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CONDITIONS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES”**

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**EU - SILC (Community statistics on Income and Living Conditions):
issues and challenges**
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0. Introduction

Over the last years, Eurostat and the EU-SILC Working Group have invested a lot of efforts for developing the EU-SILC project, which has been implemented on a step by step basis. At the end of this year, for the first time, comparable cross-sectional information relating to the 2005 collection will become available for the 25 Member States of the EU and for Norway and Iceland. It is the appropriate time to take stock of the achievements of almost 5 years of intense activity, to draw a first evaluation of the project and to issue recommendations for future improvement. These are the objectives of this Conference.

As an introduction to this conference, this paper aims to review the project as it stands, from its launching up to now and from a European Commission and national perspective. It is structured into two parts:

The first part gives an overview of the EU background of the project, covering successively the policy context, the legal basis, the scope and geographical coverage, the main characteristics, the sampling issues, implementing and tracing rules, the content, the income concept, and finally the data access policy;

The second part of the document provides an overview of the actual implementation of EU-SILC.

1. EU background of the project

1.1. Policy context

The Lisbon European Council of March 2000 sets Member States and the European Commission the goal of making a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010. Building a more inclusive European Union is an essential element in achieving the Union's ten year strategic goal of sustained economic growth, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.

Member States co-ordinate their policies for combating poverty and social exclusion on the basis of a process of policy exchanges and mutual learning known as the 'Open Method of Coordination' (OMC). From 2006, three policy areas provide the framework for this process:

- Eradicating poverty and social exclusion
- Ensuring adequate and sustainable pensions
- Providing accessible, high quality and sustainable health and long-term care

The Open Method of Coordination comprises five main elements:

- Agreeing common objectives for the Union
- Translating the EU objectives into national/regional policies on the basis of National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion
- Establishing common indicators as a means of comparing best practice and measuring progress
- Publishing reports analysing and assessing the National Reports
- Establishing a Community Action Programme to promote policy cooperation and transnational exchange of learning and good practice.

The initial set of outcome indicators adopted formally by the European Council at Laeken in December 2001, as improved by subsequent developments since that date, plays a central role in

monitoring the performance of Member States in promoting social inclusion. The purpose of these indicators is to allow the Member States and the European Commission to monitor national and EU progress towards key EU objectives in the area of social inclusion and of social protection, and to support mutual learning and identification of good (and bad) practices in terms of policies and institutional processes. This represents a major step forward in the development of EU cooperation in social policy, and has the potential to transform the framework within which Member States develop their national (and sub-national) policies to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

The development of indicators, under the responsibility of the SPC (Social Protection Committee) Indicators Sub-Group since February 2001, is a dynamic process. The work of the national delegations of experts, who make up the Group, and the secretariat provided by the European Commission Directorate-General on “Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities” (in close cooperation with Eurostat), has allowed the set of indicators (and breakdowns of these) to be considerably enriched. The following table (table 1) provides the current list of streamlined indicators in the strand relating to social inclusion as well as the list of overarching indicators for the three strands (social inclusion; pensions and health and long term care).

Table 1: list of overarching indicators and of indicators of the ‘social inclusion’ strand

Overarching indicators		Indicators for the strand 'social inclusion'	
1	Risk of poverty	1	<u>EU</u> : At-risk-of poverty rate + illustrative threshold values
1a	Intensity of poverty risk	2	<u>EU</u> : Persistent at-risk of poverty rate
2	Income inequalities	3	<u>EU</u> : Relative median poverty risk gap
3	Health outcome, inequality in health	4	<u>EU</u> : Long term unemployment rate
4	Educational outcome and human capital formation	5	<u>EU</u> : Population living in jobless households
5	Access to labour market	6	<u>EU</u> : Early school leavers not in education or training
6	Financial Sustainability of social protection systems	7	<u>NAT</u> : Employment gap of immigrants
7	Pensions adequacy	8	<u>EU</u> : Material deprivation
8	Inequalities in access to health care	9	<u>EU</u> : Housing
9	Improved standards	10	<u>EU</u> : Self reported unmet need for medical examination
10	Employment of older workers	11	<i>Child well-being</i>
11	In-work poverty		
12	Participation in labour market		
13	Regional dimension		
14	Improved standards		

EU: commonly agreed EU indicator

NAT: commonly agreed national indicators

1.2. EU-SILC: the successor of the ECHP (European Community Household Panel) project

Reliable and timely indicators, reflecting the multi-dimensionality of poverty and social exclusion, are indispensable. This means that having the required statistical infrastructure and capacity in place at the national and EU levels is a necessary condition for the Social Inclusion Process to achieve its aims, and commitment by the Member States and the Commission of the resources required to build that capacity is indispensable.

Over an eight year period (from 1994 to 2001), the ECHP (European Community Household Panel), ran in 14 of the then 15 Member States (with the exception of Sweden), and served as the source for many of the commonly agreed social inclusion indicators for this period. The role of the ECHP has therefore been crucial for the first two rounds of EU-15 National Action Plans on inclusion (2001 and 2003).

The ECHP was an input harmonised survey conducted in eleven Member States, based on common requirements defined at EU level. Concepts, definitions, classifications, procedures such as weighting, imputation, data editing and a 'blue print' questionnaire to be used by all the involved Member States were defined by Eurostat jointly with the ECHP Working Group and applied nationally.

In the other three Member States (DE, LU, UK), the ECHP data were produced from existing national panel survey data which were subsequently converted into the ECHP format. Consequently, full comparability of the data for these countries was not achieved as these national surveys were sometimes diverging to the ECHP requirements.

From the beginning, the ECHP project suffered from quality problems, mainly, incomplete geographical coverage, reliability, timeliness:

- As already said, only fourteen Member States were covered by the ECHP project;
- The reliability of the ECHP data for a number of countries has occasionally been questioned. The initial response rate of the project, around 70% for the EU as a whole, varied considerably between countries (from 90% in EL and IT) to only 38-40% in LU and DE.
- The ECHP was conceived as a long term panel and suffered from a relatively high attrition rate: between the first and second year, attrition was around 10% and stands at around 5% in the following years affecting significantly cross sectional representativity along the years;
- The ECHP results have been available only after a substantial lag and have therefore been criticised as being out of date. It took around three years for the results of this project to be available in the first years, and around two years at the end;
- In some countries it was not satisfactorily integrated into the national statistical systems.

In parallel, international recommendations on income (Expert Group on Household Income Statistics (The Canberra Group), 2001) were developed, and collection of gross income at component level (and not net income as implemented in the ECHP) appeared to be preferable for income distribution analysis.

It is with the aims of solving the ECHP technical problems, of conforming to the internationally agreed definition of income and of extending the data collection to the enlarged EU (and beyond) that the decision was taken to stop the ECHP and launch EU-SILC.

