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E DITORIAL

A real European social dimension is emerging as the barriers to free movement of goods, services, capital and individuals fall. But, at the same time, demands are ever more urgent and there is mounting concern in many parts of the social sector.

‘Unless we are very careful, the focus on individual values could deprive all collective values of their substance. Liberty could change to intolerance, equality to indifference about other people and fraternity to a vague emotional impulse.’¹

Priority for employment, for living and working conditions and for education and training, open-mindedness, a grasp of and adaptation to migratory phenomena, the fight against poverty and social exclusion and concern for an ageing population are just some of the areas in which it will take patience and perseverance to integrate this European social dimension.

Social policy, probably more than any other, must have proper, watertight figures to back it up, and translating the facts into figures and regional and social statistics is a constant challenge.

Eurostat strives to take up this challenge every day.

Fernando de Esteban Alonso

Director of social and regional statistics

¹ J. Delors' speech on 'Europe in the 21st century' to the International Conference on 'Human resources in Europe at the dawn of the 21st century', Luxembourg, 29 November 1991.

SOCIAL EUROPE IN FIGURES

A necessary Utopia
 An interview with Yves Franchet

'If we are to prevent the Europe now taking shape from being a kind of Wild West where anything goes, we need new regulations, both to avoid abuse and disloyal practice and to protect the fundamental rights of workers. It is important for the European social model to go on setting the example now that peoples of Central and Eastern Europe are looking to us. Europe will also be a social community – a Utopia, but a necessary one if the Community enterprise is to be a success.'¹

IN THE WAKE OF MAASTRICHT

Are there already glimpses of how Maastricht will affect social and regional statistics?

'For both these sectors, the signing of Maastricht is a great step forward. Despite the fact that there is one country which is not joining in the other countries' drive for social cohesion for the time being, I should be very surprised if all 12 of us were not in agreement again fairly soon.

One important aspect of this vital cohesion is the strengthening of regional policy, accompanied by a doubling of the structural Funds – developments which will generate a demand for increasingly detailed statistical data.

So we are currently thinking about what extra information we need to supply to back up the political reflection on the advances in these two areas. We are certainly going to have more to do in both.'²

What are Eurostat's main aims in the two areas at the moment?

'They should emerge from the new statistical programme for 1993-97, the first version of which was drawn up last autumn and is currently being rewritten to take the effects of the Treaty into account. There is a lot of rewriting on social matters. The main supports for the political thinking will develop inside this new programme.

We did a fairly good job of anticipating the trend revealed at Maastricht, which corroborates the ideas we had formed, in particular in the light of seminars on wage statistics and wage costs run in 1991. A similar concern was behind the groundwork for the International Conference on Human Resources in Europe at the Dawn of the 21st Century, and even the fixing of the date.'²

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

The idea of a businessman's Europe seems to have got the Community's businesses on the move, but they are not so keen about a social Europe. Will the Social Charter get off the ground, do you think?

'A businessman's Europe cannot work without a proper social Europe. I entirely agree with Jacques Delors on this and I believe that, basically, plenty of businessmen do too, despite their immediate aim being to improve turnover and push up profits. The vast majority of businessmen today are perfectly well aware that they will not be able to carry on without social peace.

So their interest, in the medium term, is to consolidate this social cohesion throughout Europe so as to ensure its stability and harmonious development.'²

What sort of social statistics do businesses really want?

'Even before having many statistical data available, some of them managed to capitalize on the disparities and comparative advantages of the different labour forces, without even being able to make any far-reaching or really objective comparisons. Far more of them want more sophisticated tools today.

They want precise details of wage costs, wage structures and so on, so they can look at their own situations and market trends and set up their production structures accordingly.

Going beyond ordinary statistical data, they also want details of social protection systems, of the social environment of any new market they may decide to tackle and so on.

Many of them, anxious to be forward-looking, want demographic data. The businessman

who decides to move into a market needs to know details of its population, its trends, the various professions and activities developed on it, its level of unemployment, etc. He needs to know exactly what the set-up is and what factors will alter it in the future.

Social statistics will give businesses plenty of data to help them make the most of the single market.¹²

TRAINING WITH FORCE

The Commission launched the Force³ programme to develop continuing vocational training. What sort of cooperation do you expect from businesses here?

'Jacques Delors wanted to put the accent on competitiveness in firms. With unemployment potentially getting worse, it is disappointing to see that the labour market is not meeting the firms' demand for specialist workers.

Vocational training is the obvious answer and the firms are interested in it because it raises the standards in their departments. We already have their cooperation with Force, in information and in training, and they have every interest in taking an active part in data collection.²⁴

A SOCIAL DATABASE

Isn't setting up a social databank in a field where very few of the definitions and concepts have been harmonized (or are indeed harmonizable) rather a long shot?

'I don't think so. On the contrary, we already have a lot of social statistics, and very well harmonized ones, covering whole sections of this databank. For example:

- demography. Demographers have been working together for centuries and a great deal of the ground in this very important area has already been harmonized;
- the labour force surveys, which have been harmonized over the Community as a whole for de-

cadecades now, work well and provide information on unemployment and on activity by age, sex, type and so on.

The degree of harmonization of course declines in cultural matters, a sensitive area where it will always be important to cultivate differences. European Union should remain a Europe of differences, but still have a statistical language whereby people can understand each other better and compare their culture and all aspects of their social make-up.

Designing this language will be no easy task and the statisticians have to do more than talk to each other to perform it. Symbiosis with other disciplines is vital. The sociologists, for example, must always be involved. Their input in the social databank we are hoping to produce will be of great importance and their reflexions on the deeper meaning of words and classifications are essential to us.²

Could demographic statistics be an argument for making European statistics more forward-looking in the various fields?

'Demography is indeed one of the themes for which the course of future decades is set and, since fecundity and mortality rates are fairly inert in their development, we already know what our population will look like in 20 years' time.

Businesses and many politicians are only now, it seems, starting to see the point of demography and its prospective solidity, even in relation to the economy.

So it really would be a sound argument for encouraging the whole of the economic world to think about devising strategies which are not – as is all too often the case nowadays – designed in terms of short- and very short-term considerations...²

MORE IMMIGRATION STATISTICS NEEDED

Jacques Delors told the European Parliament that unless the Council discussed immigration, there could be no guarantee that the internal market and the free movement of individuals

would actually come about (Echo, 5 March 1992).

What figures have to be available – and exact – for this discussion not to be difficult?

'Once the free movement of individuals has been established in the internal market, immigration policy absolutely has to be a common policy, otherwise confidence among the Member States will be shaken. The Council has to discuss this and, if it is to take up a position, it needs common statistics and definitions in order to be able to quantify and describe the migrations recorded. It is precisely such statistics which we currently do not have. In some countries, however, immigration is something new and it is only now that some people there are beginning to raise questions which other countries, with longer traditions of immigration, have done a fairly good job of solving.

It is very important for our work on this to be taken further, with both the Council and the Council of Europe, and the statistical programme for 1993-97 will leave plenty of scope for this.²

What are the main jobs which the institutions will be wanting Eurostat to tackle in regional and social statistics in the near future?

'They will vary considerably according to the origin of the request.

We expect the European Advisory Committee on Statistical Information in the Economic and Social Spheres (CEIES) to take part in the drive for better coordination of the various national and Community statistical programmes and to give us a social picture of the statistical programme, by June, with a view to a synthesis.

We note that budget considerations crop up more frequently in the Council now – hence the accent on priorities. We need to be sure that what is produced is necessary and useful. The steps we take must be scrupulous about cost-efficiency. The Council will make one-off, closely targeted requests focused on many areas of social statistics.

We have asked the European Parliament about its reaction to the pre-Maastricht document on

the statistical programme. I think that we shall see the views of Parliament and the CEIES converging closely and that they will then have to be put alongside the views of the Council, ultimately to yield a list of activities for the 1993-97 statistical programme.

A far-reaching inertia...

There will probably be a lot of things which cannot be properly completed over this period. Various schemes on the drawing board since 1990-92 will have their specific content defined in 1993-94 and be integrated into a series of activities which will not be fully developed until the end of the decade.

This fairly considerable inertia is caused by the fact that all these programmes are part of national statistical programmes and, in the social sector especially, have to be negotiated with the various participants in the social dialogue (trade unions, professional associations and so on). Any attempt at changing the status quo and harmonizing or adding new dimensions to problems under discussion will always come up against a fair amount of inertia.

Pointers

We can already point to one or two areas in which action is bound to be vigorous:

- improvements to regional and social statistics, with reference to wage structures and non-wage costs;
- vocational training (particularly under the Force programme), education and training, health and safety at work (1992 is the European year of safety, health and hygiene at work!);
- social protection. We shall certainly be consolidating our work around Esspros⁵;
- demography and migration will of course be heavy-demand areas as far as statistics are concerned.

In areas to do with culture, on the other hand, progress will be slower, since harmonization is more difficult in this field, with political reflexion, by nature, still hesitant.²

OBJECTIVE REGIONAL STATISTICS

With the increasing accent on subsidiarity, how is it possible to guarantee the objectivity of regional statistics?

'What can we do to ensure that everyone has complete confidence in a system which is the basis for so many decisions, so much thinking and much of the distribution of structural Funds?

The answer is that we can improve the statistical enquiry systems – and they are put into practice by the Member States, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

Stronger partnership

A huge effort has been made to improve data collection in countries where statistics are still behind, so as to increase the mutual confidence of the various members. For the moment, I can see no likelihood whatsoever of the Commission setting up a statistical surveillance system to test the standard of the national systems. This would not only run counter to the principle of subsidiarity, it would also be beyond our means.

Disputes can well arise, as we have found. For example, one country had two sets of regional livestock production statistics in circulation, one for administrative and one for statistical purposes. We went right up to the Court of Justice to back the statistical set against the so-called administrative set. And we won. This happened in a country where a ministry had every interest in the results of "administrative" statistics taking precedence over the results of the statistical survey. In this particular field, we ultimately managed to improve statistical cohesion throughout the Member States.

