



Council of the  
European Union

Brussels, 23 January 2023  
(OR. en)

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**Interinstitutional File:  
2023/0008(COD)**

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**5588/23  
ADD 4**

**SOC 45  
STATIS 5  
CODEC 49**

### **COVER NOTE**

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From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director
date of receipt:	20 January 2023
To:	Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

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No. Cion doc.:	SWD(2023) 12 final
Subject:	COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT Accompanying the document Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on European statistics on population and housing, amending Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 763/2008 and (EU) No 1260/2013

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Delegations will find attached document SWD(2023) 12 final.

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Encl.: SWD(2023) 12 final



Brussels, 20.1.2023  
SWD(2023) 12 final

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT**

*Accompanying the document*

**Proposal for a**

**REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on  
European statistics on population and housing, amending Regulation (EC) No 862/2007  
and repealing Regulations (EC) No 763/2008 and (EU) No 1260/2013**

{COM(2023) 31 final} - {SEC(2023) 38 final} - {SWD(2023) 11 final} -  
{SWD(2023) 13 final} - {SWD(2023) 14 final} - {SWD(2023) 15 final}

## Introduction and background

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, ensures the production of high-quality, comparable European statistics according to the statistical principles set out in Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 on European statistics. The main uses of European statistics are to serve EU policy design, implementation and monitoring, and their main users are EU institutions. The European Statistical System is the partnership network between Eurostat and the national statistical institutes (NSIs). Eurostat's role is to lead the way in the harmonisation of statistics, in close cooperation with national statistical authorities, which collect data and compile statistics for national and EU purposes.

Under Article 9 of the Treaty on European Union, every national of a Member State, in addition to the national citizenship, is also a citizen of the European Union. To design and implement policies and activities benefiting the EU population and citizens in the areas of EU competences, as established by Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, EU institutions need complete, timely, reliable, detailed, harmonised and comparable European statistics on population. These statistics are also the backbone of all social statistics and indispensable for any more detailed annual population estimates, sample surveys, regional analysis and for producing population projections.

In the context of this initiative<sup>1</sup>, European statistics on population (ESOP) comprise: (i) official European statistics on population, demographic events and migration<sup>2</sup>; (ii) statistics from population and housing censuses; and (iii) the various indicators based on these statistics. These statistics are currently governed by three legal bases developed independently of each other:

- Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 on Community statistics on migration and international protection;
- Regulation (EC) No 763/2008 on population and housing censuses; and
- Regulation (EU) No 1260/2013 on European demographic statistics.

This impact assessment establishes and examines seven different policy options towards a Commission proposal for a new single modernised legal framework to meet evolving user needs for population statistics. Since this also entails potential opportunities for administrative simplification and process integration compared to the status quo under the three non-aligned legal bases, this initiative is included in the 2022 Commission work programme as a REFIT<sup>3</sup> initiative. The impact assessment was carried out back-to-back with an evaluation of the current legal framework, as mentioned above. A single stakeholder consultation was carried out for the impact assessment and evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12958-Data-collection-European-statistics-on-population-ESOP-en>.

<sup>2</sup> Except for statistics on asylum and managed migration.

<sup>3</sup> The Commission's Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme; [COM\(2012\) 746](#).

## **Problem definition**

The evaluation concluded that the three Regulations led to significant improvements in European population statistics. However, there are several gaps and weaknesses in the statistics produced under the current framework.

The first problem with the existing legal framework is that the resulting statistics are not sufficiently complete, coherent and comparable, which may lead to sub-optimal decision making. This relates to key statistical definitions (in particular, the population base for the statistics) which are equivocal, causing poor coherence and comparability.

Secondly, availability of population data in terms of frequency and deadlines is insufficient, as the transmission of data on various important topics and breakdowns has remained voluntary. This is inefficient at EU level in the long term, as it fails to generate EU added value in terms of completeness, comparability and timeliness, despite the costs a majority of Member States incur in order to produce these statistics.

Thirdly, population statistics fail to capture characteristics and details of politically and societally relevant topics or groups. The current legal framework reflects the policy priorities current when the regulations were adopted, but lacks sufficient flexibility to enable the statistics to adapt to meet new priorities such as the EU Green Deal, increasingly dynamic population movements including EU and regional mobility, and equality and non-discrimination policies.