1.3. Legal basis of the SILC project

After a start on the basis of a Gentlemen's agreement in 2003 in seven countries, the SILC project has been implemented through a legal basis with effect from the 2004/2005 exercises. The legal basis is composed of three main components:

- Council and European Parliament (EP) regulation N° 1177/2003 defines the scope, definitions, time reference, characteristics of the data, data required, sampling, sample sizes, transmission of data, publication, access for scientific purposes, financing, reports and studies for the SILC project. The Framework Regulation was signed by the Council and EP on 16 June 2003 and published in the Official Journal (OJ) of the European Union on 3 July 2003. Regulation N° 1177/2003 is modified by regulation N°1553/2005 published on 7 September 2005 to extend the SILC project to the Member States to joined the EU on 1st May 2004;
- In parallel, Eurostat and the MS developed the technical aspects of the instrument. More concretely, five Commission Regulations (CR) on 'Sampling and tracing rules', on 'Definitions', on the 'list of primary (annual) target variables', on 'Fieldwork aspects and imputation procedures' and on 'Quality reports', implementing the Framework Regulation, were elaborated. The first four Commission Regulations were approved by the Statistical Programme Committee (SPC) in August 2003 and published in the OJ on 17 November 2003. The CR on quality reports was published in the OJ on 9 January 2004.
- In addition, every year, a Commission Regulation on the list of secondary target variables, i.e. modules introduced in EU-SILC with a possibility of repetition of a topic every four years or less frequently, is published.

1.4. Scope and geographical coverage of the SILC instrument

EU-SILC is expected to become the EU reference source for comparative statistics on income distribution and social exclusion at European level, particularly in the context of the OMCs on pensions and on social inclusion and for producing structural indicators of social cohesion for the annual Spring Report to the European Council.

As for the ECHP and in fact for most household surveys, it covers only people living in *private households*, which needs to be kept in mind when carrying out statistical analyses and when interpreting indicators within a given country as well as between countries. Persons living in collective households and in institutions are generally excluded from the target population. For instance, the impact of the exclusion from the samples of old people living in institutions, of people with disabilities and of other vulnerable groups including the homeless may be very different from one country to the next. Some vulnerable groups living in private households may also be underrepresented because they are not easy to reach.

Small parts of the national territory amounting to no more than 2% of the national population and the national territories listed below may be excluded from EU-SILC. National territories that may be excluded include the French Overseas Departments and territories, the Dutch West Frisian Islands with the exception of Texel, the all Irish offshore islands with the exception of Achill, Bull, Cruit, Gorumna, Inishnee, Lettermore, Lettermullan and Valentia, and finally the Scotland north of the Caledonian Canal, the Scilly Islands.

1.5. Main characteristics of EU-SILC

A common framework aimed at anchoring the instrument nationally

EU-SILC is organised under a framework Regulation and is thus compulsory for all EU Member States. EU-SILC is based on the idea of a *common “framework”* and no longer a *common “survey”* as

was the case for the ECHP. The common framework is defined by harmonised lists of target primary (annual) and secondary (every four years or less frequently) variables, by a recommended design for implementing EU-SILC, by common guidelines and procedures (for imputation, weighting, sampling errors calculation), common concepts (household and income) and classifications (ISCO, NACE, ISCED) aimed at maximising comparability of the information produced.

The common framework is defined in the legislative background of the project, the Council and European Parliament framework Regulation, and the implementing Commission Regulations.

A cross-sectional and a longitudinal component for EU-SILC

SILC will provide two types of annual data:

- Cross-sectional data pertaining to a given time or a certain time period with variables on income, poverty, social exclusion and other living conditions, and
- Longitudinal data pertaining to individual-level changes over time, observed periodically over a four year period.

The first priority is to be given to the delivery of comparable, timely and high quality cross-sectional data. Longitudinal data will be limited to income information and a limited set of critical qualitative, non-monetary variables of deprivation, aimed at identifying the incidence and dynamic processes of persistence of poverty and social exclusion among subgroups in the population. The longitudinal component will also be more limited in sample size compared to the primary, cross-sectional component. Furthermore, for any given set of individuals, micro-level changes will be followed up only for a limited duration, such as a period of four years.

For both the cross-sectional and longitudinal components, all household and personal data will be linkable.

Flexibility of implementation at national level

To anchor EU-SILC in the National Statistical System, sampling design is flexible. In this way, the cross-sectional and longitudinal data can come from separate sources, i.e. the longitudinal dataset does not need to be “linkable” with the cross-sectional dataset at the micro-level. Of course, such linkage is not precluded, and would normally be possible when the two types of data come from the same source. Depending on the country, micro-data could come from:

- two or more national sources (surveys and/or registers);
- one or more existing national sources combined or not with a new survey;
- a new harmonised survey to meet all EU-SILC requirements.

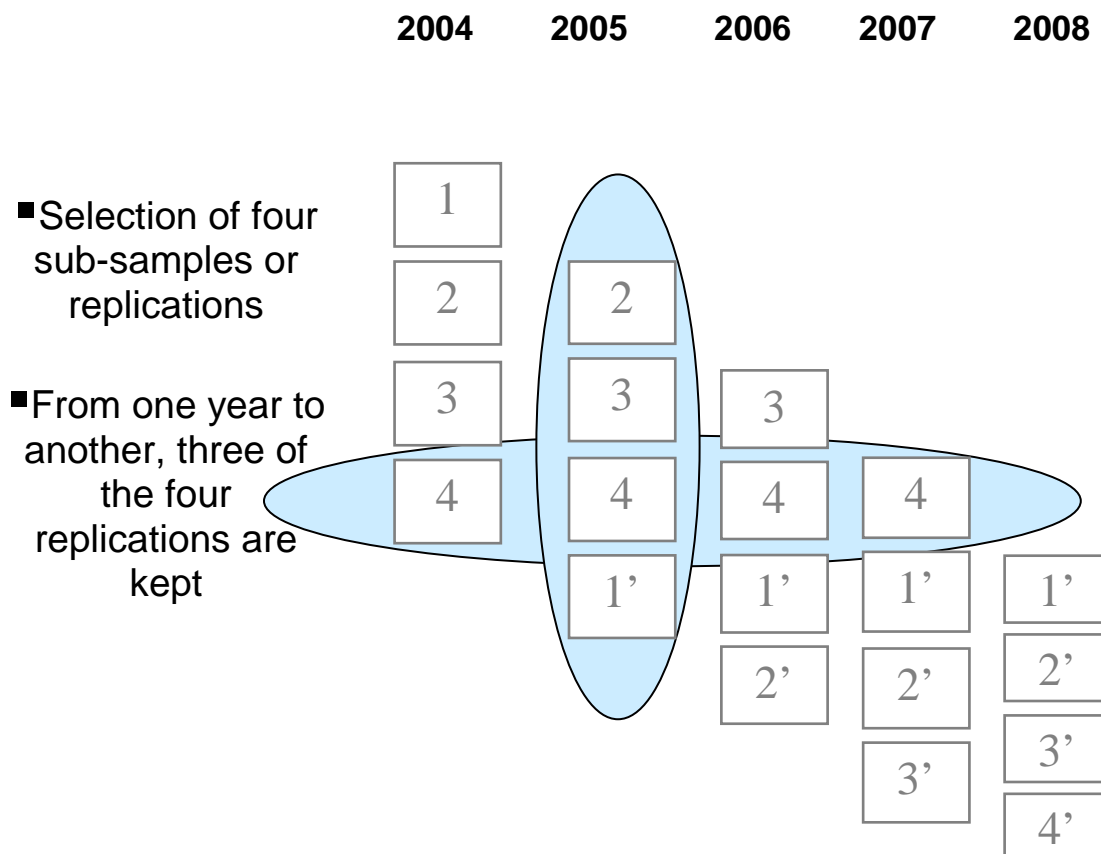
An integrated design (‘the rotational design’) for those countries that launched a new survey was proposed by Eurostat and implemented by countries.

