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Mr Hetan Shah
Executive Director, Royal Statistical Society
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Dear Hetan,

Treasury Committee hearing on the Independent Review of UK Economic Statistics

Thank you for your letter of 14 January. I hope we agree that producing internationally comparable statistics should be an important consideration for any National Statistical Institute. Moreover, as I said in my Interim Report, I would like to see a cultural shift towards ONS staff using their expertise to influence the international statistical agenda more effectively.

In your letter, you pointed out that the ONS had previously stated that 80% of its output was required by European legislation. The Royal Statistical Society submission to the Review used the same figure and I have no reason to doubt that this is the case. Indeed, in my evidence to the Treasury Committee I agreed that a large proportion of ONS statistics were produced according to internationally mandated protocols.

I believe any confusion stems from the apparent suggestion that the statistics required by Eurostat are substantially distinct from those demanded by wider international frameworks and by domestic policy makers, so that a decision to leave the European Union would permit a substantial reduction in the burden placed on ONS. In my reply to Mr Garnier's question, I wanted to make clear that this was not the case, offering my assessment that the requirement on ONS to produce peculiarly 'European statistics' was probably not a first-order issue. I believe that this addressed the key question raised by Mr Garnier, but – as your letter suggests – it does not contradict the figure provided by ONS and the RSS.

In sum, I agree with the RSS's assertion that roughly 80% of ONS statistics are subject to European regulations. But it is crucially important to be clear that only a very small proportion represents statistical requirements that are unique to being a member of the EU.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues at the Royal Statistical Society, who have been unfailingly helpful in facilitating my Review. I found the discussion you kindly hosted with experts in data science in January particularly valuable.

I am copying this letter as yours.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Charles Bean