

# Population and housing censuses

2007/0032(COD) - 23/02/2007 - Legislative proposal

**PURPOSE:** to establish common rules for the decennial provision of comprehensive data on the population and on housing.

**PROPOSED ACT:** Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

**BACKGROUND:** international, European and national institutions need to be in possession of sufficiently reliable information on the population and on housing in the European Union. The last Population and Housing Census in the European Union was conducted for the reporting year 2001. It was not based on any European legislation, but instead on a "Gentlemen's agreement". The wide variation in reference dates seriously reduced comparability. Furthermore, punctuality was not ensured. The last data were received in mid 2005, leading to a publication in September 2005, i.e. 44 months after the end of the reference year. The data initially provided were often incomplete, not fully validated or inconsistent. Numerous requests to recheck the data greatly delayed the production process. Given the important uses that are to be made of the census data, higher metadata and quality assurance standards are required.

**CONTENT:** the proposal clarifies the responsibilities and roles in the decennial provision of comprehensive data on the population and on housing, as well as common requirements concerning quality and transparency of results and methods. It leaves Member States free to produce the necessary data in the way they think is the best in their respective countries. This includes the choice of the source from which Member States wish to derive the data. At the same time, the proposal guarantees the quality of the data, notably comparability at the European level. In essence, the approach is not input oriented, but output oriented.

This proposal sets the basis for the collection of high quality and comparable data on housing. The housing situation of the population has substantial implications:

- access to decent housing is a major concern of social policy. At the 2001 Laeken European Council, Member State Governments stressed the need to develop common indicators on social inclusion, explicitly referring to housing, as well as the need to reinforce the statistical machinery in that sense. However, there is still a lack of indicators on housing at a European as well as national level. The ministers responsible for housing from the Member States have repeatedly confirmed the need for comparable data on housing;
- buildings that house private households are important consumers of energy, water, and other supplies and services that have an environmental component;
- housing has important economic significance (offer and demand for housing, finance, construction, refurbishment).