

Eurostat podcast: Stats in a Wrap

How does the EU cooperate with its neighbours and enlargement countries in the field of statistics?

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Jonathan Elliott

Stats in a Wrap - the podcast series from Eurostat

Jonathan Elliott

Welcome to another episode of Stats in a Wrap, the podcast series from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. If you've been listening to our podcasts, you will know that we think data are delicious. And we like nothing better than to slice, dice and wrap them into bite-sized morsels whilst enjoying the intriguing stories, the fascinating conversations and startling truths about the everyday and not so everyday stats that surround us.

Now, normally in our Wrap Café we like to talk about the numbers that reveal the workings of the 27 members of the European Union. But today we're talking about...well, the neighbours. As everyone knows, maintaining good relations with your neighbours is essential for harmonious living everywhere. And it's no different in the case of the European Union. Most of its neighbours are to the east and to the south.

And the EU has some very specific programmes and diplomatic institutions to maintain dialogues with these countries. And it works very closely with one group in particular - the candidate countries and the potential candidates who want to become members of the EU. At the moment, the number of countries that are in various stages of applying to become members stands at 10. And the EU is keen to help them join.

It offers after all the hope of peace, prosperity and stability in Europe, and it is an institution that's worked pretty well for everyone since 1957. But - to become a member of the European Union, a country has to show it can meet a lot of criteria. And you'll not be surprised to hear that one of the key areas in which accession countries must demonstrate excellence is statistics. And it's a field that's constantly changing - its standards and protocols are forever evolving.

And if that sounds a lot for a country to take on, consider the task if your country was only formed in 2006, as Montenegro was when it voted for independence from Serbia. Well, to talk us through cooperating and developing strong ties with neighbourhood statisticians and how that plays into the process of EU accession we have two contributors who are wonderfully placed to help us. They are Majda Savićević at Monstat, the official statistical office of the state of Montenegro, and Avis Beneš at

Eurostat - she heads the unit that deals with enlargement, neighbourhood, and development cooperation. Welcome both of you to the Wrap Café.

Avis Beneš

Thank you, Jonathan. Great to be here.

Majda Savićević

Thank you, Jonathan. It's really a great pleasure to be part of this podcast.

Jonathan Elliott

Great. Well, it's lovely to have both of you here. Before we dive into the world of enlargement and cooperation and stats, I just want to ask our contributors to tell us a bit more about themselves. Avis, tell us a little bit about your career journey to date and what led you to become the head of this particular unit at Eurostat. You're not, I think you told me, a statistician by training or background. And indeed, the role that you have is a highly sensitive one that involves quite a lot of diplomatic skill. Just tell us a little bit about how you came to this work.

Avis Beneš

Thank you. Thank you very much, Jonathan. How much time do you have? Because life is really an interesting but not always a predictable journey. My first degree is in economics, so I had some connections with statistics, but I also have masters in international relations and European integration. And I have to say I never focused really on a particular career path. For me it was really important to be where I thought I could make a difference or to do things which made sense.

I come from Croatia, so I experienced a lot of historical turbulences and developments in that part of the world from my student days in the 90s when the war was raging in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and started working then with the European Commission monitoring mission, really involved for eight years in Croatia's EU accession process, but on the side of the EU as the director of the EU Information Centre.

Basically, this EU path led me to Eurostat. I am very happy to be here, in Eurostat there is so much emphasis on the verified and objective information, and especially in the times we live in, when there is more and more blur between the facts and the twisted version of semi-facts with lots of manipulation, it really also feels like a good mission, good mission to be here. And also - knowing that I'm part of the process making a difference for the countries that you mentioned.

Jonathan Elliott

Majda, you've been at Monstat for 10 years or so now, but you didn't study statistics initially - tell us a bit about your journey in this field.

Majda Savićević

I have started my professional career as one of the best students of the final year of economy and to be very honest, at the beginning I was interested in finance. But in 2012, when I started to work, the biggest statistical action in our country, the population census, was just finished. That was a big research challenge for me. I have graduated on the topic of population census and that resulted to my wish to continue professional career in statistical office.

After that, I started to work as a statistician in sector for agriculture and environment. And I think it was a precious for me, because there I understood how the production of official data is demanding and how all the methodological aspects are important for quality and reliability of the data. In this moment, I'm working for 11 years in statistical office and my current position is Head of Department for International Cooperation and European Integration.

