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Assessing and improving quality in official statistics: the case of the French Label Committee

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Abstract

The French National Statistical Label Committee examines all the surveys carried out by official statistical authorities. After a favourable opinion on the project, a notice of compliance is given to the survey by the Label Committee. The examination of surveys lies on an in depth analysis of six criteria, each of them beeing linked with one or more items of the Code of practice. The paper describes the way it works and how worthy the assessment of surveys is.

Keywords: quality, methodology, official statistics

The French National Statistical Label Committee (« Comité du label de la statistique publique ») has been created in 1994. It is competent to examine the projects of collecting social or economic data through statistical surveys, carried out by official statistical authorities.

Actually, regarding the law of June 7, 1951, on legal obligation, coordination and confidentiality in the field of statistics, any official statistical survey must be first agreed by the National Council for Statistical Information (***Cnis***), which shall appraise, in a public debate, whether the survey is of general interest or not. Then, once the draft survey is ready, it is presented to the Label Committee which checks its statistical quality.

After a favourable opinion on the project, a notice of compliance is given to the survey by the Label Committee and the notice of its mandatory character. A ***label of general interest and statistical quality*** is then delivered. Thus, the Committee's work supplements the Cnis's one and builds a frame for all official statistical surveys.

The label is a necessary condition for the survey to be implemented, thanks to the ministerial certification ("*visa*"), based on this label, which is issued and published in the Official Journal. The Minister of Finance and Economy also decides, on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee, if the survey is compulsory or not.

The paper describes the way the Committee works and how worthy the assessment of surveys is, in order to improve their quality.

1. Composition of the Committee

The board of governance of the Label Committee is made of the President, a "rapporteur" of the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (Insee), who prepares the examination of the files to be submitted to the Committee, and the Secretariat (3 people) who organizes the meetings and the agendas, writes the final reports and archives all the documents.

The work of the Committee deals with all surveys concerning either businesses, households or individuals, agricultural farms or local public establishments. It comprises different commissions competent to examine the projects made up of the collecting of information through statistical surveys concerning, respectively, each of fields given above.

Each commission, whose members are named in official regulations, comprises different representatives, according to the covered fields: as well as the President of the Committee and the Directors of Insee in charge of the field or other statistical authorities implementing statistical surveys arising from the commission, members are :

-for households and individuals, representatives of the National Commission For Data Protection, one of trade union organisations, one of the National Union of Family Associations, one of social researchers.

- for business surveys, one representative from the French Enterprise Movement (employers), one of the Confederation of Small and Medium Enterprises, one of the Assembly of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry, one of the Permanent Assembly of Chambers of Skilled Trades and Craftworkers, one of the Union of Craftworkers, one of the trade union organisations.

- some specific members for projects concerning local authorities or local public establishments, among them: the Director General of Local Authorities, the

Commissioner General for Equality of Treatment for the Regions, one Secretary General for Regional Affairs.

- for farms or their agricultural holdings: one representative of the Permanent Assembly of Chambers of Agriculture, one of the National Federation of Farmers' Unions, one of the French National Institute of Research for Agriculture, one of the central management council of the Agricultural Social Insurance Mutual Benefit Fund, one regional or departmental director in charge of agriculture.

In the case of a regional or locally-initiated survey, the director in charge of regional operations at Insee is also member of the Committee.

In each of these commissions, ***experts*** with an advisory status also participate in the Committee meetings. They build a team of about ten people, named by the President of the Committee. They are chosen among methodologists or people with high knowledge either in data collection procedures or in the field covered by the survey. Their role is crucial in the assessment of statistical quality of files which are submitted.

In order to ensure ***professional independence***, members of the commissions must abstain during a deliberation concerning a case or a project that they have participated in.

Therefore, the Label Committee reflects points of view of representatives from the social or economic society and, partly, from educational world or researchers, as the Cnis does.

2. Procedures of submitting and examination

To enable a dialogue of good quality, i.e. in depth and accurate, between the Committee members and representatives from survey departments, a file must be presented by the survey department ("producer") to the Committee, containing a defined number of items, in order to provide a broad description of the survey.

The first step is a preliminary examination of the file by the board of governance and experts in a specific meeting. It results from this a high level technical ("prelabel") report (between five and ten pages), written by the experts. In this one, questions are pointed out: actually, in some cases, it seems necessary to clarify or bring complementary explanations on such or such items. The report is sent to the department submitting the survey and to the other members of the Committee, in order to organize following discussions during the meeting.

