

Detailed main conclusions and list of actions of CMFB meeting

held in Luxembourg on 4 and 5 July 2016

(Final – 20 September 2016)

1. OPENING

- (1) The Vice-Chair welcomed participants and thanked Eurostat for hosting the meeting in Luxembourg. Eurostat proceeded with housekeeping announcements.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (CHAIR)

- (2) The agenda was adopted without comments.

3. PROPOSAL FOR A GUIDELINE REGARDING OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY THE CMFB PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 4 OF COUNCIL DECISION 2006/856/CE (CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR)

A. PRESENTATION

- (3) The Chair briefed the Committee on the background of the proposal. The CMFB EDP rules of procedures were clear, though rules for other non-EDP consultations were restricted to Article 6 of the CMFB Rules of Procedure of 15 June 2004. The proposition was to further specify such rules; EDP rules would remain intact.
- (4) The Chair explained the decision rules of the proposed rules of procedure. While consensus was the preferred way of working in the CMFB, the Committee had to preserve its ability to issue opinions that are procedurally sound on controversial issues as well. Hence, the Chair should have the possibility for triggering a vote in the case of non-EDP opinions as well, according to the same voting rules as for EDP consultations, i.e. abstentions are not taken into account, a no-opinion option should always be offered and quorum of 50% of participation plus one should be met.

B. DISCUSSION

- (5) ECB DG-S expressed support for the proposal and referred to the position of the legal services of the Commission and ECB, on which basis both Eurostat and the ECB agreed on the legal obligation to cooperate closely, according to Article 4(3) of the TEU and between the ESS and the ESCB according to Regulation 2533/98 and Regulation (EC) No 223/2009.
- (6) Eurostat added that criteria to base consultations on non-EDP rules of procedures should be developed. The Chair agreed and added that any request in the context of Council Regulation (EC) 479/2009 would be treated in an EDP context.
- (7) A member welcomed the draft decision tree and underlined the importance of involving the entire Committee (i.e. beyond its Executive Body) in making the CMFB opinions in order to reach a representative consensus.

C. CONCLUSION

- (8) The Chair concluded that
- the outline of the proposed rules of procedure for non-EDP consultations was, in principle, agreed at the meeting;

- the formal consultation of the CMFB on a full formal text would take place by end-August 2016.

4. EXCESSIVE DEFICIT PROCEDURE (EUROSTAT)

A. PRESENTATION

- (9) Eurostat outlined the main EDP activities that took place over the preceding six months, including an oral debriefing on the audit carried out by the European Court of Auditors on EDP. The data published on 21 April contained three reservations and Eurostat made no amendments to the figures.
- (10) On 31 March 2016, Eurostat published a guidance note on the statistical implications of the new European resolution legislation. Eurostat also published a clarification note on the statistical treatment of PPP contracts on 4 March 2016 (together with the revised MGDD).
- (11) The EDP audit lasted over two years and the final report was published on 19 April 2016 ([link](#)). The Eurostat presentation touched upon the controlling of collection system, direct verifications and transparency. In the future, all advice provided to MSs will be made public.

B. DISCUSSION

- (12) Members welcomed the report, appreciated the efforts made by Eurostat when performing this exercise on a regular basis and the additional information made available. A Member called for an approach similar to that of GNI missions, i.e. representatives of other MSs joining EDP missions. Suggestions were made to explain the role of the CMFB in the report, for instance in the context of the treatment of PPPs, but in general prospective agendas would help the CMFB to prioritise its work programme. A more forward looking document, as was the case in the past, could serve this purpose.
- (13) Eurostat thanked for the comments. As per the observers on EDP visits, Eurostat would consider this issue during internal reflections. The CMFB will be informed on the outcomes of the joint work with the EIB on PPPs.

C. CONCLUSION

- (14) The Chair concluded that
 - a document with a forward-looking character would be useful to the CMFB in order to prioritize its actions;
 - Eurostat was kindly invited to involve the CMFB in the PPP discussion.

5. WP ITEM 1 – ENSURING THE QUALITY OF STATISTICS UNDERPINNING THE MACROECONOMIC IMBALANCE PROCEDURE SCOREBOARD (SPONSORED BY KIRSTEN WISMER AND EMIL DIMITROV)

5.1. ESS-ESCB Quality Assessment Report on the statistics underlying the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (level 1): draft report (Eurostat/ECB DG-S)

- (15) ECB DG-S and Eurostat underlined the constructive cooperation during the drafting of the report. The CMFB consultation was in progress with a deadline of 29 July 2016 and the document would form part of the statistical package for the EFC in autumn.
- (16) Members welcomed the report. Some called for more references to the reservations of ESA 1995 / GNI. The section of Unit Labour Costs and the Labour Force Survey may somewhat be strengthened. The mentioning of draft agreements should be handled with care. The multi-use of external statistics could also be made more pronounced.
- (17) Eurostat responded that the suggestion should also be sent during the written procedure and would be followed-up.

5.2. Alignment of level 2 reports on BOP/IIP: outline (ECB DG-S/Eurostat)

A. PRESENTATION

- (18) ECB DG-S presented the draft structure of level 2 reports that was prepared jointly with Eurostat. The level 2 report focuses on the statistical output, but it should encompass all quality dimensions. The main text should rely as much as possible on “traffic-light type” indicators (green, yellow or red). The report should assess the developments over two overlapping periods of three years, e.g. 13Q3 – 16Q2 versus 12Q3 – 15Q2. A selected set of indicators would be assessed for a longer period of time (10 years) to cater for the MIP requirements. The proposed structure would be in line with the recommendations of the CMFB Technical Group on a Generic template for national reports on statistics underlying the MIP. It would include a section highlighting the outstanding country recommendations, their priority and the target completion date, which may also serve as a summary for the level 1 report. The institutions should run a harmonised set of indicators on the same data vintage for all the countries (presented in annexes).
- (19) Eurostat added that one report per domain with common messages would increase the efficiency of communication concerning the quality of statistics and reduce burden on MS. Still, two separate quality reports are required for legal reasons.