Boosting capacity

We know how to ensure the objectivity of regional statistics: proper surveys, good samples and so on. If the national statistical institutes do not have the means of doing so, it is up to us to see that they get them. And if there is a dispute between them and the government, it is up to us to decide in the most objective way possible.

Working to improve the status of statistics in each country means helping to get statistics recognized as the most objective source of information.²

The Committee of the Regions

There will be an increasing demand for regional statistics, won't there? A number of election results recently have revealed regional focuses trying to attract power...

'That is of course why a new institution, the Committee of the Regions, is to be set up within the context of European Union, to perform the particular task of investigating the objectivity of regional statistics. We shall try to use it as a way of making people more aware that regional statistics which are not objective have to be made so.

The Committee of the Regions could have a fairly positive effect on the regions themselves here, particularly those with strong leanings towards autonomy.

In some parts of Europe, moreover, the coordination between national and regional statistical systems needs to be a great deal better.

The Committee will have to watch the regional dimension in the Union constantly. We shall certainly be taking our thinking on regional statistical development further. Our job of putting social Europe into figures inevitably takes us right to the heart of the regions. And is not the diversity of these regions the wealth of the European social model?²

The European social model

'The legal foundations of social Europe did not pop out neatly drafted from the minds of Brussels Eurocrats. They were not shaped by passing fashion or an obsession with social matters. They came from values common to all the Member States, from their economic and social traditions, from a history and a vision which were specifically European, which is why it is fair to say that there is a European social model – and a short stay in the USA or Japan is enough to prove it.¹

¹ H. Malgrat (Associate Director of the Société d'études sociologiques de Boulogne) – 'L'Europe sociale: une utopie nécessaire', in *Humanisme et Entreprise*, No 185, February 1991.

² Interview with Yves Franchet, Director-General of Eurostat, 31 March 1992.

³ Force: Action programme for the development of continuing vocational training in the European Community – Council Decision 90/267/EEC – OJ L 156, 21.6.1990, p. 1.

⁴ The Community backs regular exchanges of comparable data on continuing vocational training in its Force programme.

It will be cooperating closely with the Eurostat working party on education and training statistics in the systematic collec-

tion of data in the Member States, the development of comparable concepts from existing national work, the definition of a common methodological framework which can be used in all the Member States and the launching of a specific survey based on questionnaires sent to a sample of firms, with the cooperation of competent bodies in the Member States.

The data collected will relate to:

- the number of training courses followed;
- the number of participants by branch of activity and size-class;
- the cost of the training;
- in-company and outside training;
- outside training by type of training institution;

- in-company training by domain;
- length of in-company training;
- participation by sex.

⁵ Esspros: the European system of integrated social protection statistics. This comprises a harmonized framework designed to allow national data on social protection (defined in the light of jointly agreed standard criteria) to be presented in comparable form.

There are two separate sections:

i) the first gives a detailed description of revenue and expenditure (or assimilated) transactions;

ii) the second deals with categories of protected persons and beneficiaries of social protection schemes, as well as the various benefits which they receive.

P ROGRESS THROUGH CONSOLIDATION

Jobs and living conditions are still a priority
An interview with Odile Quintin

'I solemnly declare that the only fight which counts is our fight for pluralist democracy and social progress' (Jacques Delors, President of the Commission of the European Communities).

Odile Quintin, a doctor of law who is also qualified in philosophy and history, has, with her combination of legal and arts training, had the opportunity to be involved in a wide range of Commission activities from fisheries to external relations (North-South, Japan, East-West etc). She has been with DG V (Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs) since 1982, where she heads social security and social action programmes (Unit C1).

A POLICY WHICH EVOLVES

The Commission's social policy is evolving constantly. Its legislative action is backed up by a range of data and experience exchange programmes which over the past few years have led, in particular, to the setting up of a number of 'observatories':

- the European Family Observatory;
- the European Observatory on Ageing and the Elderly;
- the mutual information system on social protection in the Community;
- the observatory on national policies to combat social exclusion.

These groups of observers make considerable use of Eurostat's basic quantitative data in their analyses of policies, trends and processes.

Employment in the spotlight

'This area, which developed more slowly than others in the past, has been receiving more attention from statisticians in recent years.'¹ The text published at the end of the European Council meeting in December 1990 stated that 'the establishment of the single market must result in a genuine improvement in employment and in the living and working conditions of all Community citizens.' All this will have to be constantly measured and put into figures.

Social security

This is the first aspect of the work of Unit C1 in DG V.

Men and women are equal

One of the Commission's concerns on the legislative front is the very specific activity of harmonizing sexual equality in matters of social security, in the light of Article 119 of the Treaty. This is a

specific legislative task, of which there is already considerable experience.

Promoting convergence

'Much more in the centre of things is our drive to promote the convergence of social protection aims and policies. The Commission's position is not to try to harmonize social security systems, which are too different and based on cultures which are very distant from each other, but to try to bring them closer to avoid the differences in level acting as brakes on free movement.

The fact that we have the same problems – triggered as much by demographic trends as by the labour market or family structures – has led us to join together to determine a new kind of social protection which is ideal and modern and offers a response to the new demands of the present. Every Member State will of course be free to put this into practice as it sees fit, in accordance with its own system and its own funding arrangements.

Obviously, we have to link this central concern to the aim of economic and monetary union (EMU), taking account of the restricted room for manoeuvre which the various social protection systems will have under EMU.'¹

Complementary systems

'Our thinking, which is closely related to the advent of free movement, has now also been brought to bear on the type of framework to be given to complementary schemes of social protection (no legislative framework of any kind applies to them at present).

The paradox of training is that it is the most highly skilled workers – those most concerned with mobility – who have the most difficulty in transferring their entitlements from one country to another. In some cases, they cannot

even keep their pension rights. Is not some legislation called for here?

Before we get that far, we have to take stock of the situation – an extremely complex task, which Eurostat is in fact performing.¹

MORE STATISTICS REQUIRED

The emphasis on social matters goes hand in hand with a demand for figures – which, in some fields, are partially lacking.

On social protection

The initiative on the convergence of social protection aims and policies is to take practical shape in a Council instrument.

'We are setting up a system with a direct link to this instrument, which should mean that we can monitor and evaluate the various social protection policies. The system requires quantitative indicators (produced by Eurostat) and qualitative indicators (related to opinion polls which we carry out ourselves).

We have developed very active co-operation with Eurostat here and set up a group of experts (one per Member State) with whom we have discussed which indicators are linked to our chosen aims. We have also asked Eurostat to provide us with various data (not available so far) on the recipients of social protection benefits.¹

On income replacement ratios

'A direct reflexion of our political options is our work on income replacement ratios (old age, unemployment, etc.).

On income surveys

This is a new demand which will involve both a political decision on the part of the governments and the provision of adequate means.

Eurostat's main tool in the social field is currently the labour force survey. Is it in the realms of Utopia to ask for a parallel tool in the shape of an income survey?

This would be a solid basis both for policies and for everything we do in terms of social protection, poverty, monitoring of the elderly, general family trends and so on.

It would be something to ask Eurostat today, to develop income surveys.¹

Panels?

The idea of developing a systematically monitored panel of households is gaining ground. 'We have financed an initial pilot phase involving some very sound cooperation between Eurostat and us. We now have to work towards a stabilized instrument, in which the national statistical institutes play a large part and which is as valuable for social policy as the labour force survey is for employment.'¹

MORE DEMANDS ON EUROSTAT

There is no doubt that these various statistical requirements will be increasing. DG V has sometimes used sources other than Eurostat in the past. 'We have done this in two ways:

- Eurostat's poverty data were few and far between, so we got down to work with universities and research bodies when, for example, the idea of household panels was launched. This was an initiative of DG V, and Eurostat is now responsible for creating a European panel.
- We also called on the governments, via our own correspondents in the ministries, when it came to work on income replacement ratios and medium-term projections on social spending.¹

Looking ahead

What could Eurostat be helping DG V to do in terms of forward studies?

'The work would be of three kinds:

- medium-term projections of social spending: these would be a great help with our work on convergence;
- demographic prospects: particular attention will be paid to the elderly, throughout next year, and the projections in terms of trends in ageing will be of use to everyone concerned with these problems;
- forward studies on trends in family structures and behaviour (conditions relating to divorce, marriage, single parents, etc.) will also be required according to the sort of policy it is hoped to pursue.

All governments are keen to have a series of figures and medium-

term projections for predicting their social spending as accurately as possible.

Although Parliament requires fewer technical figures on social protection, it is very interested in data on the elderly and on poverty – a matter which, as we have seen, is the subject of delicate political debates.

Our "observatories" – monitoring bodies usually made up of independent experts (sociologists, economists, demographers and legal specialists) – are in constant need of figures to back up their thinking on political analyses, and I invite Eurostat to attend their meetings as regularly as possible.¹

Further improvements

It is impossible to meet every demand, but Mrs Quintin suggested that more statistical light could well be shed on:

- housing statistics, of which Parliament wants to see a great deal more;
- data whereby the involvement of the elderly in economic and social life (voting, etc) can be measured;
- health in general.

THE MAASTRICHT EFFECT

'As for the social matters of concern to us, Maastricht focused on the following:

Anti-poverty measures

Previous work on this involved too many external teams and different methods. What we have to do now, with the national statistical institutes, is come up with figures that the Member States cannot refute. Poverty and social exclusion will certainly be prominent in our action from now on.

Social protection

Social protection has been mentioned for the first time in the Treaty. The demand for information will increase.¹ Parliament's position is clear: 'The differences in social protection from one Member State to another might give rise to a kind of "social tourism" which undermines healthy competition between the Twelve. Will the chosen way of making recommendations prove effective?'²

Demography

'We shall be bringing out the new report on demography regularly and so shall be needing far more regular population analyses and more prospective analyses from Eurostat.'¹

The British position

Does London's point of view affect your unit in DG V?

