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“The Commission may, within the limits and under conditions laid down by the Council in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty, collect any information and carry out any checks required for the performance of the tasks entrusted to it.” Article 337, TFEU

Positioning Eurostat in the European polity

Summary

The statistical office of the European Union (EU) (and formerly the European Communities), namely Eurostat, is largely uncovered by the literature. This is surprising as it is the EU’s only provider of data across all member states. The question whether and if yes in which ways Eurostat could increase its importance regarding its tasks and within the interplay of the European institutions since its creation leads the paper’s analysis of the Union’s statistical environment. This is constituted by the national statistical institutes (NSIs), other national statistics collecting bodies (together the national statistical system (NSS)) and Eurostat, forming the European Statistical System (ESS). Its relations to international statistical bodies will also be scrutinised. It suggests that the statistical office was subject to a layered pattern of change.

Introduction

The paper presents the first findings of an explorative case study on Eurostat’s organisational development from its creation until present-day. The pursuit of delving into a single case case study is justified by aiming for an in depth examination of the Community’s statistical environment. Eurostat was put at the centre of this analysis caused by the unique role the statistical office plays in the European polity. Not only is the office the main provider of

cross-country and cross-sectoral official statistics of the Community (e.g. Schmeets & Huynen, 2010) and co-ordinator of the ESS, but is also an active participant in “world level” international undertakings in the amelioration of comparable statistics (e.g. the Joint UNECE/Eurostat work session on migration statistics, 2010).

Secondary literature on Eurostat’s historical development is scarce, just like the statistical office suffers from a general tendency toward non-observance in the study of European institutions that neglects its fundamental role in the coordination of the Community’s data collection. Because of this, the paper additionally relies on an initial round of exploratory expert interviews (Gogner, Littig & Menz, 2005)¹, so as to broaden the scope of sources to draw upon.²

Despite this important role, there is surprisingly little literature concentrating on the relation between the national statistical systems and Eurostat. Moreover, Eurostat’s role within the European Commission, and its relations to the other major institutions as the Council, the European Parliament (EP), the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and the European Central Bank, is - besides in Sverdrup’s paper (2005) and Cini’s (2007) chapter on the Eurostat scandal in 2003 - not covered within studies of the European institutions or EU governance. Moreover, its connections to other international bodies collecting cross-national statistics as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations (UN) are not really touched upon. Hence, this paper is interested in filling the gap and mapping how Eurostat fits into the European polity, and thus follows primarily an inductive approach. Nevertheless, it is in so far deductive in this initial stage of research as theoretical lenses are employed to provide the text with structure and to develop further research questions. In this regard, the paper’s approach coincides with what Ragin and Amoroso (2010:50) call “retroductive” research. In their opinion, both, inductive and deductive elements, i.e. *ideas* and *theory*, can be found in the large part of research and feed back into each other.

In the context of this paper, the framework of historical institutionalism concept places a multiplicity of theoretical lenses at the researcher’s disposal. Historical institutionalism is selected for it allows reflecting on the matter if and how an institution’s past influences its present day’s face, here Eurostat’s tasks and organisation. Further lenses supplied by this

¹ An expert is a person very well acquainted with the specifics of the studied area.

² At a later stage, also archival research is planned.

concept offer a typology of incremental change and criteria for the selection of a starting point of the examined sequence.

The following paragraphs give a summary of the theoretical frame, and its major debates. Also, they touch upon its positive aspects as well as its shortcomings, and subsequently present how the latter are handled within this paper.

This section lies out the main drawbacks of historical institutionalism and in which ways they will be tackled. The aim to explain incremental institutional change instead of one caused by a sudden rupture in the institutional environment, experienced much scholarly attention in the last decades. The basic claim of historical institutionalism is that the “policy choices made when an institution is being formed, or when a policy is initiated, will have a continuing and largely determinate influence over the policy far into the future” (Peters, 2005:71). The lacking explanatory power of historical institutionalism concerning future institutional change that Peters (2005:78; 85) assesses, does not represent a major problem for the paper as it is primarily interested in a retrospective account of the office’s development.