B. DISCUSSION

- (20) The Chair thanked Eurostat and ECB DG-S for the presentation, enquired about the timeline and opened the floor for comments.
- (21) Participants welcomed the progress made and, in particular, the idea of a single quality assessment report per statistical domain. The traffic light system seemed a rather static approach for some, not necessarily reflecting the pace of progress. Underlying thresholds and highly automatized classifications should be applied with care and remain realistic. Important errors and omissions (E&O) could lead to vague interpretation of the traffic light system and additional explanations might become necessary, also covering the impact of E&O on the output. In addition, the quality of certain details flagged red may not necessarily impact the quality of totals. The use of common reference databases (e.g. ECB’s CSDB) may have an impact on the output quality and this could also be reflected in the assessment. Several Members suggested the establishment of a small task force to develop the draft report.
- (22) ECB DG-S added that a lot of emphasis was put on the commonalities between the two systems, even if the approval processes and governance structures were different. Classification in a traffic light system could also depend on the purpose and the task force should ideally reflect on this. The TF might need to take into account coordination aspects in addition to technicalities – country recommendations are generally a sensitive area. Furthermore, the ESS Code of Practice and ESCB Public Commitment were aligned and could be referred to by the structure of level 2 reports. Balance of payments and financial accounts should be the two domains to start with.
- (23) Eurostat recalled that some flexibility could be necessary with regard to the thresholds, though traffic light systems had already been employed for complex quality assessments. The decision should be made on an indicator-by-indicator basis. Eurostat further referred to the issue of asymmetries that concern more than one MS. In these cases, the difference might need to be addressed bilaterally. Eurostat would work with the planned TF to address this point. This substructure should start its work as soon as possible so as to keep up with the autumn 2017 production round of quality reports, if feasible.

C. CONCLUSION

- (24) The Chair thanked for the discussion and concluded that
- the establishment of a small Task Force was welcomed to work on a gradual common alignment of the structure and content of the quality reports for BOP statistics and later expand to other areas shared by ESS and ESCB;

- the proposed timeline was supported, as it was the 'traffic light' approach (although with some caveats);
 - an update to the CMFB by the TF at next plenary on 2 February 2017 was necessary.
- (25) Representatives from the Bank of Spain, Bundesbank, CBS and ISTAT expressed their interest to participate in a corresponding task force.

5.3. ESA 2010 Quality assessment - level 2 (Eurostat)

A. PRESENTATION

- (26) Eurostat presented a new quality assessment framework for ESA 2010, covering (i) the legal basis for ESA 2010 quality reporting; (ii) ESA 2010 quality reports; (iii) the relationship with MIP; and (iv) the way ahead.
- (27) The European Parliament and Council should receive a report every five years, first in 2018 and thereafter in 2023.
- (28) The annual Eurostat report (level 2) will cover the whole ESA 2010 data quality; focus both on country data and European aggregates, and base itself on country reports and other available information.
- (29) A single annual report per country (level 3) covering all ESA 2010 tables/domains and all ESS quality criteria should be aimed at. A mix of quantitative (13) and qualitative indicators should be produced, starting with a test exercise in 2017. Eurostat would strive to prefill the report with factual information to the extent possible. The gradual implementation anticipates that all ESA 2010 derogations expire in 2021.
- (30) A certain overlap could arise as regards the financial accounts level 3 quality reports (level 3). However, the ESA 2010 reports will only be introduced gradually therefore FA reports should be maintained for the time being. Both reports should be developed with a view to their future alignment or integration, to be assessed in 2020.

B. DISCUSSION

- (31) The Committee welcomed the new quality assessment framework for ESA 2010.
- (32) A Member inquired if this move would have an impact on the draft MIP regulation. Eurostat responded that the legal basis was merely the ESA 2010 regulation and the foreseen implementing legal act.
- (33) Some Members requested to involve, already from an early stage, NCBs via the CMFB so that the integration of quality reports concerning financial accounts and ESA 2010 would be possible. A mentioning of the draft ESS-ESCB MoU was requested as well. The reporting burden on NSIs should ideally be reduced with increased use of appropriate IT solutions.
- (34) Eurostat added that an annual exercise fitted better into the MIP quality framework than one with lower frequency, and that technical tools would be employed, for instance, to the pre-filling of national reports with corresponding facts. Eurostat would take into account existing reports and available information to the maximum extent possible – duplication should remain way below the level observed earlier in the area of balance of payments and financial accounts statistics.

C. CONCLUSION

- (35) The Chair thanked for the discussion and concluded that
- the ESA 2010 quality assessment was welcomed;
 - the ECB DG-S and Eurostat expressed their willingness to cooperate in the integration and consolidation process of domain-specific quality reports for balance of payments and financial/national accounts statistics;
 - the CMFB will be informed about the developments for the ESA 2010 report.

5.4. Publication of level 3 reports: state of play (Sponsors)

- (36) The Chair recalled the state of play concerning the publication of level 3 reports, BoP and FA reports were being published, while the HPI and LFS reports were being produced for the first time.
- (37) The Chair urged Member States to fill-in the templates and encourages their publication, which nevertheless remained at the discretion of Member States. The publication of LFS and HPI level 3 reports was encouraged as well.

6. WP ITEM 2 – GLOBALISATION: MONITORING AND PROMOTION OF INITIATIVES: UTILISATION OF THE LEGAL ENTITY IDENTIFIER IN STATISTICAL PRODUCTION (SPONSORED BY ALFREDO CRISTOBAL AND EMIL DIMITROV)

6.1. GLEIF Presentation (GLEIF CEO)

- (38) The Chair welcomed Stephan Wolf, CEO of the GLEIF. His presentation explained the role of the GLEIF, the origin and structure of the LEI, how to access LEI data, benefits of LEI adoption for users in the public sector, data quality issues and next steps concerning who is who and who owns whom (level 2 data).
- (39) A Member asked if branches would have an own LEI and concerning the rules regulating if an LEI is needed. Stephan Wolf responded that legal entities were not only corporates, but indeed any counterparty to a financial transaction, which category was much broader. International branches would also become eligible for a LEI. Another expressed some concerns on how to organize the interaction with other official sources, especially the business registers, and the process in case of inconsistencies. The authoritative registers to be used would also not be merely business registers. It was noted that the LEI project seemed to have had gone beyond the purpose of identification. Stephan Wolf replied that there was no ultimate source of information and entities should be verified against various sources. It was always the legal entity who owned and provided the information, which GLEIF was supposed to validate using available sources. The renewal period of the LEI was foreseen to be one year.

