

# Towards the adoption of EU legislation for Population and Housing Censuses: summarising progress and highlighting issues relevant to register-based censuses

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## Why census legislation at EU level?

- Need to ensure a high level of quality and comparability
- Allocation of community funds, qualified majority voting, and several other policy actions require detailed census results of high quality and sufficient comparability
- Improvements in demographic statistics cannot ignore their *backbone* (censuses)
- Eliminating an unnecessary *paradox*: political and policy decisions governed by EU legislation are based on statistics which are not subject to Community legislation
- Gentlemen's Agreements did not work well in the past

## ***Output harmonisation:* a fundamental attribute of the proposed legislation**

- A realistic approach
- Recognised by international recommendations
- The ESS will lead developments in census methodology
- A unique *census-laboratory* is under construction
- Our ambition is to transform it into a *centre of excellence*

## The consultation process

- Working Group, Directors of Social Statistics and Statistical Programme Committee
- Users within the Commission: 24 DGs (Directorates General)
- Feasibility study concerning content and regional level
- Formal adoption by the Commission in February 2007
- First discussion at the STATIS WG of the Council in March 2007; expected to reach agreement in June 2007.
- Next: consultation with the European Parliament

## From the initial proposal....to the present compromise

- The core of the proposal has not changed much (the initial text had been very carefully prepared; realistic)
- The major change relates to the 'dropping' of the *recommended topics*
- Still, there is some opposition regarding the transmission of samples of anonymised micro-data
- The competence of the EU in housing matters has been questioned by two Member States

## Issues for register-based approaches (1)

- The definition of usual residence: to what extent 'registered' residence complies with the definition?
- The definition of private households: *'household-dwelling'* concept in register-based censuses; *'housekeeping unit'* concept in conventional censuses
- Some limitations in content and reliability at lower geographical levels (mixed approaches)
- Timeliness of certain census variables affected by differences in procedures followed in different registers

## Issues for register-based approaches (2)

- Some difficulties with variables such as:
  - Ever resided abroad and year of arrival
  - Country / place of birth according to *current borders*
  - Previous place of usual residence

## Next steps

- Discussions within the European Parliament (Employment and Social Affairs Committee)
- The EP and Council need to reach agreement
- Target (forecast): by the end of 2007
- In parallel: Task Force on the *implementation of the census Regulation* continues to work on all technical aspects. The objective is to submit to the Statistical Programme Committee the *Implementing Regulation* in 2008.

## Conclusions

- An important **gap** in the EU statistical legislation is about to be **bridged**
- Alternative methods of census-taking is a **reality**; failure to recognise this reality may result in a re-active and passive watching of developments.
- The EU census legislation provides the framework for the ESS to take a **pro-active approach** and lead future developments in census-taking methodology
- The ESS is committed to solve a '**census-optimisation**' problem
- There is an important **momentum** for the ESS to be successful in this operation: political will, scientific and financial resources and related statistical developments are all moving in a favourable direction