in the Treaties ⁽⁴⁾

A. Key results and progress towards achieving the Commission’s general objectives and department's specific objectives

In 2023, Eurostat pursued its mission and commitment to deliver high-quality European statistics supporting EU policymaking. In line with its strategic plan (SP) 2020-2024, Eurostat contributed to **specific objective 1 ‘to remain the trusted point of reference for statistics and data on Europe, necessary for better policies, decisions and public debate in the European Union’**, by providing high quality European statistics to support the **Commission’s six headline ambitions, the response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the related energy and cost of living crisis, as well as the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic**. The results presented in the AAR underscore Eurostat’s ability to respond adequately to all information needs by **improving the timeliness of existing indicators** and expanding the **production of new statistics**.

In the context of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, Eurostat disseminated **monthly data on non-EU citizens who fled Ukraine and were under temporary protection** as well as data on refugees from Ukraine who are registered as unemployed.



In line with the objective of EU independence from Russian fossil fuels, Eurostat continued to support the **REPowerEU plan** by monitoring key targets, in particular **the gas demand reduction and the import dependency on gas and oil**. Eurostat also provided methodological guidance on the statistical recording of the **government measures adopted in response to the surging energy prices**. To

⁽⁴⁾ Article 17(1) of the Treaty on European Union.

better monitor the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, Eurostat started publishing more complete national level data as well as first European level statistics for the **monthly index of services production** and released **new monthly statistics on business registrations and on bankruptcy declarations** at national and European levels. The **European Statistical Recovery Dashboard**, continued to be disseminated monthly.

Supporting the Commission priority ***[‘A European Green Deal’](#)***, Eurostat carried out legislative work to update Regulation (EC) 1099/2008 on energy statistics, including reporting requirements on the transformation between hydrogen and other fuels. An important achievement was the first transmission of the Member States’ estimates (‘statements’) in July 2023 for the **new EU own resource based on non-recycled plastic packaging waste**, triggering the Commission verification and inspection visits. The **modernisation of agricultural statistics** as well as of **fisheries and aquaculture statistics** has progressed, with the entry into force of the Regulation on Statistics on agricultural input and output (SAIO)⁽⁵⁾. New statistics on **zero emissions vehicles** were published by type of vehicle. The **Land Use/Cover Area frame Survey (LUCAS)**, which provides harmonised and comparable **statistics on land use and land cover** across the EU, was expanded in relation to environmental initiatives under the Green Deal.

For the Commission headline ambition ***[‘A Europe fit for the digital age’](#)***, and in the framework of the **Digital Decade**, Eurostat produced statistics on the **digital performance of Europe’s businesses and people**. Together with the core information on the digitalisation of businesses (like the level of digitalisation and the use of advanced technologies such as **artificial intelligence**, cloud or data analytics), new indicators on digitalisation, including **cybercrime data** and **broadband internet coverage**, were published. In the framework of the ESS priority-setting mechanism, a **review of the information and communication technology (ICT) statistics** domain has been launched.

Supporting the Commission headline priority of ***[‘An economy that works for people’](#)*** and in response to emerging information needs in the domain of **social statistics**, Eurostat published new **long-term population projections**. These data served as an input to the work assessing the long-term **economic and budgetary impacts of the EU’s ageing population** and the 2024 Ageing Report. Detailed **health care expenditure and financing statistics** were disseminated. The consistent production of the **quality Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) and Government Finance Statistics (GFS)** remained the cornerstone of fiscal monitoring in the EU. The verification of the **Gross National Income (GNI) Inventories** has continued and GNI information visits to all countries have been carried out. Moreover, Eurostat developed the **first experimental European Space Economy Satellite Account**. Eurostat also started creating **statistical accounts for European**

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) 2022/2379 on statistics on agricultural input and output, amending Commission Regulation (EC) No 617/2008 and repealing regulations (EC) No 1165/2008, (EC) No 543/2009 and (EC) No 1185/2009 and Council Directive 96/16/EC.

institutions. Finally, the Commission Delegated Regulation revising the statistical classification of economic activities (**NACE**) was adopted.

In relation to the Commission headline ambition **'A stronger Europe in the world'**, Eurostat invited **Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia** to join its expert group meetings. For the first time these countries were included in the 2023 Enlargement Package, following intensive work to assess their compliance with statistical legislation. Eurostat continued to drive and **contribute to the setting of international statistical standards and methodologies** to ensure the comparability of statistics across the globe. To support the **twin transition to a green and digital economy, making EU industry more competitive globally**, and enhancing EUs strategic autonomy, Eurostat continued to provide **business and trade statistics** in a timely manner.

In line with the Commission priority under the headline ambition **'Promoting our European way of life'**, the first EU level results from the **2021 population and housing census** have been published. The Commission also adopted a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council for **European Statistics on population and housing (ESOP)**.

As set out in its strategic plan 2020-2024, Eurostat contributed to **specific objective 2, 'Better meeting user needs by fostering partnerships and embracing innovative data sources and technologies'**. The work on the **revision of Regulation (EU) No 223/2009 on European statistics**, aimed at making the statistical system more responsive to the growing information needs and at exploiting the potential of new data sources for the production of European statistics, progressed significantly in 2023. Following the Commission's proposal of 10 July 2023 to amend Regulation (EC) No 223/2009, the inter-institutional negotiations concluded in early 2024.

Eurostat further explored innovative data sources, for instance by producing the first results of the project on **experimental statistics on traffic and mobility** which included new indicators on **zero emission vehicles charging stations**, the accessibility of public transport, traffic and emissions. **Experimental statistics on occupational cancers** were also released for the first time. The updated **experimental Household Distributional Accounts (HDA)** estimates data were published with a view to presenting multidimensional aspects of material well-being. Eurostat started effectively sourcing data from new available digital sources, such as privately held data from online-platforms, for instance to produce and disseminate **statistics on short-stay accommodation**. Pursuing its **digitalisation action plan**, Eurostat has tapped into new data sources to produce **experimental statistics on the labour demand of ICT specialists in online advertising** from data collected from online job portals. The preparatory work for the launching of a **One Stop Shop on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML)** was concluded in 2023. The European Statistical System Committee adopted the **ESS innovation agenda** in 2023 and the third round of **ESS peer reviews** was successfully finalised.

In relation to Eurostat's strategic plan **specific objective 3, Eurostat continued to focus on 'better communicating and promoting European statistics and facilitating their use by policymakers, citizens, businesses, researchers and the media'**. Over 15 million user sessions were registered for the Eurostat website. All Eurostat social media channels significantly expanded their reach. **The X (former Twitter), Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts all increased their followers. Eurostat has improved the design and information architecture of its website** in line with best practices for modern web interfaces, security requirements and user expectations. **Eurostat also expanded the range of statistical literacy products available**. 47 new articles and approximately 700 updates of existing articles in Statistics Explained were published.

These achievements underscore the **added value that Eurostat continued to bring** to public debate and to the design, monitoring and evaluation of Union policies, by providing comparable and high-quality data and statistics on Europe.

Key performance indicators

Eurostat has defined three key performance indicators (KPIs) in the strategic plan 2020-2024 to monitor and measure the achievement of objectives.

The first KPI 'Number of user sessions' ⁽⁶⁾ shows an increase compared to the 2019 baseline, confirming the relevance of European statistics. However, there was a decrease compared to the high results in 2021 and 2022, which was expected, as already mentioned in the annual activity report of 2021 and 2022. It was then explained that part of the increase might be due to users testing the new data browser to become familiar with its functionality before it replaces the older data explorer. This level of database sessions was expected to fall back as users would become familiar with the new application and because the data explorer was decommissioned at the beginning of 2023. The level of the indicator is expected to start increasing again in 2024.

The second KPI 'Statistical coverage', measures the relevance of the statistics published by Eurostat. It shows how the quantity and variety of data published evolves. It is calculated as the number of indicators, sub-indicators and all their breakdowns included in Eurobase (the Eurostat dissemination database) ⁽⁷⁾. In 2022 this KPI showed a very high increase of 233 million records compared to the previous year, which could be traced mostly to the publication of the data of the 2020 agricultural census, which is organised every ten years, and to the dissemination of new asylum statistics tables, a topic in high demand due to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. After that huge increase in 2022 and despite the cleaning of

⁽⁶⁾ The definition of this KPI changed because of a new application and the use of standard Commission tools as already reported in the 2021 and 2022 annual activity reports.

⁽⁷⁾ An IT routine counts the number of 'records' stored in Eurobase that differ by more than just the date, i.e. those that refer to different countries and/or variable and/or products and/or units. Records that differ only by date are considered as part of the same statistics/time series. The records for which there is only a single date are also counted. The derived datasets are not counted, but the variables included in more than one primary dataset (e.g. GDP and population) are counted as different statistics.

the database in 2023, the final value is almost identical to that of 2022, confirming the growing amount of statistics published by Eurostat.

Both KPIs above can be analysed together, showing that during 2023 Eurostat continued to maintain its large offer of data which were relevant for users, as reflected in the still high number of database sessions.

The third key performance indicator, 'Estimated risk at closure', shows whether resources have been used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and whether cost-effective controls are in place, providing the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of underlying transactions.

The estimated risk at closure for 2023 was 0.39 m EUR. It decreased from 0.48 m EUR in 2022 to 0.39 m EUR in 2023 mainly as the relevant expenditure of 2023 decreased by around 21%. As a percentage of the relevant expenditure, the estimated overall risk at closure slightly increased from 0.41% in 2022 to 0.42% for 2023, as the detected error rate for 2023 slightly increased.

<p>Most relevant key performance indicator 1 Number of user sessions in the database</p>	<p>Number of user sessions in the database (millions)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of user sessions (millions)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td>2,9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021</td> <td>4,9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022</td> <td>3,8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023</td> <td>3,2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of user sessions (millions)	2019	2,9	2020	4	2021	4,9	2022	3,8	2023	3,2															
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Key conclusions on internal control and financial management

In line with the Commission's Internal Control Framework Eurostat has assessed its internal control systems during the reporting year and has concluded that the internal control system is overall functioning well, however some minor improvements are needed. Please refer to the annual activity report section 2.3 for further details.

In addition, Eurostat has systematically examined the available control results and indicators, as well as the observations and recommendations issued by the internal auditor and the European Court of Auditors. These elements have been assessed to determine their impact on management's assurance about the achievement of the control objectives. Please refer to section 2 for further details.

In conclusion, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are appropriately monitored and mitigated. Improvements are necessary concerning internal control principles 6 and 15⁽⁸⁾. The following actions will be taken in this respect: the detected mild weaknesses will be mitigated in a timely manner by the implementation of the action plans concerning the related recommendations of the Internal Audit Service (IAS) and European Court of Auditors (ECA) audits.

The Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation, has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

Provision of information to the Commissioner

In the context of the regular meetings during the year between Eurostat and the Commissioner on management matters, the main elements of this report and assurance declaration have been brought to the attention of Commissioner Gentiloni, responsible for Economy.

⁽⁸⁾ IC principle 6: The Commission specifies objectives with sufficient clarity to enable the identification and assessment of risks relating to objectives; IC principle 15: The Commission communicates with external parties about matters affecting the functioning of internal control.

1. KEY RESULTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE COMMISSION'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT ⁽⁹⁾

As the statistical office of the European Union and as a Directorate-General of the Commission, Eurostat continued to provide **high-quality statistics on Europe**, and remained fully committed to delivering European statistics that support EU policymaking and the **headline ambitions defined in the Political Guidelines of President von der Leyen**.

As laid down in its strategic plan 2020-2024, Eurostat contributed to the general objective of **'A modern, high-performing and sustainable European Commission'** by delivering on its mission and modernising the way it works.

To translate the general objective into a concrete plan, Eurostat has set the following three specific objectives:

- 1) Eurostat remains the trusted point of reference for statistics and data on Europe, necessary for better policies, decisions and public debate in the European Union.
- 2) Eurostat better meets user needs for relevant, timely and high-quality statistics, in particular by continuing to foster partnerships and by embracing innovative data sources and technologies.
- 3) Eurostat better communicates and better promotes European statistics and facilitates their use by policymakers, citizens, businesses, researchers and the media.

In its annual Management Plan 2023, Eurostat defined the concrete initiatives, outputs and targets contributing to the achievement of these specific objectives.

Eurostat's Management Plan 2023 was aligned with the 2023 Financing Decision, which included the Annual Work Programme for the implementation of the Single Market Programme 2021-2027, as well as with the Commission Work Programme for 2023 'A Union standing firm and united'.

The details below reflect Eurostat's major achievements in 2023 grouped by each specific objective.

⁽⁹⁾ An Executive Agency uses as heading: "Implementation of the Agency's Annual Work programme - Highlights of the year".

Specific Objective 1: Eurostat remains the trusted point of reference for statistics and data on Europe, necessary for better policies, decisions and public debate in the European Union.

Activities undertaken by Eurostat in response to the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, the energy crisis, and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

In 2023, Eurostat continued its efforts to remain the trusted point of reference for statistics and data on Europe, with a particular focus on providing statistical insights into the societal and economic implications of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the related energy and cost of living crisis, as well as the efforts to support the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a follow-up to the European Council adopting an implementing decision introducing temporary protection for people fleeing Ukraine due to Russia's invasion, **Eurostat disseminated monthly data on non-EU citizens who fled Ukraine and were under temporary protection** as well as reported data on refugees from Ukraine under temporary protection who are registered as unemployed. Additionally, the labour market situation of the refugees living in private households was made available to several Member States.