Political repercussions

'The reliability of the figures has been questioned. The debate was political and that made the United Kingdom particularly suspicious about anything to do with combating exclusion. So there was more pressure on the Commission and every proposal about the various areas of social affairs led us into more "forced" cooperation with the Member States on the analysis of indicators.

The social protection report which we shall be bringing out at least every two years will contain both a statistical annex and indicators, the bulk of which will come from Eurostat. For this report, which we want to produce with independent experts, the United Kingdom has formally requested that the indicators be identified with the Member States, under their control, etc. So much for the political consequences – adequate indication of the need for figures which the Member States cannot refute: let them draw conclusions about the resources to be allocated to statistics!¹

Organizational repercussions

'The Commission's independence of analysis is at stake here. Social protection, poverty and exclusion, or the more recent incidence of violence (particularly urban violence) are highly sensitive areas. But the approach to ageing and demography is far more analytical, and the political consequences are drawn differently.'¹

SOCIAL ACTION

The second side of Unit C1's work is a whole series of social projects. 'All these projects – apart from one or two completely one-off operations – are being developed along the four lines set out below.

Measures to combat exclusion and poverty

Community programmes

We have Community programmes here, with financial support, and we finance projects, research and statistical work.

The Policy Observatory

We use the Observatory on national policies to combat social exclusion, whose purpose is to help the Community foster the exchange of experience and knowledge, identify sound practices and pertinent know-how, or identify policies and methods best suited to combating present forms of social exclusion. This is certainly a field in which Maastricht has given us more to do.³

New regulations

Still on the subject of social exclusion, we expect the Council to adopt a new regulation on the minimum wage, a "guarantee of resources and benefits" – a new legal instrument which will also need new figures to back it up.¹

The elderly

This is very new field of social policy. A three-year programme, culminating next year with the 'European Year of the Elderly and Solidarity between the Generations', is aimed at:

- exchanging information and experience;
- identifying the Member States' main problems concerning the elderly;
- identifying innovatory practices and responses regarding the social protection and integration of senior citizens;
- developing a more positive image of the elderly;
- promoting the debate on solidarity between the generations.

This debate is as important for the employment market as it is for social protection in terms of the balance of working to non-working people. In view of current population trends, should we not be revising some firms' employment policies, particularly any practices involving discrimination on age grounds?

'We are working hard with Eurostat on improving the basic data on the elderly and we intend bring-

ing out a social portrait of the elderly for the European Year, plus a specific study on income.'¹

The family

'Family policy and the family in general constitute another sensitive area. Not all Member States have the concept of family policy. The European Family Observatory set up at the Council's request investigates the various aspects of Community policy which affect the family, particularly free movement, consumer policy, some aspects of the common agricultural policy, sexual equality policy and so on.

The Commission is not promising a family policy, but it does want to analyse family trends and structures and look at the political responses from the Member States. And Eurostat has a major part to play here too, because all the basic data, be they demographic or to do with changes in family allowances, taxation, etc., are essential if we are to make any headway.'¹

Urban social development

'This is a concern born of the recent emergence of urban violence. The Community's scope here is very limited for the moment, but we are trying to collect data which will give us a better insight into all the aspects of what can be an explosive situation. In particular, we are trying, with Eurostat, to get a better idea of housing data. The housing ministers, who now meet every year, are asking us for more and more specific parameters, and we have to set up the means of investigation we need.'¹

PRIORITIES

This is a multi-directional job with countless implications. What are the priorities?

By the end of 1992

'It is fairly clear that these priorities are:

- to improve the social protection indicators, while continuing and stepping up the work on replacement rates and beneficiaries. We also still believe that it is important to develop a survey of incomes (one aspect of the response to the problem of exclusion and poverty statistics);

- to obtain maximum data for the European Year of the Elderly, in particular to fill gaps in details of health and housing;
- to develop the demographic details needed to draw up the annual population report.

In 1993

- We must expect to see the same priorities being set after the advent of the single market, with greater emphasis on exclusion. Statistics have to be more systematic and fresher. We must not be content to update what we have – which is inadequate for the purposes of our political priorities.
- There will be increased demand for statistics on the whole area of "complementary schemes" as it affects mobility. The work on pensions will therefore have to be extended to health and invalidity.
- The third priority is linked to the problem of compulsory deductions. We have to provide figures for those Member States which are less well placed than others when it comes to these payments. We have to go further into this subject, which is closely linked to convergence in social protection.¹

CONSOLIDATION AND REGULARITY

Putting social matters into figures means going beyond the problem of definitions, to which figures received from the Member States are obviously linked. Should we be investigating the unemployment budgets? Unemployment may mean different things in different places... And what about poverty? Should we base our investigation on subjective poverty or on objective poverty?

'The Member States do not necessarily accept all the approaches. We find it very difficult to go beyond definitions – hence the point of working together with Eurostat, which, in this field no doubt more than in any other, really has a unifying part to play. If we can persevere and achieve greater regularity in all we do, we will be working to consolidate a great deal of what has already been achieved.'¹

¹ Interview with Odile Quintin, 26 March 1992.

² *Tribune pour l'Europe*, No 2, February 1992, p. 1.

³ In late 1989, the Commission decided to set up an observatory to monitor national anti-exclusion policies as part of the Poverty 3 programme for the economic and social integration of the most underprivileged groups (1989-94) and pursuant to the Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Social Affairs meeting within the Council on 29 September 1989 on combating social exclusion.

SOCIAL AND REGIONAL STATISTICS

A never-ending challenge
Interview with Fernando de Esteban Alonso

A look at the social and regional statistics shows just how much Eurostat has to deal with in this field. The fact that statistics are everywhere used more and more as policy support is quite deliberate.

'Economic and social cohesion is a principle which justifies Community solidarity wherever there is a will to overcome a structural handicap, wherever unequal opportunity comes up against resistance from a local will for development.'¹

Fernando de Esteban Alonso, a product of the University of Madrid (where he gained a bachelor's degree and attended doctoral courses in economics and business management) and also qualified in the economics of transport (Astef, Paris), is now head of social and regional statistics. He has a whole range of professional experience behind him, in particular at the OECD and Spanish Railways (Renfe and FEVE), where he was both a member and chairman of the board. He has also held a number of academic posts and headed several commercial and State companies.

He has regularly contributed to a large number of publications and international conferences on transport, regional development, company management and statistical management and he holds a number of honorary titles.

LESSONS OF MAASTRICHT

The latest European summit has led European social statisticians to consider at least three major subjects:

- European citizenship;
- the role of the Committee of the Regions;
- economic and social cohesion.

European citizenship is born

The realization that this new kind of citizenship is becoming a reality goes hand in hand with a whole series of questions and analyses calling for figures which are still not really available.

Who are they?

Who are the citizens of Europe? 'First of all, we have to keep our population statistics up to date. We must be able to distinguish the various categories and see just who the European citizens are, who the visitors are, how new arrivals get here, how they settle and so on.'²

Migrants or immigrants?

Migration is the big question for all the countries of Europe.

'Once the internal frontiers have gone, the movement of individuals must be looked at. Who are they? Are they Europeans or non-Europeans? How did the non-Europeans come into the Community? They are going to be able to move from the country of arrival to other Member States without any control and, if some external frontiers are easier to cross than others, considerable problems can be expected. Yet freedom of movement within the Community must be assured, otherwise the rules of the game will be completely falsified.

So we shall need precise statistics based on clear definitions and administrative data, surveys and other systems of investigation.

We are taking a careful look at what is done in the Member States and elsewhere, in the EFTA countries, particularly Switzerland and Sweden. We have set up a joint working party with the EFTA countries. We did this with a view to the future, because we already suggested it at the end of 1990, anticipating that the politicians would want a lot of information on these points. We hope to be able to publish a document containing practical proposals on the statistics on migration at the end of this year.

The Council has asked for information, but there is not enough harmonization in the figures we provide, because of the differences in methodology and sources. We are looking to remedy this.'²

The Committee of the Regions

This is a new Community body and it must be on a par with the Economic and Social Committee, which is also a consultative body. This new Committee will need a great deal of regional statistics.

Economic and social cohesion

'A third thing Maastricht has brought, and something which sums up all the rest, is the emphasis on economic and social cohesion – the framework in which, obviously, we have to make sure that statistics provide enough objective support for the policies of convergence to come about.'²

SERVING THE INSTITUTIONS

Eurostat serves the institutions, first and foremost, and it is very attentive to their changing demands. What are the main things they want?

Parliament

'It often makes specific requests to do with such things as:

- equal opportunity for men and women;

- problems of an ageing population;
- all living and working conditions, particularly in the matter of employment and unemployment and, above all, poverty.

These three are constants, which come up regularly in the form of proposals and questions.

Parliament recently has seemed to focus more on population, employment, industrial diseases, tourist trends by age, sex and country of origin and atypical work (covering anything done outside normal labour relations) and there is a lot to do with migrant labour too.²

The Council

'The Council now seems mainly concerned with employment and unemployment and a broader understanding of income and pay situations among the European population. Competition between firms underlies what is initially a social concern, because pay is obviously the essential component from which competitiveness derives.'²

The Economic and Social Committee

'They are interested in everything. They ask all the above questions, usually more insistently and more consistently than the Council.'²

PRIORITIES

Faced with the huge job and the imminence of 1993, it would be tempting to say that everything has become a priority. In Mr de Esteban's directorate, these priorities are managed under one or two headings in each of the units, as follows.

Employment and unemployment

The labour force survey

'This is a clear priority. We have to get a renewed survey going on the labour forces. We have done a lot of work on this already and we could still come up with results this year.

Education and training

The new Force programme³ will involve a survey of firms in 1993. If it is as successful as we expect, it could be carried over into a permanent framework, just like our usual

company surveys, but for the moment it is still a one-off survey over a limited period of time.

Living and working conditions

Labour costs

We are setting up a Community survey into labour costs.

