

Jacques Fournier: 25 years of CMFB, Frankfurt, 27 January 2016

Dear Presidents, dear Robert, dear Members,

It's a privilege and an honour to chair the CMFB for its 25th anniversary.

25 years old... many psychologists now consider that adolescence effectively runs up until the age of 25...so tonight we can be praised for the passage of the CMFB for adulthood! And we owe a debt of gratitude to all former Presidents who actively nurtured the growth and the development of the Committee. They laid the foundations for the success of European statistics.

Indeed, I have the privilege to guest some of the former Presidents tonight, namely Hans-Peter, Steven and Wolfgang, and certainly not to be forgotten Joao, Joe and Peter who are still very active in the CMFB life, and they will agree with me when I say that it was notan easy task. For this, let me warmly thank all of them. We are also honoured to share our anniversary with Robert Heath; Robert, thank you for your very kind words that express the support that the IMF, as also the BIS and the OECD, always brought to the CMFB.

I'm also very grateful to the ECB for hosting the dinner and for Eurostat to share this friendly moment together.

My warmest thanks will however be to all of you, to the members of the CMFB. You are those who really allow this Committee to pursue its numerous tasks. Having in mind the excellent reports and propositions that we will examine as of tomorrow morning, I wish to say loud and clear that all of you can be very proud of the work that you have done as CMFB members. Almost all the areas of economic and financial statistics are concerned: quality, transparency, identifiers, implementation of international standards, reconciliation between different statistical sets, harmonization of revision policies, reduction in asymmetries, big data opportunities, and contribution to the European regulation.

Why has the CMFB been so active and I would say successful in its endeavours? As in private life, an Anniversary is a good occasion to cheer up but also to take some distance from the day-to-day life, and to reflect upon it, before moving ahead with even more energy.

To say the obvious, a very good reason can be found not far away from this very table. I mean the quality of all members, but also of the members of the Executive Body...I mean also an excellent secretariat: Gabor, Johan, Adeline you deserve strong compliments indeed for your efficiency in all times, smooth or hard.

There are 3 more structural causes:

1. The CMFB is deeply rooted in European history
2. The CMFB is achieving both unity and respect of diversity
3. The CMFB is operational and looking forward.

1. The CMFB is deeply rooted in European history

Truth be told, the CMFB has a quite interesting history, which is singular in many aspects.

First of all its creation, in 1991, by the Council, need I recall these early times?

1991... one year before the Maastricht Treaty; 7 years before the ECB is created and ... taking my first hat of supervisor, I have to recognize this was 23 years before the creation of the banking union!

Over the past 25 years later, as probably every European institution, the CMFB has been sometimes criticized, put into question, but eventually, after a European tour of the so-called groupe de reflexion, all NSIs and NCBs formally confirmed their willingness to support and contribute to the CMFB action in signing a formal commitment in the April 2013 MoU. The CMFB role is deeply anchored in the EU law, for EDP issues (recast Regulation 479/2009, for Balance of Payment, Monetary and Financial Statistics Council Decision of 13 November 2006, recently again in the draft recast Regulation on BOP 184/2005). The CMFB is therefore even more than yesterday a core European body solidly anchored in the European history and law.

2. The CMFB is achieving both unity and respect of diversity

However, the CMFB is more than a Body, it is a concept. The concept is to achieve across Europe, in the statistical field, both unity and respect of diversity. And as we all know, concepts are very resilient.

Unity and cooperation: there are 2 statistical systems with their identity and organization. On the one hand, each central bank had developed its own statistics to support their actions in monetary policy, financial stability and now banking supervision; on the other hand,

Eurostat in collaboration with the national statistical institutes were given the mission to produce European statistics in particular in the view to contributing to economic policy.

However, domains and concerns largely interact and to say the obvious must be developed in a consistent and orderly manner. The European Council repeatedly underlined that the two statistical systems must work together as on Statistics for the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure and structural statistics it was said that *“The Council WELCOMES the close cooperation of the ESS and the ESCB, [...], in ensuring the reliability of the statistics underlying the MIP [...]and their comparability, WELCOMES the production of the first ESS-ESCB quality report on MIP statistics and ENCOURAGES the two statistical systems to give high priority to taking forward this programme”* . At the national level, the same need to cooperate and to work in synergy exists. Unity is crucial not only because it is requested by the highest European authorities, but because it is key for the quality of European statistics.

The CMFB symbolises unity by its composition: members of the ESS and of the ESCB on an equal footing, rotating chairmanship between the two systems, equal representation in the Executive Body, each and every task is carried out under the joint sponsorship of two Executive members from the two constituencies. It is also unity in its work, as a place where NSIs and NCBs can work together to forge together a unique view on statistical issues.

But the CMFB is also protecting diversity, between the European and the national views, within countries themselves, also between Eurostat and the ECB if ever case occurs.

The gist of the CMFB is to find the right balance between those two objectives, unity and diversity. It could be called in broader terms how to behave as a system: interacting, working together on an equal footing, harmonizing but at the same time being respectful of each other. In even broader terms, it could be called European federalism, i.e a governance that makes Europe at the same time beneficial to all its components and moving ahead in synergy. European federalism is not only a dream; it is also a construction that can be achieved.

3. The CMFB is operational and forward-looking

The CMFB is not only a fair concept, it has also to deliver, and contribute therefore to the ESS and the ESCB statistical tasks. To recall, the CMFB is focusing on cross-cutting issues, to quote the border definition that has been fixed in the MoU between the CMFB and the ESS and the ESCB structures.

Deliver. It has done so in the past and continues to do so actively. I would here cite a few numbers: the CMFB has expressed more than 30 opinions for more than 15 years, on various issues including of course EDP. This year, we will publish at least one new Opinion, on a BOP/business statistics issue. This year, we have 8 substructures in action on 15 different issues. The diversity of deliverables is impressive, let me just outline 4 themes, 2 names and 2 verbs:

- Quality: thanks to Joe Grice in particular, the CMFB has set up, with the active concur of Eurostat and the ECB, new quality reports on the statistics that contribute to the macro imbalances indicators. It is a real progress.
- Macro-economy: here I would quote in particular Balance of Payment statistics: in this crucial domain for understanding globalisation, but also particularly difficult area from a technical standpoint –all those who actually compile BOP at the national level will agree with me-, the CMFB has launched a number of workstreams for improving the knowledge of cross-border flows.
- Thinking ahead: the CMFB is looking ahead, promoting concrete ways to capture a rapidly changing environment in statistics, for instance via credit cards and mobile phones for measuring travels and tourism, or a common global identifier such as the LEI, a promising tool, to be able to aggregate and analyse granular data on legal entities.
- Promoting international standards: the CMFB is actively working, under the moral authority of the IMF, the FSB and the OECD, to promote international standards such as SDDS+ and monitor the progress made in Europe, along with the ECB and Eurostat.

This mix between ambitions and actions is the “raison d’être” of the CMFB. On such a basis, the CMFB has found its role in the European landscape, at the core of European statistics.

When the CMFB is one o four...

Let me first propose a toast for the CMFB!

Thank you for your attention.