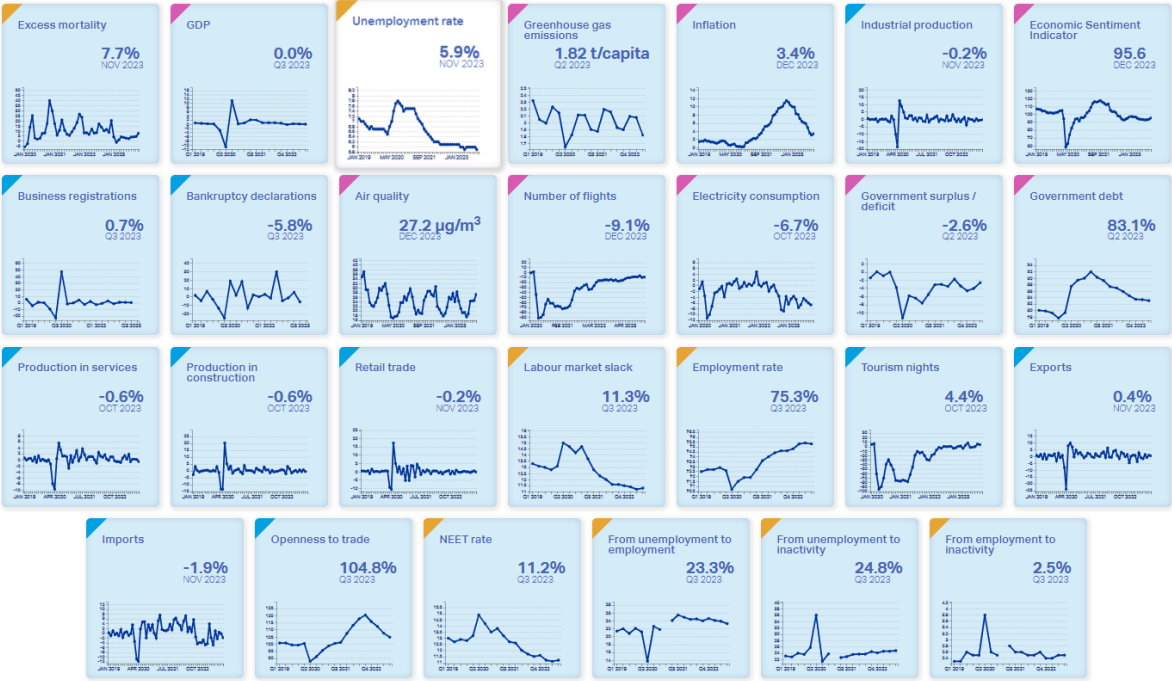
The new geopolitical and energy market realities required the EU to drastically accelerate its **clean energy transition and reduce Europe's energy dependence** from unreliable suppliers and volatile fossil fuels prices and supply. With the objective of reaching EU independence from Russian fossil fuels as stipulated in the **REPowerEU plan**, Eurostat continued to monitor progress towards key targets, in particular the **gas demand reduction target** (at T+15 days), further to the prolongation until 31 March 2024 of the Regulation on coordinated **demand-reduction measures for gas and the import dependency for gas and oil**.

Within its data collection on natural gas and electricity prices paid by final consumers, Eurostat continued to provide **methodological guidance on the statistical recording of the government measures adopted in response to the surging energy prices** that followed the Russian aggression against Ukraine. In particular, this concerned newly collected data on taxes and subsidies. The guidance also included the publication of three detailed notes intended to clarify how the national accounts rules should be applied when recording the **new policy measures aimed at mitigating the impact of increasing energy prices and inflation**. Methodological guidance was also given to the Member States on the **treatment of government energy price support measures in the Harmonised Indices of Consumer Prices** (HICP) and on the energy inflation data.

The geopolitical situation following the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian aggression against Ukraine created new data needs and the necessity to address strategic dependencies of the EU in a comprehensive manner, going beyond energy and related potential risks for supply chain disruptions. In that context, Eurostat identified, jointly with DG GROW, the

specific products to monitor through international trade in goods and PRODCOM⁽¹⁰⁾ statistics, for which aggregated figures were published. Eurostat also boosted further cooperation with the Member States to complete the data needed to identify critical raw materials and to monitor the **risks of possible supply chain disruptions** by organising a collection of **infra-annual experimental statistics on the production of a limited group of products** on a voluntary basis and by providing grants to Member States interested in developing such data. The methodological work carried out in 2023, as well as the **adoption of the critical Raw Materials Act in November 2023**, which foresees the provision of data needed for the monitoring of the products concerned, will allow for the production of new relevant statistics at the European level on this topic.

In the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Statistical Recovery Dashboard continued to be published monthly**, with a selection of COVID-19-related indicators covering economy and the environment, business and trade, as well as aspects related to people and work.



Source: ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/recovery-dashboard/

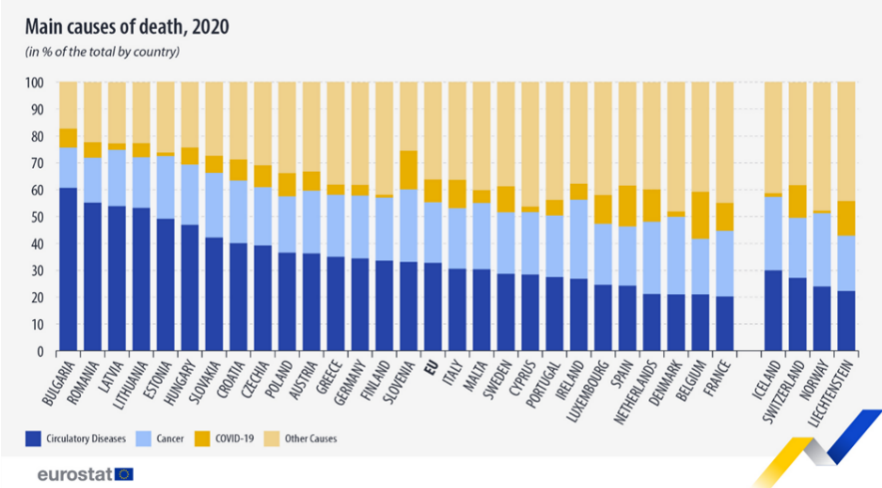
Eurostat disseminated **causes of death data, demonstrating that COVID-19 was the third most frequent cause of death in the EU in 2020**. Moreover, Eurostat made the first ever dissemination of monthly causes of death, collected on a voluntary basis and provided by 21 Member States.

Voluntary COVID-19 related variables have been introduced for the 2021-2023 data collections on detailed Health Care Expenditure and Financing statistics (HCE), covering

⁽¹⁰⁾ PRODCOM is an annual survey for the collection and dissemination of statistics on the production of industrial (mainly manufactured) goods, both in value and quantity terms, in the European Union.

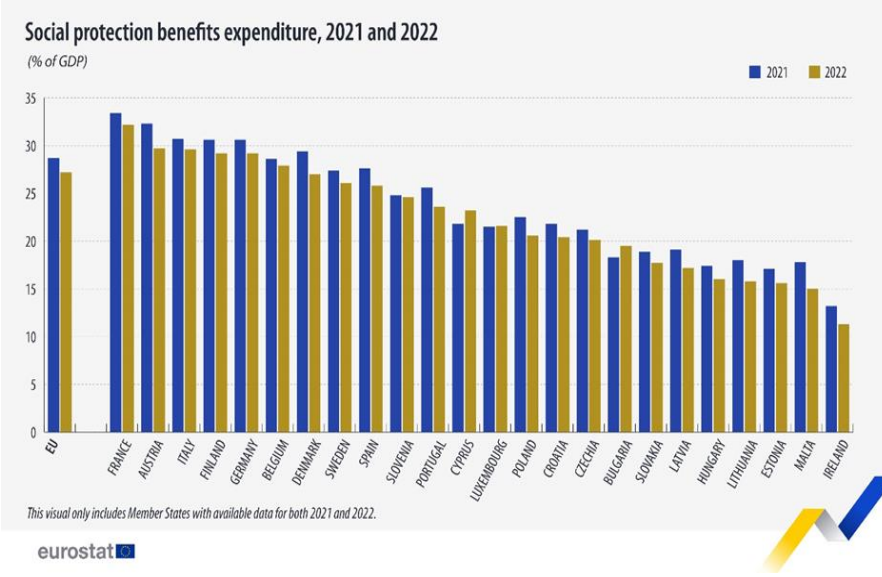
COVID-19 treatment costs, testing and contact tracing, vaccination, medical goods, as well as investment costs and provider support. Data for 2021 have been disseminated, contributing to the assessment of the allocation of financial resources in the health systems of the EU.

Healthcare data were disseminated in **new and expanded breakdowns by hospital beds and healthcare staff.** Eurostat published a detailed methodological manual for the data providers and improved metadata on healthcare.



European Statistics on accidents at work were published for 2021, showing an increase of 6% compared with 2020, probably linked to the economic recovery that followed the 2020 general slowdown related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the field of social protection statistics, Eurostat has increased the coverage of countries providing **early estimates of expenditure on social benefits, covering sickness, health, unemployment, and family and children,** among others. These data have enabled



policy makers to assess the **redistribution of resources via social protection policies amongst the EU population during the COVID-19 crisis.** Early estimates of the main indicators for 2022 and detailed data for 2021 were made available in 2023.

In cooperation with the Member States, Eurostat kept close track of the statistical aspects associated with the **gradual phasing out of various policy measures designed to alleviate the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.** This oversight was instrumental for maintaining adherence to **national accounting rules and promoting uniform recording practices among the EU Member States.** Simultaneously, Eurostat

has monitored the accounting consequences arising from the **implementation of initiatives within the Next Generation EU Programme, with particular attention to the Recovery and Resilience Facility.**

With a view to better monitoring the economic recovery after the COVID-19 crisis, Eurostat published, for the first time ever, **new monthly statistics on business registrations and on bankruptcy declarations** at national and European levels.

In addition, following the introduction in May 2023 of the monthly release of a news item on the **European index of services production**, the ECOFIN Council decided in November 2023 to replace the quarterly index of turnover in services by this new monthly production indicator as the **Principal European Economic Indicator for services.**

Since the European Union and national policymakers require ever more timely information on the activities of businesses, Eurostat launched concrete actions to use new data sources at the national level to produce **earlier estimates of industrial production.** Eventually, these data could in the future be published as new experimental statistics.

The COVID-19 crisis generated new needs for specialised medical products and the **trade of medical and non-medical supplies, including vaccines.** These new trade developments were followed at detailed product level, and in 2023 Eurostat continued to publish monthly statistics on these products.

Statistics and data to support the policies and public debate on the Commission's six headline ambitions

In 2023, the regular production and dissemination of statistics was maintained, supporting the Commission headline ambitions as follows:

A European Green Deal

Eurostat's major achievements supporting the European Green Deal included a number of activities, particularly in sectoral and regional statistics.

The Energy Union Governance, including the **National Energy and Climate plans 2021-2030**, is the key policy tool to monitor Member States' plans towards climate neutrality in line with the Green Deal. A first review of the plans took place in 2023, and Eurostat verified the draft plans to improve the final updates concerning statistics, which are due in mid-2024. In doing so, Eurostat ensured that their analytical basis is robust, transparent and based on official European statistics wherever possible to underpin the credibility of the energy and climate policies and measures as well as to ensure comparability and a transparent monitoring of progress. With the **latest amendment of the energy statistics regulation**⁽¹¹⁾, Eurostat started collecting in 2023 new data with a shorter deadline, in order to support the monitoring of the implementation of the plans and the green transition.

⁽¹¹⁾ Commission Regulation (EU) 2022/132 amending Regulation (ES) 1099/2008.

Eurostat carried out the legislative work to further update Regulation (EC) 1099/2008 ⁽¹²⁾ on energy statistics, which should enter into force in early 2024. This is a necessary step to achieve consistent reporting on **hydrogen and comparability across countries on this essential fuel**, which will play an important role in the green transition.

Another important achievement was the **first transmission of the Member States' statements for the non-recycled plastic based EU own resource** as well as the start of the official Commission inspection visits.

The work on the Sustainable Development Goals went on with the publication of the 2023 monitoring report. This report is part of the European Semester package and is consulted with stakeholders. Furthermore, Eurostat contributed with the statistical annex of the EU Voluntary Review, that the Commission presented to the United Nations. Eurostat also maintained a visualization tool on statistics for the European Green Deal.

Agricultural statistics continued to follow agricultural production, markets and prices, to ensure timely and relevant information needed to monitor food security and to support timely policy actions in case of quickly changing political and market situations. Furthermore, the **Integrated Farm Statistics (IFS) 2023** data collection on the core characteristics and the modules on labour force, rural development, irrigation, machinery and equipment, soil management practices and orchards, was carried out at the Member States' level. The dissemination of IFS 2020 data advanced and information on land use, crops and livestock, labour force and farm managers, was published.

The **modernisation of agricultural statistics** The work on the modernisation of agricultural statistics continued with preparatory work towards the adoption of the legislative acts implementing the Regulation on Statistics on Agricultural Input and Output (SAIO). In this context, the Commission adopted four implementing regulations for the following domains: crop production, animal production, agricultural prices and plant protection products.

The process for the **modernisation of fisheries and aquaculture statistics** has progressed according to the timetable and the draft of the new Framework Regulation for Fisheries and Aquaculture (EFAS) reached the final stage ahead of the adoption of the proposal by the Commission.

Responding to the Commission's **Farm to Fork Strategy**, an integral part of the European Green Deal, the publication '*Key figures on the European food chain*' was released covering the interwoven and complex nature of the EU's farm to fork chain.

Progress was also made towards the adoption of the amendment of Regulation (EU) 691/2011 on **European environmental accounts** that entered into the final stages of inter-institutional negotiations at the end of 2023.

Transport statistics on road freight, maritime, aviation, railways and inland waterway transport were produced, with improved timeliness, at national and regional levels, to monitor

⁽¹²⁾ [Regulation 1099/2008 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

policy initiatives under the European Green Deal, and support the Fit for 55 Package and the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy. New statistics on **zero emissions vehicles** were published by type of vehicle. Additionally, pilot surveys in the Member States were launched with the support of Eurostat grants for the collection of statistics on light utility vehicles and the transport of passengers by inland waterways.