The European panels

A lot of progress has been made with designing a pilot study on the European household panels. We are covering the 12 Member States and the panel, starting with a very small sample (of only about 20 000 households) which will be expanded later on, should be in operation by next year. The results of the pilot panel should be optimized in 1992 and we will be taking a decision on continuing it on a regular basis in 1993.

Social syntheses

As this unit takes a more "horizontal" approach, we have a number of irons in the fire and they will lead to specific schemes or operations over the next few months. The big job which the unit will have to tackle is the statistics of migration, but there will be many other practical things too, particularly the European Forum for Population Studies which Jacques Delors has asked us to set up.

Regional statistics and accounts

A regional portrait of Europe

This document, which we are currently completing, is a European first and people are very keen to have it. It covers 196 European regions and will contain a series of specific statistics giving a concise (no more than 10 pages) picture of the social, economic, industrial and tourist side of each one. The analyses will also try to show what development opportunities the various regions can offer and what their short- and medium-term prospects are.

The structural Funds

Another big job for the unit is to revise the indicators for the structural Funds. We have to concentrate on drawing the boundaries of the "employment zones" – the new concept developed by Eurostat.²

THE SPIN-OFFS OF SYMBIOSIS

With the EFTA countries

The first practical achievement to come out of the statistical cooperation with EFTA is the working party on migration statistics, which means that permanent contact can be maintained with these countries. We have contact on a whole series of other questions too:

- demography;
- the division of our countries into NUTS (nomenclature of territorial units for statistics);
- repeated surveys into labour forces and pay structures.

Permanent contact with these countries will regularly yield other centres of interest.

With the countries of Central and Eastern Europe

There have already been one or two interesting developments with Poland, and other countries in this part of the world (mainly Hungary and Czechoslovakia) regularly consult Eurostat on demography, employment and poverty.

'We are doing our utmost, in conjunction with the OECD, to do some practical work with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe on finding short-term indicators.

It is very difficult for these countries to set up statistics like ours for the time being, so we have to find a way of making what they have comparable to ours. Poland, for example, has plenty of social statistics and runs huge numbers of surveys, but uses definitions which are very different from ours. So there is a great deal of harmonization to do, and our contact has this in mind.'²

With the USA and Canada

The agreement with the USA and Canada provides a framework which makes it easier to exchange information and cooperate with these countries. It makes it possible for the unit on living and working conditions to work on two vital subjects:

- the European panels: tight links with the United States will be an opportunity to develop a European panel, with American ex-

perts, along the lines of the one they already have working in the USA;

- another development in harmony with American statistics: a general index of labour costs. The first definitions and the first concepts related to this index are on the drawing board now. It should be operational next year and, despite being based on the American index, it will obviously work along typically European lines.

Contact in Canada is more or less restricted to demography and training for the time being. 'We have to try and make more capital out of the Canadian experience, which has a lot to tell us about social affairs, although we have not investigated it enough as yet.'²

EUROPEAN FORUM FOR POPULATION STUDIES

At the end of the international conference on 'Human resources in Europe at the dawn of the 21st century' in late November 1991, Jacques Delors invited Eurostat to set up this forum to go further into the topics debated at the conference and discuss their development in the future.⁴

Of great interest to politicians

'I have to emphasize the political interest of this initiative from the top level of the Commission. By backing permanent discussion of trends in European society, this forum will become a kind of reference for all European policies needing a medium- and long-term picture of the future, which is behind the considerable support which we get from the Commission's Forward Studies Unit.

Of great interest to businesses

The forum, as its initiator sees it, should not be a place where specialist demographers meet. It should be open to people from different horizons, both to economists and sociologists and demographers, of course, and to people from industry and the economic sector in the broadest meaning of the term.²

Real operators

So it is the real operators of the economic and social life of the Community who have to be involved. The firms are waking up

to the fact that forward studies of social matters enable them to see much further than purely economic ones. We must try to get these firms to think in terms of much longer periods than the business world's current long term, which all too often means little more than two or three years or even just a few months.

Specific centres of interest

Firms will probably be displaying a lot of interest in at least three subjects on which the statisticians will have to supply more and more detail:

- wage costs, the main component of the cost price, which should be projected as far forward as possible;
- training: businessmen will want to know what training they can expect young people coming onto the job market to have; if these employers took an active part in the forum, it would be possible also to take account of their needs – something the teachers are ill-equipped to anticipate;
- future trends in social protection, something of great importance to the firms.

'We should like the people we talk to in the firms to be practical people rather than tied to desks in the administration. We should like to see the real leaders, outstanding ones, who can actually express collective opinions without having the message filtered through representative bodies, associations, federations and so on. The more direct the dialogue, the more open the discussion.

We should seek maximum spontaneity and optimum representativeness. The leading businessmen of Europe spend more time thinking about the future than we imagine, so why don't they come and join in our discussions? We are expecting a broad multidisciplinary approach, with strong individual opinions. However, the forum cannot be a place where interest groups come and lobby for their points of view.²

ACHIEVEMENTS, SCHEMES AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Let us move from theory to practice and point out, or remind you, that, in addition to this forum,

there is something else quite important on the way – one or two practical achievements due to emerge from Eurostat's social and regional statistics in 1992. They are:

- the *Portrait of the regions*: this will be in the style set by *Europe in figures* and the *Social portrait of Europe* and as easy to read as possible – one of Eurostat's ideas being to make statistical publications accessible to non-statisticians;
- the publications already announced on wages and the first results of the panels;
- a social databank, a very ambitious project which will not be operational for some time.

'We want this base to be very easy to access. That is the origin of the open discussions we have embarked upon with the users, DG V especially. We are adapting to a new demand from the users geared to new approaches to using such databases. I am convinced that the development of computers, and the distribution media above all, will both cut the costs and make answering questions faster.'²

'There have to be radical changes in the workings of the labour market and the way of helping people find jobs. Economic potential has to be reflected in job opportunities to an even greater extent than in the past. People have to be given the education and training they need both to hold down the jobs on offer and to broaden the range of job possibilities. And we have to find better ways of removing the barriers to the creation of jobs and activities, with due respect for proper, acceptable standards.'⁵

Eurostat creates these norms day after day. The job of objectively translating facts into figures and social and regional statistics is a constant challenge.

¹ Jacques Delors, President of the Commission of the European Communities.

² Interview with Fernando de Esteban Alonso, 25 March 1992.

³ See footnotes ³ and ⁴, page 7.

⁴ See *Sigma* No 1 – January/February 1991, pp. 21-33.

⁵ V. Papandreou, *Employment in Europe*, Commission of the European Communities (DG V), 1991, p. 3.

E MPLOYMENT AND WELL-TRAINED MINDS

Complex statistics
Interview with Hildegard Fürst

'The way ahead for the Community is to create a high-wage, high-productivity, socially just economy. This means that its businesses must be willing to stay out at the forefront of ever-changing technology, that the employees must be willing to learn new ways of working, switching jobs if need be, and that governments must shoulder the responsibility of providing basic education and training to prepare people to work in a technically challenging environment demanding adaptability and the ability to learn new skills.'¹

Hildegard Fürst, who holds a doctorate in economics from the University of Mainz, has been at Eurostat longer than most other officials, having joined the Statistical Office in 1958, when the joint service worked for the three institutions (EEC, ECSC and Euratom). Along with the early pioneers of European statistical integration, she was involved in the groundwork for the Stresa conference on agriculture, the first attempt at collecting European statistics outside the fields covered by the ECSC and Euratom.

She then moved into the social field, helping exploit the first labour force survey in 1960 and taking charge of the new research and education unit in 1973. Employment and unemployment became her main concern again in 1977. Unit E1, which Mrs Fürst currently heads, pays special attention to education and training statistics in view of the single market developments.

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

In the field of social and regional statistics, it is unit E1 which looks after all aspects of employment of concern to the Community, working very closely with both the Member States and the policies.

Are the statistics poorly harmonized...?

'Not at all! This is one of the best harmonized fields! National employment statistics vary a lot from one Member State to another, obviously, because of the legislation. Each State has its own laws on unemployment and its national unemployment statistics tend to reflect the administrative files. You cannot compare situations with very different rules for claiming unemployment benefits which have influence on registration at employment exchanges.

The many restrictive provisions have obviously been introduced because the perception of unemployment is still closely tied up with the national laws and practices and the payment of allowances that go with them. This is behind all the differences in unemployment registration and, if you only consult the files and the registers, it may well not look very harmonized at all.'²

... or poorly harmonizable?

'Right from the word go, back in 1958 almost, we realized that harmonization was a problem in this particular field. You can harmonize sectors which have been set up in accordance with statistical instructions, but when they have been founded on laws, harmonization is virtually out of the question. Statistics have more to do with reckoning and recording administrative or legal operations.'²

Publish regularly!

Statistics had to be integrated despite all this. The statistical informa-

tion needed also to highlight disparity and to emphasize drives for convergence.

Eurostat publishes a monthly bulletin on unemployment,³ giving the figures and brief comments making clear that the rates given are estimated rates. These estimates use the results of the Community Labour Force survey to avoid differences due to national methods of recording. The estimated rates can thus be compared between the Member States.

The first issue of this bulletin came out in 1977 and it has only missed two months since – a fine performance and one which has certainly encouraged the Member States to get into the habit of publishing in their own work categories which can help comparison. So, you must publish at the end of the month following the reference month – like clockwork!

'We could go even faster, if one of the Member States would stop waiting until the 30th of the following month to hand in its national indicator. All sorts of colleagues have appreciated this publication. French and German politicians and members of Parliament use it. Our work is extremely important to the politicians.

Our comments have to be short and objective. It is up to our colleagues in the political DGs of the Commission of EC to comment on situations and to describe the causes.'²

LABOUR FORCE SURVEYS

The labour force comprises the employed and the unemployed. Producing comparable statistics on employment and unemployment in the Community has been a priority issue ever since the European Economic Community started.

There were employment and unemployment statistics in all the

Member States, but sources and definitions and methods of data collection and so on varied to the point where no proper comparison was possible at Community level – which is why Eurostat ran its first labour force survey (LFS), in the six original Member States, in 1960.