The concept’s general openness towards the definition of the term “institution” - be it formal or informal rules and procedures that structure conduct (Steinmo, Thelen & Longstreth, 1992:2) - may be judged as drawback and virtue alike. It does neither strictly confess to the rational choice nor the sociological perspective. Steinmo (2008:126) takes it as far as to say that scholars of historical institutionalism are impartial regarding the question which perception of individuals prevails, i.e. their perception of humans as simple rule-followers or rather as strategic rule-users in order to maximise their gains (Aspinwall & Schneider, 2000). Instead, historical institutionalists rather analyse why a specific decision was taken and why it lead to a specific outcome. According to Peters (2005:76), the emphasis of historical institutionalism is much more on the “persistence of organizations after they are formed than it is on the facts of their initial creation”. Hence, in his opinion, it is questionable - or rather redundant to know - whether the analysis shall commence with the dawn of an institution in exchange of ideas or with the actual laying of the founding stone. This vagueness about the starting point of examination, however, clearly turns into a problem when applying the concept to a case. It is impossible to attest the persistence of an institution or thorough change if one cannot determine its initial conditions. Also from other authors, there is reluctance to agree with Peter’s opinion. For instance, Mahoney (2000:511) opposes this seemingly minor relevance of initial conditions by addressing it as one of three factors for “path dependence”. Path dependence itself, however, is a major debate within historical

institutionalism scholarship. Not content with the mere notion of path dependence as “history matters”, he stresses (2000:507-511) that “path dependence characterizes specifically those historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties.” After outlining two basic kinds of sequences, he establishes three factors that must be taken into consideration when one argues for path dependence. The first branch of literature describes sequences as “self-reinforcing”, as repeated patterns which remain, because a modification would mean complication (see also Pierson, 2000:18). Secondly, “reactive” sequences consist of events occurring in an analysed period are a reaction to the respectively precedent event back to the starting point of a chain of chronological and content-wise succeeding events. The elements of path dependence are laid out in the following. Firstly, the point of time in the examined sequence in which an event takes place, matters. Later events have less impact than earlier ones, as the possibilities of which one can select are determined by the prior choices. Secondly, the primary event of a chain of events has to be peculiar in that sense that it cannot be explained by preceding incidents - resembling Collier and Collier’s (1991) line of argumentation for “critical junctures”. Lastly, once a process within a sequence - be it reactive of self-reinforcing - towards an outcome is started, it is rarely stopped or altered.

Collier and Collier (1991) refer to these first events in a sequence as “critical junctures”, periods of transition or reorientation that shape future outcomes. They weigh eight countries against each other in their developments of labour movements and regime dynamics. Thus, their conception of a critical juncture (1991:27-39) features a comparative element across states - a significant change comes about in distinct ways in each of the analysed cases - that obviously cannot directly be detected in a study focusing on a singular case.

In order to answer *how* change occurs, the paper will refer to Streeck and Thelen (2005). They provide a typology of four patterns of change (2005:19-30). “Displacement” signifies the dissolution of existing institutions and the succeeding substitution by other institutions. “Layering” arises, if existing institutions are kept, but changed or complemented with another, new, institution that increasingly takes over the function of the old institution. The authors declare that institutional stability is not the normal case and thus requires maintenance in the form of re-focusing or fundamental re-setting in order to keep step with their respective institutional environment. In case these measures are not taken, “drift” occurs. “Conversion” diverges from the notions of layering and drift, as the analysed institution is deeply averted towards new goals, functions and purposes without being added new functions or tasks. Like

“displacement”, lastly, “exhaustion” also means the end of a current institution. Instead of its replacement with another institution that takes over its task, this fifth mode is the odd one out within the typology for it ends with the gradual dissolution of the existing institution. By that, it does not meet the feature of institutional change. Drawing on works of Thelen (e.g. 1992), van der Heijden (2011:11) extends these five modes by “bricolage”, the re-ordering of elements within an organisation in innovative ways, and “translation”, the introduction of new, externally given elements to existing institutional patterns, by referring to Campbell (2009:99). This list of modes of incremental institutional change may not be exhaustive, and in future research, additional modes may be found. Nevertheless, they provide a useful framework of mechanisms of change for this paper.