6.2. Technical Group on Business Unit Identifiers relevant for statistical production (Sponsors)

- (40) Sponsors presented the final report of the Technical Group, which included six recommendations.
- (41) Eurostat thanked for the presentation and expressed support for this work stream. The consolidation of recommendations with those of the HLG should be considered.

6.3. High level group on Business Registers (Sponsors)

A. PRESENTATION

- (42) Sponsors presented the final report on the follow-up on business registers and identification codes, which included nine recommendations.
- (43) The Chair thanked for the presentation and opened the floor for comments.

B. DISCUSSION

- (44) Members welcomed the report and recommendations. The potential of the LEI for statistics was emphasised by many, an action plan at the level of the CMFB was called for. Lifting the legal obstacles to help the proliferation of the LEI was likely to take some time. Consistency with methodological standards should be ensured when using LEI relationship information.
- (45) Members encouraged using non-confidential business register information for non-statistical purposes, which was crucial for banking supervision. Sharing part of this information also with reporting agents might be important so that they could cross-check their own enterprise

reference data. Certain economies were recompiling financial accounts based on administrative data (i.e. LEI) and this could bring improvements and contribute to the success of the initiative. The LEI could also contribute to capturing statistical units in a global context.

- (46) A member suggested the public communication of the recommendations, to express the support of the Committee. The CMFB should bring the relevant stakeholders together, i.e. the GLEIF, NSIs and NCBs and formulate a vision on the harmonisation of registers, including the role of the LEI. The HLG should integrate both sets of recommendations and develop a draft CMFB opinion.
- (47) ECB DG-S shared the positive attitude towards the recommendations. Besides a work plan, a communication seemed equally necessary – in the absence of these, the development of the LEI might rely only on requirements from the business users. The sharing of information from statistical business registers should not undermine the confidentiality of business registers.
- (48) Eurostat emphasised the coverage of the EGR (as a potential user of the LEI), covering now more than 61 000 enterprise groups and around 800 000 legal units.

C. CONCLUSION

- (49) The Chair concluded that the next steps for the High Level Group were to
 - draft an opinion of the CMFB based on the recommendations and
 - propose a draft action plan to implement the recommendations.

6.4. Stakeholder Group with the GLEIF (Chair)

- (50) The Chair debriefed the Committee on the Stakeholder Group meeting that took place in Paris on 20 May 2016. The main point was identification, which will become a key issue for data sharing of granular data on the global level. For non-financial corporates, further reflections are necessary.

7. WP ITEM 3 – GLOBALISATION: COORDINATION OF A CONSISTENT RESPONSE TO INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES SUCH AS SDDS PLUS (SPONSORED BY IRMTRAUD BEUERLEIN AND JOE MCNEILL)

7.1. Update on the G-20 DGI (Sponsors/ECB DG-S/Eurostat)

- (51) The ESS sponsor of the dossier debriefed the Committee on the G20 DGI-2, reminding that the initiative was relevant for all MSs as the EU itself was a G20 Member. Since the Global Conference of June 2016 a concrete action plan was available, to be implemented over a five-year horizon with specific deadlines and targets (including advanced or more ambitious targets as well). The key messages of the Conference would be reflected in the first progress report to be submitted in autumn to the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors. Linkages as regards the LEI, SDDS Plus and SDMX should be observed by the CMFB, as well as concrete works on DSDs. The research agenda consisted of shadow banking, distributional information and commercial property prices. Turning to SDDS Plus in particular, three more countries adhered to the standard (Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Japan) since the beginning of 2016.
- (52) The representative from the Deutsche Bundesbank announced that during the German G20 presidency in 2017, a workshop on sharing of granular data will be organised in Frankfurt 31 January – 1 February 2017.

7.2. Integrated Global Accounts (Eurostat)

- (53) Eurostat presented its work concerning the IGA project, which had the purpose to improve the statistics concerning global value chains, extended national accounts and integrated business functions and global registers.

- (54) ECB DG-S thanked for the concise overview and added that it was considering addressing the financial part of global production. Eurostat welcomed the possibility for cooperation.
- (55) The Chair thanked for the presentation and concluded that:
- the IGA presentation was welcomed; the ECB considered a similar approach for financial aspects of globalisation;
 - the CMFB encouraged Eurostat and ECB DG-S to cooperate; the issue was also on the agenda of the December 2016 ESF meeting.

8. WP ITEM 4 – IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL STANDARDS (ESA 2010 AND BPM6) AND REQUIRED CHANGES TO REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES, INCLUDING THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE EURO AREA INTEGRATED ACCOUNTS (SPONSORED BY ANDREA BRANDOLINI AND GERARD EDING)

8.1. Update on the work of the Task Force on the Harmonised Revision Policy (Sponsors)

A. PRESENTATION

- (56) Sponsors introduced the progress report. The CMFB policy of routine revisions was agreed upon in 2012, but some practical obstacles prevented its implementation in some MSs. In January 2016, CMFB agreed to mandate the CMFB TF HERP to continue working until the end of 2016, seeking close cooperation with DMES TF BRP which started its actual work at the beginning of the year. The prior discussions within the CMFB TF EHRP had confirmed the need to clarify borderline and consistency issues between routine and major revision practices and second, to await the outcome of the discussions on benchmark revisions to formulate a concrete proposal to the CMFB on routine revisions. The DMES TF BPR was expected to present its final report to the DMES by 16 December 2016. It was foreseen that the CMFB TF HERP would target its final report to the CMFB plenary in January 2017. Moreover, the impact of the EDP and GNI processes, which may exceed the maximum depth of the routine revision cycle recommended by the CMFB and the frequencies defined in benchmark revision framework should be also assessed and taken into consideration before concluding. Meanwhile, a Eurostat expert meeting on revisions for EDP/GFS took place twice, on 30 March and 25 May 2016 respectively, with a focus on the needs for revisions in EDP and GFS. ECB DG-S and Member States representatives participated in both meetings.

B. DISCUSSION

- (57) The Chair thanked for the comprehensive summary and opened the floor for comments. Member praised the clear division of labour and good cooperation between the CMFB and DMES task forces and encouraged the two groups to continue to work together. An intervention suggested to take into account the 2013 edition of the ESS guidelines on revision policy for PEEIs (or to provide reasoning in case this was not practical), as well as some revision issues GFS/EDP domain.
- (58) The sponsors responded that the ESS guideline would be considered during the work of the TF, such as the GFS/EDP relation.