In the second step, the producer in charge with the survey answers to the questions in a written form and the resulting document is again sent to all participants before the meeting.

Then the Committee meets in a plenary session. The survey department is asked to give a short oral presentation (between ten and twenty minutes), emphasizing the points that the department considers most important, without repeating exactly what is already in the file, read before by the Committee members, but answering to some questions underlined in the technical report.

This short presentation is followed by a wide discussion between the survey department, the board of governance, the experts and the other members of the Committee. When it ends, a secret deliberation takes place. ***It should be underlined that any member of the Committee shall express freely his/her own view***, according to the importance given to the survey or to the organism he/she represents. It results from this a large scope or different points of view, varied, complementary, constructive and fruitful.

After a favourable opinion on the project, a notice of compliance is given to the survey by the Label Committee[1]. The decision statement is then written by the secretariat and ratified by all members.

Most of the time, the Committee does not content of delivering the notice of compliance. It also expresses some ***recommendations***, with different degrees of expectations. In most of cases, they ought to be strictly followed in order to improve the process and make it closer to the best practices. In others, it may only consist of suggestions, advices, ways of improvement. But, in worst cases, the label cannot be delivered until a specific work has been done by the producer and its results sent to the Commitee: it may deal with methodology, building of the questionnaire, results of tests (cf. below, § 3e) etc.. In these cases, ***the reserves are considered as "suspensive"*** and the label is only given after the exam of the new documents by the Committee (it covers about 7% of the surveys). In rare cases (about 4 %), the label is not at all delivered and the survey must be submitted again in a new way or is abandoned

Each year about 60 surveys are examined, that is more than 1200 since the beginning. The label is generally delivered for a five year period. Therefore, yearly, quarterly or monthly

1 . A certification number is issued, on behalf of the minister(s), after the Label Committee has issued an opinion of compliance signifying that the survey has obtained the label of general interest and statistical quality.

surveys are not examined each year. Other specific surveys, either periodic or not, are examined some monthes before the time they have to begin, such as decided by the producers.

On the opposite side, if the Committee points out some difficulties or suggests some improvements in methodology or data collection process, it may deliver the notice of compliance only for two or three years. That means, in particular, that it will be very careful in the following examination to see if the works it has asked for have been done by the survey department.

It should be underlined that the Label Committee has no function of assessing the quality and relevance of results drawn and published from the surveys, nor of making comments on them. Its area covers all the process of building and carrying out the surveys. However it puts attention to data dissemination (cf. below, § 3g).

3. Assessment criteria

The quality of the survey is assessed from very broad points of view. But the work of the Label Committee does not consist only of drawing up a list of criteria and attributing a mark to each of them.

Actually, the examination of surveys lies on an in depth analysis of six main criteria, each of them being linked with one or more items of the European Code of practice, as described in following items. It thus ensures that all aspects of quality have been taken into account.

The links with the Code are here written in red.

a) **General context : European constraints, legal obligations**..**:**

The Label Committee must be informed about all constraints weighing on the survey. In particular, it has to know if there are European regulations or directives or other international constraints, or if the survey shall anwer to an order from the Government.

One particular point is the **Comitology.** The composition of the consultation and steering committee(s) and the reports from the main meetings are required to help the Label Committee to assess if unions and management have been enough consulted. It is particularly important when the survey deals with issues such as working conditions, relationships between workers and enterprises etc…

It is important to know if it is a new survey or a renewal. When a former survey has been carried out some years before, the changes must be underlined in order to see if the new survey fits the changes in economic or social conditions or to what extent it allows comparability with the previous results. It is also important to verify if the field covered by the survey is not dealt with by other existing sources.

At last, when the survey is planned to be compulsory (for interviewees), it must be justified precisely. The Committee deliberates upon this point and may accept or not to make the survey compulsory. The compulsory character may not be delivered in very sensitive topics, dealing for instance with health, private behaviours, opinions.. or implying long duration of interviews; in the case of business surveys, the same occurs for some surveys on very small companies. On the opposite side, however, making the survey mandatory is always considered as an asset to reduce non response rate and non response bias. And all surveys conducted according to European regulations are mandatory. **(2.3)**

b) **Statistical methodology (6) (7) and (8), with focuses on two main domains: first, sampling, data basis, statistical units; then, all statistical treatments downstream.**

- ***Sampling, field, data basis, statistical units, eather covered or surveyed, variables of interest, sampling frame*.**

  The Committee verifies that the population concerned by the survey and the population surveyed are clearly specified. The definition of the collection unit must be clear and thorough, and especially refer only to well-defined concepts. The unit type (households, individuals, enterprises, establishments...) and the population size of the corresponding observation unit should also be mentioned.

