

Professor Sir Charles Bean
Chair, Independent Review of UK Economic Statistics
By email

14 January 2016

Dear Sir Charles

Treasury Committee hearing on the Independent Review of UK Economic Statistics

We have followed with interest your appearance at the Treasury Committee hearing into your review last week Thursday, 7th January. During the hearing, an exchange took place between Mark Garnier MP, Andrew Tyrie MP and yourself, regarding evidence submitted by the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) on the role of EU requirements for economic statistics.

In the exchange with the Committee, Mr Garnier asked if it was correct to say that that the proportion of ONS outputs required by the EU amounted to a maximum of 5 percent. You agreed with this and Mr Tyrie subsequently remarked that the RSS evidence was wrong.

The evidence we submitted stated that “A very large proportion of ONS’s output of economic statistics is produced to meet the requirements of EU legislation, which have had to take priority irrespective of their actual value.”

It is clear that a large proportion of what is produced by the ONS is required under EU legislation. A figure of 80 per cent is frequently quoted but ONS can provide their best estimate. The UK would undoubtedly produce most of this output for domestic purposes but it remains the case that this volume of output is mandated by the EU. We therefore stand by the statement as submitted in our evidence. We also agree with your subsequent comment to the Committee, that Eurostat implements things that are agreed on a broader international stage and think it was helpful to clarify this. The comment made about the 5 percent perhaps relates to the proportion of outputs which are produced solely only for EU purposes and that the UK might not otherwise produce if they were not EU requirements.

Whilst we are keen to get the record straight, we should be glad to discuss the matter further.



I also note your comment to the Treasury Committee that the RSS is a collection of individuals. For clarity on this, the written evidence that we submitted to your review, including the above statement, was developed by the Society's National Statistics Advisory Group, which advises the Society's President on matters relating to official statistics. The group largely consists of former senior ONS and GSS employees, has a very high level of expertise in international frameworks and requirements for economic statistics, and speaks with the authority of the RSS.

I copy this letter to Andrew Tyrie MP, chair of the Treasury Committee and Mark Garnier MP, member of the Treasury Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hetan Shah', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hetan Shah
Executive Director