After a period of annual surveys (1968-71), the Community labour force survey was run every second year, from 1973 to 1981, during which time the basic features were unchanged. The method and content of this series were described in a publication called 'Labour force sample survey – methods and definitions'.

When new trends emerged in the labour market and the structure of employment, both the concepts and the questions had to be revised, so, after almost 10 years without any major changes, there was a complete overhaul for surveys to be run from 1983 onwards.

The main idea was to ensure a high degree of comparability between the Member States and, as far as possible, with other countries too. This is why it was decided to stick to the labour force concept as defined in the resolution adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (October 1982). The chapter on basic concepts and definitions provides precise, detailed definitions here.

Severe employment problems in the Community led the Commission (1983) to suggest running an annual survey until such time as the employment situation looked up.⁴ The Council adopted this principle once and for all with the regulation for surveys as from 1992.

Sharing the Social Fund

The most important and best known use of these figures is in the distribution of allocations from the Social Fund. Distribution entailed producing unemployment rates for young people and they were not really available in the national files. Those which did exist had not been compiled in the same way and so a common method of assessing this kind of unemployment had to be devised. The stabilization of the results of these labour force surveys brought an end to many a sterile

discussion in the Council and the agreement among the statisticians provided a much improved basis.

Define and measure

It is easy to see how important definitions are. It is worthwhile looking at those used to draw up national series to see how many people are registered with employment offices.

Belgium

All persons in the following categories registered at employment offices: wholly unemployed persons in receipt of benefit, other unemployed persons compulsorily registered and voluntarily registered persons without work.

Denmark

Persons seeking full-time or part-time employment, whether or not they are members of an unemployment insurance fund.

Germany

Unemployed persons registered at public employment offices and seeking work as employees for at least 18 hours per week.

Greece

Persons registered at employment offices. The Greek registration and benefit system for unemployed persons differs considerably from that in other Community countries, so that, even if the different employment structure is taken into account, the number of persons registered as unemployed does not reflect the true level of unemployment.

Spain

Unemployed persons registered at public employment offices and seeking work for 20 hours or more per week for at least three months.

France

Unemployed persons registered at the Agence de l'Emploi and seeking permanent full-time employment (demandeurs catégorie 1).

Ireland

Claimants for unemployment benefit or unemployment assistance and others seeking work with the employment services of the Department of Social Welfare. Excluded are persons seeking part-time employment.

Italy

Persons without work, persons seeking their first job, persons working part-time for less than 20 hours per week and workers on fixed-term contracts of not more than four months in any 12-month period who are looking for a different job.

Luxembourg

Unemployed persons registered at employment offices and seeking work as employees for at least 20 hours per week.

Netherlands

Persons registered at employment offices, between the ages of 16 and 64 years, without work and immediately available for paid employment for at least 20 hours per week. Since 1988, the data have been based on a combination of registration data provided by the public employment offices and data from the monthly labour force survey. Before 1988, the figures were based entirely on registration.

Portugal

Persons registered with employment offices who are available for work.

United Kingdom

Persons seeking full-time work and claiming unemployment benefit because they are out of work.⁵

Same guidelines adopted

Very roughly, the European statisticians are trying to use the guidelines of the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (1982) despite this diversity of definitions. According to the ILO, a person is unemployed if he:

- has no job;
- wants one;
- is actively seeking one,
- and is available.

All four conditions have to be met. 'We ask all these questions in our household survey. The latest proof of looking for work, for example, may not be more than four weeks previously. There is a very close check on availability. Anyone who, for whatever reason, is not able to start a new job within two weeks will be cut out.'²

The labour force survey is 'the only source of comparable and

complete data on employment and the labour market in all the Member States of the Community. Since it is based on common coding and methodology, and since it is a household survey, it abstracts from differences in administrative arrangements and regulations. This is particularly true for unemployment, where the harmonized unemployment data based on the LFS as published by Eurostat are designed to permit comparisons between the Member States, without needing to take account of the frequent changes in the coverage and definition of registered unemployment.⁶

Fringe groups and frauds

Despite all this, the figures cannot be mathematically precise. 'If you follow the international definition, you can, for perfectly valid reasons, easily end up with fringe groups of registered persons who are not unemployed in the ILO sense. They are not frauds. In Germany, for example, at one stage, it was mandatory for anyone who lost his job at age 59 to register as unemployed if he wanted to get his retirement pension at age 60. In this case, the so-called unemployed person could not tell the interviewer that he was looking for work. And in Greece and Portugal, people have to have worked for such a long time to be entitled to unemployment benefit, which is paid for a very short period, that a lot of them do not bother to go and register at the employment office. So a good percentage of unemployed are not registered at all, despite being unemployed in the ILO sense. These differences can be cause for concern. But, with time and a lot of patience, we now manage to use internationally accepted definitions for everything the Commission does.'²

REDISTRIBUTION

Maastricht gave fresh impulse to structural issues. The regional structural policy calls for statistics of even greater reliability, particularly in the light of what Article 123 of the Treaty says about the duties of the Social Fund.

Major improvements will thus help the Community to run a Treaty-based vocational training policy. In the recast of the aims of the structural Funds, vocational training will

be of renewed importance in boosting competitiveness (Articles 127 and 128 of the Treaty).

A new regulation

'So far, regionally speaking, LFSs have perhaps not been as reliable as they might have been. A new regulation has now provided for a continuous survey to be run over an unlimited period of time, from 1992 onwards. It has also modernized the survey and made for the first time provisions on reliability of regional results.

Extended content

The survey should give general work organization better coverage, by, for example, going into details of fixed-term contracts.

A very precise description of the second possible activity is provided. 'One person used to equal one job. But this is no longer the case. Part-time jobs, work-sharing, shorter hours, different working times and multiple jobs have turned the equation upside down. You can no longer count heads. You have to add up the volumes in terms of work input. We must get to the point where we can produce the estimated annual working hours which are needed today. We should be able to compare such things as absenteeism percentages via national indicators, without having to collect data which already exist.'²

Bringing in the European Economic Area (EEA)

The EFTA countries have already planned to keep a very close eye on LFS coverage and they are joining with Eurostat for all the theoretical, methodological and practical aspects of the 1993-97 statistical programme.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

With the single market, education is back as a priority. Maastricht brought education and training into the Treaties for the first time, which is further proof that European integration as a purely economic exercise is a long way behind us. On the statistical front, however, the coverage of education and training is fairly poor...

A long-standing concern

The Council's Education Committee has existed since 1976 and is chaired by whichever country is presiding the Commission. Education ministers decided on various areas of cooperation and priorities, statistics among them, at the time, but this all stayed in the background until 1990-92.

Eurydice, the education data network accessible to the relevant national, regional and local authorities, was to avoid duplication by not dealing with statistics. The Unesco-OECD-Eurostat common questionnaire is a means of collecting data in a uniform manner satisfactory to many.

Respecting subsidiarity

Education is a field where subsidiarity has always been emphasized. Although the Commission is indeed entitled to suggest harmonization, there is no question of trying to standardize the different systems. Convergence on things now can only be achieved by exchanging information and experience.

Continuing in-company training

Following requests from Parliament in particular, the Council is looking into continuing in-company training. The annex to its decision (leading to Force) contains a call for precise statistics to be produced during the life of that programme (which runs until 1994).

'We have a real pioneering job to do here. We are at the guideline stage at the moment, dealing with what method to use, what we want to measure, what we can measure and what continuing training actually involves. With both training and employment, we have to be careful to stick to the outline definitions produced in other places, in the ILO, the OECD and Unesco, for example, and our work on method has to be done in conjunction with these organisations.'²

Cooperation from the United Kingdom

'The fact that only 11 Member States rubber-stamped the social policy does not affect social statistics. We have every cooperation and, with the Force programme especially, the UK is giving us its full support. A British civil servant has currently been seconded to us to

help achieve our aims. Other countries have also delegated specialists to us. The Member States were very quick to see the point of the programme and they want to get things going.²

Definition and classification

These already pose considerable problems in employment and they are perhaps even more crucial in training. There are two Education ministers in Belgium, varying systems in the German *Länder*, differences between Scotland and England and so on, but we have to find a point of convergence. In particular, everyone has to apply ISCED (the International Standard Classification of Education) and try to set their national programmes in a Community context. The statisticians have to insist on a proper classification which will yield a homogeneous corpus of data whereby decent analyses can be run.

ISCO COM

They have managed this with job classification. The nomenclature – ISCO, the International Standard Classification of Occupations – produced by the ILO and revised in 1988, led to the Statistical Programme Committee adopting an ISCO COM version for Community use last December. This contains groups and codes for each country, so that everyone can locate his own national specifications in an international nomenclature. We should be able to do the same for education.

PRIORITIES

‘The main constraint policy-wise for the moment is the Force programme, which we have to implement over a relatively short period.

The LFS is not so visible from the outside, but it will go on being a priority, obviously, and the extensions to be introduced in 1992 will take a lot of work.

Making a better job of measuring the volume of work in terms of employment has in fact already triggered a more urgent demand for figures – which involves far more than just counting heads...

Alongside all this, we still have to monitor all the annual series, the input in the employment report and so on.²

Human resources, education, training and youth

Let us not forget Eurostat's constant supply of statistical input to the Commission Task Force which runs a series of education, training and youth programmes. The big thing here is transnationality, the accent on developing exchanges and setting up networks to foster cooperation between partners working on joint projects. Consultation and cooperation are the keynote of the programmes, which involve both the Commission and governments, employers, trade unions, voluntary organizations, youth organizations, universities and other educational institutions.

‘Young people are a precious resource. We must prepare them for the rapid changes which will influence their lives. Cooperation with the systems of training in the Member States is paramount if we are to achieve this objective.’⁷

¹ V. Papandreou, *Employment in Europe*, Commission of the European Communities (DG V), 1991, p. 4.