  An accurate description or the sampling process must be done. The choice of sample size must be justified in terms of cost constraints or expected accuracy (in some cases, the latter criteria are given by European regulations), according to the type of results planned and the level of detail sought (region or not, for example). More generally, any information on the accuracy of the estimators is welcome.

  The sampling plan shall specify the stratification or balancing variables chosen and the sampling rate for each stratum. It shall also show the characteristics of the sampling base: overall size, size per stratum. Attention is put on distribution of sample weights among strata.

  When the survey is regular, the method of sample rotation should be explained. The Committee also looks if the sample is *coordinated negatively* with samples for other existing surveys, in order to minimize overlapping and lighten the burden of responses (it occurs mainly for business surveys).

- ***Non-response correction, calibration, imputation and other post-data collection methods***.

  The procedures for processing of non-responses and setting final weightings should also be described. Generally these processes are not completetely defined at the time of submitting the survey to the Committee. Nevertheless, the Committee appreciates when the producer is able to give a broad description of methods which will be implemented. In some cases, some preliminary studies will be necessary or different methods will be compared. In such cases, the Committee generally asks to have a paper on these topics after. It is a way for it to verify the coherence and the suitability of chosen methods. Again, the distribution of weights and the risk of extreme values are underlined and the producer must be careful about these items and indicate what it intends to do.

- ***It must be underlined that, in these fields, the Committee does not substitute to the methodologists who have worked on these topics***. But it verifies that all the methodologic work has been well done, according to the “state of art” or, if not, it may suggest to do further works or test alternative methods etc.. It must also verify that the necessary contacts with the team of methodologists have actually taken place in the building of the survey or that methods implemented are correct from the point of view of methodologists. Actually, it works in this matter as an “***alert transmitter***”.

c) **Data collection process**, contact with the interviewees, confidentiality protection, security of data transmission..

- **Data collection processes. (4)**

  The Committee examines the process: will the questionnaire be delivered or distributed by the Post Office, available on a Web site, face-to-face surveying (with a paper questionnaire or in the form of computer-assisted collection or other), by telephone, or how these processes could be mixed etc.; who is surveyed and how (random draw of an individual from the household, choice of a member of the couple, etc). It should be convinced about the relevance of the choices made by the producer, according to the questions of costs, survey duration…

If the data collection is not undertaken by the producing department, but subcontracted, the Label Committee must be informed of this and know about the ways the service provider shall be controlled.

At last, the Committee shall see whether the use of administrative data is planned and under what terms, or if matching procedures are to be considered.

- A wide emphasis is put on ***notification letters to the interviewees***. All the letters sent or given to the person surveyed are examined by the Committee. This component of the examination is by no means insignificant. These letters represent a key element in the quality and they aim to make the questionnaire or the survey acceptable. It is therefore useful for the Label Committee to examine them.

  These letters may take several forms:

  - Letter notifying the interviewee that he will receive a questionnaire, or be called by telephone or should connect on a Web site;
  - Letter or notice accompanying the questionnaire;
  - Reminder letters;
  - Letter serving notice (if a response is mandatory);
  - Letter of notification of non-response.

  In the letters, the survey must be presented in a manner which is sufficiently motivating and convincing, so that the people contacted feel like responding, thereby ensuring a good response rate. The letter, short enough to be read, gives reasons for collection of information such as this, while explaining *the purpose of the survey*: which needs does it respond to, not satisfied elsewhere? Who are requesters, the users, the body conducting the survey and its partners if any?

  Acronyms should be avoided. The information given to the interviewee must be reliable. Technical comments, such as those relating to the building of the sample, appear superfluous. However, the way the unit being surveyed has been drawn at random and the sample base must be precised (the “representativeness” of the sample can be mentioned).

In the case of a partnership, the recipients of the results should be noted and what will be transmitted to them: files, tables, etc.