Contrary to what van der Heijden (2011:9) argues, this does not represent alternative explanations of the causes of institutional change to critical junctures. The five abovementioned “mechanisms” of change thus merely constitute a typology of incremental change that takes place. The cause should not be confused with the effect.

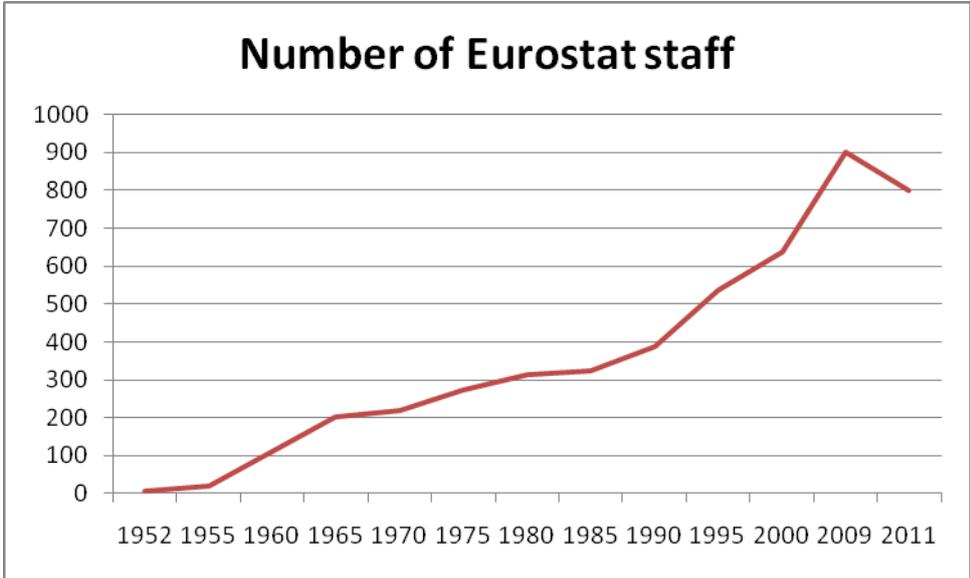
Summing these aforementioned criteria on critical junctures and path dependence up as the paper’s theoretical framework, the paper concludes that path dependent change occurred in the Community’s statistical environment if i) the starting point in a chain of events can be classified as an event that cannot be traced back to preceding events, ii) later events cause less impact than those preceding and iii) a once started process in a sequence is not stopped or altered. Contrary to this, a sudden rupture occurs when clearly a stable, long-enduring path comes to an end, and a new route has to be taken. Within this paper’s framework of a single case study, it is impossible to analyse whether an event considerably impacts on several countries in diverse ways and thus, it can merely stick to Pierson’s definition. However, it can assess what kind of incremental change occurs by applying Streeck and Thelen’s (2005) typology of gradual institutional change.

Mapping Eurostat’s progress concerning tasks and structure

As part of the European Commission and its predecessors, Eurostat’s institutional development and its relations with other statistical institutes are closely connected to European integration (de Michelis & Chantraine, 2003). The following paragraphs give an overview of its 59 years of existence, by mapping its tasks, problems, mode of governance and assess whether those were subject to change.

The paper examines the statistical office’s way from its stem-cell as statistical service of the ECSC and later the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and European Economic Community (EEC) to the DG of the Commission that it is at present. In order to answer whether path dependence or a critical juncture occurred in the case of Eurostat it is necessary to return to the facts of its creation, as argued in the introduction. In the ensuing paragraphs, the paper examines how Eurostat’s development fits in Streeck and Thelen’s (2005) typology.

What began as an enterprise of seven statisticians in the 1950s providing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) with data of the beginnings of a common market, e.g. of price statistics and gross domestic product tables (interview, Eurostat, 28 April 2011) is nowadays a full Directorate General (DG) of the European Commission. The statistical office’s³ seven directorates concern themselves with methodology, national and European accounts, business statistics, sectoral and regional statistics, social and information society statistics (Eurostat, 2011a) and around 800 employees alone at its main branch in Luxembourg (interview, Eurostat, 13 April 2011).



