



ESS Vision 2020 implementation: roles and responsibilities

1. Introduction

The ESS Vision 2020 is a strategic initiative of the European Statistical System implemented within the ESS governance structure. In September 2014 the ESS Committee (ESSC) decided to set up the Vision Implementation Group (VIG), assisted by the Vision Implementation Network (VIN), as specific ESS bodies mandated to oversee and perform regular strategic monitoring of the ESS Vision 2020 implementation, as well as advise Eurostat and the ESSC, e.g. by preparing recommendations for the latter's Vision-related decisions. Besides the VIG and VIN, other ESS bodies (ESSC, PG, Directors' Groups, expert groups) are also involved in the implementation of the Vision within their respective mandates.

As agreed by the ESSC also in September 2014, the implementation of the Vision is being performed following the portfolio management approach. However, the ESS Vision 2020 portfolio and project management is different from the 'traditional' management of portfolios and projects by NSIs, other national public authorities or in the private sector. This paper aims to be a reference document clarifying those specificities and the roles and responsibilities of the different actors in the implementation of the ESS Vision 2020.

2. Institutional context

The ESS Vision 2020 implementation has a number of specific characteristics which makes it different from projects run at the national level or just within the Commission. Clarity about those specificities and the roles assigned is necessary in order to ensure smooth running of the projects and portfolio in accordance with the applicable Commission and national rules.

Implementation of the common ESS Vision requires effort and expertise from both Eurostat and National Statistical Institutes (NSIs). The costs of the Vision implementation fall on both Eurostat and NSIs and the rewards, or benefits, of implementing are spread around the system in terms of quality improvement, timeliness, cost and burden reduction. Since the ESS.VIPs are to a large extent financed from the Commission budget, the responsibility for managing the project budgets lies with the Commission (Eurostat). It is the role of Eurostat to decide on project financing by the EU and mobilisation of specific financial instruments (procurements and grants, i.e. ESSnets, Centres of Excellence (CoEs), individual grants etc.). As the ESS.VIPs deliver their outputs, the costs of deploying them into national systems fall on the NSIs. There is therefore a shared interest in the value for money of the various Vision implementation activities.

According to Commission rules all financial decisions that affect grant allocations to Member States and Commission's contractual relations must be made by the Commission alone. Consequently, Eurostat can include only highly aggregated information on the forward costs of Vision implementation in the VIG/VIN and related documents. On the content side, in the spirit of well-established partnership and in order to ensure that the planned ESSnets and centres of excellence are relevant and of interest to the ESS community, the appropriate ESS expert groups are consulted on the overall orientation of ESSnets and CoEs within their domain and examine the respective outcomes.

For each project (including the ESS.VIPs) Eurostat follows PM² which is the project management methodology applied by the Commission.¹ This methodology is designed to facilitate the management of the complete lifecycle of projects within the EU Institutions and should be applied to all projects run by the Commission.

In order to duly reflect the common ownership of the ESS Vision 2020 by the ESSC and benefit from a very constructive cooperation within the ESS partnership, in running the ESS.VIPs Eurostat adapted the PM² methodology by assigning certain roles to ESS experts in order to reflect the active interest and involvement of the national statistical authorities in the ESS Vision 2020 implementation.

The role of the Vision-related ESS governance structure is to enable and ensure that the projects and portfolio are managed to the best possible result given the existing institutional framework and formal requirements. Therefore, the different actors in the implementation of the ESS Vision 2020 include ESS bodies in which Member States are represented as well as Eurostat. On the one hand, the ESS actors contribute to the ESS Vision 2020 implementation by providing:

- expertise and technical advice (task forces, project steering groups);
- domain-specific strategic advice (Directors' Groups).
- overall strategic and professional guidance (ESSC/PG supported by the VIG/VIN);

On the other hand, Eurostat has the exclusive responsibility for the project management of ESS.VIPs, for taking all decisions concerning their budgets and instruments, as well as for evaluating the results of work/outputs produced via grants or public procurement.