C. CONCLUSION

- (59) The Chair concluded that
- the CMFB encouraged the DMES and CMFB task forces in the field of revisions to work together;
 - a report by the CMFB TF HERP will be presented at the CMFB plenary meeting of February 2017.

8.2. Euro Area Integrated Accounts – joint release policy (ECB DG-S/Eurostat)

A. PRESENTATION

- (60) Eurostat and ECB DG-S presented the progress report concerning the early release of the Euro Area Integrated Accounts. After the interim step of moving the first release from t+112 to t+102, up from mid-next year data is planned to be released at t+94. The decision should be based on a test of reliability of the release at t+94 vs t+102 at each new quarter's data release since 14Q4; and expectations of data quality improvements in the near term. The impact of revisions in the data for the latest period and in the full time series had been considerable, but was diminishing. Hence, both the TF QSA and the WG FA are in favour of releasing EAA at t+94 up from July 2017 (with data up to 17Q1).

B. DISCUSSION

- (61) Members welcomed the progress and encouraged the continuation of work. A comment inquired about the exact rationale behind the reliability assessment in relation to BoP, and encouraged ECB DG-S and Eurostat to include government data in the first release as well.
- (62) Eurostat responded that revisions to BoP occurring between t+94 and t+102 have affected the full EAA time series. Moreover, BoP revisions to earlier quarters impact data quality of the seasonally adjusted series including the latest quarter. ECB DG-S added that BoP had issues of revisions which had stabilised since then. The question of improving timeliness of EAA data with reference to BoP data could therefore be addressed.

C. CONCLUSION

- (63) The Chair concluded that the CMFB took note of the progress in the timely transmission and dissemination of national quarterly sector accounts and publication of EAA at t+94 starting in July 2017 (with data up to 17Q1).

9. ESSC CONCLUSIONS ON THE MODERNISATION OF INTRA-EU TRADE IN GOODS STATISTICS, INCLUDING MANDATORY DATA EXCHANGE (EUROSTAT)

A. PRESENTATION

- (64) The Chair invited Eurostat to present the item. The presentation outlined the background, result of the two ESS VIP project (SIMSTAT and REDESIGN), the decision of the ESSC and its consequences. The ESSC agreed on the key elements of the targeted system:
1. harmonised statistical output: monthly statistics for both flows, by products and partners, as currently required;
 2. multiple data sources: use of multiple data sources as far as strict minimum quality requirements are met;
 3. additional data source: Mandatory exchange micro-data on intra-EU exports and their voluntary use;
 4. innovative and flexible compilation methodologies: subject to strict quality requirements;
 5. modernisation through evaluation: foreseen in 3 to 5 years after entry into force of the relevant legislation.
- (65) The ESSC mandated technical experts (ITGS SG&BSDG) to:
- make suggestions for minimum quality requirements for statistics on both exports and imports;
 - quantify the overall response burden reduction potential of the proposed scenarios;
 - recommend common confidentiality rules for the exchanged micro-data.
- (66) The work should be finished in time in order to fit in the FRIBS timetable.

B. DISCUSSION

- (67) Members welcomed the report and praised Eurostat efforts to inform the CMFB regarding these developments – as balance of payments and national accounts statistics would be impacted. The ESSC target of reducing burden by net 25% seemed very important to achieve. Guaranteeing confidentiality of multiple data sources data was however of essence. The second-round impacts on other statistical domains would need to be evaluated with care. An observer also highlighted that the work should not be seen in isolation and certain issues in national accounts might also require attention.
- (68) Eurostat addressed quality concerns by recalling that the prevailing situation was no reason for complacency. The proposal made available an additional source that had the potential to reduce reporting burden. The ESS verified the quality of the data for the reference periods Jan13 to Aug15 and the result showed that a large share of businesses could be matched, even if asymmetries remained. The inclusion of partner IDs improved data quality and facilitated its exchange among partner countries (while the data would not be exchanged beyond this circle). The net benefit of including country of origin information seemed less clear.

C. CONCLUSION

- (69) The Chair concluded that
- trade-off should be carefully assessed from the point of view of quality gains, enhanced statistics and related costs and confidentiality issues;
 - the programme presented by Eurostat allowed for addressing these trade-offs, facilitating a consensus on this issue as options will be open to national compilers; the CMFB will follow-up on the developments in this area.

10. WP ITEM 5 – BALANCE OF PAYMENTS STATISTICS: SUBGROUP ON FRIBS AND BOP/IIP (SPONSORS: KIRSTEN WISMER AND JACQUES FOURNIER)

A. PRESENTATION

- (70) The Chair introduced the item by recalling that in September 2014, the European Statistical Forum (ESF) requested the CMFB to work upon the relationship between FRIBS and balance of payments and international investment position statistics (b.o.p./i.i.p.) and contribute to the assessment of the draft FRIBS regulation from a quality assurance point of view as regards b.o.p./i.i.p. statistics. Following this request, a CMFB Subgroup was established. Its conclusions were discussed at the CMFB Plenary meeting in January 2016.
- (71) Based on the Subgroup report, two options were discussed at the CMFB Plenary meeting in January 2016.
- Option 1: requirements would be split between Regulation (EC) No 184/2005 and FRIBS depending on the nature of the request, i.e. accounting framework versus primary data. Eurostat proposed to include a safeguard clause in FRIBS to guarantee BoP needs.
 - Option 2: any enhancement to the international transactions in the domain of business statistics would be materialized through amendment of Regulation (EC) No 184/2005.
- (72) A majority of participants showed a preference for option 1, while the subgroup was invited to work further on the content and on the practical implementation of the two options, i.e. mainly option 1.
- (73) The CMFB decided also that a workshop would be held in a timely manner to discuss technicalities, on the basis of the outcome provided by the Subgroup. Business directors and the OECD were also invited. The main conclusions of the workshop that was held in Munich on 14 April 2016 are recalled hereafter:
- A general vigilance was present regarding costs and an assessment was difficult, potential merits should also be accounted for.

