

The new Learning and Development Framework for the European Statistical System (ESS-LDF)

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1. Introduction

This paper aims at providing information about the new system of statistical training, learning and development in the European Statistical System (ESS). The objectives and structure of the new system to be implemented from 2011 onwards will be presented, after a short introduction on the existing European Statistical Training Programme, from 2004 to 2010 (ESTP).

2. The European Statistical Training System up to 2010 (ESTP)

The current system of statistical training for European statisticians on European level (ESTP) consists of a program of around 30 traditional classroom-type training courses in 2009, provided by the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the Statistical Office (ESO) of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and a number of contractors.

The course program covers a broad range of topics being relevant for members of statistical institutions in the ESS, providing training on the most important European statistical standards and the functionality of the ESS. The entire system is coordinated by Eurostat and the training programme is based on identified user needs inside the ESS.

The course programme has increased substantially since its launch in 2004. However, following on from discussions with Member States, it was felt that a new long-term strategy, going beyond pure classroom-type training, was needed.

3. The new Learning and Development Framework for the European Statistical System (ESS-LDF)

3.1 Background and objectives

The new ESS Learning and Development Framework is an ambitious program with a long-term perspective. The aim is to widen statistical training in the ESS, not to limit it to traditional classroom teaching only, but rather extend it towards more active and interactive learning and development opportunities. The new framework, to be implemented from 2011 onwards, should complement and build on national training programs. The value added of this framework is that it goes beyond

traditional training and encompasses other forms of learning and development.

A major element of the framework, compared to the national program, is its European perspective. Training, or in some cases, learning and development programs, exist at national level for National Statistical Institutes (NSIs). The content of the new system is based on the needs of all important stakeholders and should refer to the demand of the NSIs and Eurostat, but also have the flexibility to react to new emerging challenges: new standards, techniques, methods or other aspects linked to a potential re-engineering of the European statistical production process and its related statistical business architecture requirements.

The high level aim of the new framework is as follows:

The European Statistical System Learning and Development Framework (ESS-LDF) aims to foster the competence of human capital in the ESS in order to raise the overall quality of European statistical information according to the principles stated in the European Code of Practice.

The new framework should help to achieve the objectives of the ESS as defined in the 5-year statistical program. The framework consists of different projects which are presented hereafter in terms of priority. This is indicative and can be changed when needs and opportunities arise. The current priority list recommends the projects to be considered first and states the implications for those remaining. In this context, the projects can be viewed as separate entities – albeit in some cases interdependent - and their organization and financing should also reflect this view of the projects as distinct entities. This means that there is no one set way to organise and finance the whole framework - instead this will change according to the objectives of each project. Additionally, there might be more than one way of financing a project and the final decision should be based on a cost benefit analysis of the different options.

3.2 The ESS-LDF and its different projects

Organisation of training courses in the EU member states, EFTA countries and Eurostat

The organization of classroom-type training courses will remain **the core element** of the new program starting 2011. The program of training courses should be one part of career-long learning and development and has to be complemented by other learning activities, going beyond traditional training. The course program needs to be flexible to adapt to new emerging training and learning requirements. It could also include cross-sectional topics (such as management, communication issues, database management, statistical processes, etc.).

Identification of competence profile(s) for European Statisticians

The specification of core technical/non-technical competences for European statisticians will be an essential element of the new framework. This will provide the necessary information to target the program even more to the real and emerging needs and competences required for European statisticians. However, the profile(s) should complement the national one(s) by adding a European dimension, covering different types and levels.

Measurement of impact on the workplace and return on investment

The benefits gained by implementing any training inputs from the new ESS-LDF, especially in the NSIs and Eurostat, should be subject to an evaluation, in order to make continuous improvements in the contents and teaching methods based on lessons learned. A tool should be developed to measure the return on investment for the organization and the individual by measuring the impact of learning back in the work place. For example, this means that participants in ESS-LDF activities would be expected to function as multipliers, transmitting the knowledge they have gained to their colleagues in their respective institutions.