Adapted from de Michelis & Chantraine, 2003.

³ The statistical office of the European Communities was re-named from “Statistical Service” to “Statistical Division”, “Statistical Office of the European Communities” to and finally to “Eurostat”, as it is known today. For reasons of readability, the paper will refer to it only as Eurostat or statistical office.

Before it is examined whether it is possible to argue for Eurostat's development as path-dependent, its creator's options - whether to build a new institution from the scratch or to fit it in the existing European statistical environment of NSIs – are laid out and assessed.

Eurostat's first "head of service", Rolf Wagenführ (1963:379-382) explains that despite the pioneers of the European statistical office could draw upon the numbers and practices of other international institutions, these data were often not fit for the three Communities' purpose in the context of European integration: An essentially comparable organisation in as much as it features an economic focus and also possesses a division gathering statistics across a multitude of countries like the OECD, differs from the Communities as it is reversible in its legal nature. Furthermore, many of its actions are subject to unanimous approval by the governments concerned. The objective of the European Communities, on the other hand, was the creation of a common market which required its member states to give up a certain degree of autonomy to form uniform monetary conditions, uniform policies, and also a largely uniform legislation. Thus, a higher degree of harmonisation of collection methods and definitions is required and a new institution with these tasks had to be created. Referring to Eurostat's "zero hour", he mentions that there had been essentially two considerations circulated on how to design and equip the statistical service: The first possibility was to create a strong European statistical body with far-reaching competences that would finally take over the tasks from the national statistical institutes. The alternative was to create a European statistical office whose task laid mainly in that of coordinating the data collection executed by the national statistical systems, by that preserving the expert knowledge and statistical cultures of the national statistical institutes.

At this point of the analysis, it is not yet possible to assess whether later developments in the analysed sequence from Eurostat's creation until the present day have less impact than earlier events. It is also impossible to argue whether a process has altered or stopped. Hence, it is too early to argue for Eurostat's path-dependent evolution. Nevertheless, one may suggest that the building a singular and powerful European statistical office, taking over the responsibilities of the NSIs, from the scratch would have signified what Streeck and Thelen (2005) call displacement. The other option of inserting a new European institution in the context of the ECSC's statistical environment possibly indicates layering.

The source describing Eurostat's roots is the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community of 1951⁴, which left the High Authority with the much leeway to design Eurostat's organisation: The sections describing the tasks of the Community's institutions do not explicitly mention a European statistical body.

Despite this lacking statutory basis of Eurostat within the Treaty, the High Authority, the executive body of the Community, was allowed to establish "all appropriate administrative arrangements for the operation of its departments." (Article 16). Under the heading of the general provisions for the functioning of the European Coal and Steel Community, Article 46 (1) enabled the High Authority to consult experts and asks it to draw up studies of the market and price trends. Article 47 finally, permitted the High Authority to gather any information it may need in order to fulfil its task. Still, Eurostat's further course, whether path-dependent or not, is not yet decided. Within Article 213 of the EEC Treaty of 1957, however, Eurostat's data collection and checks were put under the scrutiny of the Council and in later Treaties increasingly the European Parliament. Taken together, these Articles represent the initial insertion of Eurostat in the *acquis communautaire*. As the NSIs requested a higher level of independence of Eurostat from the Commission, and also because Eurostat wanted to ensure more guarantees to the NSIs on data protection, the "Eurostat law" (Commission Decision 97/281/EC) defines the European statistical office - instead of the Commission as such - as the responsible authority for Community statistics and determines Eurostat's technical independence (de Michelis, 2002:32).

The call of the NSIs for the further instalment of Eurostat in European law indicates rather the support of the NSIs as regards Eurostat's existence, than their will to reclaim the rein among the statistical institutions, possibly altering the ongoing process of institutional layering and by that opposing path-dependence in the European statistical office's evolution.