Where relevant and appropriate, Member States have the responsibility to incorporate the outputs from the ESS.VIPs into their national systems.

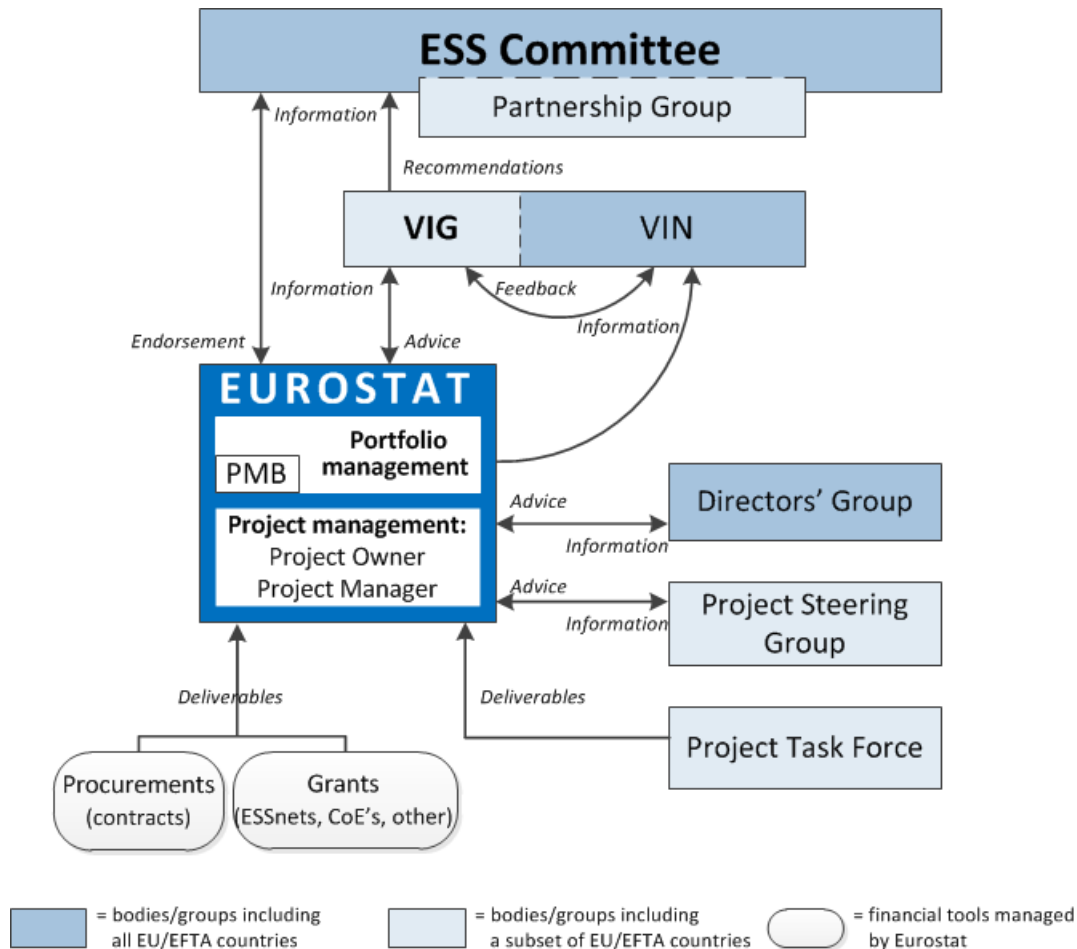
3. Actors and instruments in the ESS Vision 2020 implementation

Diagram 1 presents graphically an overview of the instruments and actors which are involved in running the ESS.VIPs and managing the ESS Vision 2020 portfolio as a whole. In particular, it displays the links between the various elements while making a distinction between financial instruments used (i.e. procurements and grants, incl. ESSnets) and expert

¹ PM² incorporates elements from a wide range of globally accepted project management best practices, described in standards and methodologies such as PMBOK, PRINCE2, IPMA-ICB, CMMi, TEMPO as well as operational experience from the different Commission departments (DGs) and relevant EC Communications.

groups or governance bodies active at project and portfolio level as well as in the whole implementation process of the Vision. The role of those different instruments and bodies is further explained below.