Implementation of learning methods/methodologies complementary to training

- a) **E-learning** is a tool that can enrich a program such as the ESS-LDF by going beyond geographic and language constraints. It takes advantage of the ability of technology to move effortlessly across countries, making it widely available to many participants. After a general inventory of relevant e-learning applications available in the Member States, EFTA and international organizations, e-learning applications might need to be developed and tailored to the special requirements of the ESS-LDF.
- b) A scheme for short term **study visits** (maximum duration of two weeks) with clear objectives both at national level and at Eurostat level should be developed. The exchange of staff among Member States, Eurostat and International organizations has a strong link with learning and development opportunities.
- c) A **summer school** (annual) for official statisticians working in the ESS should be organised in cooperation with a host university.

Portal for Learning and Development in the European Statistical System

This is a transversal tool that will support all other objectives of the program. It will be the unique and main communication portal within the ESS, to be used for e-learning, sharing good practices, disseminating teaching aids, manuals and glossaries, course materials, interaction, etc.

Set up a pool of trainers and agree on the modalities for their exchange

The success of a future ESS-LDF will depend on the quality of its trainers. The first step would be to identify possible trainers and create and maintain a database of approved trainers. This database would only be used for the purposes of the ESS-LDF (taking into account data protection issues) and it could include private experts. Potential trainers who are staff members of national statistical offices could only be approached for conducting courses through the responsible representatives for ESS-LDF in the National Statistical Institutes.

Exchange of good practice to enhance learning and development

Sharing good practice is one of the most efficient ways of promoting learning and development in the workplace. The work should start by identifying such good practices at national and international level in the field of learning and development and creating a vehicle for sharing information (such as a database, a discussion forum, cooperation with universities, etc.). For the implementation of this project, it is recommended to organise one symposium, conference or workshop every year, concentrating on topics of relevance. These topics could range from the area of learning and development such as coaching/mentoring, on the job training and also from the area of statistics such as seasonal adjustment, national accounts, etc.

Development of teaching aids and model manuals

Teaching aids and model manuals for official statistics with emphasis on European concepts and definitions have to be developed. New methods and methodologies should be used as much as possible. Common training material for some standard courses could be envisaged as well as the compilation of a multi-language glossary of statistical terms.

Statistical Capacity Building inside and outside the ESS

The aim of the ESS-LDF is to foster the competence of human capital in the ESS in order to raise the quality of European statistical information. This could also be an element of statistical capacity building, not only within the ESS but, in a second phase, also encompassing countries outside the ESS.

Other issues to be addressed in the future

A project of lesser importance, but nonetheless necessary to address, is to analyse the major bottlenecks that ESS countries face in their training and development programs, as well as in their educational programs, relating to statistics. Another peripheral activity is the statistical training of external stakeholders of official statistics. As the possible target groups here can be considerably large, it is recommended that the ESS-LDF identifies pilots that are taking place in the ESS, monitors their success and subsequently, takes any appropriate measures to address this issue.

4. Future work - Identification and implementation of appropriate solutions for different projects

The new framework, and in particular the core ESTP Programme with a classroom style training offer, should have a degree of flexibility in order to adapt to new emerging needs and requirements. These new emerging needs are likely to appear in areas with new methodological approaches or standards and also with respect to potential changes in the production processes of European Statistics. This flexibility can be achieved with more flexible terms of reference for future contracts and with courses organised by Eurostat Units or by the Statistical Office of the EFTA.

The development of solutions for the additional ESS-LDF projects described above is the main task of the Eurostat **Task Force ESS-LDF**. Eurostat, EFTA and 11 NSIs have taken the responsibility to elaborate concepts and recommendations for the decision making bodies. Taking into consideration the limitation of capacities and available funds, a list of priorities had to be drawn up. In April 2009, the ESS-LDF Task Force decided to continue with, or start, the following projects:

- a) Elaboration of competence profile(s) for European Statisticians.
- b) Measurement on the impact to the workplace and return on investment.
- c) Identification and development of appropriate E-learning instruments.
- d) Implementation of an Internet Portal for Learning and Development.
- e) Organization of study visits (Eurostat organises already a one week study visit to Luxembourg as a pilot).

5. Conclusion

The development of the new European Statistical System Learning and Development Framework (ESS-LDF) will result in outputs that will be of benefit to the ESS, especially as an integrated part of Human Resources Development of statistical institutions. The new system will contribute to improving the quality of statistical processes and results and will enhance the capacities of statistical institutions in the ESS. The close and trustful cooperation may serve as an example for partnership in the ESS and also contribute to capacity building outside the ESS.