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EUROSTAT

Directorate E: Sectoral and regional statistics
Unit E4: Regional statistics and geographical information

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GUIDELINES FOR THE REVISION OF THE NUTS CLASSIFICATION

1 PURPOSE, GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND CONTACTS

These guidelines relate to the revision of the NUTS classification (Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) in accordance with the rules and principles provided for in Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003¹ as amended (NUTS Regulation).

Eurostat consults the Permanent Representations and National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) to request input according to the provisions of Article 5(1) of the NUTS Regulation. Eurostat will carefully examine the feedback received taking into account the provisions of Article 5(2) and 5(3) of the NUTS Regulation. Based on this review, the Commission will decide whether the legal procedure under Article 5(4) will be launched to change the NUTS classification.

Eurostat relies on the NSIs to ensure effective cooperation within Member States in preparing proposals. NSIs also play a crucial role in the informal discussions about potential proposals with Eurostat.

The launch of the NUTS revision round is announced by official letter to the Heads of the Permanent Representations and the Heads of the National Statistical Institutes.

The email contact in Eurostat for any matters related to the revision of the NUTS classification is ESTAT-NUTS@ec.europa.eu.

2 BACKGROUND

The NUTS is a hierarchical system dividing up the economic territory of the European Union (EU) for collecting, developing and harmonising EU regional statistics, conducting socio-economic regional analyses, and framing EU regional policies.² The Commission (Eurostat) ensures the consistent management of the NUTS classification.

The administrative territorial breakdown of EU Member States is the basis of the NUTS classification. Given that national administrative regions may change from time to time, a procedure is in place to adjust the NUTS classification to such changes. Details of the procedure are defined in the NUTS Regulation. One of the main features of the procedure to amend the NUTS classification is that changes should be made no more than once

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003, on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), OJ L 154, 21.6.2003

² Further details on the NUTS classification: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/background>

every three years, which ensures a period of stability of at least three years in which the same classification applies.

The quantity and quality of changes in the national territorial breakdowns reported to Eurostat will determine if the NUTS classification will be amended after three or more years to implement changes in the Member States. The legal procedure to complete this takes several months.

3 BASIC RULES

Article 5 of the NUTS Regulation specifies the rules for NUTS amendments. Changes in the national administrative regions can automatically lead to an amendment of the NUTS classification. In addition, the NUTS classification also includes non-administrative regions defined for the sake of completeness of the three-level hierarchical classification. Non-administrative regions can also be revised, although such changes must comply with more strict rules and have to entail a reduction of the standard deviation in the size (measured in population) of the regions (see section 7).

Any territorial changes concerning NUTS regions should be reported. However, if a small area is transferred between two NUTS regions, the NUTS Regulation does not need to be updated if the population in the transferred area represents less than 1% of the total population in the smallest NUTS 3 region involved (see Article 5(2)(a)).

If the names of NUTS regions changed, but the territory stays intact, the name changes should be communicated to Eurostat to keep the list of the names of regions up to date.

Eurostat has made every effort to ensure that the spelling of regions is correct. Should there nevertheless still be misspellings in the classification, a correction can be requested.

The names of the NUTS regions should be in the language(s) of the country or region concerned. It is possible to have names in more than one language. Voluntary transmission of English versions of the names of regions are welcome in order to address an increasing number of related requests.

4 ROLE OF THE NSI

The NSI should consult the relevant authorities in its country about the potential NUTS revision round and the details of the procedure. The NSI is also asked to liaise with the relevant authorities in its country concerning the preparation of the official proposal.

We strongly advise that proposals be discussed with the Eurostat unit responsible for management of the implementation of the NUTS Regulation (ESTAT-NUTS@ec.europa.eu) before an official request is filed. The NSI, in its capacity as national expert and coordinator in the field of statistics, is the preferred contact for such discussions.

5 OFFICIAL PROCEDURE

5.1 How to send a proposal and deadline

If a Member State has to report changes that may affect the NUTS classification or wants to propose changes to its non-administrative regions, it should send – through its Permanent Representation – a written notification to the functional mailbox => ESTAT-NUTS@ec.europa.eu by the date specified in the official communication.