Progress in improving timeliness and enhancing the dissemination of aviation statistics was made in 2023 with more frequent publications on air passengers, every quarter instead of bi-annually, accompanied by the earlier release of monthly data.

Did you know that...?

The publication of statistics on the number of commercial flights, a few days after the end of each month, continued to deliver this information to the public in the new, post-pandemic reality. The publication of the newly developed aviation statistics by distance class continued in 2023, allowing for a more accurate monitoring of the shift of passenger and goods transport to more environmentally friendly modes.

Additionally, following successful methodological development in 2022, new modal split indicators were published in 2023, including the share of goods and passenger transported by sea and air.

The data regarding secondary critical raw materials, based on the PRODCOM data that became available in 2023, contributed to further improvements in the monitoring of the **circular economy**.

The European Green Deal and its environmental initiatives have triggered an increased demand for field data. In that context the **LUCAS⁽¹³⁾ 2022** survey was expanded with a grassland module and a landscape features module. The LUCAS 2022 campaign was successfully concluded in 2023 and the primary microdata published the same year.

Did you know that...?

Based on the LUCAS 2022 landscape features module, the JRC analysed and produced an indicator factsheet on the “*Share of agricultural land covered by landscape features*” for DG AGRI. Furthermore, the post-processing quality control for the LUCAS grassland module was concluded and the data will be handed over to DG ENV for analysis.

A Europe fit for the digital age

Digital transformation and its impact on society, businesses and the economy continued to be high on the policy agenda of the Commission in 2023. In the framework of **the Digital Decade**, the EU has set ambitious targets for digital skills, digital transformation and digital infrastructures. In that context, Eurostat continued the implementation of the

⁽¹³⁾ LUCAS - the land use / cover area survey, which provides detailed information on specific points as well as harmonised and comparable statistics on land use and land cover for the EU territory

action plan to better measure digitalisation by producing high-quality statistics on the **digital performance of Europe's businesses and people**.

The **level of digitalisation** and the use of advanced technologies like **artificial intelligence, cloud and data analytics** were at the core of the information collected and published in 2023 on the digitalisation of businesses. In addition, new indicators on digitalisation, including **cybercrime data** and **broadband internet coverage** indicators, coming from country regulators (through DG CNECT), were published. As far as people are concerned, the **number of information and communication technology (ICT) specialists, the digital skills, the usage of e-government services and of electronic identification**, have been among the main topics collected and published during the year.

Linked to the instruments used for producing digitalisation-related statistics and in the framework of the ESS priority-setting mechanism, a **review of the ICT statistics domain**, focusing on its coverage and the ways to reduce the burden on respondents, was launched in the second half of 2023 and will be finalised in 2024.

The timely provision of business and trade statistics continued to help monitor the European industrial strategy, supporting the twin **transition to a green and digital economy**, making EU industry more competitive globally, and enhancing Europe's strategic autonomy.

[An economy that works for people](#)

Eurostat has been closely involved with other Commission services **contributing to the EU Economic governance review, aiming to strengthen the economic and fiscal surveillance framework with the overarching goals of ensuring fiscal sustainability and promoting sustainable, inclusive growth**. The consistent production of high-quality **Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) and Government Finance Statistics (GFS)** remained the cornerstone of **fiscal monitoring in the EU**. Furthermore, Eurostat has continued to enhance the **methodology used in public finance statistics**, with the aim of achieving better and more consistent statistics in this area. These improvements are crucial for a continuously high level of effective fiscal monitoring, particularly concerning the statistical implications of the Stability and Growth Pact. In line with these efforts, a **new edition of the Manual on Government Deficit and Debt (MGDD)** was released at the beginning of 2023.

Eurostat has established a regular reporting mechanism to ensure that statistical rules are applied to the financial and investment flows associated with the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Simultaneously, Eurostat has taken into account the **new policy-related requirements related to government interactions with EU institutions and bodies as part of the mid-term review of the ESA⁽¹⁴⁾ 2010 Regulation**. This effort ensures a robust legal basis for reporting quarterly government revenue, expenditure and deficits.

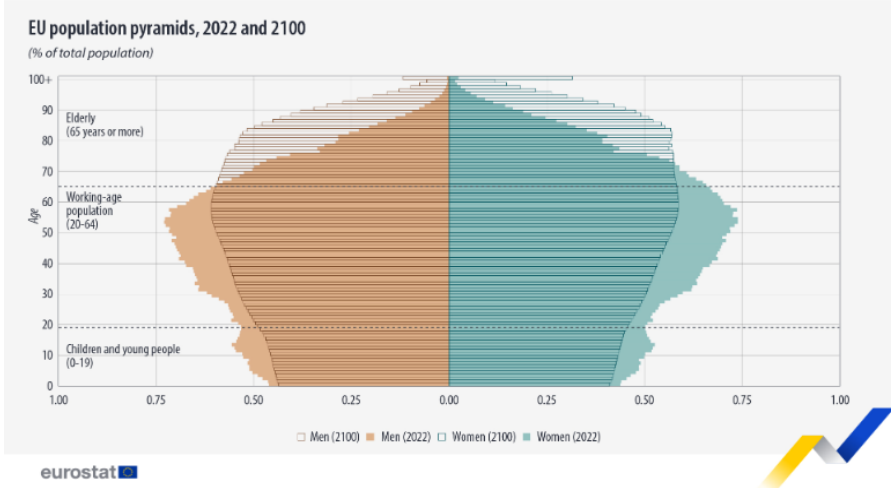
⁽¹⁴⁾ European System of national and regional Accounts.

Eurostat has undertaken the task of developing **statistical accounts for European institutions**, establishing a foundation to develop methodologies for **indicators related to deficits and debt for EU institutions**. This data contributes to a more precise representation of EU institutions within national accounts, offering valuable statistical insights to policymakers and the general public.

The **key macroeconomic indicators** and detailed data on national accounts, balance of payments, consumer prices, real estate prices, purchasing power parities and statistics for administrative purposes regarding own resources, remunerations and pensions were disseminated in a timely manner, and the publications followed the established release calendar, available on the Eurostat website.

Preparations intensified for the **next coordinated benchmark revision of national accounts and balance of payments**. This included supporting analysis, and recommendations and grants by Eurostat to improve estimates.

The **verification of the Gross National Income (GNI) Inventories** continued and information visits to all countries were carried out, following an updated risk assessment. The assessment of the GNI reservations in place continued and a large majority of the reservations were lifted. Following the recommendations of the European Court of Auditors in its performance audit report, Eurostat worked on concrete proposals in cooperation with the Member States. A first set of initiatives for the 2025-2029 GNI verification cycle was agreed in the GNI expert group meeting.



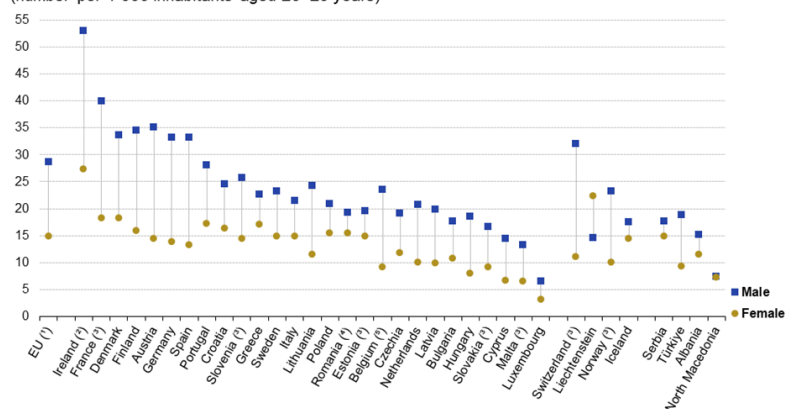
Source dataset: [proj_23np](#)

As regards social statistics and related economic aspects, in March 2023 Eurostat published **new long-term population projections for the EU, Euro area and Member States**. These data were used as an input to the work assessing the **long-term**

economic and budgetary impacts of the EU's ageing population and the 2024 Ageing Report, which will be published in 2024.

Eurostat has disseminated the results of the **joint UNESCO-OECD-Eurostat data collection on education administrative data and education expenditure data**. With the aim to improve the timeliness of education expenditure data, the second round of the voluntary collection on provisional data for a limited set of variables was launched and the results were disseminated for the eight countries that provided information.

Tertiary education graduates in science, mathematics, computing, engineering, manufacturing and construction, 2021
(number per 1 000 inhabitants aged 20–29 years)



Note: ranked on the ratio for both sexes combined.
 (*) Incomplete coverage.
 (**) Undercoverage for private independent institutions.
 (*) 2020.
 (*) 2019.
 (*) Excluding the French Community of Belgium for short-cycle tertiary.
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: educ_uae_grad04)

eurostat

Eurostat developed and published five new indicators on the **distribution of students by sex for different education levels and different fields of education**. Special focus was given to the **ratio of female students in tertiary education in STEM fields** (sciences, information technology, engineering, manufacturing and construction).

Eurostat disseminated detailed **Health Care Expenditure and Financing statistics (HCE)** for reference year 2021. In addition, more timely indicators for several Member States providing HCE data for reference year 2022 were also disseminated for the first time, improving the timeliness of indicators based on administrative data.

In the labour force domain, work continued towards the **implementation of the international classification of status in employment ICSE-18** from the International Labour Organisation.

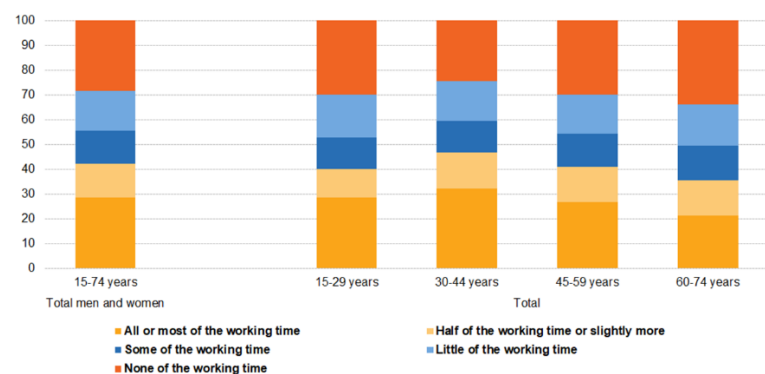
In the context of the European Year of Skills, results from an **ad hoc subject module on job skills** in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) were published.

Did you know that...?

On job skills, the data from the LFS 2022 module illustrate the use of digital devices and the time spent in tasks involving social skills. These data allow to assess the progress made e.g. on digitalisation, while showing weaknesses to be addressed for some population groups, e.g. by sex, age and the Member States. For example, more than 70% of employed people 15-74 years old used digital devices during their working time (close to 50% for those 30-44 years old) and more than 40% used it at least half of their working time. Luxembourg had the highest share of employed people using digital devices all or most of their working time (47%), while the lowest shares were in Bulgaria, Greece and Romania (all 12%). Moreover, men worked less than women, spending at least half of their working time using communication skills, in particular for external communication (around a fourth of employed men against more than a third of employed women).

Employed people by working time spent using digital devices, by age, EU, 2022

(percentage of total employed people)



Source: Eurostat (ad hoc extraction EU-LFS module 2022)



The evaluation and impact assessment of **Labour Market statistics on Businesses (LMB)** were finalised and the Commission adopted a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽¹⁵⁾ to ensure that these

statistics remain relevant, better answering user needs, being more complete and comparable, as well as limiting the burden on respondents through embracing new data sources and technologies.

The **implementation of Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 on European statistics relating to persons and households** continued. Statistics on labour force and income and living conditions became timelier. An increased number of EU-SILC ⁽¹⁶⁾ based indicators was released in relation to **children and adults' health**, on the **unmet need for medical care** and on childcare (linked to the new Barcelona targets). As far as the labour force is concerned, results from the pilot study on digital platform employment were prepared for publication as experimental statistics and are used as a basis for preparing the EU-wide data collection as an ad hoc subject module in 2026. Additionally, **data on adult learning became available for the first time** and data from the 2022 Adult Education Survey (AES) was disseminated. In 2023, legal acts were adopted for the 2025 European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), modules of the EU-SILC 2025 and an ad-hoc subject of EU-LFS 2026. The visibility of **disability statistics** was expanded with data on the **situation of disabled people on the labour market**.

Regarding the business aspects of the economy, the **implementation of the European Business Statistics (EBS) Regulation** progressed further and in accordance with the foreseen timelines. With the entry into force of the Implementing Act of the 2022 PRODCOM list in January 2023, Eurostat has now completed all the implementing and delegated acts needed for the implementation of the EBS Regulation.

The **EuroGroups Register (EGR)** ⁽¹⁷⁾, alongside the **European Profiling programme**, continued providing the global view on the largest European Multinational Enterprise (MNEs) groups with significant impact on the European economy. Under the Early Warning System and the coordination of the consistency work done in national Large Case Units (LCU), several

⁽¹⁵⁾ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Statistics on European Labour Market on Businesses – LMB.

⁽¹⁶⁾ EU Statistics on income and living conditions.

⁽¹⁷⁾ The EuroGroups register is the statistical business register of multinational enterprise (MNE) groups operating within the European Union, Member States and EFTA countries; it is managed and compiled by Eurostat.

relevant cases of MNEs restructuring were analysed, in collaboration with all stakeholders, and harmonised recommendations were issued. New data tables based on EGR containing aggregated data were disseminated for the first time and new experimental statistics on MNEs (Industry concentration indices and MNEs economic indicators) were published.

For the **dynamic business statistics**, the legal acts related to ICT statistics with reference year 2024 were all adopted. Eurostat also further updated the methodological guidance with respect to business and trade statistics, in particular the Global Value Chains (GVC) compilers' manual and the second edition of the Modes of Supply (MoS) compilers' manual. Eurostat advanced towards a timely preparation of the future transmission and production of the new data required under the EBS Regulation by agreeing with Member States on data exchange standards as well as validation rules to cover all relevant business and trade statistics.