Rotational design refers to the sample selection based on a number of sub-samples or replications, each of them similar in size and design and representative of the whole population. From one year to the next, some replications are retained, while others are dropped and replaced by new replications.

The fundamental characteristic of the integrated design is that the cross-sectional and longitudinal statistics are produced from essentially the same set of sample observations, thus avoiding unnecessary duplications which entirely separate cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys will involve.

As the most important objective of the longitudinal component of EU-SILC is to allow the calculation of the *Laeken Indicator on "at persistent-risk-of poverty rate"*, computed as the percentage of the population living in households where the equivalised disposable income was below the 60% threshold for the current year and at least two out of the preceding three years, the population selected in the first year needs to be followed-up for at least 4 years, i.e. the panel duration should be of at least 4 years. For this reason, Eurostat has recommended a rotational design with 4 sub-samples or replications.

Figure 1 below illustrates the type of structure which has been recommended by Eurostat. This structure will be suitable for meeting the combined cross-sectional and longitudinal requirements.



Timeliness: a core concern of the project

One reason for the move from the ECHP to the EU-SILC project is the need to significantly improve the timeliness of the data released. The SILC Regulation of the EP and Council gives the target dates by which cross-sectional and longitudinal data are to be delivered to Eurostat.

Compared to the three years initially required (subsequently reducing to two years) to issue the ECHP information at EU level, the EU-SILC cross-sectional data are available in the form of tables 12 months after the end of the data collection period while the longitudinal aggregated data will become available 18 months after end of data collection. The cross-sectional Laeken indicators based on EU-SILC 2004 for 12 “old” Member States, for Estonia as well as for Norway and Iceland, were released at the end of 2005/beginning of 2006 for inclusion in the Joint Social Inclusion and Social Protection Report of the Commission and publicly through the Eurostat free dissemination data base. For the first time, all 25 Member States of the current EU, Norway and Iceland have carried out SILC in 2005 and cross-sectional data should be disseminated by Eurostat at the end of 2006.

In addition, anonymised EU cross-sectional micro-data files to be used for research purpose, are to be available 15 months after the end of the data collection (data of year N are available from March N+2). It takes 20 months for the longitudinal component (data collected before N are available in August N+2).

Micro data files from 14 countries were prepared by April 2006 and have been released for specific research projects under contract from June 2006¹.

Data comparability: a priority to be thoroughly evaluated

With such a flexible format, it is not difficult to see potential problems relating to harmonisation and non-comparability arising. Apart from the development of common guidelines and procedures aimed at maximising comparability on which Eurostat and Member States are working together on, quality of the SILC data is ensured in different ways:

- Member States provides annually intermediate and final quality reports on the basis of which Eurostat is drafting an EU synthesis.
- Methodological studies have been launched covering key issues for comparability at both EU level and national level (impact of household definition, comparability of administrative and survey data, the impact of the mode of data collection, the impact of different treatment of negative income, the impact of sampling issues, ...)
- A methodological Task Force has been set up which discussed issues such as imputation techniques, the treatment of lump sum, the imputed rent, the status of private pensions plans in income.
- Eurostat is systematically computing standard errors for the income-based indicators.

1.6. Sampling/design

Probability samples

According to the Commission Regulation on sampling and tracing rules, for all components of EU-SILC (whether survey or register based), the cross-sectional and longitudinal (initial sample) data are to be based on a nationally representative probability sample of the population residing in private households within the country, irrespective of language, nationality or legal residence status. All private households and all persons aged 16 and over within the household are eligible for the operation. Representative probability samples shall be achieved both for households and for individual persons in the target population. The sampling frame and methods of sample selection shall ensure that every individual and household in the target population is assigned a known and non-zero probability of selection. Germany has a transition period till 2008 where fully representative probability sampling is to be achieved.

Sample sizes

Regulation N° 1177/2003 defines the minimum effective sample sizes to be achieved. The reference is to the effective sample size, which is the size required if the survey were based on simple random sampling (design effect in relation to the 'risk of poverty rate' variable = 1.0). The actual sample sizes will have to be larger to the extent that the design effects exceed 1.0 and to compensate for all kinds of non-response. Furthermore, the sample size refers to the number of valid households which are households for which, and for the majority of members of which, all or nearly all the required information has been obtained.

¹ Most of the conference contributors had actually the chance to get access for free to 2004 EU-SILC UDB in the framework of their study for this conference.

For the cross-sectional component, the plans are to achieve the minimum effective sample size of around 121.000 households in the EU as a whole (127.000 including Iceland and Norway). The allocation of the EU sample among countries represents a compromise between two objectives: the production of results at the level of individual countries, and production for the EU as a whole.

Sample size for the longitudinal component refers, for any pair of consecutive years, to the number of households successfully interviewed in the first year in which all or at least a majority of the household members aged 16 or over are successfully interviewed in both the years.

Requirements for the longitudinal data will be less important. For this component, an effective sample size of around 90.000 households (95. 000 including Iceland and Norway) is planned.

The following tables give for each EU Member State (plus Norway and Iceland) the minimum effective sample sizes and the corresponding actual minimum sample required taking into account design effect estimated for 2004 (when available) for the cross-sectional component (table 2) and the minimum effective sample size for the longitudinal part (table 3). Globally, the actual minimum EU sample size is about 150.000 households. Given national over sampling in order to meet specific reporting needs, we expect that the global sample size to be of about 200.000 households.