² Interview with Hildegard Fürst, 25 March 1992.

³ *Unemployment*, Eurostat (Subject 3: Populations and social conditions, B series: cyclical economic situation).

⁴ *Labour Force Survey – Methods and definitions*, Eurostat, 1988, p. 5.

⁵ *idem*, footnote 3, p. 9.

⁶ *Employment in Europe*, annual report 1991, Commission of the European Communities (DG V), p. 165.

⁷ V. Papandreou, Member of the Commission of the European Communities.

MIGRATIONS AND PROJECTIONS

Synthesis time
Interview with Bernard Langevin

Demographers are far-sighted, far more so than politicians or economists or businessmen who are so concerned with their immediate problems that they sometimes forget they ought to be synthesizing things – and social things in particular.

Bernard Langevin, who holds a doctorate in physics and spent 10 years of his life doing research, came to Eurostat from the Collège des Sciences Economiques et Sociales in Paris 19 years ago. Since then, he has been in charge of publications (1984-88, during which time he launched Europe in figures) and worked on the statistics of quarterly accounts, on regional statistics and on employment and unemployment statistics.

He runs the unit entitled 'Syntheses of social statistics' (general statistics, demography, censuses, migration and demographic projections).

EUROPEAN DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

The job

Standardization, classification, development of methods and definitions – demographic statistics have much the same job to do as other areas of European statistics, with all the collecting, controlling, checking, analysing of data and publishing which they involve.

Recent developments

Current demographic statistics

The emphasis where collection is concerned is on improving quality and speed. The data collected up until the end of 1991 could have been published within 13 months had the various NSIs not been held up by ongoing census procedures.

'We are trying to get questionnaires harmonized and stabilized and we are doing this in close contact with the UN Statistical Commission in New York, the Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva and the Council of Europe. If we can come up with just one form, available to virtually everyone in the demographic sphere, we shall lighten the load considerably and every organization which collects data will be able to pass them on to the international organizations, directly or through Eurostat.

We should come to a final agreement on the content of this common document early next year, at the next meeting of the working party on demographic statistics. All members of the EEA are concerned and the fact that these 19 countries are already involved could lead others to join in.

To back up this drive, a complex piece of research into definitions and methods is being carried out with the University of Strasbourg. The idea is to take a "picture" of the way the various countries

apply international definitions and, in stage two, to look at the differences and see where the methodological proposals need to be taken further, at least as far as Europe is concerned.'

Censuses

Three kinds of census were conducted in 1990-91:

- a conventional, exhaustive census on the basis of forms sent out to all residents on European territory;
- fairly large sample surveys rather like mini-censuses, were carried out in Germany and the Netherlands;
- a third type, in Denmark, involving combining or pairing named files.

'The results of this three-fold approach will be studied by a demography workshop which we shall be holding in Paris, with Insee's help, in the autumn and the results of the workshop will be presented to the demographic statistics working party early next year.'

We also have two projects under way:

- 'We have collected the Community work on the censuses conducted in Europe in 1990-91. We shall be doing the same again in 1993-94 and we shall do our best to publish the results as soon as they are available in the various national statistical offices.
- We are launching a debate for the future, on censuses in the year 2000. Some countries are reluctant to open their files and population registers on grounds of personal privacy, while others think that using them and pairing them with data on employment and social security and so on would mean we could avoid censuses, or at least very considerably cut the cost. Unanimity is still a long way off.'

Time budgets

The working party on social indicators discussed the point of launching a European study of time budgets. What point is there?

'Socially and sociologically speaking, it has to be admitted that the time spent working is becoming a smaller and smaller part of people's lives. They are working fewer days per year for fewer years of their lives. The European worker who retires at 60 can expect to live another 20 years, 10 of them in excellent health. There is more to life now, not just work in the narrow sense, but many activities related to social life, leisure time, information, bringing up the children and meeting people – all data which have not been recorded and which could only be obtained through time-budget surveys.

Several Member States are getting surveys of this kind off the ground and they have asked us whether we intended to take any initiatives ourselves here. That is where this new concern of ours comes from.'

MIGRATION – SOMETHING NEW

The mandate

Community statisticians were only given a mandate for this area three years ago. The Treaty of Rome only dealt with internal migration – to be specific, just workers' migration – and only gradually did the prospect of free movement come to apply to all citizens and not just workers.

Article K

Before Maastricht, this was something dealt with at inter-Governmental level, so the Community was not a party to the Schengen or the Dublin Agreements or involved in the work of the Trevi group or the *ad hoc* working party on immigration. It was only an observer and unable to take initiative.

The fall of the Berlin wall and the migratory pressure in southern Europe hastened the realization which ended with a new article, Article K, setting up cooperation in legal and internal affairs (visas, rights and conditions of residence of foreigners from non-Community countries) being included in the Maastricht Treaty.

Article K lays down the terms of cooperation – which means that the initiative may now be taken by the Community or a Member State, each one having the right to do this.

'We do not yet know how the laws and regulations will develop here. Maastricht is doubtless only a first stage which will have to be backed up by new and essential initiatives. On the demography front, it is very clear that the pressure of migration will be stronger by the end of the century. It is a problem to which we have to find a solution.'

What solution(s)?

'The current plan is to maintain the populations in their countries of origin, with support for countries in difficulty. This is a fairly generally accepted idea, but any attempts at applying it come up against the major problem of the budget and financial constraints we all know so well...'

THE USERS OF DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

The Commission

DG V

Demography is the backdrop for everything this DG does. It is extremely interested in family trends. 'This is a concern which has become a priority for us again too. After exploratory studies this year, we shall go further into the subject next year, in particular in the light of the 1990-91 censuses.

The Secretariat-General, in close contact with the *ad hoc* working party on immigration, DG V and us at Eurostat has organized a pooling of data on the Commission's central computer and common software (Acumen, the social and regional database software) enables us to exchange information very easily and maintain confidentiality at the requisite levels (in particular when it comes to data from inter-Governmental groups).'

The Forward Studies Unit

'This deals particularly with the projections we could make on the basis of the past. We are working with it on demographic projections and trying to come up with scenarios for labour supply. If possible,

we shall extend these projections to regional level and to education and training and, at a third stage, we shall see whether we can then go on to families and households.'

The Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth

'The projections required by this body involve us having data on the past, of which we possess only fragments. Several of our units are working on piecing them together and this should mean that the desired scenarios can be launched.'

The Economic and Social Council

'So far, contact has been fairly limited, but we are obviously willing to respond to any requests.'

The United Nations

'Our contact for demographic projections is the Population Commission, but we deal with the statistical Commission in New York when it comes to collecting demographic data. We also have a lot to do with the UN Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva in both these fields.'

The Council of Europe

'Traditionally, the Council has always done a great deal in these areas.'

The OECD

'This organization does not deal directly with demography, but it is very interested in the migration issue and in our forecasting.'

The national demography institutes

'We are trying to encourage the national demography institutes to use our work, not just for the purposes of analysis, but to encourage regular, reciprocal cooperation. This has enabled us to help the national bodies to work together, which has in turn enabled us to get better and better at our job of uniting them all, with proper respect for the principle of subsidiarity.'

And the firms?

Their involvement in recent activity (especially last November's International Conference on 'Human resources in Europe at the dawn of the 21st century') has not lived up to the organizers' expectations.

Time differences

'One problem in the dialogue with businessmen and even politicians is the difference in the time scales we work on. Business and politics work in the short term, a few months maybe, a year or two at most, but we demographers think in terms of 10, 20 or even 50 years, which is why the decision-makers, be they economists or politicians, rarely take more than a fringe interest in what we do.'

Awareness campaigns called for

People absolutely have to be put in the picture and the Forward Studies Unit has already done a lot towards this in the Commission. But there is still a whole series of awareness campaigns to set up.'

And the MPs?

'Is there a question of different time scales here too? The requests we have had so far have tended to be one-off and restricted. We are rarely asked for anything big and we are rather sorry about it.'

WORK

What are the unit's main concerns at the moment, over and above demography and censuses, which account for a large part of its resources?

Syntheses

A social portrait of Europe

The work which came out at the end of last year, *A social portrait of Europe*, in nine languages, was very well received and the fact that very few errors have been pointed out is indicative of the high standard of the data provided. 'We intend bringing out an augmented edition in 1994, in which we hope to raise the standard of the data on education and training, social protection and wages even further.'

There will be three new chapters on:

- transport;
- justice;
- culture.

The last two have only been in the Community's scope since Maasticht and we shall be handling them with care.'

Other monographs

The unit will continue to bring out monographs and, in particular:

- a picture of the status of women in the Community;
- a publication about the disabled. There are a number of methodological problems to overcome here and the publication will be more a compilation of existing data than a proper piece of harmonization to begin with.

Then more specific subjects will be dealt with, such as old people, families, young people and the social situation of migrants, etc.

The social and regional database

This project is nearing completion and a first part will already be accessible this year. The social European statistics and the 'Euro-demo' demographic data will already be loaded and working on Acumen software by early 1993. Data which are more difficult to manage will not be available until 1994.

'This instrument will give us the opportunity to work on one base with one set of software and thereby compare our applications and those of DG V, the Task Force and the Forward Studies Unit easily. The social and regional data will be available on outside servers, replacing what is currently done through Cronos.'

THE EUROPEAN FORUM FOR POPULATION STUDIES

Initiative at the top

It was Jacques Delors who asked Eurostat to set up the forum to produce a European picture of the population, its components, its ways of living in society and at work, and so on.

In early March, the cabinet of the President convened the cabinets of Mr Christophersen and Ms Papandreou, together with representatives of the Forward Studies Unit, the Secretariat-General, DG V, the Task Force on Human Resources and DG II. 'We managed to come up with a number of guidelines at this meeting.'

Defining the field

First of all, this contains the major challenges tackled by the November conference:

- social exclusion;
- the place of migration and foreigners;
- the ageing of European society.

It also has to include various other aspects discussed and, in particular:

- the labour market;
- the future of the family;
- women's status;
- the role of education and training throughout life;
- the use of time.