Eurostat continued producing statistics on international trade in goods (ITGS) and services (ITSS), foreign direct investment (FDI) and foreign affiliates (FATS) to contribute to **monitoring the impact of the EU's free trade agreements with non-EU countries**. The globalisation dashboard was also prepared. In addition, with respect to the quality of business and trade statistics, **work on asymmetries has continued** in the fields of ITGS, TSS and FDI. In particular, the work carried out under the action plan on intra-EU trade in goods asymmetries, based on the exchanged micro-data on intra-EU exports, allowed for better use of the micro-data exchange (MDE), especially in the compilation of intra-EU imports and the improvement of the quality of the intra-EU trade in goods statistics. **This work has allowed a better understanding and communication on the causes of asymmetries.**

A statistical report using information from **tourism satellite accounts** (TSA) and showing the (macro)economic dimension of the tourism sector as well as an analysis of the particular impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on this segment of the European economy was published.

Eurostat developed the **first experimental European Space Economy Satellite Account with a view to performing** a wide range of new analyses on the space sector, and to estimate the total output, gross value added, employment and labour compensation of the European Space Economy. The first results on the exports and imports for the spacecrafts were released, including satellites and spacecraft launch vehicles, as well as the report describing the methodology and the list of statistical codes to measure the space economy.

Finally, the **Commission Delegated Regulation revising the statistical classification of economic activities (NACE) was adopted** in January 2023⁽¹⁸⁾. It will improve the relevance of European statistics as it more closely reflects the reality of the economic activities in the European Union, taking into account recent structural, scientific and technological developments.

⁽¹⁸⁾ [Delegated regulation - 2023/137 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

A stronger Europe in the world

Eurostat continued to drive and **contribute to the setting of international statistical standards** to ensure the comparability of statistics across the globe. In particular, **Eurostat promoted European norms and methodologies via regional programmes in the neighbourhood partner countries**. The evaluation of the regional programme for the European Neighbourhood countries in the East was carried out, successfully laying down a solid background for a future regional programme for those countries. The regional statistical programme for the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) South, MEDSTAT V, was implemented improving the availability, visibility, and accessibility of reliable and timely statistical data in the ENP-South countries.

Eurostat also actively participated in the relevant groups and in the processes to update the **international manuals**, among others in the **System of National Accounts** and the **Balance of Payments**.

Enlargement continued to be at the forefront of the European policy agenda.

Eurostat involved **Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia** in its expert group meetings in 2023. For the first time, these countries were included in the 2023 Enlargement Package, following intensive work to assess their compliance with statistical legislation, in particular in terms of data transmission.

Did you know that...?

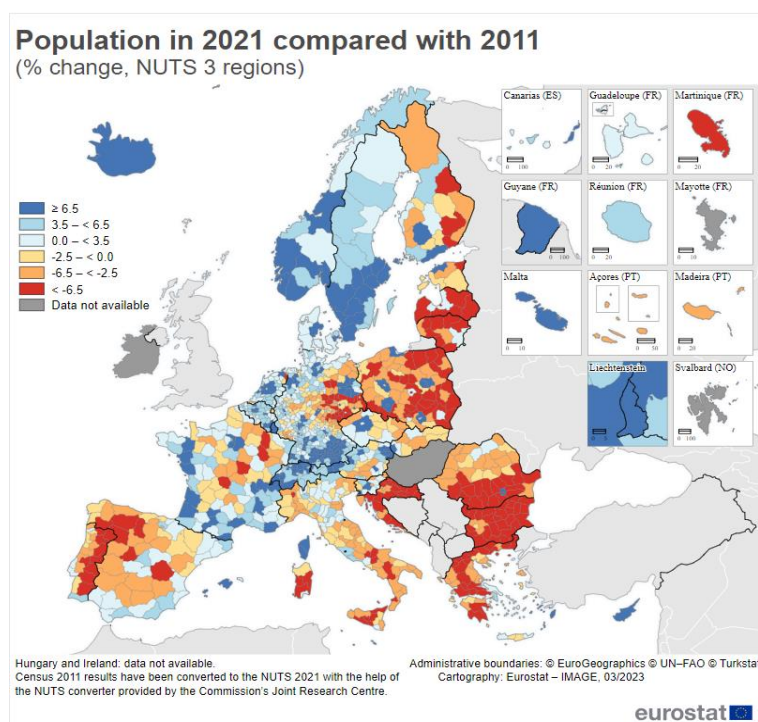
The European Commission adopted the Enlargement Package in 2023, providing a detailed assessment of the state of play and the progress made by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo ⁽¹⁹⁾, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, and for the first time also Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, on their respective paths towards accession to the European Union. In particular, the report focuses on the progress in the implementation of fundamental reforms, as well as on providing clear guidance on the reform priorities ahead. In light of the results achieved by Ukraine and Moldova, and of the ongoing reform efforts, the Commission has recommended that the Council opens accession negotiations with both countries.

For the **Western Balkans and Turkey**, the IPA ⁽²⁰⁾ 2019 multi-beneficiary programme on statistics was implemented through expert missions, study visits, workshops and traineeships in Eurostat and the Member States. Other activities aiming at increasing the number of data transmitted to Eurostat and at further aligning with EU standards included the annual tour to seven enlargement countries, the monitoring of compliance for all statistical domains, active participation in the sub-committee meetings organised within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Agreements and the follow-up of recommendations from previous peer reviews. A

⁽¹⁹⁾ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

⁽²⁰⁾ Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

Promoting our European way of life



The relevance of **population statistics and demography data** remained high on the policy agenda of the Commission, in particular in the context of an **ageing society and shrinking working-age population**. The **first EU level results from the 2021 population and housing census were published in 2023**. The geocoded data on the total population at the 1 km² grid level has enlarged Eurostat's geospatial database. The first new dissemination product from the **geocoded population data** was disseminated in March 2023. The Commission also adopted

a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council for **European Statistics on population and housing (ESOP)**.

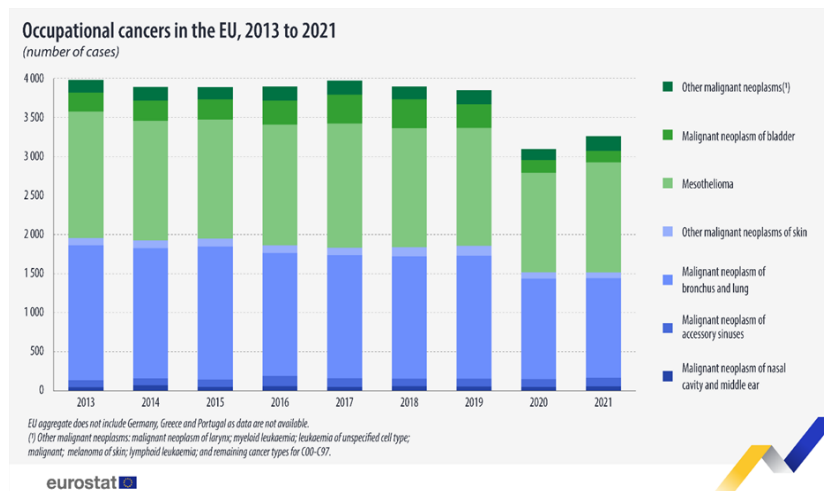
Specific Objective 2: Eurostat better meets user needs for relevant, timely and high-quality statistics in particular by continuing to foster partnerships and embracing innovative data sources and technologies

To achieve strategic objective 2, Eurostat pursued a range of activities, including legislative initiatives, new or experimental statistics, exploration of new sources and close collaboration with stakeholders within and outside the ESS system.

In the course of 2023, the work on the **revision of Regulation (EU) No 223/2009** ⁽²¹⁾ on **European statistics** progressed and several final important steps were completed. The Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 in July 2023. The adoption was preceded by an impact assessment and consultations with stakeholders. The main aim of the proposal is to **make the European Statistical System fit for the future, through improving the responsiveness of the ESS to data needs and providing more timely and granular European statistics while reducing administrative response burden**. At the same time, the proposal leaves unchanged the ESS governance which has proved to work well. Though the initial target date of Q1 2023 was not achieved, the slight delay allowed a solid proposal

⁽²¹⁾ Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council Regulation on European statistics.

to be produced as witnessed by the fast progress of the initiative before the co-legislators. Negotiating mandates were established in both the European Parliament and the Council before the end of the year. The co-legislators achieved a provisional agreement on the file in early 2024.



Work on innovation continued in Eurostat. **Experimental statistics on occupational cancers** were released for the first time, covering 2013-2021. This indicator relates to cancers caused by exposure to carcinogenic factors in the working environment, generally due to long-term exposure.

In January 2023, the **experimental statistics on short-stay accommodation** offered via online platforms entered a regular dissemination calendar, including data release via Eurostat's standard online database (Eurobase). This was an important milestone towards re-using privately held data for official statistics beyond their experimental status.

To showcase the use of innovative data for transport statistics, the first results of the **project on experimental statistics on traffic and mobility** were produced, including **new indicators on zero emission vehicles charging stations**, the accessibility of public transport, traffic and emissions. Furthermore, in cooperation with the European Maritime Safety Agency, Eurostat finalised the methodology for producing **experimental statistics on short term maritime traffic estimates** at EU level using Automatic Identification System data (AIS) and other administrative data. The cooperation with railways infrastructure managers started in 2023, aiming to develop statistics and new indicators from real time data on train movements along the European rail network.

Throughout 2023, Eurostat continued refining the methodology and broadening both the temporal range and the level of detail of the **Household Distributional Accounts (HDA)** estimates. The updated experimental HDA data for reference year 2021 were published. At the same time, the Task Force on Household Distributional Accounts (TF HDA) continued its activities, serving as a platform for sharing experiences and knowledge, assisting countries in estimating their own distributional accounts and enhancing the quality of existing results.

The assessment of the **compliance of the National Statistical Business Registers (NSBR) and EuroGroups Register** under the EBS Regulation was implemented for the first time. New quality indicators were used according to the EBS quality framework, and an automated assessment process was concluded for the first time. New metadata reports for data transmitted from NSBR to EGR were received and published for the first time, too.

Concerning the new **G20 Data Gaps initiative** that has as one of its four priority areas income, consumption and savings distributions, Eurostat actively contributed to the work by being a member of the task team as well as establishing a dedicated task force supporting the Member States in their efforts to produce national distributional national accounts estimates, and thus contributing to closing the data gap.

Eurostat continued to contribute to the preparation, evaluation and implementation of policies related to rural, urban and regional development. For the first time, Eurostat released two Statistics Explained-based online publications showcasing these data, entitled '*Urban Europe*' and '*Rural Europe*.' Eurostat also initiated the update of territorial typologies based on the preliminary population census grid results.

In June 2023, Eurostat published its **model-based early estimates of the income distribution** for the reference year 2022, contributing to the latest Employment and Social Developments in Europe report. It also disseminated **indicators based on matched income and consumption microdata** for three reference years (2010, 2015 and 2020), corresponding to the household budget survey waves. The last reference year data of joint distribution indicators on households' income, consumption and wealth was published in 2023 for eighteen Member States. Moreover, Eurostat published additional indicators on the affordability of essential services, including energy and transport, for 2015 and 2020.

Pursuing its digitalisation action plan, Eurostat has tapped into new data sources to produce experimental statistics on the **labour demand of ICT specialists** in online advertising from data collected from online job portals.

In the area of International **Trade in Service Statistics (ITSS), experimental statistics** continued to be produced and published annually, in particular by Broad Economic Categories (BEC), by Modes of Supply (MoS), and by Enterprise Characteristics (STEC) until ITSS by MoS and STEC will become official statistics in 2024.

In Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Eurostat continued producing and disseminating **FDI inward positions** by ultimate investing economy while also exploring **new experimental statistics on FDI** by ultimate host economy.

In 2023, the methodological work started for producing **early estimates of short-term business indicators using alternative data sources or models**. Eurostat will work together with the Member States to improve production processes and develop IT tools, leveraging on the integration benefits brought about by the EBS Regulation.

Eurostat took several initiatives to help Member States build up and reinforce their capacity to **use microdata linking (MDL) in the area of business and trade statistics**.

Did you know that...?

MDL can lead to new statistical output that is highly relevant for European policymaking without increasing the burden on respondents. Innovative grant actions continued in 2023 to build capacity in the Member States and produce new experimental statistics. In December

2023, the Business Statistics Directors agreed on an **ESS MDL Work programme prioritising globalisation indicators**, such as a breakdown of structural business statistics (SBS) by group status (resulting from linking SBS and EGR), and insights on import of goods dependencies (resulting from linking SBS and international trade in goods statistics).



The work on **methodological developments for the reuse of Mobile Network Operator (MNO) data** has progressed. A position paper motivating the need and outlining the key requirements to define a common methodological and quality standard for the statistical use of MNO data ⁽²²⁾ was released. The work to advance towards the definition of a methodological standard, co-developed by experts from industry and NSIs, along with the implementation of an open-source reference pipeline, started. A research grant was launched to investigate novel methods for integrating MNO data with other statistical data and processes.

The preparatory work for the launching of a **One Stop Shop on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML)** was concluded in 2023. A consortium of NSIs will work from 2024 onwards to develop and provide a set of foundational capabilities for implementing AI and ML approaches for the production of official statistics within the ESS.

The work on Privacy Enhancing Techniques has progressed towards the definition of the high-level requirements for the **Multi-Party Secure Private Computation-as-a-Service (MPSPCaaS)** concept.

The **Eurostat datalab**, which is a **flexible cloud-based infrastructure**, was deployed on the European Commission data platform in 2023. It has been used to develop **experimental statistics on traffic and mobility** and to explore financial transaction data. In addition, the datalab was used for training courses in data science, as well as for testing Large Language Models in the context of Artificial Intelligence and European statistics.