Organisation

The next section analyses Eurostat's structural orientation with the other European institutions. With the coming into force of the ECSC Treaty in 1952, the High Authority created 12 divisions and services, and amongst them the "statistical service" was created as an

⁴ The European Coal and Steel Community's the main institutions were: the High Authority – the later European Commission, the Common Assembly - the future European Parliament - and the Council of Ministers (Nugent, 2006:38-39).

early version of Eurostat, serving the ECSC (de Michelis & Chantraine, 2003:12) by coordinating the data collection of the member states' statistical institutes. Tendencies of High Authority departments collecting statistics themselves during the 1950s and 1960s never put Eurostat's existence at risk (interview, Eurostat, 8 May 2011): Only the statistics produced by Eurostat were considered as "official statistics" of scientific quality for the preparation and monitoring of Community policies and also for a European statistical system. Furthermore, the statistical cells of the DGs could not collect the figures published by the national statistical systems or any other public or private statistical source. In the 1960s, at the time at which the executives of the European Communities were fused it was intended to incorporate Eurostat's units in the different DGs of the Commission. This idea was quickly abandoned by the Vice President of the Commission of that time, who was an advocate of independent statistics and in favour of a single European statistical reference organisation. With the signature of the Treaties of Rome in 1957, two further European Communities, namely the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom with each a Commission as executive body, came into existence, as a sign of intensified co-operation between the ECSC countries. Due to the highly technically specific nature of the atomic energy statistics, Euratom employed a distinct statistical service which should in 1958 be incorporated in Eurostat's organisational structure, whereas Eurostat's responsibilities included from the beginning on the provision of the EEC's numerical information (de Michelis & Chantraine:24-29). From 1959 onwards to the unification of the three Communities in 1967, a common statistical service was established. It was managed by a committee consisting of a member of the High Authority, the EEC Commission and the Euratom Commission each, deciding by rule of unanimity upon staff, budget and organisational matters. Parallel to the Community as a whole, Eurostat found itself in a deep crisis during the 1980s as the statistics it produced did not meet the Commission's expectations regarding timely and relevant statistics (interview, Eurostat, 26 May 2011). This weakened its position within the Commission. Above all, its management was uncertain about the further steps to take (de Michelis & Chantraine, 2003:100-109). However, the European Parliament strengthened Eurostat's position by opposing Commission proposals to dissolve the statistical office and to integrate its tasks within its respective policy-related DGs. Instead, it argued for a statistical office that was open for all European institutions under the same conditions. Perhaps its most important request was to apply the co-decision procedure to decision-making on future statistical programmes. Also, the statisticians developed a sense of solidarity towards each other.

As anticipated by President Delors statistics played a key role in the European integration process from the late 1980s onwards (interview, Eurostat, 26 May 2011): the single market, the European Monetary Union, enlargement, and finally the increasing attention that was paid to environmental protection, required all a solid basis of comparable statistical indicators to formulate policies, and to monitor their implementation. In order to keep up with these developments, opened up towards the general public as a “service provider” and introduced a common training programme for its own and national statisticians. Furthermore, Eurostat introduced weekly management, monthly middle-management and quarterly statistical programme committees, along with periodical programming committees with the major stakeholders of the ESS-members, candidate countries, central banks, the Parliament and the Commission DGs. One can preliminarily conclude that Eurostat’s institutional progress did not come to a halt: The take-over of statistics collection and presentation from the Commission’s policy-DGs did not harm Eurostat because of its status as singular provider of European-wide statistics. Moreover, with the statistical service of Euratom, it rather itself incorporated a statistical body with similar tasks as its own. This evokes the notion of layering (Streeck & Thelen, 2005) in the sense that it was complemented with the new institutional element that the Euratom service represented, while itself it was not “diverged”. Lastly, it also survived the slack period of European integration of the 1980s, and did not drift.

Since Eurostat is governed by a plethora of committees, this paper will address Eurostat’s major Committees⁵ in the subsequent section.