Organizational aspects

Frequency of meetings

'We are moving towards the idea of initially fixing a very big meeting to which the Commission itself would be invited at the beginning of its mandate. This would be prepared by a series of other meetings, probably quarterly, bringing together 20 or so major specialists on particular subjects.'

Looking at it calmly

The Commission often has to work under pressure and is unable to take a step backwards. These specialists should bring a fresh scientific approach to the world of politics. In a forum of this kind, the decision-makers would be faced with advances from the sociologists, backed by figures from the statisticians and the meetings – simple opportunities to sit down and discuss things – would generate ideas which could be taken into account in various political decisions.

The forum's annual report will be a reference for the report provided for in Article 7 of the annual report on the social situation. But the Commission will only include the parts it considers to be most pertinent to European policy in its own synthesis.'

Involving the local decision-makers

'The scientific element is fairly heavy and we can have no more than 20 or so participants each time, so we shall be able to involve only the big European political decision-makers at this stage. But if these meetings are held in

different European towns, which would be asked to help with the organization, we think we can obtain the support of front-ranking political decision-makers at local and regional level, who will no doubt have useful comments and experience and an interesting point of view.¹

All in all, this is a good way of combining social and regional concerns... and of spreading the spirit of synthesis.

LIVING AND SURVIVING

Poverty in figures
Interview with Mrs L. Conde de Artiaga Barreiros

'Integration will take its place in accordance with the diversity of our European cultural traditions. It will be helped by a Community which is more united and self-assured, but it will not be possible unless we make it one of our priorities to combat marginalization and poverty at home.'¹

Mrs Barreiros, an economist who specializes in development issues, began her career in the public service as an official at the Portuguese Planning Ministry and was subsequently seconded to the cabinet of the Secretary of State. She dealt mainly with the social dimensions of development before joining the ILO as a consultant. There, she was involved in the study of essential needs as part of the world employment programme before being associated with the Netherlands cooperation programme and taking part in a number of technical assistance missions for third-world countries.

Having taught economic policy and social planning at the Economics Faculty in Lisbon and socio-economic models at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, she joined Eurostat at the end of 1987 where, with her experience of social policy, she has taken charge of the unit on living and working conditions.

SOCIAL SURVEYS AND BUSINESSES

Is it possible/desirable to lighten the load of survey data collection by combining business surveys with social surveys on wages and labour costs?

Could they be combined?

'We are currently studying the possibility of combining business surveys from the methodological point of view, particularly those on labour costs, in order to make them more rational and more consistent. Further aims would be to make less work for employers and statisticians and to compare labour costs with other variables such as value added and gross capital formation.

However, certain conditions would have to be met before this merger became possible. From the general point of view, there would have to be a genuine extension of the non-industrial sector and agreement as to the content of the variables. Further work is also needed on the statistical unit and sampling plan. Surveys on the structure of industry are based on the enterprise, which means that there is less reliable, exhaustive information available for regional analyses.

Finally, and more specifically, a multi-objective survey should have a shorter, fixed questionnaire as its basis, with the possibility of introducing specific questions from time to time (the shuttle/satellite concept). Further detail is needed on the periodicity of any refinements covering labour costs.²

Should they be combined?

'Some Member States have reservations about merging the surveys, even if only at organizational level. There are also doubts about reducing the burden on enterprises, especially since response times will be lengthened if the questionnaires are longer. Finally, the quality of the statistics

may be affected. There seems to be a preference for two separate surveys, provided that the data they require overlap as little as possible – hence the need for greater coordination.'²

Employers and employees react

Employers' confederations feel that a large volume of essential information would be lost if the two kinds of survey were combined, in particular information on non-wage labour costs. 'So we have not yet come up with a definite solution and are trying out a number of alternatives, such as a redistribution between existing surveys and the short-term labour costs index provided for by the new system of Community statistics on wages and labour costs.'²

HARMONIZING SOCIAL PROTECTION

How can standards of comparison valid outside the national systems be produced to enable social protection to be measured? And what should the priorities be?

Eurostat's experience in this field goes back to the 1970s. The Esspros system (European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics) was set up in 1981.

Harmonising receipts and expenditure

Thanks to the success of Esspros, fed by the Twelve, comparable and up-to-date information is published regularly on social protection receipts and expenditure. For example, as early as November 1992, Eurostat will be publishing definitive data for 1990 and provisional figures for 1991. The OECD is very interested in this system and is working with us to produce a comparable system for its member countries. In Scandinavia, Sweden has been transmitting data to us since January. The countries of eastern and central Europe would also like to adopt

the European system of statistics on social protection receipts and expenditure.

Data on beneficiaries

'Financial flows are published regularly for 12 "functions" (or risks): sickness, invalidity, occupational accident/disease, old age, survivors, maternity, family, job promotion and vocational guidance, unemployment, housing, poverty and miscellaneous. We are now attempting a more detailed analysis by "function" to supplement current Esspros publications with a statistical digest of social protection in Europe. This is now in preparation, and has three main objectives:

- an appropriate analysis of social protection functions using a new classification by benefit type, specific to each function;
- very detailed statistics on financial flows and numbers of beneficiaries;
- a description of the social protection system in each Member State, using a form for each benefit.

The first volume, on old age, has just come out.

Priority was given to the "old age" function for the following reasons:

- at Community level, it accounts for more than one-third of social protection benefits (old age, invalidity and survivors combined account for more than half of the total);
- it is an extremely complex field because of the variety of responses in the Member States and rapid changes in their systems, in particular the development of supplementary pensions. Only detailed and specific work can properly cover such statistics;
- at present, old age is undoubtedly of particular interest for those working in social protection; both political and academic circles are seeking objective figures on which to base their studies;
- for the Commission, retirement pensions are a priority in the context of the single market.³

Work in progress

The minimum wage

The Commission has periodically to give the Council information on

social protection in Europe and DG V provides partial data on the machinery of the minimum wage through its mutual information system on social protection. 'We do not currently provide any figures here. The idea of a minimum wage exists in only eight of the Member States and the Commission has no intention of recommending such a thing for the Twelve.

Although we are not involved in this programme, we do have to deal with poverty figures and therefore to situate poverty in relation to minimum wages. It would be interesting to be able to find out whether these minimum wages are above or below a poverty threshold defined by different criteria. Statistics would be a fundamental contribution to this.²

Trend indicators

The Commission is currently preparing a draft recommendation for the Council to find out what would constitute sufficient resources for the social protection systems. But how is it possible to compare systems which use such different mechanisms – and where the Commission does not want some aspects quantified?

One way of getting round this difficulty would be to come up with trend indicators which, in macro-economic terms, would shed light on total receipts/expenditure, sources of financing (State, businesses or beneficiaries themselves), the percentage of individual contributions, breakdown of expenditure by function and so on.

These indicators, thus defined, could be used for the regular monitoring of social protection. They would help overcome political difficulties related to quantifying poverty – which is far from being seen in the same light in all the Member States.

Ad hoc, microeconomic studies are shedding new light on social protection, in particular supplying indicators enabling the efficiency of national systems to be compared, as illustrated by the recent study on the income replacement ratio at the time of taking retirement.

Replacement ratios

Is the attempt at making comparisons more successful with replacement ratios?

A study has been run in the Twelve to determine the loss of income upon retirement (ratio of the amount of the retirement pension and final pre-retirement income). This indicator is an essential parameter of the cost of a pension scheme and an indicator of the level of social protection provided by the scheme.

'But this study is not general in scope because it depends on particular hypotheses: levels of income from work at the time when retirement is taken; types of career and situation of the family aggregate. If the comparison is to be valid from one country to another, calculations will have to include voluntary schemes and a study of how pensions evolve during the years when a person is at work, via a study of national revaluation systems based, for example, on indexation against prices and equalization linked to wage rises. The study is to be updated and extended, in particular to take account of the way pensions are adapted to reflect changes in prices and wages, in 1992.³

PARAMETERS FOR LABOUR

Figures for costs

Firms are not just interested in labour costs in terms of wages paid. Non-wage costs come into it too. How much will social protection, vocational training and industrial accident and disease insurance cost? They need to have a clearer idea of all these things before hiring staff.

Instruments for the future

Quarterly costs

Up to now, Community labour cost surveys have been carried out only every four years. With the European Community becoming more complex, statistical requirements have changed. In particular, there has been an increasing demand for comparative, frequent and periodic statistics on the level and structure of labour costs. These requirements were apparent at a conference organized in Stoke Rocheford in March 1991, where we attempted to stimulate a dialogue between users and producers of such statistics. The short-term (quarterly) monitoring of trends in wages and labour

costs was identified as one of the priority requirements. Harmonized statistics on earnings are the most up-to-date source of short-term statistics at present. They include six-monthly data, only the actual wage component, and concentrate mainly on industry. But these statistics based on national sources give rise to problems of various kinds, in particular as regards the comparability of publication dates.

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics has conducted a successful experiment on a short-term employment cost index (ECI), which is very popular with all policy decision-makers. 'We are working with the BLS to try to adapt the experiment for Europe. Seven Member States (Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom), together with Sweden and Czechoslovakia, have come forward to take part in a test which we shall run on sectors as yet to be defined.

Survey on wage structure

Further requirements identified at the Stoke Rocheford conference were periodic information on the level and structure of wages. The last Community wage structure survey dates from 1978.

We are planning to relaunch this in revised form from 1994 onwards, since we feel that it is very important once again to obtain from firms information on individuals (on such things as wage fixing by sex, age, training, occupation, etc.). The figures we have today are only averages which also come from harmonized statistics on earnings.

Our original survey, dating from 1968, was carried out in France and Germany and transformed by other countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands into an annual survey. We have been aware that there were few possibilities for comparisons in the 12 countries. Finally, the revamped survey will be supplemented by wage data taken from household surveys, in particular the labour force survey. The main problems with a household survey are non-responses and the burden on the persons included in the survey. However, earnings and labour costs have to be covered "from both sides", i.e. all the costs borne directly by businesses and the im-

portant component of household incomes represented by wages. Although the main source of statistics on wages is, admittedly, the system of business surveys, it is generally agreed that these data should be supplemented by household surveys.²

FAMILY BUDGETS

A very good way...