- In the absence of a pronounced direction of arguments, the workshop found that the costs were mainly contingent on the content of the draft regulation and on the governance scheme to be adopted.
- The level of granularity covered by EBOPS appears to be the preferred classification for BOP in the short term, CPA for the NA and business statistics.
- There was a common wish for a convergence in the long run of the different classifications, EBOPS and CPA/CPC in particular.
- This convergence should be organized at the global level, which is particularly relevant for statistics on international transactions.
- For the overwhelming majority of the participants to the workshop, there appear no compelling arguments for the inclusion of FDI in the FRIBS regulation as primary statistics and there are strong doubts regarding the advantages of splitting different frequency requirements of the accounting elements into different regulations.
- The CMFB should contribute to consistency within bop/i.i.p and between b.o.p/i.i.p and other statistics, in particular national accounts. There is a need for coordination at the European level before but also after the new FRIBS regulation to ensure harmony and address operational issues. In that respect, there is a clear consensus on the role of the CMFB which is to give advice to the two statistical systems in order to ensure consistency. The CMFB role could be mentioned in the FRIBS Regulation.

(74) In the view of expressing its Opinion, the CMFB would need:

1. to contribute to specify the delimitation of the items covered by FRIBS under option 1. While it appears already consensual that travel & FISIM would remain in Regulation (EC) No 184/2005, the positioning of other close items such as insurance services appears still uncertain;
2. to emphasize that the potential adjustments to EBOPS is done by subdivisions of the categories and not by altering the concepts and definitions;
3. to be presented the “safeguard clause” to guarantee BoP which was announced by Eurostat;
4. to clarify consistency in treatment of the different frequencies (monthly, quarterly, annual) across the two regulations, taking into account the strong links between the statistics compiled under the different periodicities;
5. to determine the governance scheme in the future, more particularly regarding the role of the CMFB. The CMFB could notably contribute to mitigate the risk of a progressive divergence in the requirements under the two regulations.

(75) The way forward could be

- The CMFB Subgroup could undertake further work on these important remaining issues, with a view to deliver proposals by mid-September 2016.
- The CMFB EB will immediately afterwards propose an Opinion to all CMFB members by written procedure.

(76) Eurostat thanked for the presentation and added that since the distribution of the presentation, clarification had been prepared for all five points and a corresponding room documents were distributed:

- basic legal act for FRIBS;
- data requirements in FRIBS (in implementing legislation) as approved by the BSDG on 22 June 2016 for the case of option 1, where the elements of concern for the CMFB are highlighted
- changes proposed in regulation 184/2005 (BoP, ITSS and FDI Regulation).

(77) Eurostat provided a clarification on all points:

1. There was no uncertainty concerning the delimitation of the items covered by FRIBS under option 1; Note for the quarterly data that option 1 is consistent with (i) Having an aggregate of business related services; and (ii) leaving the details in 184/2005 untouched.
 2. The definitions in Regulation 184/2005 will not be changed, nevertheless, in FRIBS Eurostat needs to specify the rules of the data collection. A rewording from “business definition” to “compilation description” might help to overcome the confusion.
 3. The safeguard clause was included in recital (25) and article 8(1) of the draft (basic) legal act.
 4. According to the principles agreed, all frequencies of the accounting framework should stay in one Regulation, which was the case. The consistency between Regulation like the ESA, FRIBS and BOP will be ensured using the quality framework that had been in place since many years.
 5. As regards the role of the CMFB, the same wording could be used as in the amended Regulation 184/2005. However, this would repeat prevailing EU legislation, which, according to legal experts, is not the best law-making practice.
- (78) Eurostat asked that the direction of the CMFB’s opinion might be concluded at the meeting, due to the consensual framework, without a vote and in-line with the deadline of end-July 2016, i.e. not delaying FRIBS proceedings..

B. DISCUSSION

- (79) Members thanked Eurostat for distributing the most recent text for the FRIBS Regulation. A member referred to prevailing grey zones in option 1, also noting that only option 2 seemed to be fully in-line with the principles agreed by the Subgroup, further adding that convergence on option 1 might be a bit less clear. Some interventions welcomed the removal of FDI requirements from FRIBS.
- (80) According to a few other Members, annual FDI is an accounting framework on its own, just as b.o.p./i.i.p. and could therefore be part of FRIBS. The prospects of future evolution of FDI statistics was an additional justification. The requirements for FDI statistics and input to b.o.p./i.i.p. as FDI statistics were already different. For ITSS, the accounting framework should be part of the BoP Regulation.
- (81) A question was raised as regards fitting financial services into the FRIBS framework. Eurostat responded that financial services remain in 184/2005, as outlined in the documentation provided by Eurostat after the CMFB FRIBS-BOP WS.
- (82) The Chair inquired if the FRIBS draft legal text was updated following the Workshop (WS). Eurostat responded that it was outlined how the text would change with the implementation of option 1. A Member added that changes did indeed take place following the WS and it was difficult to decide on the basis of a table document. It was demanded to draw the full picture of legal, operational and practical consequences of the new propositions, hence further reflection was necessary.
- (83) It was highlighted that pure logical responses might not be sufficient to address outstanding issues and practical consequences might need to be addressed – splitting annual and quarterly frequencies could illustrate this need and such consistency was vital. The WS provided good ground for a compromise that seemed to be within reach. Eurostat’s responses should go beyond the legal aspects and address methodological questions.
- (84) . For several members, option 2 seemed not be an option anymore, though it preserved the consistency of accountancy framework better, while a few members still supported option 2.
- (85) The safeguarding of the interest of all European statistics was an important aspect and the repetition of the CMFB reference could be helpful in this respect, at least by means of a cross-reference. Potential divergence of statistical requirements in the future should be mitigated.
- (86) Eurostat declared that from a governance point of view, the CMFB’s responsibilities are set by the Council Decision and that from its viewpoint, a parallel permanent sub-structure should not be built.

- (87) Some Members expressed support for option 1 and the tabled proposal as it would clarify the macroeconomic role of BoP and strengthen the role of it. Concerning FDI, its inclusion on FRIBS was not supported due to the lack of deep enough considerations at the meeting and in-line with the SG conclusions. The safeguard close was also supported. Eurostat did a good job in addressing the outstanding points and in its view there were not much outstanding issues holding up the draft opinion.

