

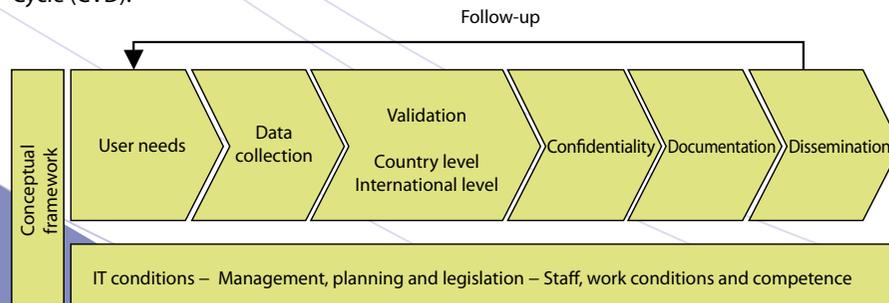
The 2008-2010 quality assessments plan in practice

From 2008 to 2010, almost all statistical processes in Eurostat will benefit from a quality assessment. To cater for the wide diversity of processes, there are four types of assessments:

- self assessments, done by the production unit;
- supported self assessment, with involvement of the quality unit;
- peer reviews, in which an external expert participates;
- rolling reviews which are in-depth assessments involving an external expert and user and partner surveys.

The choice of the type of assessment takes into consideration the characteristics of the process at hand: periodicity, existence of a legal basis, extent of Eurostat involvement in the production and validation of the data, relevance of the output, staff involved, etc. Also, a certain level of flexibility is allowed to accommodate resource constraints. Rolling reviews may be conducted by grouping together more than one process, in order to benefit from economies of scale.

Assessments are based on the Eurostat Statistical Processes Assessment Checklist, which examines chronologically every step of the production of statistics, following the Data Life Cycle (CVD):



Each assessment yields three outputs:

- a summary assessment report with strengths, weaknesses and improvement actions;
- an assessment diagram giving an overview of the results; and
- the description of good practices that can be more widely advertised.

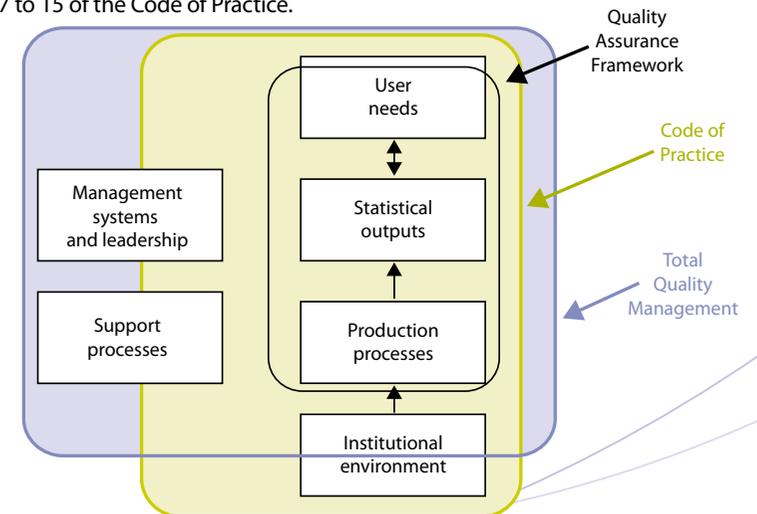
Quality assessments are integrated into other Eurostat horizontal activities by providing inputs for the Evaluation Function, for the Annual Management Plan (AMP) and by promoting the standardization of Eurostat IT tools developed in the context of the CVD.

The Eurostat Quality Assurance Framework

What is it?

Eurostat's mission is to provide the European Union with a high-quality statistical information service.

Quality activities in Eurostat build on the fifteen principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice, covering the institutional environment, statistical processes and statistical outputs. The Eurostat Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) is embedded in Total Quality Management and describes the tools and procedures put in place to ensure that the statistics produced are of high quality. It focuses on statistical processes and outputs, which are covered by principles 7 to 15 of the Code of Practice.

