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Answer given by Mr Dombrovskis
on behalf of the European Commission
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The European system of national and regional accounts (ESA 2010) requires that all economic activities are recorded, provided that all units involved enter the actions by mutual agreement. This obligation also covers some illegal activities. The Handbook on the compilation of statistics on illegal economic activities in national accounts and balance of payments¹ provides a common definition of illegal economic activities and guidance for collecting and compiling the related statistics in a consistent and coordinated way.

The Handbook is explicit: ‘prostitution services that do not have the characteristics of an economic transaction, i.e. those not based on mutual agreement; must be excluded from the measurement’ (§3.4, p. 33). Trafficking, coercion and exploitation are thus not reflected in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and other macroeconomic statistics. National authorities use information from law enforcement, health services and specialised organisations to ensure this distinction.

The same principle applies to employment. Only people who voluntarily provide services are treated as employed for statistical purposes. Neither traffickers nor persons forced into prostitution are counted as employed in macroeconomic statistics.

Including certain illegal activities in macroeconomic statistics is a technical requirement to ensure that GDP and other figures are consistent and comparable. The regulation of prostitution is a competence of the Member States.

¹ As the *Handbook on the compilation of statistics on illegal economic activities* (Eurostat/ECB, 2018) further explains, statisticians view these activities ‘from a purely statistical perspective (...) to ensure comparability between and within countries over time’ (Foreword, p. 3) – <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-05-17-202#:~:text=The%20present%20Handbook%20represents%20the%20first%20comprehensive%20overview,national%20accounts%20%28NA%29%20and%20balance%20of%20payments%20%28BOP%29>.