Table 2: cross-sectional component: minimum effective sample and actual sample required

	Households		Persons aged 16 and over	
	Minimum effective sample size	Actual sample size required	Minimum effective sample size	Actual sample size required
Belgium	4750	4940	8750	9100
Czech Republic	4750		10000	
Denmark	4250	3570	7250	6090
Germany	8250		14500	
Estonia	3500	3850	7750	8525
Greece	4750	5452	10000	11477
Spain	6500	9295	16000	22880
France	7250	8193	13500	15255
Ireland	3750	4875	8000	10400
Italy	7250	10223	15500	21855
Cyprus	3250		7500	
Latvia	3750		7650	
Lithuania	4000		9000	
Luxembourg	3250		6500	
Hungary	4750		10250	
Malta	3000		7000	
Netherlands	5000		8750	
Austria	4500	4500	8750	8750
Poland	6000		15000	
Portugal	4500	5490	10500	12810
Slovenia	3750		9000	
Slovakia	4250		11000	
Finland	4000	5614	6750	9473
Sweden	4500	4320	7500	7200
United Kingdom	7500		13750	
Iceland	2250		3750	

Norway	3750	3750	6250	6250
Total including Iceland and Norway	127000		260150	

Table 3: longitudinal component – Minimum effective sample size

	Households	Persons aged 16 and over
Belgium	3500	6500
Czech Republic	3500	7500
Denmark	3250	5500
Germany	6000	10500
Estonia	2750	5750
Greece	3500	7250
Spain	5000	12250
France	5500	10250
Ireland	2750	6000
Italy	5500	11750
Cyprus	2500	5500
Latvia	2750	5600
Lithuania	3000	6750
Luxembourg	2500	5000
Hungary	3500	7750
Malta	2250	5250
Netherlands	3750	6500
Austria	3250	6250
Poland	4500	11250
Portugal	3250	7500
Slovenia	2750	6750
Slovakia	3250	8250
Finland	3000	5000
Sweden	3500	5750
United Kingdom	5750	10500
Iceland	1700	2800
Norway	2750	4650
Total including Iceland and Norway	95200	194300

1.7. Implementing and tracing rules

Implementation rules

For ensuring the best quality output of the project, minimum requirements for the implementation have been defined at EU level and are part of the Commission regulation N° 1981/2003 on the fieldwork aspects and imputation procedures. These rules for example:

- Limits the use of proxy rate;
- Limits the use of controlled substitutions to cases where the response rate is below 60%;
- Defines the maximal interval between the end of the income reference period and the time of the interview for the respondent concerned;
- Defines the maximum total fieldwork duration;

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- Defines intervals between successive waves in the longitudinal component;
 - Defines precise follow up rules of households in case of refusals, non contact...

Tracing rules

The longitudinal component of EU-SILC will comprise one or more panels. For each panel, the initial sample representing the target population at the time of its selection is followed-up over a minimum of duration of 4 years according to specific tracing rules. The duration may be longer or indefinite depending upon the design adopted in the country. The objective of the tracing rules is to reflect in the initial sample any changes in the target population and to follow-up individuals over time.

To study changes over time at individual level, all sample persons (members of the initial sample) should be followed-up over time, despite the fact that they may move to a new location during the life of the panel. However, in the implementation of EU-SILC some restrictions are applied for cost and other practical reasons. It has been decided that only persons remaining or moving within private households in the national territory are followed up. Sample persons moving to a collective household or to an institution, moving to national territories not covered in the survey, or moving abroad (to a private household, collective household or institution, within or outside the EU), would normally not be traced. The only exception would be the continued tracing of those moving temporarily (for actual or intended duration of less than 6 months) to a collective household or institution within the national territory covered, who are still considered a member of the household.

1.8. Content

EU-SILC is a multi-dimensional instrument focused on income but covering at the same time housing, labour, health, demography, education so as to allow studying the multidimensional approach of social exclusion.

It is composed of primary (annual) and secondary (module) target variables.

The target variables are the variables transmitted to Eurostat. Given the principle of flexibility of the implementation of the SILC project at national level, the corresponding sequence of questions needed to construct one target variable may vary from one country to another.

The primary target variables are either household or individual (for persons aged 16 and more) information and are regrouped into domains:

- At household level, five domains are covered ((1) basic/core data, (2) income, (3) housing, (4) social exclusion, (5) labour information;
- The personal level is regrouped into six domains ((1) basic/demographic data, (2) income, (3) education, (5) labour information and (6) health).

Tables 4 and 5 below gives of an overview of the sub-domains included in EU-SILC and of the component (cross-sectional and/longitudinal) in which each sub-domain is included.

For countries using the integrated design, all variables will be in both cross-sectional and longitudinal components.

Table 4: Primary annual component: domains covered at household level

Domains	Areas	Cross-sectional (X) and/or longitudinal (L)
Basic data	Basic household data including degree of urbanisation	X, L
Income	Total household income (gross and disposable)	X, L
	Gross income components at household level	X, L
Social exclusion	Housing and non-housing related arrears	X, L
	Non-monetary household deprivation indicators, including problems in making ends meet, extend of debt and enforced lack of basic necessities	X, L
	Physical and social environment	X
Labour information	Child care	X
Housing	Dwelling type, tenure status and housing conditions	X, L
	Amenities in the dwelling	X
	Housing costs	X

Table 5: Primary annual component: domains covered at personal level

Domains	Areas	Cross-sectional (X) and/or longitudinal (L)
Basic data	Basic personal data	X, L
	Demographic data	X, L
Income	Gross personal income, total and components at personal level	X, L
Education	Education, including highest ISCED level attained	X, L
Labour information	Basic labour information on current activity status and on main job, including information on last main job for unemployed	X, L
	Basic information on activity status during income reference period	X
	Total number of hours worked on current second/third...jobs	X
	Detailed labour information	X, L
	Activity history	L
	Calendar of activities	L
Health	Health, including health status and chronic health or condition	X, L

	Access to health care	X
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The secondary target variables are introduced every four years or less frequently. One module per year is included from 2005 only in the cross-sectional component. The first EU-SILC modules are relating to:

- 2005: Inter-generational transmission of poverty
- 2006: Social participation
- 2007: Housing conditions
- 2008: Over-indebtedness/Financial exclusion
- 2009: Deprivation

The 2009 module is only in a planning phase at this stage.

1.9. Income concept

As already said, income is the core of the EU-SILC; consequently, the Commission regulation on definitions is mainly focussed on the detailed definition of income. An important objective for EU-SILC is adherence as closely as possible to the recommendations of the international Canberra Group on the definition of household income (Expert Group on Household Income Statistics, 2001). This has led to significant changes compared with the income concept used in the ECHP.

Four main aggregates are computed from EU-SILC: total disposable household income, total disposable household income before transfers (with and without old-age and survivors' benefits) and total gross income.

The income concept (following the Canberra recommendations) will only be fully implemented from 2007. In this perspective, 2004-2006 can be seen as a transitional period as some countries (Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Latvia and Poland) are allowed to only deliver net income components and for all countries, a limited number of components is not compulsory during this period.

Gross income data collection leads to practical difficulties². Strategies have thus to be developed depending on the national context. In particular, some countries have to design procedure for gross/net conversion in order to obtain with a reasonable degree of accuracy, the required data on the basis of net collected data. Eurostat developed a generic model for net-gross conversion to meet the EU-SILC requirements for the construction of the standardised income target variables from input data collected in various forms. A system, named the Siena Micro-Simulation Model (SM2), has been developed as a flexible tool for this.