As part of the European Commission, Eurostat disposes of the right of initiative for new secondary legislation. Under what was called the co-decision procedure pre-Lisbon - now the “ordinary legislative procedure” - new initiatives that arise within Eurostat, are firstly discussed in a Eurostat working group or sectoral committee, within which statisticians representing their member state are able to express their views. Secondly, the actual document is prepared and passed on to the DGINS, to reach an agreement within this committee. This is not compulsory, but common practice within Eurostat. After the document is declared to fit the opinion of other concerned DGs, and approved by the Commission, it is sent to the

⁵ A selection had to be made, because the plethora of Eurostat’s committees would go beyond the scope of this conference paper. Further committees are listed at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/about_eurostat/european_framework/statistical_commitees.

Council and the Parliament. As this procedure is costly in terms of time - on average takes about three years - Eurostat usually chairs only one or two working groups per year (interview, Eurostat, 13 April 2011). The Director Generals of the national statistical committee (DGINS) - already set up in 1953 - have to have two hats ready when they attend Eurostat committee meetings: the national hat and the European one. Although the cooperation between Eurostat and the NSIs were very intense - caused by a multitude of statistical committees and working groups and discussions at DGINS conferences (de Michelis & Chantraine, 2003:93) - the differentiation is not always an easy one. An example of the dilemma in which they found themselves, when the discussion arose whether to confer implementation powers to a Statistical Programme Committee (SPC). It was staffed by the Director-Generals of the NSIs and chaired by Eurostat, whereas Eurostat as chair had no voting power (Statistical Programme Committee, 2001). Based on Council Decision 89/382/EEC, the SPC was created to assist the Commission in its task to establish a common methodology and standards and the multiannual Statistical Programme (Eurostat, Committees, 2009). Further causes were firstly to provide the discussions of the DGINS meetings with a legal base. Secondly, to set up a structure to within which it was possible to exert Comitology, i.e. delegated implementation, powers to the Commission⁶. As early as 1971, plans existed to create that the SPC, but were not transferred into practice for about 18 years, because in principle, the DGINS agreed on the principle of harmonisation, but only if it were their respective own methods forming the benchmark (de Michelis & Chantraine, 2003:64).

The SPC has evolved to the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC). Representing jointly Eurostat and the NSS it is responsible for deciding on “measures which the Commission intends to take for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics.” (Eurostat, ESSC, 2009). Each member state is usually represented by only one person. With the chairman’s permission, however, additional experts may be present at the expense of the member state. This could potentially privilege rich member states.

Again, it turns out that Eurostat does not merely stick to its initial institutional structure. Despite the reluctance of the DGINS, it was able to elevate its status vis-à-vis the NSIs.

⁶ The Gross National Product Committee, Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics, Foreign Trade Statistics Committee and the Committee on confidentiality were committees which could dispose of Comitology power, whereas sectoral committees did not have these powers (de Michelis, 2002:7-8).

Tasks

Subsequently, Eurostat's tasks will be examined over time. Coinciding with what was found in the ECSC Treaty's provisions, Eurostat's core tasks were not replaced by different duties since they were enlisted in the office's first communication to the High Authority on the statistical service's inclusion in the High Authority of the of 1952 (de Michelis & Chantraine, 2003:15-16). As the idea of a European statistical office that itself collected statistics failed, the harmonisation of the statistical definitions and collection methods in the constituting countries of the Community, which were assessed as not comparable at all, was Eurostat's first and foremost concern. In order to draw up a working programme for the advancement of the Community's economy - the cause of its existence - however, exactly those numbers of the six founding countries⁷ were required. To give an example how basic the harmonisation attempts were in those early days: Eurostat's statisticians questioned the domestic definitions of seemingly clear-cut things like salt: Was it cooking salt, road salt or salt used during chemical processes of which they received the member states data (interview, Eurostat, 13 April 2011)? Still, harmonisation is the buzzword. Today, a way out of this deadlock is seen in metadata, i.e. descriptions of the collection method, data source or definitions (interview, Eurostat, 17 May 2011). Although the ESS came formally only into existence in 1997, secondly, the service declared the close co-operation with the national statistical institutes as decisive from its creation onwards (de Michelis & Chantraine, 2003:15-16). It was and is still in the hands of those domestic institutes to produce the member states' official statistics. By that they represented the basic elements to the Community's data collection. The relationship with the NSIs changed considerably with the creation of, e.g. the statistical programme committee (SPC) and sectoral committees which disposed of delegated implementation power. From that period onwards, some NSIs wanted Eurostat to become independent of the Commission which they suspected to push the publication of certain sensitive figures in a certain direction (interview, Eurostat, 28 April 2011). An example for the adaptation of national statistical systems to the European level (Vink & Graziano, 2007) is detected in Eurostat's request for information from a NSI which it would not collect were it not forced by European law to supply this information. Without being obliged to give an EU-27 total, not all member states would collect as much detail for their national statistics. A simplistic example is found in agricultural statistics (interview, Eurostat, 13 April 2011): The growth of olives in