Diagram 1. Actors and instruments involved in the ESS Vision 2020 implementation



The roles and responsibilities of the various actors are not limited to the project execution phase; the deployment of the project results by the Member States constitutes a key role for them in contributing to the implementation of the ESS Vision 2020. In this phase, the NSIs (and ONAs, if appropriate) perform planning, development and monitoring tasks at the national level and incur the related costs. Depending on the nature of the project deliverables and on the agreements reached at the ESS level, the deployment of project results can be mandatory or voluntary.

The current situation regarding the concrete instruments (except procurements) and bodies involved in the implementation of the ESS Vision 2020 at the level of projects and horizontal frameworks are presented in the Annex. It does not contain portfolio level bodies (ESSC, VIG, VIN) which are common for all projects and horizontal frameworks.

Moreover, in order to prepare and approve any relevant decisions reserved for the Commission, an internal governance structure exists in Eurostat at project and portfolio level, involving in particular the Director General, the Board of Directors (DM), a portfolio-level

coordination group chaired by Eurostat's Deputy Director-General and project-level internal steering committees. This structure ensures good coordination across Eurostat and provides an internal consultation cascade for decisions to be taken and documents to be consulted with ESS bodies. Besides, project owners (at Director level), project managers and Portfolio Management Bureau (PMB), which all are part of Eurostat, have both internal and external roles as they work closely with Member States at different levels within the portfolio and project management.

3.1. Project level: ESS.VIPs

The existing governance structure at project level is not equal across the portfolio but tailored to the needs of each project. The project implementation takes place in close cooperation between Eurostat and the Member States and there are responsibilities on both sides for the development and deployment of the deliverables. All ESS.VIPs have a project manager and a project owner, both within Eurostat. However, the setup on the ESS side might vary between the projects (existence of a TF or not etc.), thus the distribution of work at the ESS technical level is different across the portfolio.

Project management by Eurostat

The project manager, a Eurostat expert, manages the project on a daily basis and is responsible for the qualitative product delivery according to the agreed conditions and constraints, e.g. the allocated resources. In this sense the role and responsibilities of the project manager do not differ substantially from the corresponding role of any project manager for Commission projects. His/her role is for example to propose and execute the project plans; ensure that project objectives are achieved with the required quality, time and cost objectives, and take preventive or corrective measures where necessary; monitor the development of outputs, e.g. by closely following the work performed by the relevant ESSnets, task forces and contractors; evaluate and compare project deliverables to what was planned and report project progress accordingly to the project owner, the project steering group and the relevant Directors' Group; perform risk management for project related risks; escalate unresolvable project issues to the project owner; prepare all key management milestone artefacts (Project Handbook, Project Management Plan, Business Implementation Plan, etc.).

The project manager also has responsibility to help Member States understand the benefits of the ESS.VIPs and work with them to maximise the deployment, or implementation of the project deliverables into their national statistical systems.

The project owner, a Eurostat's director, is the key project decision maker accountable for the project success. His/her role is in particular to set business objectives and define the Business Case for the project; mobilise the necessary resources for the project in accordance to the budget; be the project champion promoting the success of the project; provide a link between the project, the (sectorial) business community and decision-making bodies; provide leadership and strategic direction to the project manager; own the project risks and assure proper project outcomes in line with business objectives and priorities; monitor project progress regularly; coordinate resolution of issues and conflicts; ensure that the project

outcome meets the business expectations and agreed objectives; approve plan deviations, scope changes with high project impact; approve and sign off key management milestone artefacts.

Financial instruments: Procurements and grants

The budget available to an ESS.VIP by the Commission (Eurostat) can be used according to the financial instruments of the EU Financial Regulation.