Finally, population statistics are also going through a period of major change, with many Member States moving to increased use of administrative data and other new sources. This potentially allows for statistics to be produced more frequently and in a more timely manner, and at a lower cost. However, it is not possible under the current legal framework to take advantage of such developments.

The evaluation has found that without legislative action, in the future these problems will persist or may worsen.

## **Objectives**

The general goal of this EU action is to better respond to users' needs, and to modernise and enhance the relevance, harmonisation and coherence of European population statistics. This goal can be broken down into four specific objectives aligned with the problems outlined above, namely to:

- ensure complete, coherent and comparable European population statistics;
- ensure timely and frequent statistics to meet users' needs;
- provide statistics that are sufficiently comprehensive in terms of relevant topics and sufficiently detailed in terms of characteristics and breakdowns;
- promote legal and data collection frameworks that are sufficiently flexible to adapt datasets to evolving policy needs and opportunities emerging from new sources.

## **Policy options and their impacts**

Policy options have been constructed by grouping granular policy measures addressing the specific objectives according to four characteristics of a possible intervention:

Table 1 – Comparative ambition of the seven policy options regarding the four main characteristics of the possible intervention (scale: no ambition ‘0’, otherwise ‘+’, ‘++’ or ‘+++’).

Policy option	Harmonisation of statistics	Integration of processes	Statistical outputs	Framework flexibility
<b>A (baseline)</b> – Limited harmonisation, current statistical processes and outputs	0	0	0	0
<b>B.1</b> – Limited harmonisation, improved statistical processes, limited upgrade of statistical outputs and flexibility	0	+	+	+
<b>B.2</b> – Limited harmonisation, improved statistical processes, more expansive upgrade of statistical outputs and flexibility	0	+	++	++
<b>C.1</b> – Improved harmonisation and statistical processes, limited upgrade of statistical outputs and flexibility	++	+	+	+
<b>C.2</b> – Improved harmonisation and statistical processes, more expansive upgrade of statistical outputs and flexibility	++	+	++	++
<b>D.1</b> – Full harmonisation, improved statistical processes, major upgrade of statistical outputs and effective flexibility	+++	+	+++	+++
<b>D.2</b> – Full harmonisation, redeveloped and integrated statistical processes, major upgrade of statistical outputs and effective flexibility	+++	+++	+++	+++

- harmonisation of statistics where the main focus is on defining the population base;
- integration of statistical processes;
- statistical outputs;
- framework flexibility.

Table 1 shows the resulting options that increase in ambition regarding the four characteristics mentioned.

Option A is the baseline scenario, with separate statistical processes and legislation, limited harmonisation of the population definition, and no new statistical outputs.

The main features of options B.1 and B.2 are an upgrade, with increasing ambition, of the statistical outputs and the framework’s flexibility, but leaving limited harmonisation of the population base.

Options C.1 and C.2 are the same as B.1 and B.2, but with a more ambitious attempt to harmonise the population base. Options B.2 and C.2 provide for a more expansive upgrade of the statistical output and framework flexibility compared to options B.1 and C.1.

Finally, options D.1 and D.2 would involve full harmonisation and a major upgrade of outputs, as well as sufficient flexibility for future development of the statistics to meet new needs. Option D.2 also includes the introduction of a statistical population register in all Member States.

Table 2 – Overview of key assessment outcomes for the preferred option D.2 and the alternative option C.2

		Option:	D.2	C.2
<b>Overall assessments</b>				
Proportionality			Uncertain	Pass
Effectiveness			3.71	2.21
Coherence with EU objectives			4	3
Efficiency			Does not compare directly	
Stakeholder views (statistics producers v users)			Deeply split	More convergent
<b>Estimated incremental costs over baseline (in million 2021 EUR)</b>				
NSIs	one-off		50.42	24.41
	recurrent over 10 years		128.92	52.97
Eurostat	one-off		0.83	0.48
	recurrent over 10 years		1.83	0.89
<b>REFIT benefits: Reduced administrative burden through ...</b>				
Professional users	ability to find all needed statistics on Eurostat website		+++	++
NSIs	simplified statistics transmission processes		+++	+
	integrated statistics production process		+++	0
	improved use of admin. and/or other data sources		+++	++
	regulatory changes to adapt to evolving policy needs		+++	+++
Admin. data providers	streamlined data exchange with NSIs		++	++
Eurostat	regulatory changes to adapt to evolving policy needs		+++	++