⁷ The founding countries of the ECSC were Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

Denmark is rather small. Less trivially, is an example from industrial statistics. Eurostat employed a three level system whereby the six largest member states, that make up 90% of the respective EU total, had to provide a high level of detail of most needs, whereas medium-sized countries had to provide less detail, and the smallest member states like Malta had just to provide a total.

Also, as a last task, the attention of the High Authority was drawn towards the liaison with external statistical bodies of what was to become the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) and the Economic Commission for Europe in elaborating common guidelines for statistics in order to being able to lucratively trade with non member states. But how was this co-operation with outer-EC/EU statistics collecting divisions framed in practice? A senior statistician at Eurostat describes it as follows (interview, Eurostat, 13 April 2011): “When they first started, they were very proud of inventing their own methods, for Europe, that was a period of great enthusiasm.” For instance, the first system of national accounts diverged markedly from the UN system which existed already at that time. This, of course, lead to a series of problems for the users who were suddenly confronted with two data sets: One of Eurostat and one of other organisations, both telling a different story. Because of this, Eurostat needed to converge and to align its methods with, for instance, the OECD, the UN, and depending on the subject, also the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for balance accounts. Today, this external liaison encompasses 50 to 60 organisations. Its strategy, thus, changed from a solo attempt to advertising its own needs wisely in negotiations concerning international systems. This is also important because many countries, but not every country and also to a diverging degree, take over the international system of e.g. migration statistics (UN, 1998), before transferring it in more detail to their specific national structures. A second direction of Eurostat’s cooperation with external statistical bodies emerged during the 1970s with the introduction of cooperation programmes with developing countries (de Michelis & Chantraine, 2003:92).

Eurostat’s duty to disseminate statistics stemming from Article 46 (5) ECSC Treaty was accomplished by e.g. the weekly bulletin on the Community’s coal industry, the statistical annex to the yearly ECSC reports and *informations statistiques*. This reflected Eurostat’s departments of that time, which until 1957 consisted of three departments which were “coal statistics”, “steel statistics”, and “general statistics” (de Michelis & Chantraine, 2003:17). The entirety of the data collection reflected the needs of quantitative information of

the High Authority of the ECSC. Although it would not be entirely correct to assess an exclusive focus on economic statistics in Eurostat's initial stage, the "social" statistics it collected, were rather socio-economic by nature, e.g. household-budgets which gave insight into the situation of workers' families in the coal and steel sector (interview, Eurostat, 28 April 2011), which evokes the notion of a positive spill-over effect (Haas, 1958). The dissemination of figures to external users⁸ - in the beginning on paper and later with the technical and IT progress as data base transmissions - enabled Eurostat to build up a good reputation outside the institutions and also to consolidate its role within the institutions.

Thus, the basic tasks have virtually remained the same, although the number of subjects on which Eurostat published statistics and the intensity of the co-operation between the national statistical systems and Eurostat increased with the insertion of new competences in succeeding Treaties. The development of the statistical domain covered by Eurostat went firstly hand in hand with that of the Commission which was and still is the "administrative patron" of Eurostat. For example when, around the mid-1980s, the Commission decided to start working on the formulation of a common economic and monetary policy, Eurostat developed a department of economical and monetary statistics. Eurostat's responsibilities amplified with the enlargements. When only six countries supplied Eurostat with data mainly focused on economic data, each statistician was responsible for one country. They were aware of the collection methods and definitions and discussed them amongst each other. With 27 member states and preparatory work with accession countries, this is rendered impossible (interview, Eurostat, 13 April 2011). In general, Eurostat takes the initiative to establish contacts with accession countries as soon as the Council decides to start negotiations concerning the accession of a country (interview, Eurostat, 18 April 2011). There were two exceptions: The first enlargement of the Community of the UK, Ireland and Denmark was made without a veritable input of the statistical office. Similarly, in the accession process of Greece there were almost no prior contacts made. Contrary to that, in the case of the accession of Spain and Portugal, the strategy of the Council and the Commission was to negotiate with the countries about their capability to adopt the *acquis communautaire*. Eurostat's role therein was threefold: Firstly, to verify the capability of the candidate countries to join and to integrate as their national statisticians as observers, before the accession was settled, the NSS