Eurostat started to implement the **Warsaw Memorandum on Earth observation for statistics** and the subsequent ESSC recommendations, by preparing an inventory of the already finalised or ongoing projects within the ESS and setting up a **Task Force on Earth Observation** to help establish a roadmap for further work on the topic. Eurostat also started to investigate, via pilot projects, the opportunities offered by Earth observation for producing, facilitating or complementing statistical processes and improving the quality of data, as well as defining the needs in terms of tools and techniques for the purpose.

Eurostat actively pursued collaborative efforts with National Mapping and Cadastral Agencies (NMCAs) and international organizations focused on **integrating geospatial information**

⁽²²⁾ Reusing Mobile Network Operator data for Official Statistics: the case for a common methodological framework for the European Statistical System, 2023 edition Statistical Reports series.
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-statistical-reports/w/ks-ft-23-001>

into statistical processes, such as the UN-GGIM ⁽²³⁾ and UNECE ⁽²⁴⁾. These efforts aimed to contribute to the standardization, harmonization, and provision of expertise and support to Eurostat's partners. Eurostat also continued to work on the provision of **geospatial services** – including the pan-EU core geospatial datasets on administrative units, buildings, addresses, orthoimagery, transport networks, education and health care facilities, further improving the coverage and quality of the published data.

The modernisation of the production processes for transport statistics also continued. Cooperation with EU Agencies and observatories was enhanced with more timely data exchange and **new transport safety data on aviation accidents**, as well as for streamlining methodologies on railway transport infrastructure, facilitating Member States' reporting to the Commission and reducing burden.

The third round of ESS peer reviews was successfully finalised with the last 11 peer review visits taking place and the total of 31 peer review reports being published on Eurostat's website and the websites of the reviewed ESS members. The peer review visits in 2023 were accompanied by national communication campaigns based on the communication material provided by Eurostat. Preparations of the final reporting phase have started.

The **EU Council presidency high-level meetings of Directors-General** were well coordinated, ensuring efficient discussions on strategic topics of the ESS, in line with the political priorities of the Council presidency, such as statistical leadership in the emerging digital societies, Data Governance Act, and integration and interoperability strategies for modernizing official statistics.

The **ESSC meetings** organised in 2023 met the quality standards such as timeliness, content and clarity of papers and discussions, and were rated positively by a vast majority of the meeting participants. The topics discussed by the ESSC reflected key EU priorities and extended to practically all statistical fields. Recurrent items on the ESSC agenda in 2023 were the Revision of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European Statistics, the ESS Innovation Agenda, the European Green Deal, European statistics on digitalisation and ESS Strategic Communication. To facilitate the discussions of the ESSC, timely and relevant operational and coordination support was provided to the Partnership Group.

Did you know that...?

In February 2023 the **European System Statistical Committee adopted the ESS innovation agenda** to organise, coordinate, support and sustain innovation activities of the European Statistical System. The related activities seek to develop new or improved statistical products and processes. In addition, the ESS innovation agenda aims at leveraging **key innovation drivers and enablers by creating conditions for integrating innovation into statistical production** and for sharing innovative ideas in the ESS.

⁽²³⁾ United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

⁽²⁴⁾ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

The ESS innovation agenda is implemented via the **innovation action plan**, which is reviewed and monitored annually. The initial plan identified 21 innovation activities that cover broadly prioritized technological and methodological domains and, at the same time, will generate new or improved statistical products. The implementation of the innovation agenda is supported by an expert group, the **ESS Innovation Network**, which has been working to promote innovation practices in the ESS, facilitate knowledge sharing and best innovation practices, and support the engagement with external innovation stakeholders.

The organisation of the **EU common positions for the UNSC**, making sure that the EU speaks with one voice, was successfully dealt with. EU Common positions were prepared in important domains, such as the international statistical classifications, fundamental principles of official statistics and enlargement of the UNSC. This has helped to shape and promote statistical standards that are compatible with EU values.

Eurostat contributed to the strengthening of a coherent policy on the agreements with external stakeholders. Eurostat has concluded the negotiations of two Administrative Arrangements on statistical cooperation with UN-ESCWA and UN-ECLAC. The Administrative Arrangement with UN-ECLAC was signed in March 2023.

Eurostat continued to strengthen cooperation with EU national statistical institutes in the field of strategic communications through the work of the **Expert Group on ESS strategic communications**.

The conference on **New Techniques and Technologies for Statistics (NTTS)**, a flagship conference of Eurostat, took place in March 2023. It brought together more than 500 on-site and more than 1100 online participants, providing a forum for presenting ongoing research and innovation projects and discussing the impact of new technologies on the system of official statistics.

Eurostat and ESAC co-organised a seminar in November 2023, which involved participants from the two entities, the National Users Councils (NUCs), DG SANTE and other stakeholders.

The **DGINS 2023 conference** took place in Ireland in October 2023 and focused on the highly relevant and topical theme of challenges and opportunities for official statistics in the context of climate change and the energy crisis.

Did you know that...?

Eurostat launched at the beginning of 2023 a study on the **European Master in Official Statistics (EMOS)** programme to assess its current implementation against the initial objectives, to review the current EMOS objectives and to identify opportunities for its future development. Based on the results of the study, which will be available in 2024, Eurostat will initiate a discussion on the future of EMOS with the objective of ensuring the relevance of the programme in the future. Currently, 33 universities are offering EMOS labelled programmes throughout the European Union. Based on the figures from the previous year, 174 EMOS students are expected to graduate in 2023.

Together with the Prague University of Economics and Business and the Czech Statistical Office, Eurostat organized the ninth **EMOS workshop** in October 2023 in Prague. The workshop gathered around 90 participants from EMOS labelled master programs, national and international statistical institutes, EMOS students and graduates.

Specific objective 3: Eurostat better communicates and better promotes European statistics and facilitates their use by policymakers, citizens, businesses, researchers and media

In 2023 Eurostat contributed to specific objective 3 through a number of initiatives and deliverables.

Several actions **improved the use of European microdata for research purposes**, including the introduction of a new request submission portal, which simplifies the process of requesting and managing access to microdata for research, and the **accreditation of a new remote access point**, which avoids the need to travel to Eurostat to work with scientific use files.

In total, Eurostat recognised almost 60 new research entities in 2023 (an increase of 50% compared to 2022), amended 200 ongoing projects, and treated around 400 new research requests by recognised research entities.

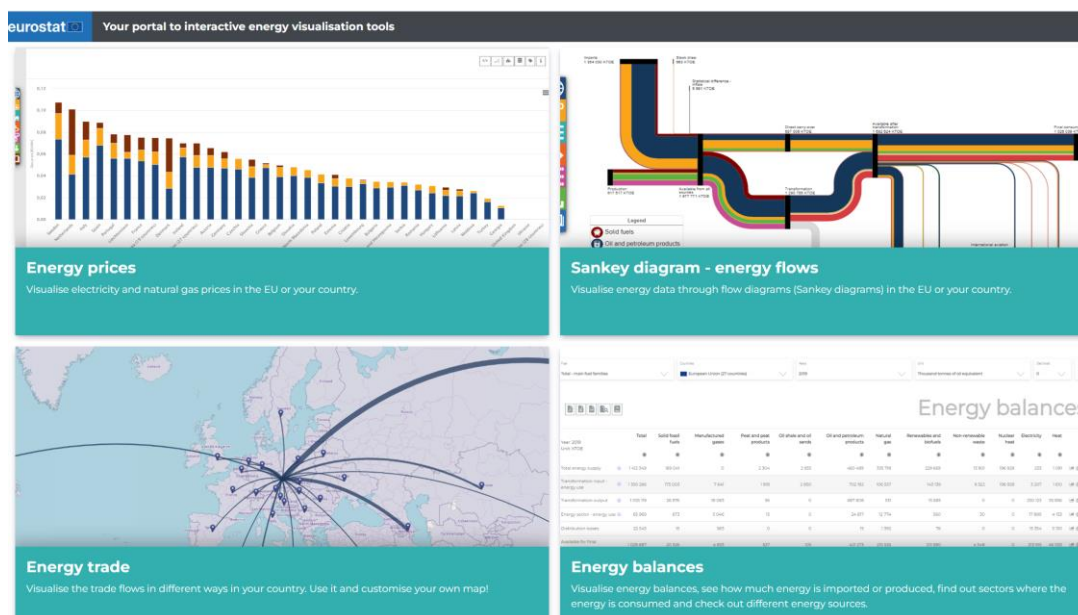
The six most popular microdata sets among researchers were documented using the SDMX metadata standard. Requirements for a querying system for metadata were defined following consultations with users. The second phase of the project was launched with a view to deliver a prototype system for metadata querying in 2024.

In March 2023, Eurostat co-organised with the International Energy Agency and UNECE a **webinar on administrative microdata for climate change, energy and environment statistics**. This allowed countries and organisations to share experiences on particularly promising data sources, such as utility meter data, energy performance certificates of buildings and vehicle tests data. These sources can complement traditional data collection methods to increase the efficiency of data production or enable production of new statistics, indicators and analyses.

Eurostat supported the preparation of the reporting templates and the process for the **National Energy and Climate Progress Reports** (the main monitoring mechanism of the National Energy and Climate Plans), ensuring that European statistics were used whenever available and prefilled in the templates.

Eurostat continued working on its **energy and circular economy visualisation tools** ⁽²⁵⁾, to improve their performance and make them more accessible to users:

⁽²⁵⁾ [Energy Visualisation Portal \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)



Eurostat has enhanced the **IMAGE tool**, which is now a more user-friendly web-tool, freely accessible to the general public. This updated version enables the production of statistical maps within a predetermined area, utilising data sourced directly from the Eurostat database.

Eurostat has further reached out to users to ensure the effective dissemination and communication of statistics among different stakeholder groups. In line with its **communication and dissemination strategy**, Eurostat has implemented the 2023 dissemination and communication programme, expanding its reach across key dissemination channels through visually appealing products, responsive interactions with users and carefully targeted promotional activities. Over 15 million user sessions were registered for the Eurostat website. **All Eurostat social media channels significantly expanded their reach.** The X (former Twitter) account gained 26 000 followers to a total of 206 000 (+14%), Facebook increased by 32 000 to reach more than 120 000 followers (+36%), and the Instagram account doubled from 40 500 followers to a total of 81 000 followers (+100%). In June 2023, Eurostat launched its LinkedIn page, which gained more than 12 000 followers by the end of the year. Eurostat exceeded the targets for growing the follower base on all platforms and reached on average more than 125 000 engagements per month on Facebook.

Eurostat disseminated **147 Euro indicator releases and over 400 other first data releases**, each supported by appropriate dissemination and promotional products tailored for the specific topic and its target audience. Throughout 2023, Eurostat has updated the European Statistical Recovery Dashboard on a monthly basis, tracking the economic and social recovery from the pandemic and providing timely input into the information on the impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

In the context of the **digital transformation**, a **new interactive publication on digitalisation in Europe** became available. The publication provides easy to understand statistics on information and communication technologies and the way people and businesses use digital technologies. In the framework of the European Year of Skills,

Eurostat released a new interactive data visualisation tool that shows the most demanded skills in online job advertisements for a selection of occupations within the EU.

The 2023 editions of the Eurostat flagship publications '*Key figures on Europe*', '*Eurostat Regional Yearbook*' and '*Sustainable development in the European Union*' were published, including in digital interactive formats. The Key figures series has been expanded with the new publication of '**Key figures on European living conditions**'. The third edition of the "*Key figures on European business*" publication was released, covering key business statistics indicators and the higher inflation levels. Furthermore, the second edition of the "*Key figures on European transport*" publication was produced on the transport of people and goods, to provide information on, among others, accidents by mode of transport, and the impact on the economy as well as on the environment.

In order to harmonise and reinforce the **Eurostat visual identity**, the new visual style guide has been implemented across the different communication and dissemination channels.

Throughout 2023, Eurostat has improved the design and information architecture of its website in line with best practices for **modern web interfaces, security requirements and current user expectations**.

Eurostat expanded the range of statistical literacy products available. **47 new articles and approximately 700 updates of existing articles in Statistics Explained were published in 2023**. To increase statistical literacy among the youth, a statistical competition for the age groups 14 to 16 and 16 to 18 took place with over 19 000 students from 19 countries. The education corner has been expanded through the preparation of animation for kids, explaining inflation and with materials provided by the National Statistical Institutes.

A **Eurobarometer survey** was undertaken in late 2023 on the subject of 'Public awareness and trust in European statistics.' The results are being analysed and will be made public in Q1 2024.

All the achievements listed above show the added value that Eurostat continued to bring to public debate and to the design, monitoring and evaluation of Union policies, by providing comparable and high-quality data and statistics on Europe.

2. INTERNAL CONTROL AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Assurance is provided on the basis of information on the efficiency and effectiveness of internal control systems and governance processes. The management monitors the functioning of the internal control systems on a continuous basis and carries out an objective examination with internal and external auditors. The results are explicitly documented and reported to the Director-General. The following reports / documentation have been considered:

- the reports from AOSDs (and from the Common Implementation Centre ("CIC") to all research related services, etc.), from Heads of Delegations (EAMRs), from Managers of EU Trust Funds (EUTFs), etc.;
- the reports from Authorising Officers in other departments managing budget appropriations in cross sub-delegation (if any);
- the contribution by the Director(s) in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control, including the results of internal control monitoring at department level;
- the reports on recorded exceptions, non-compliance events and any cases of 'confirmation of instructions' (Art 92.3 FR);
- the reports on ex-post supervision and/or audit results;
- the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control, and the observations and recommendations reported by the Internal Audit Service (IAS);
- the observations and the recommendations reported by the European Court of Auditors (ECA).

The systematic analysis of the available evidence provides sufficient guarantees as to the completeness and reliability of the information reported and results in the full coverage of the budget delegated to the Director-General of Eurostat.

This section covers the control results and other relevant elements that support management's assurance. It is structured into 2.1. Control results, 2.2. Audit observations and recommendations, 2.3. Effectiveness of internal control systems and resulting in 2.4. Conclusions on the assurance.