Finally, comments on the mandatory nature of the survey or not and the preservation of statistical confidentiality are essential, with regard to respect of statistical secrecy of two kinds:

- ✓ concerning the individual responses of companies (or establishments), it is guaranteed that responses may in no case be used for the purposes of tax inspections or punitive measures;
- ✓ with regard to dissemination: public data cannot allow identification of the unit[2].

An indication of the time needed to fill in the questionnaire should be provided ("***fair data collection***" principle). The return date of the questionnaire must be provided (if it applies).

It is also desirable to speak of the dissemination (date of publication, contact details to obtain documents). In some cases, if individual feedback of information is planned, it should be mentioned.

To give consistency to the letters for different surveys, the Committee has written recently a booklet giving advice and principles upheld by it, including a set of standard letters which can be used in most of the cases, whatever the topic of the survey or the data collection process. These letters must be followed as close as possible.

- **Security(5)**

If applicable, the specific measures taken to guarantee statistical confidentiality will be described. The security of data transmission, from the interviewees to a central unit or a body which keys data, is also studied by the Committee.

2 . In the case of business surveys, a rule stipulates that the results published must relate to at least three units and not include a dominant position which would count for more than 85% in public data.

d) **Study of the questionnaire**, with narrow links with the topics of relevance with respect to the general interest appraised by the Cnis.

The questionnaire is the core of the survey. The Committee has to examine the final version of the full questionnaire, that is the questionnaire as developed after the latest tests. It also requires explanatory notices and, in some cases, a summary document, giving a condensed written explanation of the logic on which the questionnaire has been constructed and placing it in perspective.

If the instruction handbook for interviewers is available and facilitates the understanding of questions, it is useful to help the Committee. In the same idea, the Committee may need the book of cards listing the possible responses to certain questions which cannot be included in the questionnaire (too many terms, "open" questions, etc). The Committee also assesses the shape of the questionnaire, regarding data collection process: in the case of computer-assisted collection questionnaires, it is necessary to have a "readable" version; in the case of internet questionnaires, a paper version is needed.

Also, if there are different versions of the questionnaire according to the sub-population to which it applies, these must be included.

Finally, for renovated surveys, the questionnaire from the previous version should systematically be provided, clearly displaying the changes made, which will allow the Label Committee to assess the renovation in question, particularly in terms of response burden.

The examination of the questionnaire mainly deals with the following points:

- Consistency with the general interest defined by the Cnis **(11)**
- Relevance according to the purpose of the survey: avoid additional questions without direct correlation, or strongly justify them
- Non ambiguous nor redundant questions
- Items for answering: exhaustive, non redundant
- Length and duration of the questionnaire, with respect to the data collection process (for instance, avoid long lists of items when the interview is by phone..)

- Correct organization of filters between questions.

Generally the Committee makes a lot of remarks on the questionnaire, leading to review some questions or some anwers items. The final version which will actually be used for the survey has to take into account any observations by the Label Committee. This final version must imperatively be submitted to the Committee Secretariat as soon as it is available after the quality label has been obtained.

e) **Test report (considered as a part of the assessment of the questionnaire)**

The Committee appreciates mainly the quality of the questionnaire through the test report. A survey whose questionnaire would not have been tested before being submitted to the Committee or whose tests would have been "poor", on a very few number of interviewees for instance, could not obtain the label. On the opposite side, the Committee, underlining regularly the importance of tests, leads producers to make progress in this.

The objective of the tests is to ensure the clarity of questions and the facility with which the interviewee can respond. In addition to this first objective, they may provide an idea of the quality of responses (overall coherence, coherence of the main values with exogenous sources, etc.). And finally the observed response times, compatible with the commitment made at the time of the assessment of suitability, is measured thanks to the tests. Some figures on dispersion, such as type "for a quarter of the questionnaires, the response time should be less than..., for a quarter more than..." are also very useful.

Therefore, the file submitted to the Label Committee must include *a summary report on the tests* containing:

- Framing information (number and type of units surveyed, procedure used, timetable),
- Remarks of a general nature (overall attitude of respondents, difficulties encountered, examples of reactions),
- The questions or response terms which pose a problem (for reasons of clarity or difficulty of access to information),

- Change proposals, the main changes actually made after tests (or the reasons why the latter were not taken into account). If the tests have led to the changing, addition or deletion of a question in relation to the questionnaire given to the Label Committee, the resulting changes should be explained.

f) **Costs and burden on respondents, length of questionnaires and duration of the survey(9)**