The notification must clearly state the proposed changes and the Annexe(s) to the Regulation concerned. If Annex I (NUTS regions) is concerned, the proposal must include the lists of regions before and after the change, and the names and population figures for the individual regions. It is also advisable to explain the reasons for the proposal (e.g. administrative reorganisation or improvement of comparability between regions), and to send the components of the new regions (i.e. the lower-level NUTS regions or, in the case of changes at NUTS 3 level, the local administrative units (LAU)).

To delineate the geographical extent of the changes, geographical data files that can be used in GIS (e.g. shape files) should also be transmitted to Eurostat (ESTAT-NUTS@ec.europa.eu). The shape files should contain the geometries, identifiers and names of the proposed NUTS areas and their constituent LAU areas if available. The scale of the data should be 1:100 000 or larger. If GIS data is not available, high-quality maps with a scale of 1:100 000 or larger should be included in the proposal. The maps should show the territory of the proposed regions, including the labels. Eurostat will use the geographical data files to derive the maps of new NUTS regions for Commission-internal analysis.

Please note that Eurostat also requests a specific confirmation from each Member State that does not intend to propose any changes to its regional breakdown.

5.2 Legal procedure

On the basis of the official communication received from the Member States, the Commission (Eurostat) will decide whether the legal procedure under Article 5(4) will be launched to change the NUTS classification and inform the National Statistical Institutes.

The Annexes to the NUTS Regulation will be amended through a Commission delegated Regulation. The draft delegated Regulation will be prepared by Eurostat based on the input received by Member States.

Eurostat will consult the DIMESA (Directors of sectoral and environmental statistics and accounts) and the Experts Group Directors General of NSIs of the EU. Moreover, a formal inter-service consultation will be organised as part of the adoption procedure within the Commission. As part of the Commission's better Regulation agenda, citizen and other stakeholders will be able to provide feedback on the draft delegated act over a four-week period via the Have-your-say portal.

Once the Commission has adopted the act, it will be notified to the European Parliament and the Council, and they will have two months to formulate any objections. If no objection is formulated, the delegated act will be published in the Official Journal of the EU and will enter into force.

To ensure a smooth legislative procedure, the deadline specified by Eurostat for sending proposals must be strictly adhered to.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

When changes are made to the NUTS classification, Member States will be required to send retrospective data for the revised regional structure for a certain period in accordance with Article 5(5) of the NUTS Regulation ("historical time series implementing act"). NSI are advised to take such future obligations into account, in particular when proposing amendments to non-administrative NUTS regions.

Proposals should take into account that breaks in statistical time series are to be avoided if possible. For this reason, Eurostat strongly recommends considering whether it will be feasible to supply historical data in line with the envisaged regional classification before submitting an official proposal,

7 PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

The NUTS Regulation provides for several rules to determine the territorial units. The following questions might help in the process of defining the units in line with these rules. If there is a deviation from, or a non-compliance with, these rules, we would be grateful if you could inform us as soon as possible, so that potential solutions can be discussed in good time.

For each NUTS level, please consider:

- 1. Is the level of NUTS hierarchical, i.e. a subdivision of the higher level?*
- 2. Are the units of the level administrative or non-administrative?*

a) administrative units/regions

- Do they cover the whole territory of the country, or are there gaps?*
- Does the average population size of the units comply with the thresholds as defined in Article 3(2) of the NUTS Regulation?*

Level	Minimum	Maximum
NUTS 1	3 million	7 million
NUTS 2	800 000	3 million
NUTS 3	150 000	800 000

b) non-administrative units/regions

- Are they an aggregation of smaller contiguous administrative units, taking into account geographical, socio-economic, historical, cultural or environmental circumstances?*
- Does the new regional breakdown lead to a reduction of the standard deviation of the population size of all EU regions at the NUTS level concerned? (Please note that Eurostat can help with the calculation)*
- Do the population sizes of the new units comply with the thresholds as defined in Article 3(2) of the NUTS Regulation (see above)?*

If not: Are there any geographical, socio-economic, historical, cultural or environmental circumstances, especially in the islands and the outermost regions, which would justify a deviation from the thresholds?