Person on street 1

I am, in fact, strongly in favour of expanding European Union, because European Union is not only the common market, free flow of people and capital, it's also the values that we represent and stand for. For example, democracy, rule of law, human rights, all these things could be really benefiting for all the countries who may not be today members of the European Union. So, expanding European Union is expanding the values. And this is something that will really tie us closely as the union.

Person on street 2

It's a good thing. But on the other hand, we have to see if we can manage it, you know? We cannot say: Okay, we're taking as many countries as possible but at the end nothing is working anymore like now. And I think one really important point for the EU is to manage all the economies together that will get bigger together, and can handle it.

Jonathan Elliott

I'm just going to come to Avis at Eurostat now, to give us a bit of context. Tell us about these candidate countries and the potential candidates, all of which are very different, with different stages in their applications. I think it'd be helpful for our listeners to get a kind of bird's eye view, let's say, of the neighbourhood, particularly as it relates to joining the EU. Avis, just talk us through the map of candidate countries and potential candidates, as well as separate concept of EU neighbourhood itself - what are those countries and whether they overlap in any aspects?"

Avis Beneš

We can look at it from two aspects: one is geographical and the other is political. And this political would reflect the level of aspirations to join the EU. But when we go into the geographical sphere, we have two European neighbourhood policies, east and south. So, these are the Europe's or EU's direct neighbours.

There we have Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and until recently Belarus – which, at the moment, the cooperation with is suspended from the time of Russian aggression - these are the countries where EU also wants to put additional emphasis of cooperation. Same in the ENP south region, so, European neighbourhood south, where we have 10 countries of North Africa and Middle East, and currently also suspended the cooperation with Syria.

And then we have southern Eastern Europe, where we have Western Balkans and Türkiye, which until recently were the only enlargement countries. Enlargement, just to explain, is the general term for all these technical candidate countries and potential candidates. We have these 10 countries, which

are...eight of them are candidate countries, and we have two countries which are called potential candidates or have European perspective – these are Kosovo¹ and Georgia.

This enlargement process is again placed as a top priority on the EU's agenda. EU as well as Eurostat is putting a lot of emphasis on all the European neighbourhood countries. The strongest emphasis is on these 10 enlargement countries.

Person on street 2

So, I think the EU has some issues with Member States that are already a part of the EU, that maybe should be dealt with before expanding.

Person on street 3

How far that extends, I don't know. But I also maybe do think that there should be some sort of cultural compatibility between the countries within the European Union.

Jonathan Elliott

Listeners in Western Europe perhaps will not feel quite as keenly the role of the EU as a peace building and peace maintaining body. Avis, you just touched on Russia, and you just touched on some other kinds of political insecurity, instabilities in the Western Balkans. But the question on some people's lips might be: Well, what's in it for the EU? Why enlarge? Why get bigger? It's already doing quite well. To people who might ask you that question what would you reply?

Avis Beneš

Yes, yes, it's a question that is dominating many discussions in many countries in the EU. I mean, as a reminder and something that you also refer to at your introduction - enlargement goes to the heart of the purpose of the EU. It has been one of the most successful policies and creating the strongest union ever on the European continent from 1957, when the Rome agreements were signed. The credible enlargement policy is a geostrategic investment for the European Union and for all the countries that are part of the European Union, in peace, stability, security, prosperity.

And it benefits everybody. There is a sense of having a stable and democratic European continent, based on community of countries with the same values, all the values that were mentioned previously (rule of law, respect of judiciary, free market, human rights, etc). If there are more countries which adhere to this practice and those principles, it makes the whole EU project much stronger.

Jonathan Elliott

It is a fascinating dialogue, a two-way process between the EU and the accession countries, all of whom have to align their laws and institutions, so that the European Union can have them as meaningful members. We'll be talking a bit more about that later in the podcast. But before we do, I'd just like to go to Montenegro now and to Majda, just to talk through her country's accession story. It started the process around the time of its independence from Serbia, some 17 years ago, and its candidacy was formalised in 2010. Just tell us Majda about the challenges and hurdles that you've observed in that process.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Majda Savićević

I have to start with saying that our country had a clear plan and vision but also the need for a European integration process. But that required the transformation of the entire system. Our country became candidate country in December 2010, and accession negotiations started in June 2012. In that specific moment, all state administration capacities were fully dedicated to this process. Montenegro and Serbia are still one of the frontrunners by the assessments of many European officials.