- The Committee is very careful about the duration of the survey, which is an indicator measuring the burden on interviewees. It analyses and appreciates any way of lightening it, such as matching with administrative data in order to remove some questions from the questionnaire. For instance, in household surveys, questions on incomes are very often replaced by data coming from tax sources **(10.3)**.
- It results from this analysis estimates of the ***cost of the survey*** for the respondents. Mainly for business surveys, to answer to a demand coming from the Government in order to minimize administrative burdens on enterprises, the Secretariat or the Committee makes calculations, taking into account the size of sample, the duration of the questionnaire and an average cost per hour, and summarizes them in a yearly balance sheet.
- The Committee also studies the means dedicated to the survey, in terms of number of people occupied or financial cost for the survey department; thus it may make comparisons between different surveys **(10)**. The objective is to verify that public funds are used advisedly for the survey.

g) **Data dissemination, either aggregated or detailed (11) and (15) and, partly, (12)**

- Any official statistical survey must have a clear dissemination policy.
- The Committee verifies if the programme of publications is broad enough and if the planned deadlines are not too long. A survey whose results would be only given to some bodies or to the requesters is not acceptable.
- But it also requires that individual data be available for resarchers, with respect to statistical secrecy, in order to allow any work on these data lightening

behaviours of individuals or enterprises. The Committee stresses a lot on this and often states strong recommendations.

- At last, emphasis is put on the transparency of metadata (and also paradata) concerning the survey **(6.4)**.

4. Contributions of the Committee to quality improvement

All the items described above are the way the Label Committee assesses the quality of surveys. And its recommendations are a way to improve this quality.

Actually, the Label Committee therefore defines the standards of quality that any official statistical survey must follow. In some cases, the label is not delivered. It may occur once or twice a year. It leads the producers to improve the characteristics of the project which have not been agreed by the Committee or for which it has expressed some doubts or questions.

In some cases, the producers are not accustomed to the level of quality required by the Committee. It is therefore necessary to provide teaching skills in order to make them understand what the best practices are and how they shall be implemented. More and more, statistical authorities learn how to describe their surveys, what criteria will be used for the assessment and what they should do to obtain the label.

Actually, producers do appreciate to benefit from an ***outside expertise***, which allows them to take profit from others' good practices. This is all the more valuable that they are more distant from the "heart" of official statistics.

It results from this an increasing degree of high expectation for all official statistical surveys and, as a corollary, of quality standards.

The Committee produces itself a lot of documents which summarize the assessment process: the main ones are the "prelabel report", the "decision statement" and, at last, the notice of compliance. But the work of the Committee leads it to collect a lot of information given by the statistical authorities in charge with the survey: the preliminary files sent to the Committee in order to submit a survey, the answers to the "prelabel report" and also all the documents which are asked for by the Committee after the meeting and, particularly, in the case of reserves.

These documents are very useful. They build up a set of advices and references which help producers to improve the general quality of the surveys. Moreover, when a periodic survey is submitted again to the Label Committee, the first step for the board of governance is to read what has been written about the previous survey some years before. It is also a way to look if the former recommendations of the Committee have been implemented. If not, it may be considered as a default, whose result may be not to deliver a new label for the coming period.

Finally, the Label Committee secretariat builds the “memory” of all statistical surveys it has examined; it builds up a kind of library, on paper and electronic files, where it is easy to find any information on a given survey.

5. **Some issues for future**

a) **Widening the Label Committee’s role**

Since 2010, the role of the Committee has been extended. The success it met through the examination of surveys has led to ask it to expertise sources which do not derive from official statistical surveys. Thus, it comprises now a new commission competent to give opinions resulting from the examination:

- either of statistics produced by ***private law bodies***. In these cases, the aim is to assess statistics which bring more accuracy or freshness to statistics produced by national authorities. For instance, while a national survey on rents does exist in France, the Label Committee has examined favourably the works done in this field by an Observatory dedicated to rents in the area of Paris. Currently, the Committee also works on statistics about energy, complementary to those of national surveys.
- or of production and dissemination procedures, for general information, of ***data collected by French administrative bodies***, official bodies and private bodies mandated with a public service mission. In this latter case, the president of the Official Statistics Authority can give a label of general interest and statistical quality to the examined procedures, in reference to the principles of the code of good practices of European statistics. In such topics, the Label Committee is currently working on data about health expenditures and reimbursements from the Social security system, on employment estimates also derivating from the social security contributions of enterprises and, at last, on prices of dwellings coming from notaries registrations.

b) Identifying surveys in and out « official statistics »

What should be an « official statistical survey »? What criteria to identify them and mainly to identify those which are not? This is not an easy issue.

