

OPINION OF THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

of 11 April 2001

at the request of the Council of the European Union concerning a Commission proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on quarterly non-financial accounts for general government

(CON/2001/4)

(2001/C 131/04)

1. On 21 March 2001, the European Central Bank (ECB) received a request from the Council of the European Union for an opinion on a draft regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on quarterly non-financial accounts for general government (hereinafter referred to as the 'draft Regulation').
2. The ECB's competence to deliver an opinion is based on Article 105(4) of the Treaty establishing the European Community. In accordance with the first sentence of Article 17.5 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Central Bank, this opinion has been adopted by the Governing Council of the ECB.
3. The objective of the draft Regulation is to specify the transmission of quarterly data on general government expenditure and revenue by the Member States to the European Commission (Eurostat), in addition to those data already covered by Commission Regulation (EC) No 264/2000 of 3 February 2000 on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 2223/96 with respect to short-term public finance statistics⁽¹⁾. The breakdown of general government expenditure and revenue is defined by reference to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1500/2000 of 10 July 2000 implementing Council Regulation (EC) No 2223/96 with respect to general government expenditure and revenue⁽²⁾.
4. The ECB welcomes the draft Regulation which is part of the action plan on economic and monetary union (EMU) statistical requirements (hereinafter referred to as 'EMU action plan'), established at the request of the (Ecofin) Council by the European Commission (Eurostat) in close collaboration with the ECB. The EMU action plan is a response to the report of the Monetary Committee on information requirements in EMU, endorsed by the (Ecofin) Council on 18 January 1999, and the second progress report on information requirements in EMU drawn up by the Economic and Financial Committee and endorsed by the (Ecofin) Council on 5 June 2000.
5. While the provision of quarterly data on general government expenditure and revenue does not alter in any way the reporting requirements in the context of the excessive deficit procedure as set out in Council Regulation (EC) No 3605/93 of 22 November 1993 on the application of the Protocol on the excessive deficit procedure annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community⁽³⁾, as amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 475/2000 of 28 February 2000⁽⁴⁾, it broadens the short-term macro-economic analysis in the framework of ESA 95 national accounts. In this respect, the draft Regulation is a further step to a limited set of ESA 95 quarterly sector accounts also required under the EMU action plan.
6. The ECB therefore strongly supports the timetable for the transmission of quarterly data on general government expenditure and revenue as envisaged under the draft Regulation. The ECB also calls upon the Member States to abstain from derogations and to provide the quarterly data in line with ESA 95 concepts, in particular for the compilation of euro-zone aggregates.
7. The draft Regulation might however be improved in some technical respects: (a) In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1500/2000, the title 'quarterly non-financial accounts for general government' would best be changed to 'quarterly data on general government expenditure and revenue'; (b) The first sentence of Article 3(2) might be amended to read 'Quarterly data shall be transmitted for the following categories (or groups of categories) of general government expenditure and revenue as defined in Council Regulation (EC) No 2223/96 of 25 June 1996, as amended'; (c) Article 3(2) should also require the transmission of quarterly data on total general government expenditure (TE) and total general government revenue (TR), as well as general government gross saving (B.8g); (d) Article 4(1)(c) might be amended to read 'The quarterly data and the corresponding annual and quarterly ESA 95 data shall be consistent.'
8. This opinion shall be published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*.

Done at Frankfurt am Main on 11 April 2001.

The President of the ECB

Willem F. DUISENBERG

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 29, 4.2.2000, p. 4.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 172, 12.7.2000, p. 3.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 332, 31.12.1993, p. 7.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 58, 3.3.2000, p. 1.