In case of procurements a specific part of work is contracted to an external entity via a public tender. The contractor is paid for delivering the agreed work. Eurostat is responsible for defining the needs, planning, monitoring of the execution of the contract, assessment of deliverables and remunerating the contractor. Eurostat owns the deliverables.

Grants are used as an instrument to finance the development work within an ESS.VIP. Individual grants can be awarded to NSIs and ONAs, e.g. if they want to make a feasibility study or concrete adaptations in their national production system which are in the interest of the ESS (and the EU) as a whole.

Multi-beneficiary grant agreements can be used to finance ESSnets, which are collaborative networks² aiming at jointly attaining results of common interest to the ESS. Experience shows that ESSnets bring best results where the number of partners interested in bringing the work forward together in this form is relatively limited. Almost all ESS.VIPs include one or more ESSnets as means to reach the project objectives. ESSnets are therefore financed by multi-beneficiary grant agreements between Eurostat and the co-beneficiaries (the participating ESS partners). The work programme of an ESSnet is based on the proposal submitted by the ESSnet consortium in response to Eurostat's invitation to submit proposals. The co-partners are jointly responsible for carrying out the action in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement. A coordinator (one of the participating partners) nominated in each ESSnet organises its work and eventually redistributes, according to a pre-agreed key, the financial resources granted by the Commission to the ESSnet consortium.

As ESSnets are based on grants and coordinated by a Member State (ESSnet coordinator), Eurostat is not involved in the daily work and the development of the results. The role of Eurostat's project manager in the execution phase is rather to monitor ESSnet's work, give feedback on its progress and evaluate whether the outputs are consistent with the initial proposal and the signed grant agreement. Therefore, Eurostat should be regularly informed by the ESSnet coordinator on the progress achieved, as well as on any issues encountered, in order to prevent possible delays and deviations from the agreed scope of work. Any regular and active contribution of the project manager to the ESSnet's work could possibly create a conflict of interest as it would be for the same person to eventually evaluate the ESSnet results and give green light to grant payments.

Another form of cooperation which can be financed on the basis of a multi-beneficiary grant agreement is the Centre of Excellence. The rules applying to running a CoEs are very similar to those applicable to ESSnets. The main difference is the purpose. While ESSnets aim at

² Article 15 of Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics. Note: ESSnets and Centres of Excellence can also be applied outside the area of implementation of ESS Vision 2020.

developing some new common or shareable solution, CoEs are designed to support the implementation and ensure sustainability of already developed ESS products or methodologies by providing helpdesk, training and maintenance functions to the ESS partners. While an ESSnet is limited in time as a project or part thereof, services of a CoE are expected to be continuous.

ESS task forces

Another way to deliver on the project is to invite experts from different Member States to work in a task force under Eurostat's leadership. Task forces as such do not involve other financing by the Commission than reimbursement of the participants' travel expenses according to the limits of Commission financial rules.

ESSnets and task forces potentially involve the same participants, i.e. national subject-matter experts. Task forces are not designed to oversee ESSnets. The two of them can rather be perceived either as alternative or complementary forms of cooperation. The choice between an ESSnet and a task force needs to be made by Eurostat depending on the resources and scope of work. If both an ESSnet and a task force are created, the scope of work may be divided between them without any overlaps, but the task force could also provide a platform to discuss methodological directions of ESSnet's work with non-participating Member States. Task forces also offer to ESSnets the opportunity to pre-consult, via the Eurostat project manager, their intermediate and final results in a wider circle of potential beneficiaries, thus maximising the eventual practical application of the results.

Project steering groups

Project steering groups chaired by Eurostat involve a number of Member States that follow closely ESS.VIPs to ensure that they bring the expected value in the common interest of the ESS as a whole. In this way, Member States provide their views regarding the project content and advise Eurostat on the results achieved. At project owner's request, they issue recommendations on project continuation, based on the project's Business Case and progress reported, and give opinion on project plan deviations and scope changes with high project impact. Moreover, they are consulted on the draft project end report. Finally, they are expected to promote the successful execution of the project and help keep the project focused towards its objectives.