Some surveys (such as opinion polls for instance) are clearly out official statistics. In other cases, a data collection process can be decided and implemented as an ***administrative process***, led by national regulations: it is not in a strict sense a statistical survey and some characteristics of the process are not fulfiled as they should be if it were a statistical survey, such as secrecy, confidentiality, data dissemination.. But the border between those processes and official statistical surveys is not so clear in many cases.

Some surveys appear as ***experiments***, in order to verify or test some methods. It is the case, in particular, for new internet surveys which are carried out at the same time as the main survey in face to face process, the aim of this being to compare results from two different data collection processes. The purpose of these surveys is actually to verify a certain quality: they are in the Label's scope but are only examined without delivering a label.

Some surveys, often more qualitative, look like ***research work*** and do not necessarily fit the standards of quality usually required by the Committee. In these cases, it is more complicated for the Committee to check the statistical quality. In this field, the case of "*follow-up surveys*" should be mentioned: they are non-statistical qualitative surveys in the form of interviews carried out by investigators, where the aim is to gain more in-depth responses from the interviewees on one or other question from a main survey. Generally, there is neither random sample nor built questionnaire, but only a set of topics discussed with the interviewee, in reference with some of his/her answers in the main survey.

Other surveys cover fields and use techniques - particularly in health, with biological measures - for which the Committee has no particular knowledge: in this case, it cannot go further than the confidence it grants to the specialists of the matter.

c) The case of European or international surveys

When the survey is framed by European or other international regulations or by a board of international researchers (like the *European Social Survey, ESS*), the issue is to what extent the Committee may have influence, either on methodology or on the questionnaire, if these items have been decided before. Particularly, decisions about the questions themselves are often taken while tests have not been completely performed. And it often happens that the results of tests lead to changes in the questionnaire. Thus, for the French Label Committee, the final questionnaire can be only accepted after tests have been implemented and their results analysed in depth.

As a corollary, what meaning and impact could be attributed to a label given while characteristics of the survey which are usually verified could not be assessed? In such cases, the standard of quality cannot be reached or verified as usually and it may set the Committee in an uncomfortable position. Besides, when there does not exist any more possibility of making changes at the European level, rooms to manoeuvre may seem rather poor, restricted to the way of translating or formulating the questions or explaining them in details with accompagnying notices or recommendations for the interviewers.

For those reasons, to improve the building of the survey, the Label Committee has proposed in some cases to send to Eurostat the technical reports and its final statement. It may be useful, if not in the current survey, but for the following ones or to make Eurostat aware of some difficulties in understanding or explaining the results.

d) **Towards a European Label Committee?**

Therefore, it may seem also necessary to think of a way of assessing European projects earlier, either from a national point of view - such as the French Committee actually does, with an appropriate feed-back to the European task forces or working groups at the right moment - or in a European framework.

All the previous arguments would campaign for the building of a ***European Label Committee***, especially to deal with European surveys and check their quality before granting the regulations and implementing the surveys, such as in ad-hoc modules linked to the LFS, SILC etc.. Particularly, tests are essential before taking final decisions on the questionnaire and they should be a significant component of the assessment process led by this European Committee.

The usefulness of such a Committee in a quality process could be ensured thanks to the experience of the French Label Committee value. Besides, the very important issue of ***comparability*** among Member States should be in this Committee’s scope and, particularly, the issue of ***translations***. But it is of course the matter of Eurostat and the European Commission to study this idea and make it operational.

6. Conclusion

In its report on the National Statistical French system, the Peer review, in December 2014, has underlined the positive role played by the Label Committee in the examination of quality of statistical surveys.

The Label Committee is an essential machinery to implement ***external checking*** on surveys. It is an ***independent*** body, whose conclusions are appreciated - even unfavourable -, and which contributes to the dissemination of good practices.

The regular assessment of periodic surveys is the way to verify that they still fit the standards of quality.

If the French Label Committee does not deal with the results of the surveys, the quality and the relevance of these ones are narrowly linked with the quality of the process. It thus shows the importance of the role of the Label Committee.

Actually, the Label Committee acts as a “flame keeper” and its vigilance preserves the state of art, mainly in the heart of official statistics, but more and more at the border.

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