C. CONCLUSION

- (88) The Chair concluded that
- the majority rule should, at some point, take effect to allow the CMFB to conclude an opinion.
 - a short period of time was necessary to reflect on the documentation provided and on outstanding issues;
 - a Eurostat note would arrive by 8 July 2016 for the CMFB EB and that CMFB members could request clarifications afterwards;
 - following a debate by CMFB members about a mentioning of the CMFB in the proposed FRIBS Regulation, Eurostat offered to add the same wording as for the amended Regulation 184/2005 adding an article *“On all matters falling within the competence of the Committee on Monetary, Financial and Balance of Payments Statistics established by Council Decision 2006/856/EC, the Commission shall request the opinion of that Committee in accordance with that Decision.”; some concrete form of involvement of the CMFB will also be rapidly looked for by the EB;*
 - a consultation on a draft CMFB Opinion would take place by end-August 2016, the final opinion published early September 2016.
- (89) Considering all practicalities, including the time pressure from Eurostat, the CMFB Chair indicated that a consultation that would be closed late July would not be the best way forward as some extra time was deemed necessary to carefully analyse the additional documents proposed by Eurostat, especially the legal texts and as a number of members would be on vacation during this period.
- (90) Eurostat indicated that the timing of end August for the CMFB opinion was in contradiction with the earlier CMFB commitment (of April 2016) to have the opinion by the end of July and too late in view of the approval process by the BSDG. The Chair underlined that the CMFB process had to conduct a fair process on a text that is just now on the verge of being stabilised, or to express it otherwise to have time enough to forge consensus on this important issue.

11. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR THE PERIOD 2017-2018

- (91) The Chair proposed Kirsten Wismer (Statistics Denmark) as Chair and Andrea Brandolini (Banca d’Italia) as Vice-Chair for the period 2017-2018 and sought the endorsement of the Committee. No objections were made.
- (92) The incoming Chair thanked for the support and explained that national accounts and balance of payments would remain in the centre of the agenda. Facilitating the cooperation between the two systems producing European statistics remain a priority as well. Business registers and big data should be part of the work programme as well.
- (93) The incoming Vice-Chaired thanked for the honour and explained to share a common vision in terms of cooperation with the majority of the Committee.

12. MEMBER'S REQUESTS FOR A CMFB OPINION IN STATISTICAL CLASSIFICATIONS (CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR)

12.1. Request from Banco de Portugal on the statistical classification of BANIF

A. PRESENTATION

- (94) The Chair referred to the documentation, which would be complemented with an issues note after the CMFB meeting. The classification decisions of INE and BdP were different, the former to general government, the latter to the financial sector. The Chair explained the two options. The CMFB would express its advice pursuant to Article 9(1) of the ESA 2010 Regulation.
- Option 1: BANIF residual was an institutional unit that still produced financial intermediation services. As a consequence and under the rebuttable presumption that the residual entity which kept the BANIF name, as it stood at the time, was not controlled by the government it should be classified in S 12. However, it should not be classified in the MFI subsector but rather in other financial intermediaries (S 125).
 - Option 2: BANIF residual should be classified in the general government, considering the history of the BANIF rescue operation that required public funds, and also the risk that the government might bring further funds into BANIF to cover, instead of the creditors, the potential losses of the residual entity at the end of the liquidation process.
- (95) The BdP representative clarified that the CMFB's advice was sought as regards the statistical classification of BANIF and encompassing all uses, not only for EDP purposes. The BdP kept the entity in the financial sector.
- (96) INE Portugal added that before the resolution BANIF's main shareholder was the state and according to the law, residual losses had to be covered by the shareholders prior to recourse to creditors. The Portuguese resolution fund was classified inside general government. BANIF was neither a financial intermediary (was not placing itself at risk) nor a financial auxiliary.
- (97) The Chair complemented that ownership, in itself, was not a classification criteria in ESA 2010. Concerning the resolution entity, the note will further clarify the situation.

B. DISCUSSION

- (98) Members welcomed the involvement of the CMFB and envisaged a procedure to prepare a comprehensive advice in the Committee.
- (99) Eurostat can go along with the procedure and underlined the importance of exhaustive, factual and neutral documentation. Eventual statistical discrepancies are regrettable but their impact should not be overestimated.
- (100) ECB DG-S recalled that the legal position of the Commission and ECB legal services, as derived from the Treaty and other applicable European legislation, on which basis both Eurostat and the ECB agreed on the legal obligation to cooperate closely, according to Article 4(3) of the TEU and between the ESS and the ESCB according to Regulation 2533/98 and Regulation (EC) No 223/2009. The procedure was therefore welcome.

C. CONCLUSION

- (101) The Chair concluded that
- the final issue note explaining, in a balanced and neutral manner, the two options for statistical classification of the BANIF residual entity will be distributed to the CMFB members by end-July 2016, for consultation by 16 September 2016;
 - the CMFB opinion on the statistical classification of entities under resolution could be used for reference;
 - the CMFB's final opinion should be published in the second half of September 2016.

12.2. Request from the Τράπεζα της Ελλάδος (Bank of Greece) on the statistical classification of TEKE (Hellenic Deposit and Investment Guarantee Fund)

12.3. Request from INSEE on the statistical classification of FGDR (French Deposit Guarantee and Resolution Fund)

A. PRESENTATION

- (102) The Chair suggested to discuss item 12.2 and 12.3 together due to their similar nature and invited the requesters to introduce the case.
- (103) The Bank of Greece representative stated that the time of submitting the request, Eurostat's full set of arguments were not yet know – the letter would therefore need to be complemented. He pointed out that TEKE operated three independent funds (resolution fund, deposit guarantee fund, investment guarantee fund) all of which were fully financed by levies on commercial banks. TEKE's board had a majority of members appointed by the Bank of Greece and the banking sector, with the Government appointing only one of the seven members. The Chair of TEKE's Board was appointed by the Bank of Greece (normally a Deputy Governor). The veto power of the government seemed rather formal and virtually impossible to exercise. The lender of last resort role was not a classification criterion in ESA 2010.
- (104) The INSEE representative explained that the consultation was not an EDP request, the EDP impact was also minor, but a general classification issue. The fact that the Regulation constrained resolution funds to a large extent was not very strong or convincing argument in a modern, regulated economy. The scope of government veto on decisions was so small that had no decisive role on the functioning of the fund.