2.1. Control results

This section reports on the control results used by management to support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives (ICO) ⁽²⁶⁾. Eurostat's assurance building and materiality criteria are outlined in annual activity report annex 5. The annual activity report annex 6 outlines the main risks together with the control processes to mitigate them and the indicators used to measure the performance of the relevant control systems.

The financial operations managed by Eurostat are exclusively under direct management mode. Eurostat's operational budget aims at implementing the Programme for Single Market, competitiveness of enterprises including SMEs, and European statistics 2021-2027, in line with the multi-annual framework and in accordance with the Financial Regulation and related rules. The overview table below presents the payments made in 2023 by risk-type and activity of Eurostat.

Overview of expenditure based on payments made (amounts in EUR million)

Risk-type / Activities	Grants (e.g. actual costs based, or lump sums, or entitlements)	Procurement (e.g. minor or major values)	Administrative appropriations (support activities *)	Total Expenditure **)
European Statistical Programme (Direct management)	44.15	49.57	0.39	94.12
Totals in mEUR <i>(In %)</i>	44.15 <i>(46.91%)</i>	49.57 <i>(52.67%)</i>	0.39 <i>(0.42%)</i>	94.12 <i>(100.00%)</i>
<i>See Annex 3, Table 2 – payments made</i>				

*) Administrative appropriations managed and paid by Eurostat in 2023 mainly related to support for planning, monitoring and reporting activities, as well as for support for financial information systems.

***) For computational reasons, the table above may contain minor rounding differences.

Eurostat implements its budget based on a multi-annual control strategy for budget implementation that is valid until 2027, that may be revised if deemed necessary. The objective of the strategy is to provide an adequate set of controls related to Eurostat's financial transactions in order to achieve the control objectives in a cost-efficient way.

Eurostat puts in place key processes for ensuring an efficient and effective budget planning and monitoring, the processing and controlling of transactions to ensure their legality and regularity, and support to internal and external users and related reporting. Eurostat also

⁽²⁶⁾ 1) Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; 2) reliability of reporting; 3) safeguarding of assets and information; 4) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and 5) adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes as well as the nature of the payments (FR Art 36.2). The 2nd and/or 3rd Internal Control Objective(s) (ICO) only when applicable, given the DG's activities.

develops initiatives for simplifying its financial management and adapting the control system to current and future changes in its legal and operational environment.

In line with the 2018 Financial Regulation, Eurostat’s assessment for the new reporting requirement is as follows:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases of "confirmation of instructions" (new FR art 92.3)
No such cases for Eurostat.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases of financing not linked to costs (new FR art 125.3)
In 2022, Eurostat launched a call for proposals for one grant action covering two years, where the form of financing is financing not linked to costs. The action is implemented in 2023 and 2024.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Framework Partnerships >4 years (new FR art 130.4)
No such cases for Eurostat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases of flat-rates >7% for indirect costs (new FR art 181.6)
In 2023, Eurostat grant beneficiaries, except for international organisations, received 30 % flat rate financing of indirect costs, calculated as a percentage share of eligible direct personnel costs. It was decided that the 30% flat rate of personal costs corresponds to average of indirect costs beneficiaries incur when implementing Eurostat’s actions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases of "Derogations from the principle of non-retroactivity [of grants] pursuant to Article 193 FR" (new Financial Regulation Article 193.2)
No such cases for Eurostat.

2.1.1. Effectiveness of controls

a) *Legality and regularity of the transactions*

Eurostat uses internal control processes to ensure sound management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions it is responsible for, taking into account the multiannual character of programmes and the nature of the payments concerned.

1) *Control objective*

Eurostat uses internal control processes to ensure sound management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions it is responsible for, taking into account the multi-annual character of programmes and the nature of the payments concerned.

One of the control objectives is to ensure that the value of the error affected by the deficiency does not represent more than 2% of the payments authorised. This indicator is based on ex post controls and measured and assessed on a multi-annual basis. More details on the materiality criteria are outlined under Annex 5.

In addition, financial controls shall verify whether operations financed by Eurostat are correctly implemented in accordance with applicable rules and regulations. The relevance, legality and regularity of procedures shall be assessed, as well as expenditure declared by Eurostat suppliers and beneficiaries; possible overpayments shall be subject to financial recovery. Controls can also provide contributions to the improvement of the financial management of grants and procurements. They can help to ensure financial discipline in organisations (pedagogical and dissuasive effects).

The following control results are presented by internal control objective ⁽²⁷⁾ and are further subdivided by main type of expenditure, namely grants and procurement transactions, covering 99.58% of the payments made by Eurostat in reporting year 2023.

2) *Assessment of the control results*

➤ **Grant transactions**

The European Statistical Programme (ESP) is implemented by means of agreements between the NSIs, other national authorities and Eurostat. In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 2009/223 on European statistics, grants are awarded without calls for proposal to the members of the ESS.



Beneficiaries of grant agreements signed by Eurostat are mainly National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of the EU Member States and of the enlargement countries and of the EFTA countries. They do not belong to a high-risk environment: they are public sector organisations and partners of Eurostat within the European Statistical System (ESS). The number of Eurostat grants' beneficiaries is limited and the population of potential beneficiaries is highly stable, as they are NSIs or other national authorities designated by the Member States as members of the ESS.

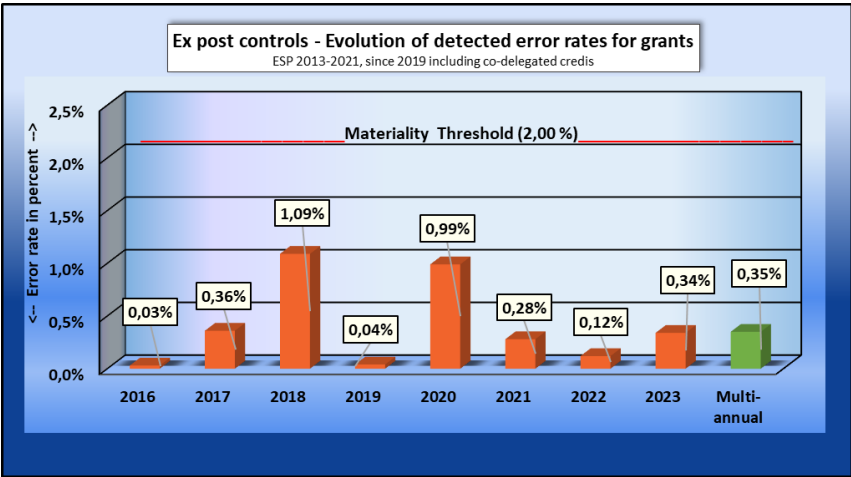
Grant agreements are subject to preventive (*ex ante*) and detective (*ex post*) controls. As required by Article 74(5) of the Financial Regulation, all financial transactions related to grants and procurements were subject to **ex ante** controls on operational and financial aspects. All *ex ante* controls are based on checklists or working instructions, ensuring compliance with the regulatory framework. All errors detected *ex-ante* are corrected before authorizing a transaction. *Ex ante* controls did not identify major weaknesses in the reporting year.

Re-assurance was given by complementary financial **ex post controls**. Five *ex post* controls were launched in 2023. The auditees were selected based on a stratified sampling strategy, taking also into account risks that were identified. All controls were finalised in 2023. In addition, one assessment of the correct application of the unit cost methodology for direct

⁽²⁷⁾ Effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; reliability of reporting; safeguarding of assets and information; prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of fraud and irregularities; and adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

personnel costs was launched and finalised in 2023. The assessment did not identify any findings or errors. All control results were incorporated in this AAR.

The detected error rate for the reporting year 2023 is 0.34%. The multi-annual detected error rate remained unchanged at 0.35%. This value is well below the materiality threshold of 2%. Therefore, it can be concluded that the controls implemented are effective.



Ex post control indicators

Year	Audited			Amount of error identified (€)	Detected error rate in %	Fraud related audit observations	Audit results failed implementation
	Population €	Benef.	Grants				
2016	1 093 183	4	14	302	0.03%	None	None
2017	1 253 928	5	22	4 507	0.36%	None	None
2018	965 461	3	25	10 495	1.09%	None	None
2019	2 465 076	4	33	1 093	0.04%	None	None
2020	3 164 844	5	40	31 387	0.99%	None	None
2021	3 907 516	4	35	10 788	0.28%	None	None
2022	5 917 602	7	46	7 137	0.12%	None	None
2023	4 257 586	5	26	14 561	0.34%	None	None
Multi-annual	23 025 196	37	241	80 270	0.35%	none	none

N.B.: • Figures referring to the ESP 2013-2021; Source: European Commission, Eurostat
 • Grants concluded under the SMP are not yet subject to ex post controls;
 • Since 2019, co-delegated appropriations are included in the figures.

➤ **Procurement transactions**

Besides grant agreements, the European Statistical Programme is implemented via procurement transactions with a share of a little more than 50% of the total amount of appropriations attributed to Eurostat.



Procurement transactions implemented by Eurostat in 2023 concerned mainly:

- 1) Provision of statistical services and methodologies;
- 2) IT services, supplies and database management;
- 3) Seminars, workshops and training.

The different stages of procurement transactions and their controls are presented under Annex 6. As requested under Article 74(5) of the Financial Regulation, all procurement transactions were covered by standard **ex ante** controls. These controls are checklist-based or based on working instructions ensuring compliance with the regulatory framework. They cover financial as well as operational aspects of a transaction. All errors detected ex-ante are corrected before authorising a transaction. *Ex ante* controls did not identify major weaknesses in the reporting year.

For the determination of the amount at risk in table 4, a flat error rate of 0.5% is applied as the most conservative and prudent approach, as no *ex post* controls are carried out on procurement transactions. In addition, it can be concluded that there are indications that the equivalent error rate might be close to 'zero'.

Further to the mandatory *ex ante* controls, in terms of management checks and supervision, a **Market Committee** reviews the quality of the terms of reference of planned calls for tender on a sample basis, based on internal criteria. In 2023, the number of procedures selected for the Market Committee was three, covering a total of six lots. The Committee gave a favourable opinion with comments for two procedures and favourable opinion for one procedure. All comments were accepted. No specific issues had to be reported.

3) Overview of Eurostat`s risk profile

Eurostat's portfolio consists of segments with a relatively low error rate, i.e. grants and procurement transactions.

This is, respectively, thanks to the inherent low risk profile of the beneficiaries and the performance of the related control systems, as explained above. Beneficiaries are informed via dedicated information meetings organised by Eurostat on changes and modifications related to grant management. They are also made aware of errors and weaknesses disclosed during past audits and controls. Consequently, their experience and expertise in financial management related to grant agreements can be assessed as high.

Furthermore, Eurostat made increased efforts to improve the financial management and to reduce the risks via a number of specific actions (for detail, please see annex 7 of the AAR).

Based on all the above, Eurostat presents in the following Table X an estimation of the risk at payment and risk at closure for the expenditure managed during the reporting year:

Table X: Estimated risk at payment and at closure (amounts in EUR million)

The full detailed version of the table is provided in annex 9.

Eurostat	Payments made	Relevant expenditure	Estimated risk (error rate %) at payment		Estimated future corrections and deductions		Estimated risk (error rate %) at closure	
	m EUR	m EUR	m EUR	%	m EUR	%	m EUR	%
RCS								
• Grants	44.15	43.31	0.15	0.35	0.01	0.02	0.14	0.32
• Procurements	49.57	49.09	0.25	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.50
• Admin. credits	0.39	0.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Eurostat total	94.12 m EUR	92.80 m EUR	0.40 m EUR	0.43 %	0.01 m EUR	0.01 %	0.39 m EUR	0.42 %

► For computational reasons, some amounts or totals of the table above may contain minor rounding differences.

The estimated overall risk at payment for 2023 expenditure, 0.43%, is the AOD's best conservative estimate of the amount of relevant expenditure during the year, not in conformity with the contractual and regulatory provisions applicable at the time the payment was made. This expenditure will subsequently be subject to ex-post controls and a proportion of the underlying errors will be detected and corrected in subsequent years, corresponding to the conservatively estimated future corrections for 2023 expenditure, 0.01%.

The difference between those two, results in the estimated overall risk at closure ⁽²⁸⁾, 0.42%. This is an increase compared to 2022 (0.41%) mainly due to the slight increase of the detected error rate for grant agreements in the reporting year 2023.

For an overview at Commission level, the departments' estimated overall risk at payment, estimated future corrections and risk at closure are consolidated in the AMPR.

4) Preventive and corrective measures

As regards the corrections carried out in 2023, Eurostat has in place an effective mechanism for correcting errors, through ex-ante and ex-post controls, resulting in preventive and corrective measures, amounting to EUR 1.525 million and EUR 0.0065 million respectively. This is similar to last year with EUR 1.440 million and EUR 0.0112 million respectively. This represents an increase related to ex ante of EUR 0.085 million and a decrease of ex post of EUR 0.082 million compared to N-1. The slight increase of ex ante is mostly explained by a minor increase of credit notes posted in relation to ex ante controls carried out in 2023.

⁽²⁸⁾ This is the AOD's best, conservative estimation of the expenditure authorised during the year that would remain not in conformity of applicable regulatory and contractual provisions by the end of implementation of the programme.

b) Fraud prevention, detection and correction

Eurostat has developed and implemented an anti-fraud strategy since 2013, on the basis of the methodology provided by OLAF. It is updated at the end of each three-year implementation period, or before, if necessary. It was last updated in June 2021 and made available on Eurostat's Intranet. Its implementation is monitored and reported to the management twice a year. All planned actions in 2023 were implemented and are in line with the Commission's anti-fraud strategy objectives. Eurostat does not have any financial recommendations from OLAF to follow-up on.

The anti-fraud reporting exercise is integrated into Eurostat's regular reporting. It is ensured every year in the Annual Activity Report and through the internal control reports, which include a specific section on anti-fraud/OLAF. The reports are issued twice a year and addressed to the Commissioner.