Gross income components

Gross income components covered in EU-SILC are employee income, self-employment income, imputed rent, property income, current transfers received, other income received, interests paid on mortgage, current transfers paid.

Employee income

² For example, computation of the structural indicator "at-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers" requires deducting social transfer income from total income. If social transfer income details are only collected on a gross basis, some method has to be found to adjust these to net.

In EU-SILC, employee income covers gross cash or near-cash employee income, gross non-cash employee income and employers' social insurance contributions.

For non-cash employee income, only company cars are to be recorded till 2006. From 2007 onwards, the variable will in addition include free or subsidised meals, luncheon vouchers; reimbursement or payment of housing-related expenses (e.g. gas, electricity, water, telephone or mobile telephone bills); other goods and services provided free or at reduced price by the employer to their employees, when they are a significant component of the income at national level or they constitute a significant component of the income of particular groups of households.

For employers' social insurance contributions, the compulsory component will be introduced from 2007 given the positive results of the feasibility studies. The voluntary component is only to be included if it represents more than 10% of the total (compulsory plus voluntary part).

Self-employment income

Self-employment income is in SILC broken down into gross cash profits or losses from self-employment (including royalties) and the value of goods produced for own consumption.

Various alternative approaches to the measurement of income from self-employment are allowed:

- The 'entrepreneurial income' that corresponds to the concept of profit/loss normally used in business accounting;
- The 'net operating benefits/losses' shown on the annual tax accounts;
- The money (goods) drawn out of the business for personal use.

The value of goods produced for own consumption will be included from 2007 when they are a significant component of the income at national level or they constitute a significant component of the income of particular groups of households. This is particularly likely for certain of the Member States that joined the EU in May 2004 and the current Candidate Countries.

Imputed rent

The imputed rent is to be added from 2007 for all households that do not report paying full rent, either because they are owner-occupiers or because they live in accommodation rented at a lower price than the market price, or because the accommodation is provided rent-free.

The impact of its inclusion is important on all inclusion indicators generating unbalanced flows into and out of poverty. In addition, concerns have been raised about the existence of a comparable methodology for computation of imputed rent. These aspects will require specific attention and monitoring.

Property income

Property income is included and broken down into 'Interest, dividends, profits from capital investment in an unincorporated business' and 'Income from rental of a property or land'.

Current transfers received

Current transfers received include social benefits and regular inter-household cash transfers received.

Social benefits are broken down into family/children-related allowances, housing allowances, unemployment benefits, old-age benefits, survivors' benefits, sickness benefits, disability benefits, education-related allowances and social exclusion not elsewhere classified.

Other income received

This covers income received by people aged under 16.

Interest paid on mortgage

From 2007 onwards, the interests paid on mortgage should be taken into account together with imputed rent when computing total household disposable income.

Current transfers paid

Finally, current transfers paid are broken down into tax on income and social insurance contributions, regular taxes on wealth, employers' social insurance contributions, regular inter-household cash transfers paid.

The inclusion of employers' social insurance contributions is crucial for comparability of gross income levels and income structures in the EU and it is likely to have an impact on the spread of the employee income distribution and thus on inequality measures based on gross data. However, inclusion of employers' social contribution will have no impact on total disposable income and on derived indicators.

1.10. Data access

The EU-SILC data are cleaned and imputed by the MS and then individual records are transmitted to Eurostat without any direct identifiers (e.g. name, address, official identifiers). EU-SILC individual records are likely to be considered as confidential data in the sense of Article n° 13 of Council Regulation 322/97 (Statistical Law) because they allow indirect identification of statistical units (individuals and households). In this respect they should only be used for statistical purposes or for scientific research.

Commission Regulation 831/2002 granted the Commission to release anonymised micro data for instance via CD-ROM to researchers. Anonymised micro data are defined as individual statistical records which have been modified in order to control, in accordance with best practices, the risk of identification of the statistical units to which they relate.

EU-SILC framework Regulation n°1177/2003 makes provision for the release of anonymised micro data to researchers (encrypted CD-ROM with documentation).

At European level, only variable suppression and global recoding have been envisaged as they can be applied uniformly to all countries without case by case tuning.

Other methods like local suppression or data perturbation, needing case by case tuning would be only envisaged at national level if countries feel it necessary.

At this stage, 3 types of release are envisaged:

- A cross sectional UDB containing the 2 most recent wave of EU-SILC;
- A longitudinal UDB containing all the trajectories ending with the most recent wave of EU-SILC; or

-
- A longitudinal UDB containing all 4 years trajectories available at the time of the release, possibly complemented by a historic files of 4 years trajectories

At the moment, only the cross sectional UDB containing 2004 EU-SILC data is available.

Price policy has been adjusted to avoid obstacle to access the data base. The cross sectional and longitudinal files are sold separately at the price 500€ for the first purchase and 250€ for subsequent waves.

Details on the EU-SILC micro-data files to researchers in relation to (1) variable suppression and global recoding applied for the issue of the 2004 and (2) the timetable for forthcoming releases are given in appendix 1.

2. Insight on the EU-SILC current implementation and achievements

2.1. Introduction

The 2004 quality reports provided to Eurostat by MS under regulation requirement provide a good insight on the national implementations and substantive elements to draw preliminary conclusions regarding the quality of the instrument. These elements have been complemented by the information collected through the frequent contacts between Eurostat and MS during data checking operation and grant agreements negotiations for the funding of the launching and anchoring of EU-SILC in national systems.

On this basis, the second part of this paper aims to give an insight of the actual implementation of EU-SILC. Many of the features encountered in national implementation are the results of framework requirements which have been described in the first part of this paper. The review of procedures used by countries allows drawing preliminary conclusions regarding the quality of the instrument as a whole. So called good practices are indeed known to enable the production of higher quality data. Their identification in national processes is a first step in the quality assessment of the instrument. On the other hand, the identification at this early stage of practices that are likely to produce poorer quality results, would allow drawing recommendations for continuous improvement of the instrument.

2.2. Different starting dates

EU-SILC was launched in 2003 on a gentlemen's agreement basis in six Member States (Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg and Austria) as well as in Norway. Eurostat, in close cooperation with Member State national statistical institutes, used these data to evaluate the process of data collection and the computation of cross-sectional indicators. They have carried out methodological investigations focusing on survey quality, data cleaning and on the impact of the changes of source and (mainly income) definitions on the cross-sectional income-based Laeken indicators.

In 2004, under Regulation N° 1177/2003 of the EP and Council, EU-SILC was implemented in twelve EU-15 countries (with the exception of Germany, The Netherlands and United Kingdom) as well as in Estonia, Iceland and Norway.

In 2005, EU-SILC was operating in all EU-25 countries as well as Iceland and Norway.