B. DISCUSSION

- (105) Eurostat explained both decisions taken earlier in 2016. The Greek fund was on autopilot with little autonomy, the Board of directors were appointed by the Ministry of Finance, which also set structure, methodology, limits etc. for the fund. The law required the consent of the Ministry of Finance in a very broad range of circumstances. Compulsory contributions funding the fund were treated as taxes. Bank of Greece made recommendations by the final decision was taken by the Ministry of Finance. ESA 2010 defines control (and including veto) as a classification criterion. Eurostat explained that concerning INSEE, the fund was in S13 earlier, though INSEE decided to reclassify it into S12. Similarly, the fund had little autonomy (autopilot) and was subject to the wide veto power of the corresponding Minister. Some compensation may even be paid directly by the French government. In addition, Eurostat also pointed out that the issue of the statistical classification of deposit guarantee schemes and resolution funds is taking place at technical level in Eurostat.
- (106) The Chair reiterated the request if a CMFB consultation takes place, it should strictly be based on facts and provide a full account of all relevant details. MSs directly concerned by the request should not participate in the preparation of the background documentation but restrict their role to providing the facts. Eurostat further referred to the six-month EDP notification cycle and the advice would be important for the upcoming round, i.e. the CMFB's advice should ideally be concluded by early-September 2016.
- (107) ECB DG-S recalled that the legal basis for the deposit guarantee and resolution funds was relatively new and the fact-finding might therefore be somewhat demanding. The ESS and ESCB should therefore join resources on a technical level and provide an advice that is coordinated, agreeable by all parties and would not trigger follow-up discussions stretching over several years. Another point to investigate carefully was the role of control/ownership vs activity during the ESA 2010 classification process. Clarifying these basic principles would characterise decision for an extended period of time.

C. CONCLUSION

- (108) The Chair concluded that

- K. Wismer and A. Brandolini were appointed sponsors of the requests concerning the statistical classification of TEKE and FGDR and more generally on the issue of classification of deposit guarantee and resolution funds; a first issue was already distributed to the CMFB on the latter item;
 - they should produce a report by end-October 2016,
 - the CMFB’s final opinion should be published by the year end;
- (109) The Chair invited Eurostat to wait for the CMFB advice before taking decisions on those new and somewhat complex issues of the statistical classification of the deposit guarantee funds, in line in particular with article 9.1 of the ESA Regulation. If Eurostat would think it useful, he stood ready to write a letter to the EFC Chair about the procedural aspects (not touching upon substance).
- (110) Eurostat declared that this timing is incompatible with the second EDP notification of 2016 and this urgent work should be taken up and concluded earlier; any input from the CMFB would be welcomed. Technical work is already being conducted together with MS and an additional group was not necessary.

12.4. Request from the Hungarian Statistical Authorities (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal and Magyar Nemzeti Bank) on the statistical classification of captive financial institutions, including EXIMBANK

A. PRESENTATION

- (111) The Chair invited the HU representatives to introduce the case. The KSH representative explained that following its 2016 dialogue visit in Hungary, Eurostat advised on the reclassification of the Hungarian Export Import Bank (Eximbank) from the financial corporations sector into the general government sector. Eximbank was a complex financial institution with wide range of financial service and eligible to participate in the operations of the central banks. The MNB representative added that accounting and classification rules regarding financial intermediaries and auxiliaries did not change due to the recent methodological changeover. For this reason, the sector classification of traditional public financial institutions should be the same as before. Rules on the recording of government subsidies and guarantees did not change either, thus classification of related instruments and units should be the same as before. New rules appeared only in the methodology on special cases (captives, restructuring agencies, etc.). Traditional public financial institutions like export-import banks, development banks, and financial guarantee institutions cannot be covered by these special cases and should remain in the financial corporations sector. The new rules apply to SPEs only.
- (112) Eurostat recalled that this issue has been discussed with the Hungarian statistical authorities since some years, and explained that its opinion is already published on its website. Eurostat explained that in its view, Eximbank, established by law, was a public unit in the sense that it was an incorporated entity 100% owned by government. It had substantial liabilities and assets, as a way to de facto distribute government subsidies for export, support specific projects and at the same time, all the liabilities of Eximbank were guaranteed by government, which controlled both its assets and general lending policy. Eximbank did not take deposits from the general public and was also not participating in the deposit insurance scheme; hence it could not be classified in S.122. It remained a typical example of a captive financial institution; even if at first sight it appeared to be an institutional unit. The decisive criterion was whether or not the unit had enough independence from its parent as demonstrated by effective and substantive control over its assets and liabilities to the extent that it was genuinely exposed to the risks and rewards on them (ESA2010 2.22). Eximbank did not have effective control of its assets and liabilities. Eurostat also disagreed with many of the methodological interpretations provided during the presentation.

B. DISCUSSION

(113) Members underlined the fundamental issue behind the actual classification discussion concerning Eximbank and suggested that a TF should therefore be established. The problem had been pending since 2014 and it was time for a well-balanced advice. It was further added that ESA 2010 rules did not change, but the MGDD did. The expansion of captive financial institutions seemed to originate from this change. Other aspects of the functioning of the units became more important and financial intermediaries could now also be treated as non-market producers, provided that their activity did not comply with the definition of financial intermediation as provided by ESA 2010. Eurostat did not show any interest for the TF. However it was invited to clarify these aspects of the MGDD 2016.

C. CONCLUSION

(114) The Chair thanked for the discussion and concluded that

- the CMFB welcomed the idea of a task force as suggested by some Members on this important issue;
- Kirsten Wismer and Jacques Fournier will be the sponsors for this item;
- the TF will address the request from the Hungarian Members, the sponsors (the Chair and K. Wismer) will approach them for further information,
- the TF should address the general underlying issue for statistical classification, i.e the way to take into account government guarantees on liabilities of financial institutions,
- the TF should deliver its final report by end-November 2016;
- the CMFB’s opinion should be adopted by end 2016 and published soon afterwards.