In 2023, the implementation of the anti-fraud Action Plan 2021-2024 concentrated mainly on achieving the strategic objective of improving awareness among staff in order to strengthen Eurostat's anti-fraud capacities. Eurostat provided information sessions on anti-fraud to all Eurostat's newcomers during every 'internal induction programme' training which took place during 2023. Additionally, Eurostat continued cooperation with OLAF by regular participation in Fraud Prevention and detection Network (FPDNet) meetings.

Eurostat also contributed to the revised CAFS Action Plan of July 2023⁽²⁹⁾ and to the implementation of its actions, notably actions 11a and 40.

Eurostat neither registered a fraud nor reported to OLAF any potential fraud-related case during 2023. Finally, no fraud risks were included in the Eurostat risk register 2023. Based on available information it can be concluded that the fraud measures in place are effective overall.

c) Safeguarding of assets and information

Eurostat's information systems and data are highly important assets supporting Eurostat's mission to be the leading provider of high-quality statistics and data on Europe.

Eurostat regards it as crucial to safeguard, monitor and secure its information systems and applications as well as its collection, handling and hosting of sensitive information, including the dissemination chain and the website used for publishing statistics and press releases.

In the context of IT security and data integrity, there are three main objectives: awareness, implementation, and monitoring, in line with main action lines included in the EC IT Security Strategy 2023-2024. The control objectives in place focus on:

- i) raising the necessary staff awareness on the EC Security Policies, standards, and best practices, including Eurostat's information security policy

⁽²⁹⁾ [Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy Action Plan - 2023 revision \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/e3000000/1/6/Commission%20Anti-Fraud%20Strategy%20Action%20Plan%20-%202023%20revision%20(europa.eu).pdf)

- ii) the implementation of the controls defined in the EC policies with the support of EC central services, and
- iii) the monitoring and access controls applied to the IT infrastructure, the Information systems and Information, implementing the continuous improvement in the operational procedures based on the lessons learnt as result of the monitoring, report and review processes.

The benefits of the controls focus on the alignment with the EC policies and its standards ensuring an adequate level of protection while limiting the burden associated with their implementation.

In 2023, there were no relevant incidents recorded regarding data integrity in the reception and transmission of information, including Eurostat’s website.

Regarding the safeguarding of sensitive information, the control objectives are defined in the following areas: the identification, classification, and inventory of sensitive information in Eurostat; effective protection, use and access to sensitive information; and the access controls applicable to sensitive information. In 2023, no relevant incidents leading to breach of confidentiality were reported.

Within the ESS, the ESS IT security framework, in its second cycle, defines the controls to be put in place in order to safeguard the sensitive statistical information within the scope of exchange of data related to intra-EU trade statistics. Eurostat, as part of the ESS, already completed the re-certification process by an external company, demonstrating the adequate design and implementation of these controls and successfully coordinated the re-certification process among all the ESS members participating in the exchange.

2.1.2. Efficiency of controls

To assess the best possible relationship between resources devoted to controls and outputs achieved, Eurostat defined a set of efficiency indicators, which are regularly monitored and analysed. The tables below provide an overview of the timely payment indicators related to grants and procurements.

Indicator	Timely Payments	
	DG Score	EC Score
	100%	99%

In the reporting year, Eurostat made most payments (1880 out of 1884 payments) in time and achieved an outstanding 100% for the ‘payment accepted amount in time’ indicator. This is the result of paperless payment processes and a dedicated payment time monitoring system in place in Eurostat, supported with an active follow-up of the advancement of individual payment files through the payment process.

A number of further efficiency indicators are presented in table 6 below:

Indicator	Reporting year				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023

Grants					
• Average time-to-inform applicants [Art 194 (2a) FR sets a time limit of six months] (180 days)	80 days	63 days	98 days	79 days	96 days
• Average time-to-sign grant agreements or notify grant decisions [Art 194 (2b) FR sets a time limit of three months] (90 days)	64 days	44 days	53 days	67 days	52 days
• Payment accepted amount in time (in percentage)	*1)	100.00 %	99.15 %	100.00 %	99.78 %
• Average time-to-pay [Art 116 FR]	38 days	27 days	32 days	24 days	23 days

Procurements					
• Payment accepted amount in time (in %)	*1)	100.00 %	99.54 %	100.00 %	99.94 %
• Average time-to-pay [Art 116 FR]	20.6 days	18.5 days	19.6 days	18.0 days	18.2 days

Source: European Commission, Eurostat

*1) No data available

On average, Eurostat informed grant applicants of the outcome of their application in 96 days and signed grant agreements within 52 days in the reporting year 2023. As compared to the previous year, the time-to-inform indicator shows an increase (up from 79 days) while the time-to-sign indicator has improved (down from 67 days in 2022). In the reporting year, Eurostat's average time-to-grant indicator (i.e. the sum of average time-to-inform and time-to-sign days) stood at 148 days in 2023 and remained well within the limits set in the Financial Regulation⁽³⁰⁾.

For one project carried over from the previous year, i.e. projects under calls for proposals published in 2022 and relating grant agreements signed in 2023, the time limits were adjusted, in line with Article 194(2) of the Financial Regulation, for reasons of the complexity of the proposed action, the set-up of the call, as well as for reasons attributable to the applicants.

Eurostat's time-to-pay indicators remained stable in the reporting year. The average payment times of 23,37 days for grants was shorter than the average of the previous three years (27,84 days). For procurement, it remained unchanged as compared to the previous year. This is the result of a monitoring system in place complemented with active follow-up of payments, in addition to the use of electronic tools and workflows.

Timely decommitments:

Indicator	Objective	ESTAT Score	EC Score
• Timely Decommitments	Ensure efficient decommitment of outstanding RAL at the end of commitment life cycle	100%	90%

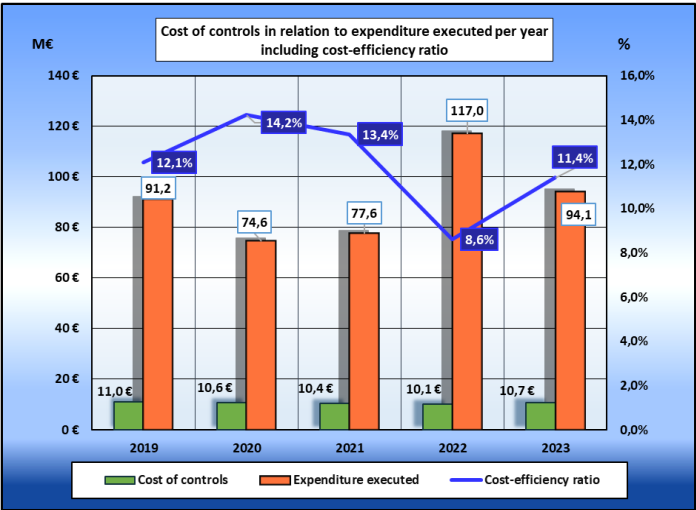
⁽³⁰⁾ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012.

As a result of a dedicated monitoring system in place, similar to the payment monitoring system, Eurostat maintained its 'timely de-commitment' indicator at 100 % in the reporting year.

2.1.3. Economy of controls

The calculation of cost of controls is based on a best and most reasonable estimate⁽³¹⁾. Staff costs were measured by multiplying the number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) attributable to control-related activities with an annual average cost rate depending on the staff category. External costs were included in the calculation using the individual contracted amount. As in preceding years, the estimation of FTEs for staff is based on data supplied by the ATLAS-Tool ⁽³²⁾. Those data are regularly revised and updated. Eurostat believes that the calculation of cost gives a true and fair view of Eurostat's control costs for the reporting year, based on a best and most reasonable estimate.

The positive trend related to economy of controls was interrupted in the reporting period. The cost-efficiency ratio increased from 8.6% in 2022 to 11.4% in 2023. This effect was primarily caused by a decrease of payments executed in 2023 (decreasing from M€ 117.04 in 2022 to M€ 94.12 in 2023). In addition, cost of controls in absolute value slightly increased as a result of updated annual average FTE costs.



Efforts to improve economy of controls continue. In 2023, Eurostat continued to implement on-going grant actions with simplified forms of financing, such as unit costs, single lump sum and financing not linked to costs. In addition, in the reporting year Eurostat completed the authorisation for the use of an additional form of simplified grant funding ('single lump sum based on estimated budget). This form of grant financing may be used as from 2024. However, it has to be noted that Eurostat is implementing a rather small volume of budgetary appropriations per financial year. Although the average size of grant transactions is relatively small, a full set of controls must be put in place. This results in diseconomies of scale.

⁽³¹⁾ The corporate methodology for the estimation, assessment and reporting on the cost-effectiveness of controls was revisited in September 2018 and applied for the first time in the 2018 annual reporting. The difference in the estimated cost of controls compared to previous years derives from this new methodology and does not reflect any substantial change in the DG's control strategy.

⁽³²⁾ ATLAS (Activity and Task Logging for Allocated Staff) is a workforce reporting and planning tool helping to allocate resources to priorities and providing up-to-date information on the allocation of resources to political priorities, and activities.

Additionally, it is important to note that controls are implemented to manage revenue and expenditure in line with the Eurostat Control Strategy on budget implementation and accordance with the underlying budgetary rules and regulations, ensuring compliance with the requirements regarding the legality and regularity of transactions. To prevent, detect and correct errors and irregularities, many of the controls performed in Eurostat are mandatory. The margin for reducing them is therefore limited.



Initiatives to improve cost-effectiveness of controls

Eurostat has in place key processes and controls that ensure the legality and regularity of financial transactions and result in efficient and effective implementation of its budget. Eurostat's financial indicators for the year demonstrate well this result. The indicators show that the objectives set out in Eurostat's Management Plan 2023 were reached.

In the reporting year, Eurostat participated in the preparatory actions for the roll-out of SUMMA in the Commission services. As per the decision of the central services, the actual going-live of this budget management tool has been postponed by one year.

2.1.4. Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant key indicators and control results, Eurostat has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of its control system and reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of the controls for which it is responsible.

Eurostat faces relatively high costs for the implementation of its activities, but these costs are proportionate and necessary. As explained above, Eurostat is implementing a rather small volume of budgetary appropriations, nonetheless requiring a full set of controls. Benefits of controls are demonstrated by low error rates and efficiency indicators that prove the best possible relationship between resources devoted to controls and outputs achieved. In addition, there are a number of non-quantifiable benefits resulting from the controls performed, such as ensuring that financial transactions are implemented in accordance with applicable rules and regulations. Furthermore, controls can also help to ensure financial discipline in organisations (pedagogical and dissuasive effects). In conclusion, Eurostat considers that the current control system and strategy represents a good balance between the invested efforts (cost of controls), the obtained error rates (effectiveness of controls) and delivery of objectives (efficiency).

2.2. Audit observations and recommendations

This section sets out the observations, opinions and conclusions reported by auditors – including the limited conclusion of the Internal Auditor on the state of internal control. Summaries of the management measures taken in response to the audit recommendations are also included, together with an assessment of the likely material impact of the findings

on the achievement of the internal control objectives, and therefore on management's assurance.

2.2.1. Audit work performed by IAS during the year 2023

IAS followed up on the implementation of the “important” recommendation number two (on quality controls by production units) of the **“Audit on Eurostat’s quality management of statistical processes”** (IAS.C3-2018-ESTAT-002). IAS concluded that the recommendation has been adequately and effectively implemented and closed it.

In 2023, IAS performed an audit on **“Eurostat’s role in the European Statistical System”** (IAS.C3-2022-ESTAT-001), with three “important” recommendations issued in the final report on 26/01/2024.

For further information, please consult annex 7.

2.2.2. Audit work performed by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) during the year 2023

In 2023 the ECA started the fieldwork of the performance audit covering the **“The new own resource based on non-recycled plastic packaging waste”**. Eurostat is the main auditee of this audit task; DG BUDG and DG CLIMA are associated services.

2.2.3. Open issues from audits of the ECA before 2023

For further information, please consult annex 7.

2.2.4. Conclusion of the IAS on the state of internal control in Eurostat

IAS concluded on the state of the internal control in Eurostat, that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.

2.2.5. Conclusion on the assessment of audit observations and recommendations

- Eurostat accepted all recommendations issued by IAS.
- Currently, Eurostat does not have any “critical” or “very important” recommendations issued by the IAS, nor by the ECA.
- Currently, Eurostat does not have any audit recommendations overdue for more than six months.

- During 2023, Eurostat implemented 2 “important” recommendations stemming from the IAS “Audit on effectiveness and efficiency of Eurostat’s performance management system”.
- During 2023, Eurostat implemented three recommendations issued by the ECA in Special Reports on European statistics, on European Environmental Economic Accounts (EEEA), and on sustainable use of plant protection products and a further recommendation issued by the ECA in its “Annual Report on Compliance concerning the financial year 2020”.
- Action plans referring to all the open audit recommendations were established and are being implemented.
- Detected risks have been reduced significantly.

Therefore, Eurostat concludes that audit observations and recommendations do not disclose significant weaknesses of the internal control system that would require a qualification to the declaration of assurance with a reservation.

2.3. Assessment of the effectiveness of internal control systems

The Commission has adopted an Internal Control Framework based on international good practice, to ensure the achievement of its policy and management objectives. Compliance with the internal control framework is a compulsory requirement.

Eurostat uses the organisational structure and the internal control systems suited to achieving its policy and internal control objectives in accordance with the internal control principles and has due regard to the risks associated with the environment in which it operates.

The functioning of the internal control systems was monitored closely throughout the year. Twice a year, Eurostat’s management monitors the implementation of the mitigating actions referring to audit recommendations, discharge recommendations, risks at DG-level, and to the implementation of antifraud strategy.

Additionally, twice a year, Eurostat’s management assesses if:

1. new mitigating actions need to be implemented to further mitigate identified risks;
2. the level for the risks included in Eurostat's risk register has changed;
3. new risks have been identified.

The results of the monitoring of the IC indicators 2023 did not show any significant deficiencies. There are no “critical” or “very important” audit recommendations issued by the ECA or IAS.