And that only shows that no matter how the steps are small or big, we are constantly moving. From a statistical point of view, process of European integration is a very challenging one. But already in 2014, the chapter 18, statistics, was opened. What gave us sufficient courage that we will deal with the process is that we opened the chapter without any opening issues. Official statistics is a special chapter - it has around 350 regulations to implement, but also it offers many different data sets to other chapters.

I truly believe that the smaller countries, the bigger challenges are. But if we succeed to face them, the benefits are enormous. After 13 years from becoming candidate, we, and I believe I'm speaking on behalf of all the enlargement countries, I feel like we are the last puzzle of this unique union. And I would only add that we know our importance for the European Union and the importance of European Union to us.

Person on street 3

For me personally, I like the idea of all of the smaller countries combining to be a stronger unit as one and representing, yeah, Europe as a union. Yeah.

Jonathan Elliott

Now, the drive to beef up and increase the firepower of the statistical institutes of candidate countries is a big part of the process of accession. And we in the Wrap Café know very well that the power and beauty of the numbers in statistics give amazing insights into what is really going on in a country: from its trade to its demographics, its agriculture, education, environment, transport, well, the list goes on and on.

The whole DNA of a country is completely observable through its stats. And if all the EU's members are pulling together and doing their stats in the same way, then that makes for a very powerful tool for clear policymaking and really good political debate. But, Avis, there is in the process of joining the EU a further benefit. Well before accession, candidate countries are starting to produce really useful data about themselves, and this is a great win-win. Can you just tell us a bit more about that?

Avis Beneš

What is crucial in this win-win situation that you say among other things, it's this development of standards, methodologies, and also the production of data, which is beneficial for all parts in the system. We also consider it as a joint success and achievements - for countries themselves, but also for better decision-making processes in the countries. Having comparable data is the essence of the whole story.

EU on its side also would like to be objectively aware of the situation in the partner countries. Having this reliable official statistics data enables EU to form its policies, its economic investments, its programmes, and myriad of various assistance programmes. Also, official statistics data is the basis for

numerous EU flagship strategies - from supporting socio-economic developments, whether it's digital transformation, green agenda, everything which is very high on the agenda of the policies today.

The final objective is, as I say, that benefits both sides to obtain harmonized high-quality data in line with European and international standards, hoping that it will be used for the best decision-making. And also to say that we on the Eurostat side, we also make an effort to improve transparency of the data of these countries, because we publish them through comparative publications, which are rarely done in this way, but also in the dissemination database, in Eurobase, together with the data from the EU Member States. So, it also profiles their data much higher altogether, and I invite all the listeners to have a look at Eurostat website to find this data.

Jonathan Elliott

Now, it takes a long time for countries to join the EU. Britain, let us not forget, first applied to join the European Economic Community as it was then back in 1963. And it took 10 years before it signed the Treaty of Accession. Portugal and Spain took over six years each to join the EU. Türkiye applied in 1999 and is still going through the process. North Macedonia applied in 2005 and has yet to join.

The compendium of EU law that covers every conceivable aspect of national life, from fisheries to finance, agriculture to energy, and of course, statistics, is huge. It's called the *acquis communautaire* and it runs through 35 chapters - every single one has its own process of harmonising national and EU law. There is a lot of work to do.

Person on street 2

I think it's...it's good that it's a long process, because it should be a long-term commitment to the EU as well. So, it's important to make sure that the Member States that join they really want to and are ready for it.

Person on street 3

I think it's fine that the process is long. I think this is not something that should be taken lightly because if the EU is going to work as one single unit in some aspects of things, I think it's important that the countries that are part of the EU, should be vetted properly before they join. Yeah.

Jonathan Elliott

Majda, let's come to you, we'll cross over the fence and talk about it from the other side as you've observed it yourself in Monstat. There you are, since 2012, I think, you've been talking to your opposite numbers in Luxembourg. That's a long relationship now that you've had with Eurostat. Tell us a little bit about it from your experience: How does this relationship work and what are the benefits?

Majda Savićević

Everything starts with a clear plan and a clear vision. In that matter, I can say that we had set up the vision. And there I can see the Eurostat as a main contributor or a help for us to set the vision. Eurostat is the voice of the European Commission because they're usually trying to inform us or involve us in the European Commission priorities, and our role is then to provide official statistical data to support those policies.

