
**Eurostat experiences of piloting
the Checklist for Quality Assessment of Statistics**

Prepared by Eurostat

The Eurostat version of the Checklist for Quality Assessment of Statistics underwent significant changes compared to the last version presented to the CCSA in April 2007. These changes have several different origins. First, the feedback received from CCSA members, who proposed many improvements, was taken into account. Second, two pilots were conducted at Eurostat involving two different production units: before any wide use of the Checklist at Eurostat, it was necessary to test the Checklist in real scale. Third, it has been decided to use the Checklist to monitor the compliance of individual statistical programs with the Code of Practice¹. This implied modifying and adding questions.

The first part of this note presents the main results of the pilots (A). The second part outlines the main undertaken improvements of the Checklist (B).

A. Feedback received from the pilots

The Checklist plays an important role in the Quality assurance framework for Eurostat: it has been approved as a tool for systematic quality assessment of statistical domains at Eurostat. Pilots were conducted prior to systematic use, in order to identify potential issues

1. Flexibility of the Checklist

The two pilot domains —the EU Statistics on Income and Living Condition (SILC) and the Short Term Statistics retail trade turnover index— were chosen to be sufficiently different to help assess the flexibility of the Checklist. A unit producing data from administrative sources also informally tested the Checklist.

The conclusion concerning flexibility is the following: the Checklist appears to be able to cover different situations thanks to its flexibility; however, there may be a need to further adapt the Checklist in some cases, especially in domains where pure administrative data or economic accounts are used.

2. Workflow and cooperation setup

The chosen workflow involved extended support from the quality team, which pre-filled the Checklist and prepared outputs.

¹ *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and to the Council on the independence, integrity and accountability of the national and Community statistical authorities, 25.5.2005, COM(2005) 217.*

The workflow has in general been assessed as appropriate. Units emphasised the usefulness of the support from the quality team.

3. Burden on assessed domains

Resources devoted to the Checklist in the production units were 19,5 hours-person in one case and 16 hours-person in the other case.

Feedback suggest that involving at least two persons form the production unit and two persons from the quality team was better, as it allows for more robust answers and helps in many practical aspects (burden placed on a single person reduced, taking notes made easier, etc.).

4. Content of the Checklist

Colleagues from the two tested domains found the whole process useful and provided substantial and useful feedback.

The content of the Checklist was considered appropriate, with no area being over- or under-covered. Precision and clarity of some question was found lacking, and in some cases, production units recommended to provide clear thresholds to improve the robustness of answers. Other comments regarded the relocation of some questions in the Checklist.

5. Outputs

Information provided in the Checklist and gathered during the meetings proved sufficient to compile Assessment reports and Assessment diagrams. In one case, some clarifications and additional information obtained during the second meeting were necessary to finalize the assessment documents. In both cases, assessment documents were eventually validated by the domain.

The Checklist proved useful to identify good practices as well as potential improvements at unit or Eurostat level.

B. Improvements undertaken

Following feedback from CCSA members and from the pilots, the Checklist underwent a global rereading. Wording of questions was improved, provided answers were made clearer, etc.

On top of this rereading, three areas received substantial modifications: coverage of the Code of Practice, outputs, and explanations of the working of the Checklist. On top of these modifications, the CCSA Checklist and the version adapted for Eurostat have been compared and their differences listed to ease their parallel maintenance.

1. Increasing the coverage of the Code of Practice

Of the 15 principles of the Code of Practice, 6 were not relevant for a domain-level assessment, as their scope reaches well beyond individual units. The coverage for the indicators of the nine remaining principles was assessed. Some questions were added when necessary, others were reworded.

Although the Code of Practice applies to the European statistical system, most of the added questions were not specific to Eurostat in themselves. In fact, while making sure the Code of Practice was covered, some parts where the Checklist was lacking have been identified.

2. *Improving outputs*

As part of the Checklist, two different tools are proposed to help users to summarize the results of the Checklist: the Summary Assessment Report and the Assessment Diagram.

- Following suggestions made during the pilots, the Summary Assessment Report now calls for more precise deadlines and ownership for implementation of improvements action.
- The Assessment Diagram was also improved by changing the assessment questions on which it relies. These questions now follow a coherent pattern, the respondent being asked to give his/her assessment on one aspect of quality using a 5-level scale. The Diagram has also been made more balanced in terms of quality dimension, every dimension being represented by at least two questions.

3. *Clarifying the working of the Checklist*

As several comments pointed, some parts of the Checklist are not relevant in some cases. For instance, chapter 5 isn't useful for some domains or organisations.

In order to avoid misunderstandings on this issue, it has been made clearer that, the Checklist being modular, parts that are not relevant can be skipped.

4. *Listing differences to be kept between the CCSA Checklist and the Eurostat version*

Before the pilots, the two versions of the Checklist were very close. Following the pilots, many improvements were incorporated in the Eurostat version, resulting in extensive differences between the two checklists.

However, the CCSA version would have benefited from most of these changes. In order to ease the maintenance of the two checklists, and to make sure each of them benefits from improvements in the other, a list of the differences to be kept between them has been established. It appears that they are relatively few (around 20 questions are involved). In the future, a common text will be maintained, and updates of the two checklists will be derived from it.

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