Eurostat has assessed the open recommendations issued by the IAS and the ECA and considered the underlying risks as already mitigated by the ongoing implementation of actions plans addressing these audit recommendations. The “Exceptions and Non-compliance Register” did not yield significant weaknesses.

The "Periodic validation of user access rights granted in ABAC" for 2023 did not issue any significant weaknesses.

In 2023 there were no incidents recorded regarding data integrity in the reception and transmission of information, including the website. No significant issues have been disclosed in the AOSD declarations for the year 2023.

Eurostat's management assessed the effectiveness of the internal control system and its results following the methodology established by DG BUDG in the "Implementation Guide of the Internal Control Framework of the Commission". Please refer to annex 8 for the detailed approach and its sources.

The analysis of the effectiveness of Eurostat's internal control system resulted in the assessment that the internal control principles 6 and 15 are present and functioning well but some improvements are needed, which are mainly related to addressing open recommendations from recent audits.

The results of the assessment have been analysed and discussed between the Director-General and the Director in charge of Risk Management and Internal Control (DRMIC).

Eurostat has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed as minor deficiencies were identified related to the internal control principles 6 ("The Commission specifies objectives with sufficient clarity to enable the identification and assessment of risks relating to objectives") and 15 ("The Commission communicates with external parties about matters affecting the functioning of internal control").

2.4. Conclusions on the assurance

This section reviews the assessment of the elements already reported above (in sections 2.1., 2.2 and 2.3), and the sub-conclusions already reached. It draws an overall conclusion to support the declaration of assurance and whether it should be qualified with reservations.

Eurostat's performance in 2023 demonstrated that it is on course to meet the long-term policy, programme and operational objectives. In Eurostat's judgement, its operational expenditure authorised has contributed to the policy achievements and generated Union-added value. The KPIs indicate that the usage of European statistics is increasing as a general trend. The residual error rate for grants is consistently below the 2% materiality threshold.

The estimated overall amount at risk at closure for the 2023 relevant expenditure is EUR 0.39 million.

Eurostat has set up internal control processes to ensure the adequate management of the risks relating to its operations. Eurostat performs a risk assessment at DG level twice a year.

In 2023 there were no incidents recorded regarding data integrity in the reception and transmission of information, including the website.

Eurostat has assessed the observations and recommendations issued by the IAS and the ECA and continued in 2023 with the implementation of actions plans addressing audit recommendations.

IAS concluded on the state of internal control that the internal control systems in place for the audited processes are effective.

Eurostat concluded that audit observations and recommendations do not reveal significant weaknesses in the effectiveness of the internal control system that would require the declaration of assurance to be qualified with a reservation.

Eurostat has assessed its internal control system during the reporting year and has concluded that it is effective and the components and principles are present and functioning well overall, but some improvements are needed. Remedial measures are being implemented to remove minor weaknesses detected in the internal control principles 6 and 15.

The AOD gained a true and fair (i.e. a reliable, complete and correct) view of the state of affairs in Eurostat and has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended.

In conclusion, based on the elements reported above, management has reasonable assurance that, overall, suitable controls are in place and working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented. The Director-General, in her capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation has signed the Declaration of Assurance.

2.5. Declaration of Assurance

I, the undersigned, Director-General of Eurostat,

in my capacity as authorising officer by delegation, declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view ⁽³³⁾,

I state that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the self-assessment, ex-post controls, the work of the Internal Audit Service and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

⁽³³⁾ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the DG/Executive Agency.

I confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported here which could harm the interests of the institution.

signed

Luxembourg, 27/03/2024

Mariana KOTZEVA

3. MODERNISING THE ADMINISTRATION

3.1. Human resource management

In 2023, Eurostat continued to focus on ensuring the effective management of human resources to deliver on the Commission's headline ambitions and statistical priorities. Eurostat focused on the implementation of the specific actions for 2023 (HR plan 2023) while remaining consistent with the overall Commission strategy. The key elements of the HR plan 2023 focused on the recruitment of staff, their onboarding, and their career opportunities.

Despite the challenging situation on the Luxembourgish job market, Eurostat managed to further decrease its vacancy rate and is now below the Commission average, which is a significant achievement in comparison to previous years. Nevertheless, recruitment remains a major concern for several reasons. First, Luxembourg remains less attractive as a workplace than other places of employment. Second, there are no suitable EPSO reserve lists available for Eurostat to source candidates from. Third, recently there have been considerable delays in the organisation of EPSO competitions.

Therefore, in 2023, the number of temporary agents on permanent posts further increased. Eurostat was a frontrunner DG as regards the external publication of vacancies for temporary agents and contract agent posts, advertised externally on the Eurostat and EPSO websites. This helped broaden the group of potential candidates and identify more potential candidates, including from under-represented nationalities and aiming at more geographically balanced recruitments. For almost all the selection panels of contract agents and temporary agents, at least one candidate from an under-represented Member State was interviewed throughout the year with very few exceptions (e.g. when no applications from under-represented Member States were received).

An annual HR plan 2023 was adopted and the concrete actions and measures, such as digital transformation and information management, were implemented during the year. Eurostat requested the launch of an external EPSO competition in statistics and then contributed substantially to the necessary preparatory work with EPSO. However, this external

competition, which was initially due to be published in November 2023, is now delayed sine die.

Eurostat launched an improved onboarding process for newcomers, including a mentor to facilitate a smooth integration in the workplace as well as in Luxembourg. As regards career opportunities, Eurostat staff were informed about all upcoming career development programmes on Cybernews. In addition, two workshops were organised for temporary agents and contract staff with the participation of Eurostat colleagues who had been successful in internal competitions, and with the aim of sharing experiences.

Eurostat is on target as regards gender equality at all levels of management (57.1% of female representation as regards senior management as well as Deputies to the Director and 54.5% of female representation in middle management) at the end of 2023.

Regular meetings of Senior management with staff were organised. In addition, the Director-General or the Deputy Director-General participated in the specific induction programme for newcomers (three events in 2023).

Throughout 2023, Eurostat continued its top priority of effectively informing its staff about the latest developments involving Eurostat and the Commission overall. On Eurostat's Intranet page "Cybernews", there is a daily set of news articles (four per day).

Throughout 2023, Eurostat consistently promoted corporate priorities internally, illustrating their relevance to all Eurostat staff (e.g. the transition to Sharepoint Online, the 2023 Staff Survey, cybersecurity, diversity and inclusion, etc.). In 2023, Eurostat's newsletter "Eurostat-Infos" was published three times. In addition to profile articles introducing new Heads of Unit and Directors, it presented in-depth 'behind the scenes' articles on Eurostat's work and the staff responsible.

3.2. Digital transformation and information management

Digital transformation

Eurostat is an active member of the Digital Transformation community and an active participant in several communities aiming to advance the digital transformation in the Commission, such as the Cloud Council, the Digital Stakeholders Forum (DSF), and the DSMP (Digital Strategy Modernisation Plan) clusters, among others. Furthermore, Eurostat contributed to the creation of the new Digital Strategy, with the following initiatives:

- Eurostat explored the possibility of using Large Language Models to support and facilitate users querying and retrieving information available on the Eurostat website (data, metadata and explanatory notes). Based on an analysis of the landscape, the project identified a list of components for realising a proof of concept in 2024;
- Eurostat has launched a modernisation project of its IT statistical production systems. The objective is a rationalisation of Information Systems which will also lead to a more comprehensive and clearer structure of the IT governance. During 2023,

Eurostat identified the target information systems for this rationalisation, as well as defined the principles that will define its governance, in alignment with the EC Digital Strategy;

- Eurostat has launched several internal campaigns to increase the cybersecurity awareness of Eurostat staff. Those campaigns are coordinated with EC central services;
- Eurostat has continued to explore the use of modern technologies for data processing, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML); In particular, Eurostat conducted a scoping study to explore large language models (LLMs) and their potential to support data and metadata discovery in the context of data dissemination; Eurostat also started a project to explore the potential of AI and machine learning for data validation; furthermore Eurostat uses natural language processing and AI in the processing pipeline of the web intelligence hub to extract characteristics from web data, specifically from online job advertisements.
- Eurostat has established a process to conduct yearly reviews of all of its IT security plans, with the second iteration in 2023;
- Eurostat migrated to the WELCOME domain during 2023, to profit from a secure-by-default and modern end-user environment.

Information and IT security rules

Regarding cybersecurity, Eurostat is actively engaged in assuring that the Information and IT security rules are implemented according to EC policies, standards and best practices. Eurostat worked and continues working on the implementation of the actions laid out in the EC Security Strategy 2023-2024, and in 2023 in particular Eurostat achieved the following:

- Completion of the attestation cycles for priority security controls and update of the security related data quality included in GovIS2 and GRC;
- Annual review of the IT security plans for its IT systems;
- Monitoring of the implementation of Multi Factor Authentication (MFA) for all externally exposed IT systems, especially those handling SNC data;
- Organisation and promotion of cybersecurity awareness activities, including knowledge assessments related to the cybersecurity assessments and participation in the relevant forums and workshops within the EC on the topic.

Data, information and knowledge management

Building on the existing governance framework for statistics (European Statistics Code of Practice), Eurostat has further enhanced its data governance and data policies with a corporate retention and revision policy.

In 2023, Eurostat published almost all statistical classifications as linked open data. Eurostat also advanced on the development of an index to modernise the maintenance and dissemination of the statistical classification of economic activities (NACE). The index will improve accessibility by stakeholders and contribute to a more harmonised coding of

enterprises across the European Statistical System. In 2023, Eurostat also made the structural metadata underpinning its data exchange processes available in SDMX 3.0 format. SDMX 3.0 is the latest version of the SDMX standard and its implementation will improve the way Eurostat collects and processes microdata and geospatial data.

Eurostat has also actively contributed to the different strands of the Commission data policy and the IMSB Rolling Action Plan, in particular regarding a corporate reference data management policy; country knowledge; evidence for better regulation; the management of the corporate inventory of data assets and the setting up of a quality framework for data assets (ongoing); the development of the corporate data platform services; the data advisory portal; the evidence transparency service; data skills and training; and indicators to monitor MFF spending programmes along Commission priorities.

Data protection

Regarding compliance with the Commission's Data Protection Action Plan (C(2018) 7432 final), all Eurostat Units concerned keep records in the Data Protection Management System (DPMS) updated with the help of the Data Protection Coordinator team. Records related to specific data processing operations carried out by Eurostat are monitored on a regular basis and the necessary updates are made in the DPMS. The Data Protection Coordinator (DPC) and Assistant DPC are consulted by the Units in charge of the processing on all relevant questions regarding record updates. Data protection training is now integrated into the Newcomers' induction program for new Eurostat staff, thus reaching all staff members entering service. Further to the training, the DPC published three data protection-related articles via Cybernews, and one awareness raising e-mail message was sent out to all staff members in the course of 2023.

3.3. Sound environmental management

In line with the European Green Deal, the European Commission produced an action plan to become climate-neutral by 2030. The Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) in the Commission plays a key role in implementing this action plan. As part of the EMAS scheme, EMAS correspondents work in each Directorate-General to raise environmental awareness in their respective DGs. Based on the success of the ESTAT EMAS network ⁽³⁴⁾, Eurostat implemented an additional network of EMAS representatives in Eurostat units and established a group of volunteers to work on Greening Eurostat. As a result of this work, Eurostat became the first DG in the European Commission to establish a carbon accounting system for its own activities using the same standard to ensure compatibility with the system used Commission-wide, and using 2019 as the baseline year. Measuring our own carbon footprint was the starting point in 2022 to establish a commitment with measures in different areas to achieve carbon reductions in line with the Commission's green strategy to become climate-neutral by 2030. This commitment focused on areas like carbon footprint management, meetings and conferences organised by Eurostat, missions, home-work

⁽³⁴⁾ Eurostat created one of the first intra-DG EMAS networks in the Commission. This network is composed of more than 40 members and works to promote environmental awareness in Eurostat.

commuting, waste and resources, sustainable catering, IT, buildings and environmental awareness.

Eurostat's Directors were informed about the results of the updated carbon emissions inventory in May 2023. Greenhouse gas emissions from Eurostat's activities have dropped by 35% in absolute terms (by 36% per capita) from 2019 to 2021. With the partial return to the office and the resumption of missions and meetings with external experts, the emissions are expected to increase for 2022.

In 2023, Eurostat released a [significant number of EMAS Cybernews articles](#) in Eurostat's intranet on various environmental topics, continued to improve its [Green@Eurostat](#) intranet website, shared many environmental communications through its EMAS networks (such as the promotion of the activities of the interinstitutional GPP Helpdesk, especially targeted to colleagues working with public procurement procedures), organised a very successful zero-waste lifestyle webinar (around 50 participants) and set up a stand in Luxembourg during the European Week for Waste Reduction to help colleagues improve their waste sorting habits. Around 80 to 100 colleagues participated in the activities proposed in the stand. Eurostat also set up a 50% reduction target for emissions from professional travel (using 2019 as baseline). To achieve this target, Eurostat's physical working groups and Task Forces are reduced to only one per year (the rest being virtual). In addition, while allowing for physical interaction when needed, staff participation through videoconference in external meetings is preferred.

3.4. Examples of economy and efficiency

In 2023, Eurostat amended its decision on simplified grants funding to include seven domains, where the single lump sum cost option will be used.

All quality reviews planned for 2023 were launched, and during the year Eurostat finalised 10 quality reviews of its statistical production processes and outputs, leading to increased harmonisation and standardisation and better service to users. At the beginning of 2024, there are 17 ongoing quality reviews with 3 more quality reviews planned to be launched in 2024. These will further support the continuous assessment of the quality of processes and outputs and will suggest improvements thereof, thus increasing effectiveness and efficiency and improving the quality of statistics. The current cycle of quality reviews will be evaluated at the end of 2024 with a view to draw lessons and design the next cycle of quality reviews.