Bulgaria, Turkey and Romania have launched EU-SILC in 2006, Switzerland is expected for in 2007 and later on most probably in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and in Croatia.

Given the different starting dates of SILC depending on the country, longitudinal data required for the at-persistent-risk-of-poverty indicator will only be available by the beginning of 2010, although temporary variations of that indicator will be available during the interim.

There is therefore a significant data gap at EU level as well as, for several Member States (who relied solely or primarily on the ECHP), at national level.

2.3. Different designs

Almost all countries have used the integrated design proposed by Eurostat. Modified designs have been used only in few countries, primary for the purpose of integrating EU-SILC with an existing survey (i.e. Sweden, Finland, Germany), and/or incorporating into EU-SILC an existing sample (i.e. Norway). France and Norway have adopted the same structure as the standard integrated design, except that panel duration of 9 years and 8 years respectively. Luxembourg is the only country having implemented a pure panel complemented with annual sample to compensate attrition and high turnover of the Luxembourgish resident population.

All designs encountered ensure acute cross sectional representativeness and allow for following a significant number of individuals over at least 4 years.

2.4. Various Samples

The EU-SILC instrument has been thought to collect information on representative samples of the target population.

Following Commission regulation requirements, all samples³ are actually probabilistic. In all countries updated sampling frame and stochastic algorithm to select statistical units are used. Fully enumerated list of dwelling is used in AT, CY, FR, HU, MT. Population registers are used in BE, DK, EE, FI, IS, LT, LU, LV, NL, NO, PT, SE, SI, SK. Post enumeration of randomly selected primary sampling unit is used in EL, IE, IT, ES, PL. In all cases, unbiased estimates can be produced on firm theoretical grounds. The coverage bias is limited by the appropriate frequency of updating of this frame in almost all countries.

The EU-SILC sample at EU level can be seen as the accumulation of sample drawn at national level. The achieved sample size in 2004 was 113.501 households and is expected to reach 200.000 households in 2005. For the 2004 cross sectional component, the minimum effective sample size requirements have been met by all countries except Portugal. In some instances (DK, ES, FI, IT, NO, SE) the sample size is significantly higher than requirements. The allocation of the sample among MS is directed by the EU Regulation. It was set up by Eurostat taking into account the size of the country in order to meet precision requirement for estimation at national level and to be efficient when producing EU-estimation.

MS have designed their sample in order to find a good trade-off between reporting needs at sub national level and cost effectiveness of the data collection. In 2004, significant increase of the sample size, driven by sub national reporting requirements, was recorded in Spain and Italy.

Stratification according to geographical and possibly demographic characteristics is common to all designs except for very small countries/populations. Within strata, the type of design differs widely: simple or systematic random sample is sometimes preferred in small countries (AT, CY, MT, IS, LU); common two/three stage designs (BE, LV, LT, SK, SI, FR, HU, PL, IT, SP) are found

³ With the exception of Germany, for which an existing quota sample has been used at the launching of EU-SILC. This non probabilistic sample will be phase out progressively.

whenever country have to cope with large geographical areas and/or when central register are not available (IT, SP, PL); two phase sample is used in countries where EU-SILC is integrated or is coupled to existing instrument (NL, DE) or is using a master sample (PT). Direct probability proportional to size sample of household is found only in EE. SRS (simple random sampling) approximation is eventually proposed where SILC is using existing self weighting sample (NO).

Globally, sample designs are found adapted to the national specificities. Except for DK and SE, sample designs are slightly less efficient than SRS because of the dispersion of sample weights due to non response and the unbalanced clustering and stratification effects of the selection of the sample. Weighting schemes are derived accordingly enabling unbiased design based inference. In one instance, in Luxembourg, advanced weighting scheme (weight sharing method) had to be set up in order to cope with the existence of multiple frames. The most critical assumptions regarding weighting schemes are probably found when SRS approximation is used for existing sample.

Table 6: Achieved sample size and design effects for the 2004 EU-SILC operation

	Achieved hh ss	<i>Deff</i>
AT	4521	1.00
BE	5275	1.04
DK	6866	0.84
EE	3993	1.10
ES	15355	1.43
FI	11200	1.40
FR	10273	1.15
EL	6252	1.15
IE	5477	1.30
IT	24204	1.41
LU	3572	NA
NO	6046	1.00
PT	4989	1.28
SE	5478	0.96
Total	113501	

2.5. Data source

EU-SILC framework fosters the use of existing sources and/or administrative data. However, in practice not all EU-SILC variables can be obtained from register and administrative data. Hence,

two groups of countries can be done on the basis of the data source used in EU-SILC: in the so called register countries (DK, FI, IS, NL, NO, SE, SI) most income components and some demographic information are obtained through administrative registers. Other personal variables are obtained through interview. In all other countries except Ireland, the full information is obtained through survey among household and interview with household members. In Ireland, upon the explicit agreement of the household collected, the information is obtained from administrative information.

2.6. Data collection

Type of collection

In EU-SILC two types of collection of household and individual variables have been allowed. In most countries (the non-register countries), all members aged 16 or more of selected households received and have been asked to fill in a personal questionnaire. In the register countries (DK, FI, IS, NL, NO, SE, SI) only a selected household respondent receive a personal questionnaire and household variables are collected either through register or through the selected respondent. The different modes have different impact on the tracing of individuals through time (longitudinal dimensions). In the first mode, all household members are panel persons and followed over time. In the second mode, only selected respondent are sample persons and followed over time. At one point in time, household are reconstructed around sample individuals. The different modes lead to different weighting schemes in particular when the selected respondent mode is used, the individual and household weights are obviously different.

Mode of data collection

The specific mode of collecting information also varies from country to country. PAPI is still the main collection mode (CZ, EE, HU, IT, LT, LU, MT, PL, SE for cross sectional, SK). CAPI is implemented in 9 countries (AT, BE, CY, EL, FR, IE, IS, LV, PT, SI, SP, UK). CATI mode is often associated with selected respondent model (DK, FI, NL, NO, SI for reinterview, SE for panel). Germany is the only country where questionnaires are sent by post. The editing facility provided by computer assisted mode as implemented in about half of the countries has a positive impact on the quality of the micro-data collected and reduces costs of data collection and edition.

Fieldwork periods

National surveys also differ through the period during which the fieldwork is carried out. Regulation recommends that the one shot survey fieldwork is extending over less than 4 consecutive months and the lag between income reference period and fieldwork is limited to 8 months. When continuous surveys are used, the sample allocation over time should be controlled and weighting adapted to produce unbiased estimates of the annual average. Table 7 shows that most countries used one shot survey with fieldwork concentrated over a few months mainly in the first half of the year with two noticeable exceptions for IT and BE where the fieldwork is carried out in the second half of the year. Continuous survey over the whole year is run in Ireland (and United Kingdom from 2005). The impact of varying fieldwork period over time might be noticeable when comparing indicators with steady and seasonal pattern overtime but is likely to be negligible for permanent income distributive analysis. One shot surveys always use the previous calendar year as income reference period while it is sliding for continuous survey. The higher degree of inconsistency between stock (income) and flow (socio economic status) when fieldwork period are distant from income reference period can be spotted as a weakness of some EU-SILC implementation.