I would also add that this is a very regulated process, and that Eurostat is providing all the methodological standards that we need to follow. And aim of this is that all the countries have

comparable data in production of official statistics. Additional value of cooperation with Eurostat is that is that they are guiding us through this very regulated system. They are constantly reminding us that there is still work to be done. And I think that is a very important element of our cooperation. They are also recommending different measures for improvement of statistical work. They are not only related to the data, but they are always recommending some structural or systematic reforms, which are also the signal not only for us, but the national authorities which also have important role in this political process which we call European integration.

Person on street 1

Yes, I wouldn't say this is spending money – is investing money. Why? Because we will add value for the regions that may not be so developed, that may not be so beneficial as let's say Germany or some other countries are today, because when we are within the family, the average development is what we are seeking for. So, if we will be on the same level of development, then we can talk about cohabitation, we can talk about supporting each other and not taking advantage of each other.

Jonathan Elliott

Now there is a second set of challenges in developing the statistical robustness of candidate countries, and that is the fact that the world of statistics does not stand still. Data science is constantly advancing as all science strives to, technology opens up new ways of doing things, change is constant in dynamic, advanced economies, statistical methods change with them – that means, the target is always moving. Avis, this is a tremendous challenge – the candidate countries not only have to raise their game, but the game itself is not even the same game from one day to the next. That's a tough ask, isn't it?

Avis Beneš

Absolutely. It's a...it's something that it's also a challenge for the EU Member States, let's be clear. It's not just the countries which are enlargement countries that have to face it and deal with it. It is a never-ending race, so to say, which is having a lot of challenges and obstacles. EU regulations are updated regularly, statistical standards are changed, the partner countries need to adapt to new legislation, but also to the new practices.

We have systematically included all these enlargement countries into so-called expert groups of Eurostat, which are the backbone of the work, where all the EU Member States together with the enlargement countries talk about the latest developments, new reforms, the practices. And in this sense, they are fully emerged, (well, fully - almost) in a large extent emerged in a European statistical system.

Jonathan Elliott

Let's not forget that stats are there to help people in their everyday lives. Majda, Montenegro is a young country, its people were united in their desire to form it less than two decades ago. How does the average citizen see the accession project and the need for robust statistics?

Majda Savićević

The latest public opinion poll in Montenegro show that 77% of citizens of our country are supporting the European integrations. And of course, they are expecting that our country is the next Member State. I would add that this is very encouraging for us, but at the same time a big obligation for all of us who are

in this process, because this is the highest support ever from the moment that we started the European integration process.

We are trying to explain our citizens that statistics is very important. It's important because it delivers, but it's also important because in order to make informed decisions, you need official statistical data. It's important because with data you can analyse problems, you can plan, you can track progress, you can measure performances, and in my opinion official statistical data are the DNA of every informed decision. And in similar words speaking: statistics captures the reality, and it really helps the citizens to understand the world.

Person on street 4

Statistics gives a very objective answers to the questions. There is no...there is no...no hard feelings here. You either answer to the criteria or you don't.

Person on street 3

I think statistics matter a lot, just from an objective point of view, because if it's just a matter of opinions of whether a country is fit or not, then I think looking at the...the specific data is...is important before they're able to join.

Jonathan Elliott

Now, we mentioned earlier the guiding "bible" - if you like - of EU law, which guides accession, the famous *acquis communautaire* and it's 35 chapters, which are clustered into six groupings: internal market, resources, competitiveness, and so on. But sitting above them are the fundamentals cluster, the core principles of what a country has to be, to be in the EU.

These are: public procurement, justice and freedom, judiciary and rights, financial control, all pretty essential basics, and with them recently has been added statistics. It's a measure, isn't it, Avis, of the importance of statistics that it now sits alongside human rights, justice, freedom, and security?

Avis Beneš

Well, I mean, there is this mantra saying that reliable and comparable statistics is a precondition for successful accession process. What does it mean, actually? There is the need for candidate countries to implement these comprehensive reforms. Some of these reforms are really painful and not popular, not always easy. In each round of enlargement there is something new learned, and there are some reforms.

And we had the reform of this enlargement process from early 2020 and where we are glad to see - because we also, we're advocating it - that the statistics chapter in between all these 35 chapters becomes part of this fundamentals cluster of chapters, meaning these are the ones who are opened the first and they close the last. The progress under these chapters actually determines the overall pace of negotiations.

