

12 July 2023

CMFB opinion on the Exchange of confidential statistical information (ECI) on European Statistics for statistical purposes between the ESS and the ESCB

Pursuant to Article 4 of Council Decision 2006/856/EC¹, the CMFB “may express opinions on its own initiative on any questions relating to those statistics that are of common concern to the Commission and national statistical authorities (ESS), on the one hand, and the ECB and national central banks (ESCB), on the other. In the execution of its tasks, the Committee shall give its views to all interested parties”.

This opinion has been issued at the request of the CMFB and has been unanimously adopted by the Committee at its meeting on 29 June 2023, following the Procedure for the expression on non-Excessive Deficit Procedure Opinion as adopted by the CMFB via written procedure on 30 August 2016 ([link](#)).

1. Background

The community of European official statisticians understands the value of exchanging confidential statistical information (ECI) for the efficient development, production, dissemination and increase of the quality of European Statistics². In the CMFB context, the scope of ECI covers company data (i.e., not individual personal data). The legal and operational cooperation for the ECI between (and within) ESS and ESCB statistical authorities has been improving over the last decades to attain a robust setup in terms of legal certainty and information technology (IT) for safe environments supporting the exchange. These are pre-conditions for ECI to occur in a controlled manner so that the risks of unlawful disclosure of confidential information are minimised and the benefits of synergies through collaboration between statistical authorities of official statistics are maximised.

¹ 2006/856/EC: Council Decision of 13 November 2006 establishing a committee on monetary, financial and balance of payments statistics (Codified version) *OJ L 332, 30.11.2006, p. 21-23*

² As defined in Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2009 on European statistics and the Council Regulation (EC) No 2533 of 23 November 1988 concerning the collection of statistical information by the European Central Bank.

Two CMFB Task Forces investigated the status and way forward of the ECI between the ESS and the ESCB:

- Task Force (TF) ECI I mainly took stock of prior experiences in the ECI and of international work existing around the issue, explored which confidential statistical information held in the ESS/ESCB would be beneficial to share, exchanged examples of good practices, and derived recommendations in this regard;
- TF ECI II followed up on TF ECI I report, investigated the legal framework of ECI of European Statistics for statistical purposes, developed recommendations for amending the current EU legal framework and, additionally, other suggestions to enhance ECI between ESS and ESCB within the current legal framework.

Both reports are published on the CMFB website ([link](#)).

According to the CMFB Work Programme for 2023-2024, as adopted by the European Statistical Forum, the results of the CMFB work on ECI shall be expressed in the form of a CMFB opinion.

The following opinion is based on the above-mentioned reports of the TF ECI I + II, the discussions at CMFB plenary meetings and the well-established and proofed CMFB consultation procedure.

2. Opinion

(1) The CMFB acknowledges the key importance of the exchange of confidential statistical information (ECI) for ongoing and future fit for purpose production of macroeconomic European Statistics, which themselves support national and EU policies, administrative procedures, research as well as other official country and EU tasks. The work of the before mentioned CMFB Task Forces clearly indicates that in our increasingly digitalised and globalised economies, official statistical institutions in the EU have to rely even more than so far on the exchange of confidential statistical information when developing macroeconomic European Statistics. The importance of an adequate ECI between the ESS and ESCB is also demonstrated by the CMFB work on asymmetries and inconsistencies. The FDI-Network³ provides a good example on the fruitfulness of the ECI for reducing asymmetries between country data.

(2) Based on these experiences, the CMFB advises the European institutions to further broaden and facilitate the ECI between the members of the ESS and the ESCB for well justified statistical purposes. Extended ECI would lower the burden of compiling high quality official macroeconomic statistics and achieve better statistical outcomes from the statistical

³ <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/bop/2014/pdf/14-20.pdf>

development, production, dissemination and data quality activities without jeopardising data safety and privacy.

(3) The legal context is relevant in this regard. Therefore, the CMFB asks all Institutions involved in reviewing existing and developing new legal texts concerning European Statistics to take into account well justified needs for further broadening the ECI when deciding upon the priorities for developing, producing, disseminating macroeconomic European Statistics and for their quality improvements – based on the criteria of the European Code of Practice of the ESS ([link](#)) and the Public Commitment of the ESCB ([link](#)), as well as taking into account the work of UNECE⁴ and the G20 Data Gaps initiative⁵.

(4) Finally, the CMFB calls for joint actions of the ESS and ESCB in the further promotion and practical implementation of the ECI for statistical purposes. The TF ECI reports, as well several good practices in various EU countries provide constructive ideas that may help fostering the ECI.

⁴ <https://unece.org/statistics/publications/guide-sharing-economic-data-official-statistics>

⁵ <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Seminars/Conferences/g20-data-gaps-initiative>