Table 7: Fieldwork period for the 2004 EU-SILC operation

	AT	BE	DK	EE	ES	FI	FR	GR	IE	IT	LU	NO	PT	SE
Jan						■			■					
Feb					■	■			■			■		■
Mar			■	■	■	■			■		■	■		■
Apr			■	■	■	■		■	■		■	■	■	■
May			■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■
Jun	■			■			■		■		■		■	■
Jul				■					■		■			■
Aug				■					■					■
Sept		■							■					■
Oct		■							■	■				■
Nov		■							■	■				■
Dec		■							■	■				■

2.7. Deviation to common definitions and variation in implementation

The comparability in EU-SILC instrument is ensured by the conceptual harmonisation of target variables obtained through their detailed definition (income components ...) as provided in EU-SILC regulations and through the active role of Eurostat coordinating and supporting implementation. EU-SILC pertains to the so called ex ante output harmonisation model. Explicit deviation from these commonly agreed standards was allowed to a limited extend but are monitored through quality report that are transmitted to Eurostat.

To date, regarding the 2004 operation, no significant deviation is recorded in the concepts implemented by MS.

The framework allows however explicitly for some additional flexibility, namely on the data source (administrative or interview). It also allows for different concepts for self-employment income. These are among the most important issues that will require continuous monitoring of comparability and possibly improvement actions. These aspects will be reviewed in detail in the paper of session 4 of this conference.

In addition, for some issues, details of implementation might lead to non comparability, for instance, the precise household definition, the precise phrasing and routing of questions, the treatment of negative income, the conversion between net and gross income depending on the type of data collected, the treatment of outliers and lump sums in some income components, the type of imputation, in particular the imputed rent. All these aspects are currently under review by a methodological TF bringing together methodologists from Eurostat and MS. Recommendations from this long run TF validated by the EU-SILC working group is expected to lead to continuous improvement of the instrument.

2.8. Data processing

EU-SILC is anchored in national statistical system. It benefits from the existing infrastructure of National Statistical Institutes and its horizontal and specialised processes. In particular, the existence of experienced interviewers pools and efficient procedure for their training are positive elements. Centralised and streamlined processing for data entry and editing are sometimes centralised. Procedures to minimise and to trace processing errors, specific process for the coding of classification like NACE, ISCO are also in some instances available. All these aspects, which participate to the excellence of the ESS, are beneficial for quality of EU-SILC.

For income components, EU-SILC framework requires full imputation. The level of imputation of income component is controlled through a set of flag. This requirement participates to the homogeneity and the completeness of information delivered by the instrument.

In parallel Eurostat has developed an independent process for the micro data validation. Eurostat checking rules ensured that the final datasets have minimum consistency standard and meet basic quality requirements. The checks proposed by Eurostat have inevitably enriched the set of checks implemented by MS where they are most efficient, i.e. during or close after fieldwork. Eventually, Eurostat process comes up with a set of meta information obtained through the frequent contact with MS at that stage and participates to the certification of the quality of NSI processes.

2.9. Non sampling errors

The quality of the output can be characterised by a series of indicators which allow to control quality of the data collection and the risk of so called non sampling errors. The most important, such as the length of interview, the total non response rate and the item non response rate are produced annually in the quality reports.

EU-SILC was designed to keep respondent burden controlled so to avoid to high non response rate and to ensure good quality of the information collected. Despite the detailed collection of income components can be cumbersome, the target was to report limit the total length of interviewing household in average below 60 minutes. In 2004, the average among MS carrying out full surveys was about 55 minutes. Significant decrease of interview times is observed for the register countries where the length of interview can be as low as 18 minutes on average.

Total non response of selected household/individuals was required to be below 40% which was thought be challenging for non mandatory surveys. When this target was difficult to achieved, substitution mechanisms were allowed. In 2004, substitution has occurred in Spain and Ireland only. The average non response for household interview for 2004 is about 30%. The highest non response rates are recorded for BE and LU with slightly more than 50% of non response and lowest levels for FI, PT and EL with about 10-15 % of non response only. Within household individual non response was found almost negligible with level always below 2 % except in 2004 in Spain (16%) and Estonia (5%) for which correction measures have already taken place in 2005.

Item non response for non income variable is always limited to 5 percents except in very rare situations where questionnaire routing had defects and for which correcting measures were easily implemented. Income components recorded in micro data file are frequently already the aggregation of different sub components which are either directly collected from the respondent or can be derived using a model taking into account the situation of the household/individuals (such as child allowance, ...). When non response affects a subcomponent collected through interview, statistical imputation or modelling is required. In many occasions, gross components are obtained from the net components collected by applying a taxation model. All these aspects are controlled in the

datasets through imputation flags which represent the proportion of collected over recorded amounts. This imputation flags allow controlling the performance of the data collection and the relative importance of modelling in recording income.

The following table shows the imputation/modelling rate of the key EU-SILC income components for 2004 operation, namely, total disposable income, capital, employment income and self employment income. At the moment the imputation does not allow for distinguishing statistical imputation from modelling. However, the impact of item non response on the rate of non complete records for capital and self employment income is obvious.

Table 8: For main income components, fraction in % of records partially or fully imputed/modelled for EU-SILC operation 2004

	Total income	Employment income	Capital income	Self employment income
AT	49	28	70	40
BE	71	26	74	62
DK	0	0	0	0
EE	46	35	38	23
SP	39	8	55	68
FI	6	0	11	0
FR	49	15	0	10
GR	0	0	0	0
IE	31	12	0	60
IT	42	10	29	21
LU	67	28	30	46
NO	0	0	0	0
PT	-	-	-	-
SE	0	0	0	0

Register countries are remarkable for their thorough collection of income components. On average about 75% of the income records in EU-SILC comes from raw data collection, the 25% remaining percents are obtained through model (taxation models) or statistical imputation. In terms of amount, in average, more then 90% of the amount recorded comes from data collection and less then 10% from model or imputation.

These indicators reveal the importance of modelling and imputation in recording income. This claims for an extensive assessment of the methods used by MS in the future

2.10. Sampling errors

Standard errors of key indicators are commonly used as a measure of the reliability of data collected through sample survey. EU-SILC was designed to provide measure of at risk of income poverty

rate with an absolute precision of about one point, i.e. the half length of the (95% confidence level) confidence interval (δ) to be of the order of 1%. Sample size requirements have been set up in accordance with this goal.