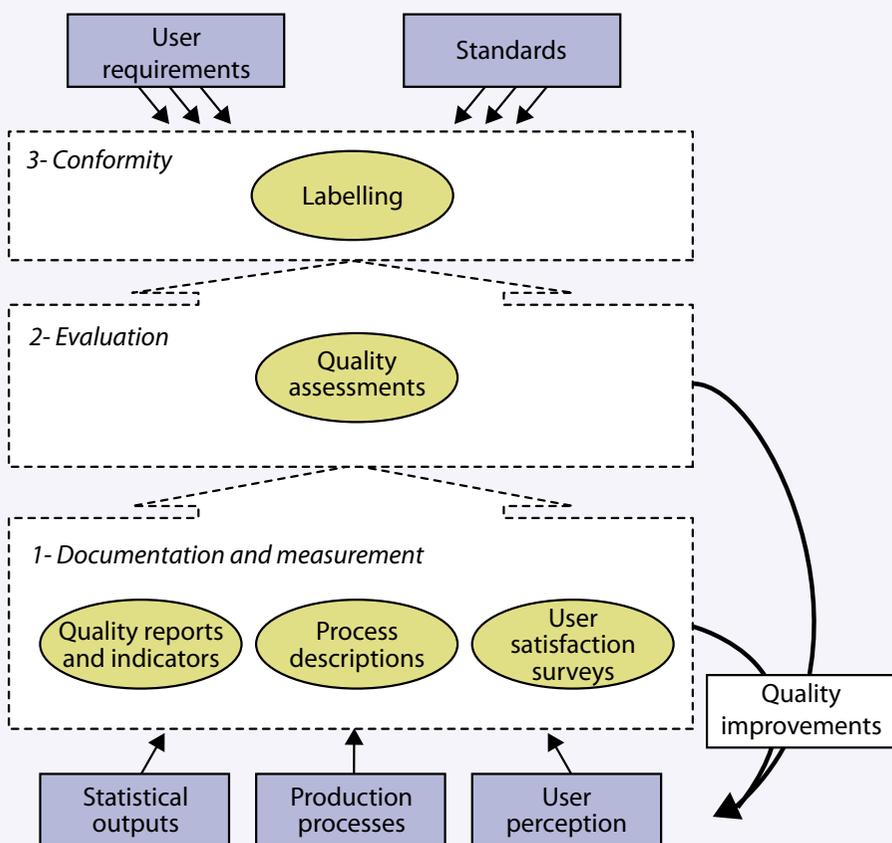


For the purpose of the Quality Assurance Framework, the quality of statistical outputs is assessed against six criteria:

- relevance;
- accuracy;
- timeliness and punctuality;
- accessibility and clarity;
- comparability and
- coherence.

What tools is Eurostat using?

The QAF can be thought of as a tool box to be used according to specific aims. These quality assurance tools can be divided into three different categories: documentation and measurement, evaluation, and conformity. On the way from documentation to conformity, information on the quality of the statistical process is increasingly summarised, making it more appropriate for managers and users. The information available at the various layers is fed back into the production processes to improve the quality of statistics.



1. Documentation and measurement

In the first layer, the complex information obtained from measurement and documentation is selected and structured. Methods and tools, like identifying key process variables and quality indicators, structured quality reports and user satisfaction surveys, are used in the individual statistical domain.

2. Evaluation

With quality work evolving over time, evaluation goes a step further and statistics are evaluated against internal or external standards (e.g. fixed in regulations, by working parties etc.). Quality assessments can range from self-assessments to other more comprehensive assessments involving external expertise. The common elements for this layer are the outputs: improvement actions and identification of good practices.

3. Conformity with recognised standards

Labelling further condenses the information to demonstrate the compliance with defined standards and requirements (Code of Practice based). Labelling thus can help to enhance trust and credibility in official statistics. Work on the labelling methodology is in progress.

How is the QAF implemented?

- Quality assessments take as their input existing information on quality, evaluate the statistical process and its outputs against pre-fixed standards, identify strengths and weaknesses and derive the corresponding improvement actions.
- Addressing the shortcomings identified by these improvement actions will enhance the quality of the statistical process and its outputs as well as users' perceptions.
- The cycle of documentation and evaluation will continue until the pre-fixed standards are fully met, leading then to the conformity layer and labelling.

For more information, visit:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/quality> or our intranet pages.