

European demographic statistics

2011/0440(COD) - 14/12/2018 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents its report on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1260/2013 on European demographic statistics.

The Regulation establishes a common legal framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics on population and vital events.

Under this Regulation, the Commission is required to submit a first report to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Regulation by 31 December 2018 and a second report by 31 December 2023.

The present document is that first report.

Background

Member States had previously submitted such data voluntarily for a number of years but, as these were based on their varying demographic definitions, concepts and methods, there were risks of heterogeneity, incomparability, inconsistency and lack of timeliness. The common framework was intended to meet the need for the high-quality annual demographic statistics considered fundamental for formulating and evaluating a wide range of policies, with particular regard to social and economic issues, at national and regional level. This is particularly important as statistics on population and vital events are used as a denominator for a wide range of policy indicators.

Main findings

- Quality

The report noted that Member States have improved the underlying data sources and the methodologies and statistical tools used for data preparation, resulting in better coverage and more punctual data transmissions of statistics. This has allowed the Commission to shorten the time needed for data dissemination, facilitating timelier data releases and improving further the accessibility of data by the users, e.g. improved metadata and harmonised data.

In addition, the collection of the data has been merged with that of the data required under Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 on Community statistics on migration and international protection, in order to achieve consistency between the various population breakdowns and, to the extent possible, in the demographic balances between population, vital events and migration flows. Member States' metadata submissions have also been merged.

- Relevance

Furthermore, the statistics are a key input in the EU decision-making process, as population determines Member States' qualified majority voting (QMV) weightings in the Council. The statistics produced under the Regulation are regularly used by national administrations, international organisations, academic researchers and civil society groups working on a wide range of topics and for planning, monitoring, and evaluation programmes in a number of social and economic policy areas. Of all the statistics disseminated

by Eurostat, those relating to population are among those consulted most. There is growing interest among users in data on population change. This confirms the relevance of the data for users and the public at large.

- Timeliness

The main deadline for supplying the bulk of the demographic data to Eurostat is 12 months after the end of the reference year; three small datasets are to be transmitted within 6, 8 and 11 months of the end of the reference year.

Considerable improvement has been observed in the punctuality of data provision under the Regulation, as compared with the previous, voluntary approach. This is due in particular to the introduction by Member States of automatic extractions from their statistical databases to comply with Eurostat's data requests and Eurostat's regular compliance monitoring. Less time is now needed between data being received and validated, and then being disseminated on the Eurostat website.

- Comparability and coherence

European demographic statistics draw on a high degree of harmonisation as regards concepts, definitions, classifications and methodologies. However, for the detailed statistics on population, live births and deaths at national and regional level, the strict application of the population concept of 'usual residence' has proven the hardest problem to address. Efforts are ongoing and many Member States can now approximate 'usual residence' on the basis of their national data sources.

Overall, demographic statistics are comparable over time. However, discontinuities may arise where Member States improve or change their methodology, or adjust the territorial units used in statistics.

Eurostat continues to follow up sporadic cases of non-compliance with the Regulation, where data were incomplete, of low quality or not delivered in accordance with the legal deadlines. It monitors and assesses these aspects of data provision on an ongoing basis and contacts the Member States concerned at technical and administrative level to resolve the issues.

Improvements

The report has demonstrated that the Regulation has significantly improved European statistics on demography in terms of data availability, completeness, punctuality and timeliness. The data quality has benefited from the merging of the collection of the data with that of the data received under Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 and related implementing measures. Quality should continue to be improved in the future, in particular by tackling under- and over-coverage.

The production of European demographic statistics under the Regulation can be considered to be up and running, and providing various stakeholders and local, regional, national and international administrations with relevant data. However, demographic behaviour and the structure of the population are in constant flux and, as new data sources and methods become available, close monitoring of current data production and output under the Regulation and parallel developments as regards future needs will remain an important challenge in the coming years.