It is important for the implementation of the ESS Vision 2020 to ensure that the results of development work at expert level, be it within an ESSnet or a task force, should not only be properly scrutinised and approved by the project manager, but also eventually implemented (deployed) by other Member States. Project steering groups play an important role in ensuring that the project outcomes correspond to Member States' needs and circumstances. They advise Eurostat project managers on the project deliverables, while the latter retain the responsibility for the final evaluation of all project results.

Given the strategic orientation of project steering groups they should preferably include national representatives at middle or senior management level, while task forces and ESSnets are expert level groups.

Based on the experience gained in the more advanced ESS.VIPs, the VIG on 13 July 2015 recommended that all ESS.VIPs should on principle have a project steering group.

3.2. Sectorial strategic level: Directors' groups

In the ESS governance, Directors' Groups provide strategic support and advice to Eurostat in all matters pertaining to the developments in their specific statistical domain. This includes aspects of the ESS Vision 2020 implementation and ESS.VIPs which are relevant for the respective group. Therefore, Directors' Groups are consulted on business cases of ESS.VIPs and are regularly informed about the progress achieved.

The specific role of Directors' Groups as regards the ESS Vision 2020 includes regular information on the progress achieved on the ESS.VIPs, supporting frameworks and other Vision related initiatives and, at Eurostat's request, to provide opinions on key deliverables such as standards, tools and recommendations. The consultation with the Directors' Group aims at confirming with all Member States the quality and applicability of project deliverables, and ensures that the variety of circumstances and specificities of national statistical systems are taken into account. This process is crucially important for achieving the support and buy-in among Member States on implementing the results of the project before the deployment stage.

Moreover, Directors' Groups may propose new project ideas and are consulted on business cases of the relevant new projects (excluding the budget part) and whenever an opinion of all Member States is needed and the project steering group does not offer this possibility.

All ESS.VIPs except BIGD and DIGICOM are assigned to a sectorial Directors' Group. The VIG agreed that due to their cross-sectorial nature no single Directors' Group can be attributed to those two projects, so that the VIG will, on a temporary basis, fulfil the corresponding role for them.

3.3. Portfolio level: ESS Vision 2020 portfolio

ESS Committee and Partnership Group

The ESSC, comprising the NSIs' top managers, is the owner of the ESS Vision 2020. It performs high-level monitoring of the entire portfolio of projects implementing the Vision, horizontal frameworks supporting the Vision implementation and other modernisation initiatives in the ESS. The Committee provides strategic and professional guidance on all Vision related matters. In particular, it regularly discusses the progress on ESS Vision 2020 implementation; reviews strategic risks to the implementation of the Vision as a whole and the respective mitigation actions; endorses new projects' business cases; and provides Member States' appraisal of ESS.VIPs' final results, in particular with regard to their eventual implementation (deployment) at national level.

The Partnership Group prepares ESSC meetings. Thus, it is consulted on key documents being prepared for ESSC discussions. The PG is also regularly informed about the progress achieved in the ESS Vision 2020 implementation.

Vision Implementation Group (VIG) and Vision Implementation Network (VIN)

The VIG reviews, on behalf of the ESSC, and performs regular strategic monitoring of ESS Vision 2020 implementation, advises Eurostat and the ESSC, and prepares recommendations for the latter's Vision-related opinions.

The VIG is designed to work in an agile way. It consists of a maximum of 10 members from different NSIs, mostly at the Deputy Director-General or Director level, and the Deputy Director-General of Eurostat as Chair. One of the national members is the Deputy Chair.

