

Population and housing censuses

2007/0032(COD) - 21/11/2007

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted a report drafted by Ona **JUKNEVIEN** (ALDE, LT), and amended, in the first reading of co-decision, the Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on population and housing censuses, and strengthened data protection measures on statistics.

The main amendments made in committee were as follows:

Type of statistics: addition of “environmental” variable: Members felt that, apart from periodic statistical data on the population and on the main family, social, economic and housing characteristics of individuals, there was a particular need to collect detailed information on housing in support of various Community activities such as the promotion of social inclusion and the monitoring of social cohesion at regional level, or the protection of the environment and the promotion of energy efficiency. The report stated that the place and the space available for each member of a household, and the quality of that space, are central to analysis of the quality of life that populations have. The extent to which environmental and energy standards match social requirements also serves to measure quality of life. It added “environmental and energy classification”» to the Annex, for information to be collected. Other amendments to the annex include “job security (over a given period or otherwise)” and “number of times that a person has changed jobs”. Housing topics includes size (category) and date of construction and of last structural maintenance work.

MEPs deleted from the Commission's proposal a range of topics for which data were to be collected. The list of non-derived topics has also been amended and is composed of: distance from the place of usual residence to green spaces and recreation grounds; distance travelled between the main health care establishment and the place of usual residence; availability of water and light; and telephone and standard and broadband Internet connection. The report stated that it was important to have information on these subjects because the access which populations have to given facilities and amenities is an important indicator of social progress in our societies. Same-sex and mixed-sex partnerships is on the list to be compiled regarding derived topics.

Data sources: this will include a combination of register-based census and sample survey and conventional census.

Data protection: Member States shall take all measures necessary to meet the requirements of data protection. The Member States' own data protection provisions shall not be affected by this Regulation. The Committee deleted Article 4(4) requiring Member States to report to the Commission (Eurostat) on the data sources used. It also deleted “anonymised microdata”.

Reliability and comparability of data: in order to ensure the comparability of the data provided by the Member States and for reliable overviews to be drawn up at Community level, the data used should refer to the same reference year.

Data quality: a new Article 5(a) on quality assessment is inserted, and defines terms such as relevance”, “accuracy”, “timeliness”, “accessibility”, “comparability” and “coherence”. Member States shall provide the Commission (Eurostat) with a report on the quality of the data transmitted. In this context, Member States shall report on the extent to which the chosen data sources and methodology meet the essential features of population and housing censuses as defined in the text.

Reference date: each Member State shall determine a date to which its data refer (a reference date). The reference date shall fall in a year specified on the basis of the Regulation (reference year). The first reference year shall be the year 2011. The Commission shall establish subsequent reference years in accordance with the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. The reference years shall fall during the beginning of every decade.

Housing: “housing” is defined as living quarters and buildings as well as housing arrangements and the relationship between the population and living quarters at the national and regional levels at the reference date. The Committee defined “buildings” as permanent buildings that contain living quarters designed for human habitation, or conventional dwellings that are reserved for seasonal or secondary use or that are vacant. It amended the definition of “usual residence” and added that the following persons only should be considered as usual residents of the geographic area in question: those who have lived in their place of usual residence for a continuous period of at least twelve months before the reference date; and those who arrived in their place of usual residence during the twelve months before the reference date with the intention of staying there for at least one year.

Lastly, a new clause states that the Commission shall adopt the technical specifications of the topics as required by the Regulation as well as of their breakdowns, in accordance with the regulatory procedure.