It has been a recognition of importance of statistics, which, as you said, goes beyond one chapter, it's connected with overall process in the country. For each of the enlargement countries, there is this so-called enlargement package, where in every October, EU gives its evaluation of the progress that countries have made in the last year.

Person on street 5

Well, certainly it is good to be in European Union, because the European Union is alliance that includes the countries with same values, with free market, with free labour markets and so. So, I think it's positive for everyone - for the countries who wants to be members, for members who are already members. Because it's a big community who is getting rich by culture, financially, and so...

Jonathan Elliott

Majda, let's just talk a little bit about the national conversation in Montenegro itself. You were just talking earlier about how engagement and standards and understanding and the sophistication and depth of statistical knowledge and data science about the country has increased, and you've had to increase it. But has it fed into general everyday conversation or the understanding of the country and its relationship with Europe and the wider geography? I mean, how has stats become part of the everyday sort of social discourse - let's put it that way - in Montenegro?

Majda Savićević

My impression is that official statistical data have never been used as they are now in our country. Probably the main reason is that our country suffered different socio-economic turbulences, and everyone wants to know about official statistical data, so they can measure all the processes.

Person on street 3

Some of the pros are the economic aspect of it and I also think traveling between countries a lot easier is a big bonus. And on the con side I think there's an aspect of having less control as a country, some laws are...are broad across the EU, and maybe some countries lose a bit of control in that aspect.

Jonathan Elliott

Now, no podcast about European enlargement, or touching on European enlargement could be complete without talking about recent events. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has completely kickstarted so many things and changed so many perspectives. Avis, just tell us a little bit about Eurostat and how it's changed into high gear with the huge acceleration to join the EU of the three countries particularly, the "associated trio" they're called - this is the tripartite format of the three new enlargement countries Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. How has that changed things, particularly in relation to stats and the stats development of these countries? Just tell us a bit about that.

Avis Beneš

Well, indeed, it has been a sort of earthquake with the accession process, what has been happening, and I mean not just with the accession process - generally, in geopolitical and security reality terms, what has happened last year, rather harsh awakening in some aspects. The EU had to act rather fast in terms of political developments. As you mentioned, from June last year Ukraine and Moldova are candidate countries, Georgia a country with a European perspective.

Eurostat also had to react fast and of course we have been cooperating with these three countries a lot even before through the previous regional programmes and... but this has been taking it to a new higher level altogether. Also, the request, the need, for data from those countries has dramatically increased, and we are in touch with the countries to see what the possibilities are to increase data collection.

There are of course some special situations in the Ukraine, when there is a provision that according to the martial law, in certain areas one is not supposed to provide data or share data. What we have done in Eurostat is certainly to make the strategic decision to include these three new countries also in this, as mentioned, this backbone of statistical methodologies and statistical work, in these expert groups. We also are constantly in touch with them and discuss their needs, they are fully at the table. And now there are also new dynamics where the group of enlargement countries is not anymore seven, but ten. There are meetings where the ten countries will be present, and this will be also probably creating some new dynamics between the countries as well.

Jonathan Elliott

So, this brings us neatly on to another bit of technical jargon, that, like so much else in the field of statistical cooperation, sounds terribly dull but is quite the opposite. And these are the dread words: commitment on confidence. If you're still awake, it's the power of statisticians to scare politicians and keep them honest. Stats after all, merely reflect the reality of what's going on in a country - a mirror that can reveal painful truths, especially about the policies advocated by elected representatives. *Avis*, dreadfully boring phrase, commitment on confidence, but just tell us a bit more about it.

Avis Beneš

Well, the principle is very important despite its not the most attractive name. It is actually promise of politicians not to smudge the mirror and put its tone over the mirror. The goals of the things that we do in our cooperation, one of the objectives is to promote implementation of good governance and implementation of professional independence of national statistical offices.

It's not always known that this is the principle that the statistical offices are supposed to be independent in terms of the actual statistical data. There is supposed to be no interference from any political aspect in this. And it also aims, basically, to ensure more public trust into European official statistics - not that many people are aware of it, but this may be why we are here as well.

Many EU Member States have it either as a standalone or enshrined in their statistical legislations, and what we are glad to see in Eurostat that from the group of countries that we were just talking about, there are three who have adopted it as well, although it was not an obligation, certainly not at this point of their accession process. And these are: Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia, whose governments have adopted these commitments.