The VIG supports Eurostat in managing the portfolio according to Commission rules and to the established management methodologies. It discusses current developments around the ESS Vision 2020 portfolio and considers the relevant aspects of portfolio management, e.g. design of monitoring processes, prioritisation and revision of the portfolio, maximisation of deployment benefits, risk assessment, communication etc. Furthermore, it ensures strategic coordination of deliverables and dependencies of all projects included in the portfolio, the supporting frameworks and other modernisation initiatives in the ESS.

While the VIG has a clear focus on the portfolio, it also reviews on a regular basis the progress achieved in the individual projects with a view to identifying and early addressing issues that might have an impact on the achievement of Vision objectives. In particular, major changes to the project content should be consulted with the VIG prior to the decision to be taken by the project owner. Moreover, the project owner may choose to consult the VIG on all issues (except for budget matters and contractual relationships between Member States and the Commission) which obstruct further progress in a project where no consensus could be reached within the project steering group. Finally, the VIG is consulted on the business cases of new projects and on final results (project end reports) of finalised ESS.VIPs.

The VIG pays particular attention to a good communication of the objectives and results of ESS.VIPs and their portfolio as a whole. Therefore, the Group works closely with Eurostat to regularly inform the ESSC about the progress achieved. It also communicates with the VIN, which is a network of senior managers in NSIs established to ensure two-way communication between Eurostat and Member States at strategic level on all Vision related matters. The VIN channels to all NSIs information about the ESS Vision 2020 implementation progress and keeps them informed about the discussions and work taking place within the VIG. VIN members are expected to "promote" the ESS Vision 2020 in their respective offices and be well informed about all relevant internal developments. Moreover, the VIG consults the VIN on all strategic matters discussed whenever concrete input is needed from all Member States before delivering ESS-wide analyses and recommendations to the ESSC.

Annex

Table 1. Existing governance bodies of ESS.VIPs and horizontal frameworks (as on 29 June 2016)

	Eurostat:		ESS:			
Projects: <i>(in italics if finalised)</i>	Project manager	Project owner	Project Task Force	ESSnets/CoE	Directors' Group	Project steering group
SIMSTAT	<i>Mushtaq Hussain</i>	<i>ESTAT Dir. G</i>	<i>SIMSTAT TF</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>BSDG</i>	<i>SIMSTAT SC</i>
REDESIGN	Karo Nuortila	ESTAT Dir. G	No	No	BSDG	No
Validation	<i>Luca Gramaglia</i>	<i>ESTAT Dir. E</i>	<i>TF ESS.VIP Validation</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>DIME/ITDG</i>	<i>No</i>
ESBRs	Ioannis Xirouchakis	ESTAT Dir. G	No	Yes	BSDG	ESBRs SG
ADMIN	Sorina Vâju	ESTAT Dir. F	Preparatory group, several TFs	Yes	DIME, DSS	ADMIN SG
ESDEN	Javier Manso Del Valle	ESTAT Dir. B	No	<i>planned</i>	ITDG	ESDEN SG
SERV	Pierre Peyronnel	ESTAT Dir. B	TF "shared SERVICES"	Yes	ITDG	SERV SG
BIGD	Albrecht Wirthmann	ESTAT DDG	ESS TF Big Data	Yes	(VIG)	<i>planned</i>
DIGICOM	Christine Kormann-Fromageau	ESTAT Dir. B	ESS TF DIGICOM TF Data Visualisation and Infographics TF Statistics Explained	<i>planned</i>	(VIG)	SG DIGICOM
<hr/>						
Horizontal frameworks:	Responsible person	Responsible Director	Task Force	ESSnets	Directors' Group	Steering group
QUALity	Zsuzsanna Kovacs	ESTAT Dir. D	TF QUAL	<i>No</i>	DIME	No
Enterprise Architecture	Jean-Marc Museux	ESTAT Dir. B	No (ESS TF EA ended)	<i>No</i>	DIME/ITDG	informal group of EA experts
Cooperation models	Beatriz Fernandez	ESTAT Dir. A	RDG TF CM	<i>No</i>	RDG	No