The following table gives for some Laeken indicators and for the 2004 operation:

- 1) the average coefficients of variation (CV = standard error divided by estimated value of the indicator) computed over the 2004 countries⁴.
- 2) the median of the half lengths of the confidence interval (δ) for the indicator in the 2004 countries
- 3) the minimum δ among the 2004 countries
- 4) the maximum δ among the 2004 countries

Table 9: Summary measure of precision for EU-SILC 2004 operation for some Laeken indicators

Indicator	Average CV	median δ	min δ	max δ
At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers - total	2.9	0.8	0.1	1.3
At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers - men total	3.4	0.9	0.1	1.4
At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers - women total	3.2	1.1	0.1	1.6
At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers - unemployed	6.2	3.9	1.7	6.4
At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers - men, unemployed	7.4	5.4	2.5	8.9
At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers - women, unemployed	10.1	5.1	2.3	8.7
At-risk-of-poverty threshold - single	0.8	-	-	-
Inequality of income distribution S80/S20 income quintile share ratio	2.4	0.2	0.1	0.5
Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap - total	4.7	1.7	1.3	2.8
Gini coefficient	1.6	0.9	0.4	2.0
Mean equivalised disposable income	0.9	-	-	-

This table shows that the target for precision at the level of at risk poverty rate is globally met. The total "at risk of poverty rate" is estimated with an absolute precision of about one point. For small domains (e.g. unemployed by gender), the performance of sample surveys is limited (the precision is of about 5 points) and specific estimation strategies might be required.

2.11. Coherence

The sets of weights available in EU-SILC datasets have been obtained using calibration techniques which ensure basic coherence of estimates obtained from EU-SILC micro datasets and demographic counts. Further coherence analysis with other survey like LFS or HBS or other statistics like NA and social protection accounts can be found in national quality report. A thorough assessment of this dimension will have to be further developed in the future. The methodological workshop will give an account of methods and specific results about it.

2.12. Timeliness

Timeliness was at the core of the need for change from ECHP to EU-SILC. The latter has been designed to deliver timely data on income poverty and social exclusion. At the launching of EU-SILC, timeliness has thus received much attention. Despite the difficulties to streamline processes

⁴ except LU for which standard errors are not available yet

from the inception of the instrument, the timeliness challenge of EU-SILC has been met. Cross sectional estimates of poverty referring to 2004 population (2003 income reference period) were produced according to the plans in December 2006. 2005 operation is already well engaged and the same time schedule will be followed with the 27 countries. In comparison with its predecessor, EU-SILC is definitely a success. However, the need for further synchronisation with other Commission reporting processes has already arisen. After a time for adaptation, there might be a need to design different estimation strategies and to further streamline national processes.

3. Conclusion

This paper has described the substantive investment done both at EU and at national levels to develop and implement the SILC instrument which is about to be the EU reference source for income distribution, social exclusion and pension analysis at EU level. It has become the second pillar of household social survey statistics at EU level, complementing the EU Labour Force Survey focussed on labour market information.

The instrument is not yet stabilised. Although the cross-sectional component has been implemented in all countries last year and results will become available at EU level at the end of this year, the longitudinal component will only become fully operational in 2010.

Countries face important difficulties in the process of integration of SILC in their National Statistical System and some of them already made important adjustments in the model used between 2004 and 2006. For implementation in the medium to longer term, and with a view to limit the interview duration and consequently to improve data quality, more countries are envisaging to use register information for the income component of SILC.

Technical, methodological and implementing improvements will take place in the future to produce data of better quality mainly in terms of comparability and to better fulfil the needs of the different users i.e. Commission DGs, the scientific community and other international organisations. The aim of this Conference is to get first ideas about necessary future adaptations to this instrument.

Appendix 1: EU-SILC micro-data files to researchers: (1) details of variable suppression and global recoding applied for the issue of the 2004 (covering 14 EU Member States) and (2) on timetable for forthcoming releases

(1) Details of variable suppression and global recoding applied for the issue of the 2004 (covering 14 EU Member States)

Geographical variables

- Region information limited to NUTS1 code for most countries, NUTS2 for Spain, France and Finland with some regrouping, no release of NUTS for Portugal
- Degree of urbanisation is released but is recoded for Estonia

Sampling design information

- Stratification information has been removed
- Clustering information is kept but anonymised
- Design weight are withdrawn, only final weights re available

Fieldwork information

- Fieldwork information has been kept except that non response is not traceable
- Day of interview is removed
- Month of interview is recoded into quarter of interview (1,2,3,4)

Other key variables

- Month of birth Recoded into quarter of birth (1,2,3,4); no release at all for Ireland
- Year of birth Top coded (1924 and before)
- Month when then person moved out or died: recoded into quarter of move (1,2,3,4)
- Month when the person moved in Recoded into quarter of move (1,2,3,4)
- Some basic recoding of Dwelling type and Number of rooms
- Country of birth is recoded into 4 modalities: Local/EU/non EU/world; EE?
- Citizenship1 is recoded into 4 modalities: Local/EU/non EU/world; EE?
- Citizenship 2 is withdrawn
- ISCED level currently attended Codes 5 and 6 regrouped
- Highest ISCED level attained Codes 5 and 6 regrouped
- NACE Recoded in 12 modalities
- Income: perturbation of highest income for Finland
- Occupation (ISCO-88 (com): specific grouping for Portugal

Due to the confidential character of the EU-SILC micro-data, direct access to the anonymised data is only provided for research purpose by means of research contracts. Access is in principle restricted to universities and research institutes inside the EU. For other kind of organisations inside the EU and any requests from any organisations outside the EU, approval for access needs to be requested first from the Committee of Statistical Confidentiality by written procedure

(2) Timetable for forthcoming releases

The forthcoming releases are reported in the following table:

Date	Type of release	Comment
March 2006	Cross sectional UDB SILC 2004	Only 14 countries available (BE, DK, EL, ES, FR, IT, LU, AT, PT, FI, SE, NO, IE, EE)
March 2007	Cross sectional UDB SILC 2005	27 countries (all MS + NO IS)
August 2007	Longitudinal UDB SILC 2004-2005	3 rotation groups – waves 1-2 – Only 14 countries.
March 2008	Cross sectional UDB SILC 2006	
August 2008	Longitudinal UDB SILC 2004-2005-2006	2 rotation groups – waves 1-2-3 1 rotation group – waves 1-2
March 2009	Cross sectional UDB SILC 2007	
August 2009	Longitudinal UDB SILC 2004-2005-2006-2007	1 rotation groups – waves 1-2-3-4 1 rotation groups – waves 1-2-3 1 rotation group – waves 1-2
August 2009	Historic Longitudinal trajectories	1 rotation group – 2004-2007 trajectories
March 2010	Cross sectional UDB SILC 2008	
August 2010	Longitudinal UDB SILC 2005-2005-2006-2008	1 rotation groups – waves 1-2-3-4 1 rotation groups – waves 1-2-3 1 rotation group – waves 1-2