Jonathan Elliott

The EU helps candidate countries develop with aid, financial assistance, funding programmes, and so on right across the areas of the *acquis*, not just stats, and these are the IPA funds. IPA stands for instrument for pre-accession assistance, it's a lot of money - between 2021 and 2027 the budget is something in the region of 14 billion euros. *Avis*, how do we see that translating into results into, say, the Western Balkans, for example? Can you sort of point at what we've seen in concrete terms that the funding has turned into, what are we seeing on the ground? What are the results?

Avis Beneš

Well, just before that just to say - these 14 billion euros, it's IPA for all kinds of areas, not just for statistics, because if statistics would be getting this amount of money, we would be extremely glad. In the last 15 years or so there has been about 65 million euros allocated in these programmes. And the

goal is to have this capacity development, methodology support, development of statistical infrastructure in their own national statistical systems.

We help the countries to develop many statistical surveys and products that they would otherwise would not be able to develop. There is a lot of engagement of European experts, EU experts who give advice to NSI. In these last 15 years, we had about 450 statisticians from these seven countries who have through this IPA trainees scheme joined and worked in Eurostat or EU Member States for between three to six months.

They are taking home really very precious experience, knowledge and contacts. And this is something that we have been investing in a lot. The biggest result and the biggest objective and the goal is to have much more data from the countries - collected, validated - as said - presented same as the data from EU Member States in the Eurobase. We are not there yet, there is still a process to go. There is a goal that in a medium-term period, the enlargement countries will catch up with the EU Member States. Statistics is a really long process which takes time, and we are glad to continue in the future.

Jonathan Elliott

Wonderful, thank you very much. I think we have to go to Montenegro in closing now and just talk about how Monstat has benefited from its work with Eurostat. Majda, can you just talk us through the milestones and achievements and some of the kinds of concrete results of your relationship with the EU? What have you achieved together would you say?

Majda Savićević

Everything that we have achieved until now would not have been possible without financial and expert support of the European Commission. And I think establishing a good cooperation with Eurostat was an added value to this process. I must say that we are using the pre-accession funds from 2005. And in this moment, we have reached the sufficient level of expertise. And we succeeded to implement new surveys and gather a huge set of official statistical data.

As I mentioned couple of times the added value for these processes was the constant guiding of Eurostat that really resulted in a clear recommendation to follow, if you want to develop our official statistical system. We have succeeded to establish statistical system fully in line with European regulation. We have succeeded to independently realise the biggest statistical actions like censuses are, we have succeeded to maintain independency in our work.

We have harmonised around 65% of methodologies to our system. We have transformed and we keep transforming the IT system so we can increase the quality and timeliness of the data. Very important in my opinion is that our staff is highly educated and already we have different experts' engagements in different statistical fields.

Our main challenges are the small number of staff, spatial capacities, financial capacities, and due to the fact that legislation is constantly moving, this makes the work of one statistician, a very challenging one. I can conclude that we still must reform, we still must keep growing and anticipate changes, but I can assure you that we will not get tired of doing that.

Jonathan Elliott

Well, we're out of time on the podcast today, a fascinating tour of the neighbourhood... and a sometimes slow, yes, but so necessarily thorough business of getting the statistical systems of

candidate countries ready for membership. It only remains for me to thank our wonderful guests in the Wrap Café today. Thank you very much for your contributions, Majda Savićević of Monstat, the official statistical office of the state of Montenegro. Thank you, Majda.

Majda Savićević

Thank you, Jonathan. It was a pleasure to be part of this podcast today.

Jonathan Elliott

And Avis Beneš, Head of Unit Enlargement, Neighbourhood and Development Cooperation at Eurostat. Avis, thank you so much for joining us today.

Avis Beneš

Thank you, Jonathan. And thank you for tackling this important subject and I hope we were interesting enough for our listeners.

Jonathan Elliott

You certainly were. Thank you very much. If you've enjoyed the show, don't forget to share with friends and colleagues where Stats in a Wrap can be found on Spotify, Apple, Google, and all the usual places. And if you'd like to know more about the subjects discussed today, just search "stats in a wrap Eurostat".

And of course, join us for the next episode, when the Wrap Café will be dishing up more flavours of insights - this time about quality, easy to spot in everyday things like food, well...wraps for example, and clothing and things like that. But how about statistics? Well, Eurostat has a dedicated team on the case, and we'll be hearing how that benefits, among many other things, the Eurovision Song Contest. Well...stay tuned for a quality show to find out more. But for now, goodbye!