Community statistics: income and living conditions in the Union EU-SILC

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PURPOSE : to establish a common framework for the systematic production of Community statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). EU-SILC is to become the reference source of comparative statistics on income distribution and social exclusion at the EU level. CONTENT : Statistics on income and living conditions and, more precisely, indicators on poverty and social exclusion have been requested at high political level. Articles 136, 137 and 285 of the Treaty establishing the European Community imply that statistics on income, living conditions and social exclusion shall be collected in the context of EU-SILC. Furthermore the conclusions of the Lisbon (23-24 March 2000) and Nice (7-9 December 2000) European Council meetings have given strong support to the eradication of poverty and invited the Council and the Commission to promote a better understanding of social exclusion through continued dialogue and exchanges of information and best practice on the basis of commonly agreed indicators also capable of measuring progress. It is in this context that the Commission has developed the "Programme of Community action to encourage co-operation between Member States to combat social exclusion", which has been submitted in 2000 to the European Parliament and the Council to promote the "collection and dissemination of comparable statistics in Member States and at Community level". Data are required in both cross-sectional (pertaining to a given time in a certain time period) and longitudinal (pertaining to individual-level changes over time, observed periodically over a certain duration) dimensions. However, the first and clear priority is to be given to the delivery of timely and comparable cross-sectional data. Requirements for longitudinal data will be less important - in terms of both, coverage and sample size. In order to be in a position to carry out multi-dimensional analysis at the level of households and persons, and in particular to investigate major issues of social concern that are new and require specific research, it is essential that the cross-sectional (resp. the longitudinal) information can be linked at the household and personal level. EU-SILC has to be flexible in terms of data sources. Eurostat strongly encourages the use of existing data sources, whether they are surveys or registers. While encouraging the use of national sources, Eurostat will recommend an integrated design for EU-SILC to those countries planning to launch a new operation. This design aims to be the most cost effective and efficient for both, cross-sectional and longitudinal requirements. EU-SILC will be launched in 2003. The cross-sectional and longitudinal micro-data sets will be updated on a yearly basis. Modules will be added to the cross-sectional component of EUSILC starting from 2004. Lastly, the high priority given by the Council and the Commission to fight against poverty and social exclusion in the EU requires comparable and timely statistics to monitor this process.