⁸ Primarily, member states' ministries, public agencies, for data that allows for sectoral comparisons between the countries; private enterprises; universities and research centres; international organizations, e.g. OECD, UNO, IMF (interview, Eurostat, 18 May 2011).

of the candidate countries in the working groups and statistical committees so that they could immediately start to operate at the moment of the accession. Secondly, to provide the countries with a training programme and technical assistance to facilitate the integration of the respective NSS to integrate in the ESS. Lastly, it is important to mention that Eurostat from the beginning of the 1990s onwards systematically invited statisticians beyond the Union's territory as observers to its working groups and committees. Candidate countries take part as associates, via training sessions (interview, Eurostat, 26 May 2011). Still, it is Eurostat's task to put forward harmonised concepts and definitions, common classifications and harmonised methods of surveys, working towards a common statistical language.

A preliminary conclusion is that Eurostat's responsibility as regards working out new, harmonised data collection methods and definitions for the EC/EU remained stable and was refined over the years of its existence. Its duty of dealing with the NSIs and with external statistical bodies was subject to change. However, these developments can be regarded as an intensification and further elaboration of the these two parts of Eurostat's mission.

Conclusion

Within these last paragraphs, the paper outlines its theoretical framework. Also, the preliminary findings which were established within the context of the case study will be summarised before the paper finally concludes whether Eurostat's status regarding its organisational structure and tasks was subject to path-dependent change. If yes, it will further delineate which kind of incremental change took place. Lastly, it will give an outlook on possible future findings.

In the paper's introduction, a theoretical framework of historical institutionalism was created. In short, the paper concluded that it was impossible to test the notion of critical junctures in studies focusing on a single case. Path-dependence, however should firstly meet the requirement of the starting point in a chain of events should be a peculiar event. Secondly, later events should cause less impact than those preceding and lastly, a once started process in a sequence should not be stopped or altered.

The paper assesses Eurostat's development over time regarding its organisational structure and mission overall as path-dependent. Firstly, the establishment of cooperation in the coal and steel sectors within the frame of the ECSC of six countries that had only recently experienced WWII clearly marked a peculiar event in Europe's history and marked Eurostat's

creation. It is, however, still unclear whether the second requirement of the decreasing impact of an event the more recent it is within the analysed sequence, is also met and would need more detailed research. The third requirement is met: Despite European integration accelerated and further enlargements and technical advancements impacted on Eurostat's set-up and tasks, these developments did not change the European statistical office's core responsibilities. Hence, Eurostat's institutional change over time can be analysed within the typology of incremental change. Layering seems to be the most probable pattern of incremental change within the context of this explorative study: The second option of Eurostat's creators, namely the insertion of a new European institution in the context of the ECSC's statistical environment that was focused on the cooperation with the existing NSIs indicates layering. Also, Eurostat increasingly, but not totally took over the function of the old institution. The establishment of a singular and powerful European statistical office, fully taking over the responsibilities of the NSIs, would have signified displacement. During the 1980s, the possibility of a drift occurred as Eurostat did not meet the expectations of the Commission as regards timely statistics and should be dissolved and its parts included into policy-DGs. After refocusing on its tasks, it was able to withstand the drift. Also, conversion or exhaustion did not take place, as Eurostat's core aims remained the same and it still exists to the present day.

Lastly, it turned out by this explorative study, that various other theoretical lenses as supranational governance or Europeanisation could provide further insights.

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