13. WP ITEM 5 – BALANCE OF PAYMENTS STATISTICS: TASK FORCE ON THE CONSISTENCY NA-BOP (SPONSORS: JOE GRICE AND JOAO CADETE DE MATOS)

(115) Sponsors introduced the item by referring to the progress report. According to its mandate, “*the Task Force will not address the discrepancies due to different revision dates, but will liaise with the two Task Forces on revision policy – the ESS Task Force on benchmark revisions and the CMFB Task Force on routine revisions – with a view of optimising these parallel work streams*”. Nevertheless, in order to have a full view of discrepancies, “vintage and revisions” was listed among the possible causes to be cited in the questionnaires. Indeed, it appeared to be a major source of discrepancies, mentioned by 11 countries; which were significant in some countries. 6 countries did not report any difference between NA and BOP. The TF would request further feedback from these countries on their experience of dealing with NA and BOP compilation. 18 countries reported discrepancies in goods/imports and 13 in goods/exports; 9 countries reported discrepancies in travel (either imports/exports or both) and 19 countries have discrepancies in other services (either imports/exports or both). 4 countries did not reply to the questionnaire. Not all the respondents have so far provided information about the sources of discrepancies identified. Several countries mentioned as source of discrepancies “balancing of accounts” that may affect several categories of goods and services.

(116) No comments were made. The Chair thanked for the presentation and praised the work of the Task Force. The work already launched by Eurostat and the ECB DG-S should feed in the CMFB task Force work in the second phase. The report on the first phase will be presented at the CMFB meeting of February 2017.

14. WP ITEM 5 – BALANCE OF PAYMENTS STATISTICS: TASK FORCE ON ASYMMETRIES IN FDI AND THE FDI NETWORK (SPONSORS: IRMTRAUD BEUERLEIN AND JOE MCNEILL)

(117) Sponsors introduced the item by referring to the follow-up of the final report. The Task Force on asymmetries in FDI and the FDI network presented its final report to the CMFB plenary meeting of 28-29 January 2016 in Frankfurt. The document consisted of (i) an overview of the implementation of the recommendations; (ii) the potential introduction of quantitative

thresholds into the FDI network as requested by the CMFB plenary meeting in January; (iii) the first annual reporting on the use of the FDI network (2015 data)

- (118) No comments were made, the option 1 is the preferred option by all CMFB members who committed to use the network and share data (with one exception).
- (119) The Chair thanked for the report and the progress made, and concluded that the implementation of the CMFB commitment will be followed up in 2017.

15. ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS AND REPORTS

15.1. Priorities for the 2017 operational work programme in the light of the December 2016 meeting of the European Statistical Forum and of the CMFB Plenary meeting discussion (Chair -Incoming Chair)

- (120) The Chair and Incoming Chair briefly presented the draft priorities for 2017 and invited for comments. A Member underlined the importance of a CMFB opinion on the LEI.
- (121) The Chair concluded that the CMFB will finalise the priorities on time for the discussion at the meeting of the ESF Bureau on 16 September 2016; i.e. by 29 August.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (122) The next CMFB meeting will take place in Frankfurt on 2 and 3 February 2017.

List of actions of CMFB meeting held in Luxembourg on 4-5 July 2016

(10 August 2016)

Actions	Deadline	Responsible
(1) Eurostat note on the outstanding issues of FRIBS for the CMFB EB	By 8 July 2016 (accomplished)	Eurostat
(2) CMFB questions on the outstanding issues of FRIBS in the light of the Eurostat note	22 July 2016 (accomplished)	Chair, Vice-Chair
(3) Second CMFB opinion on FRIBS, after consultation of the CMFB between end July and end August	End August 2016	Chair
(4) CMFB comments on the ESS-ESCB Quality Assessment Report on the statistics underlying the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (Level 1)	29 July 2016 (accomplished)	CMFB Members
(5) Finalisation of the ESS-ESCB Quality Assessment Report on the statistics underlying the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (Level 1)	End September in view of the EFC Sub Committee on Statistics on 12 October 2016	Eurostat, ECB
(6) Call for expression of interest to participate in a small Task Force on the gradual common alignment of the structure and content of the level 2 quality reports for b.o.p./i.i.p. statistics	20 August 2016	CMFB Chair/Secretariat
(7) The CMFB will discuss the results of the TF on the gradual common alignment of the structure and content of the level 2 quality reports for b.o.p./i.i.p. statistics	Next CMFB Plenary meeting in February 2017	EB
(8) The CMFB will be informed on the development of the report on ESA 2010 quality assessment by Eurostat		Eurostat
(9) Encouraged publication of the Level 3 reports on the statistics underlying the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure		Members
(10) CMFB opinion and action plan on the implementation of the recommendations of the TG BUI and the HLG on business registers	Prepared for the EB meeting in October 2016. Finalisation by the CMFB by 30 November 2016	HLG on BR
(11) CMFB - GLEIF Stakeholder Group TelCo scheduled	September 2016	Chair, Vice-Chair
(12) CMFB consultation based on a final issue note explaining, in a balanced and neutral manner, the two options for statistical classification of the BANIF residual entity	Prepared by the EB by 26 July (accomplished) Consultation of the CMFB by 16 September 2016	Chair, Vice-Chair

(13)	Publication of the CMFB opinion on the statistical classification of the BANIF residual entity	By end September 2016	Chair, Vice-Chair
(14)	CMFB Work Programme 2017 for the ESF Bureau	Possible CMFB comments on the draft already circulated to be received by 26 August 2016	Chair, Incoming Chair
(15)	Formal consultation of the CMFB on the change in the non EDP Rules of procedure regarding the process for expressing opinions	Prepared by 28 July Consultation of the CMFB by 26 August	Chair and Vice-Chair
(16)	Report from the CMFB EB sponsors on the statistical classification of deposit guarantee and resolution funds	October 2016	Incoming Chair and Vice-Chair (who have been elected at the 4 and 5 July 2016 plenary meeting: Kirsten Wismer and Andrea Brandolini)
(17)	Report from the CMFB TF on the statistical classification of Eximbank (specific case and general issues raised by it)	By end-November 2016	Chair, Vice-Chair
(18)	Publication of the CMFB opinion on the statistical classification of Eximbank (specific case and general issues raised by it)	December 2016	Chair, Vice-Chair
(19)	Task Force on the consistency of NA and BoP – report on the 1 st phase	February 2017 CMFB plenary	Sponsors, TF Co-Chairs
(20)	EDP activities document with forward-looking elements (asked by the CMFB to Eurostat)	Next CMFB plenary in February 2017	Eurostat
(21)	Task Force on the Harmonised Revision Policy – report	Next CMFB plenary in February 2017	Sponsors, TF, Co-Chairs
(22)	The implementation of the CMFB commitment on the use of FDI network will be followed in 2017	Next CMFB plenary in February 2017	Sponsors