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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Accompanying the document

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council

establishing a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households, based on data at individual level collected by samples

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Executive Summary Sheet

Impact assessment on a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households, based on data at individual level collected by samples

A. Need for action

Why? What is the problem being addressed?

The growing information needs for policymaking and other purposes increasingly confront Eurostat and the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) with additional high quality requirements – including timeliness – for statistical data. At the same time new technological innovations change the possibilities available for data collection while also further (re)shaping the future needs of data users. The current system for social statistics is fragmented into separate domain-specific Regulations, which rigidly fix the contents (the topics to be covered) and the technical requirements of the data collection (size sample, quality criteria, transmission requirements, etc.). The resulting fragmented and inflexible legal system at the EU level is mirrored in the national processes on data collection – through mostly independent surveys - and contributes to the following key problems of European social statistics: (i) lack of responsiveness to users' needs; (ii) quality issues in particular on consistency and comparability across data collections; (iii) little support to the use of innovative methods of data collection and of available data sources. In addition, the combination of these problems also contributes to increasing inefficiencies: (iv) higher than necessary cost and response burden of data collection. The ultimate consequence of these problems is that the statistics collected by Eurostat gradually lose relevance for policymakers and other data users.

What is this initiative expected to achieve?

The challenge for addressing these main problems is to create a legislative environment for the European Social Surveys that will guarantee the comparability, adaptability and coherence of the data in the long run. The system of European social surveys must be sufficiently robust and maintain a high quality in an environment characterised by the rapid innovation of methodology and IT, the availability of new data sources, changing needs and expectations of data users, increasing competition on the information market and continued pressure on available resources. To consolidate the relevance of social statistics collected as input for EU and national social policies as well as research purposes, the following specific objectives have been defined: (i) Improve responsiveness of social statistics to societal needs, (ii) Ensure better quality of social statistics; (iii) Better facilitate the use of innovative methods and processes; (iv) Improve the efficiency in the production of social statistics.

What is the value added of action at the EU level?

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) outlines the EU competence to adopt measures for the production of statistics where necessary for the performance of the activities of the Union (article 338 TFEU). The data collections considered in this IA are inputs for the performance of the Union's activities. The essential need for international comparability makes an EU intervention indispensable. The possibility of gaining efficiency by a strengthened collaboration across the European Statistical System gives an additional value to action at the EU level.

B. Solutions

What legislative and non-legislative policy options have been considered? Is there a preferred choice or not? Why?

A range of options has been considered to address the fragmentation of data collection at EU and national level (5 options) and the inflexible programmatic and technical requirements (3 options). For both fields, alternative approaches have been analysed in comparison to the baseline scenario. The preferred option includes a legislative instrument that integrates the current domain-specific Regulations, while 'defragmenting' national data collection processes. The preferred option also increases flexibility with allowing for flexible technical requirements, while fixing the elements of statistical programming.

Who supports which option?

For data producers the most important impacts of any policy option considered are the costs: any revision to data collection, be it changes to existing data collections or new data collection components involve costs for NSIs in the short term, recognising a potential decrease of data collection costs in the longer run. Data users support more flexible programming, while also requesting continuity of data collection series. Data users support policy options that contribute to better timeliness of data, and more coherent high-quality data.

C. Impacts of the preferred option**What are the benefits of the preferred option (if any, otherwise main ones)?**

De-fragmentation of data collection processes reduces duplications and therefore enables considerable efficiency gains in the production of social statistics at the system level; for (i) Eurostat, (ii) data producers, and (iii) respondents. More flexibility facilitates responsiveness to new user needs. The economic and social benefits of the preferred option include improved relevance, timeliness, and consistency of social statistics that contribute to a more efficient statistical evidence base for sound economic and social policies, which should result in better economic performance and positive social impacts of future policy decisions. The simplification objectives of the REFIT programme will also be achieved by streamlining the legal framework in place.

What are the costs of the preferred option (if any, otherwise main ones)?

The preferred option faces initial implementation costs that mainly affect the data producers, due to revisions in their business processes for the production of data. The impact assessment shows that these implementation costs in the short term are outweighed by the efficiency gains at the system-level in the longer term especially in the data collection phase.

How will businesses, SMEs and micro-enterprises be affected?

The policy options do not have direct or indirect impacts for SMEs or micro-enterprises.

Will there be significant impacts on national budgets and administrations?

The implementation costs have an impact on the budget of NSIs, and therefore indirectly on national budgets. It is essential that the statistical regulatory framework that would be developed fully takes into account these costs and foresees safeguards that would limit and reduce as much as possible the costs.

Will there be other significant impacts?

No other significant impacts have been identified.

Proportionality?

The preferred option will ensure the quality of European social statistics including their comparability, relevance and responsiveness in a harmonised manner based on the same principles. It will lead to greater cost-effectiveness while respecting the specificities of Member States systems. Therefore the preferred option does not go beyond what is strictly necessary to achieve the objectives.

D. Follow up**When will the policy be reviewed?**

The frequent Member States reporting on data quality, consolidated by Eurostat, are produced and disseminated after each wave of data collection and contains a wealth of relevant monitoring information on the various elements targeted. The European Statistical Programme, currently covering the period 2013-2017 and that includes social statistics, is assessed at mid-term and when it terminates. Key performance indicators are followed-up annually. Collection of information about quality, costs and benefits will therefore continue and improve. The results from this policy will be further evaluated after the implementation of the future data collections foreseen under this initiative.