The costs of all options have been quantified to the extent possible, using as criteria: (i) the level of harmonisation of the population base; (ii) the upgrade of statistical outputs; and (iii) the integration of statistical processes through national statistical population registers. Finally, benefits were itemised, but most of them could not be quantified due to their often indirect or dispersed nature and were thus assessed qualitatively.

### Comparison of options and preferred option

With a lack of quantified benefits, a direct ranking of options is not possible. The efficiency assessment, however, showed qualitatively that none of the options is obviously more cost-effective than any other. Rather, the options offer increasing benefits (directly for statistics users and indirectly for the whole society) at increasing costs (mostly for statistics producers, i.e. national statistical production systems). The deep division between producers and users of statistics reflects this pattern as producers focussed on costs while users prioritised the benefits. However, the assessment has clearly shown that ambitious action on data needs for EU policy priorities has its price, in the form of additional resources needed for statistics producers that are substantial compared to the current baseline costs (up to around 10% for option D.2). More precisely, only the most ambitious options, D.1 and D.2, contain strong measures to address the needs of key EU policy areas like urban/rural integration, the Green Deal, and fundamental rights and non-discrimination. Additionally, only option D.2 includes

statistical population registers as a strong measure to increase production efficiency and thus facilitate delivering the ambitious output goals.

Therefore, the overall preferred option is D.2. Being most ambitious in terms of statistical output and flexibility of the framework, it achieves the best result thanks to a similarly ambitious simplification and integration of the statistical production systems and sustainable long-term efficiency gains. However, uncertainties remain around the subsidiarity and proportionality, in addition to the significant adaptation costs of introducing interoperable statistical population registers in all Member States. Therefore, an alternative (conservative) approach preferring option C.2 would also be reasonable if the proportionality and efficiency concerns of option D.2 are given more weight – this would also be more acceptable to statistics producers as key stakeholders for the implementation.

The preferred options D.2 or C.2 are likely to generate some scope for possible REFIT-relevant cost savings resulting from the simplification, streamlining and integration of statistical processes (see Table 2). Notable simplifications are expected in data sharing between source data owners and NSIs, in regulatory adaptations to evolving data needs for NSIs and Eurostat, and in data transmission procedures from NSIs to Eurostat. Users will benefit from simplified and centralised access to statistics on the Eurostat website. Finally, the introduction of national statistical population registers in all Member States is expected to lead to significant long-term efficiency gains. The impact assessment roughly estimated the potential recurrent EU-level cost savings on censuses at up to half a billion euro per census round.

As for whether there would be any new burden on people, the only potential source of such impacts under the preferred option D.2 is the policy measure introducing new collection modes for equality data. Since at least some of these variables should be collected by self-declaration, some form of incremental direct interaction with people will generally be required. Applying the ‘one-in, one-out’ principle, the analysis shows only a negligible incremental response burden that would thus not generate any significant ‘net ins’.

Regarding new costs for businesses, the only potential source of such impacts under the preferred options D.2 and C.2 are the policy measure enabling business-to-government data sharing for European population statistics. The analysis found that such data sharing in general, including for official statistics, does not generate ‘net ins’ for businesses that would be relevant under the ‘one-in, one-out’ principle.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

The performance of a new ESOP framework will be monitored and evaluated using the operational objectives set under each of the specific objectives mentioned. To this end, 24 key performance indicators including current baseline benchmarks and provisional targets have been defined, mainly by reusing or adapting indicators used in the evaluation. A first evaluation concluding the implementation phase is planned within 3 to 5 years after the entry into force of the new legal framework, but with at least 3 full years of statistics availability. After transition to the application phase, the legislation's functioning and impact will be evaluated regularly every 3 to 5 years.