Family budgets provide a wealth of information about the social behaviour of families and are among the most complete household surveys, even though in most countries they were originally intended to provide detailed data on the pattern of households' consumption. They are now used much more widely than initially, both to identify the consumption patterns and habits of households and to provide information on types of housing and many other quality of life indicators such as income and holidays classified by various socioeconomic characteristics.

...of investigating poverty

They are also the essential source of information in any study of poverty. Despite the fact that coverage of household incomes varies considerably from one country to another, they are the only source whereby the standards of living in the 12 countries can be compared. This is not a straightforward comparison, however, because although income data are clearly understandable in some countries, in others income is more readily used as a variable for classification and scaling. The solution is to use consumption as an income proxy.

...analysing food intake

Family budgets also provide a wealth of data which can be used to determine the structure and composition of the typical household's diet. Links with health can be established from a study of household eating habits.

...and studying target groups

Finally, a large number of data are available on population groups of special interest such as single-parent families, children or elderly people: housing conditions, comfort indicators, possession of durables, levels of consumption, income, etc. All this can be used to

back up the data originally obtained from questions on social protection.

Harmonizing family budget surveys

Since family budget surveys are now used more widely than ever and have a particularly important part to play in the Community system of statistics on households, more rigorous harmonization is essential at Community level. However, this is no simple matter, especially since there are differences not only in definitions and survey content but also in synchronization, methods and objectives in the different countries.

A handbook of recommendations

'In order to improve the harmonization of family budget surveys, we shall be producing a handbook of general recommendations, concentrating on how to improve access to and the use of the data, classifications and the coding of variables and the harmonization of survey frequency, dates, structures, concepts and content. We are at a far greater disadvantage than in the case of the labour force survey (LFS)⁴, which has a Regulation laying down a proper framework. Here, we are working with a gentleman's agreement and trying to set up databases which some countries (Austria, Switzerland and Poland) already appear to be willing to join.

Access to individual data

The LFS has access to individual data, but so far we have only been able to use aggregates here. However, nine countries recently agreed to let us have their individual data and the last three will do so as soon as the Regulation on statistical confidentiality comes into force. This will give us greater flexibility in responding to any request for statistical information in this field.²

THE EUROPEAN PANEL ON HOUSEHOLD INCOMES AND LIVING CONDITIONS

Objectives

Eurostat has decided to look into the possibility of setting up a Community household panel to monitor the impact of social changes in Europe after 1992. This will be a

unique source of Community-level statistical data on changes in the income and the living conditions of private households in the 12 Member States.

This decision followed on from the initiative of DG V, which sponsored (1987-89) a comparative analysis of various national panels in the Community action programme for the economic and social integration of the least privileged groups (Council Decision 85/8/EEC). In May 1991, following on from the DGINS meeting of 16, 17 and 18 May 1990, the Eurostat Management Committee authorized the launching of a pilot panel in 1992.

The four main aims of this scaled-down simulation of the European household panel will be to:

- test every stage of the panel process, from the operationality of the concepts and the testing of the sampling methods to the development of the questionnaires, the handbook and the data collection procedure;
- try out a model of the data collection-exploitation-quality control chain;
- assess the difficulty of setting up and managing a network of everyone involved, from the data users to the data producers;
- assess the costs of the European household panel.

The same households will have to be questioned several (at least three) times over a period which is fairly short but none the less long enough for trends to be observed.

'First use over the period 1992-95 will give an idea of the initial social effects of the single market, its implications in terms of long-term unemployment, social exclusion, the persistence of poverty, the way the various social protection systems affect standards of living in connection with free movement, the school-to-work transition, the time it takes to settle, the role of vocational training, etc. We are defining priority policy requirements – which will, of course, have to be limited to begin with.'²

Spreading motivation

Because the sample will be small, the Community panel will be representative at Community level only, although the various countries will

have to be motivated to suggest the bases on which the sample can be expanded.

'There is nothing new about this type of panel: several experiments are already under way in Europe:

- (1) in the Netherlands, the CBS (Centraal Bureau voor de statistiek) set up a panel of 5 000 households in 1984;
- (2) in Germany, a panel has been in existence since 1984, for which Infratest, a market research institute, is responsible. It covered 6 000 households before being expanded in 1990 to take in the new *Länder* as well;
- (3) in Luxembourg, the CEPS (Centre d'études de population, de pauvreté et de politiques socio-économiques) has been responsible for a socioeconomic panel of 2 000 households since 1986;
- (4) in France, the Insee has been conducting a pilot experiment since 1985, in Lorraine only; it hopes to extend the scheme to cover the whole country;
- (5) in Belgium, the University of Antwerp has been responsible for a panel of 6 000 households since 1987;
- (6) in Ireland, the Economic and Social Research Institute set up a panel in 1988;
- (7) finally, in the United Kingdom, a similar experiment was launched in 1990 by the University of Essex, covering 5 000 households.²

STUDY OF POVERTY

Antecedents

'The Community has long been concerned with the poor. A first Community anti-poverty programme⁵ was run in 1975-80 and a specific scheme⁶ lasting four years (1985-88) was authorized by Decision 85/8/EEC of 19 December 1984,⁷ as amended to take account of the accession of Spain and Portugal.⁸ The latter programme mobilized ECU 29 million in all.⁹

A new programme

Under the third programme, launched in 1989 [see Article 'Progress through consolidation', footnote³, p. 11], Eurostat has to produce comparable, regular stat-

istics on poverty. 'But we still have problems of definition and method to contend with and we use a sensitivity analysis to test various possibilities. Should we use objective poverty as measured in monetary terms by reference to consumption or to income? Or would a subjective approach be better, taking account of the problems the individual comes up against in trying to satisfy his or her needs? What scale of equivalence should be used to convert a household into adult equivalents? How should the non-monetary aspects of poverty be measured? How can the homeless be included?''²

Relative poverty

Work has so far been based on the concept of relative poverty, in line with the Council Directive, and this work was the subject of the Commission's report to the Council at the end of the second poverty programme.

'Relative poverty from a national perspective is measured by reference to a poverty threshold (level of welfare below which a household is considered to be poor) defined as 50% of the national average household expenditure per adult equivalent. Adult equivalent coefficients are used to take into account differences in household size and composition. The coefficients are: first adult in a household = 1, all other adults = 0.7 and children (under 14) = 0.5.

Relative poverty from a Community perspective is measured by reference to a poverty line defined as 50% of the Community average household expenditure per adult equivalent.

National family budget surveys are used as the data sources. Although these surveys are the most suitable sources for comparisons of poverty across countries, the data are not entirely comparable, mainly because of differences in expenditure definitions, coverage and reference year. Extrapolation methods have had to be used for some countries for which data were not available for the mid-1980s.¹⁰

The new poverty

It is estimated that in 1985 there were 50 million poor people in the Community, a slight increase over the 1980 figure.

'Despite all efforts..., poverty is not disappearing from the Community. Quite the opposite. There have been structural changes over the past few years, too. Different populations now have a majority of their members poor and new pauperization processes – new poverty, so-called – have appeared alongside the traditional forms.'⁹

So there is more to it than tracing the trend in Europeans' living conditions. In tens of millions of cases, what we are talking about is their conditions of survival... Europe will be social or there will be no Europe! A pipe dream? '...There is, maybe, nothing so powerful as a dream, as we have found in the developing countries... (which)... have demonstrated that it is possible to wipe out the terrible phenomenon of generalized poverty. So let us dream together of a planet with no poverty and no famine. Let us join forces!'¹¹

¹ Jacques Delors, 'Europe in the 21st century', closing speech at the Conference on 'Human resources in Europe at the dawn of the 21st century', Luxembourg, 29 November 1991.

² Interview with Mrs L. Barreiros, 31 March 1992.

³ L. Barreiros, OS-E2 work programme, Eurostat/E2, 28 October 1991.

⁴ Community labour force survey.

⁵ Council Decision 75/458/EEC, 22 July 1975 (OJ L 199, 30 July 1975 and EC Bull. 7/8-1975, item 2.2.31).

⁶ This is usually referred to as the Community's second anti-poverty programme.

⁷ OJ L 2, 3 January 1985 and EC Bull. 12-1984, item 2.1.95.

⁸ OJ L 382, 31 December 1986 and EC Bull. 12-1986, item 2.1.149.

⁹ 'Medium-term Community action programme to foster the economic and social integration of the least privileged groups', Bulletin of the European Communities, supplement 4/89, p. 5.

¹⁰ 'Rapid reports – Population and social conditions', 1990/7, p. 4.

For further details, see the Eurostat publication 'Poverty in figures – Europe in the early 1980s'.

¹¹ Paraphrased from A. W. Clausen (former President of the World Bank), 'Poverty in the developing countries in 1985', speech at the Martin Luther King Jr Centre, Atlanta (Georgia), 11 January 1985.

M ISSIONS, VISITS AND MEETINGS

■ EUROPEAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL INFORMATION IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SPHERES (CEIES)

The Council decided to set up the European Advisory Committee on statistical information in the economic and social spheres (CEIES) in order to involve the whole of the Community's economic and social sphere in establishing and pursuing statistical objectives.

The first meeting, organized by Eurostat, was held in Brussels on 26 and 27 March 1992, and the fact that Henning Christophersen, Vice-President of the Commission, was in the chair emphasized the importance of the event.

The CEIES, a forum for economic and social circles, will give all those involved an opportunity to voice their concerns and needs as regards statistical data on the major Community policies such as economic and monetary union, the social space and the sectoral policies. Members will include leading figures from the world of science (teachers and researchers) and the world of work (employers and employees).

The Committee will also have to match the Community's requests for post-Maastricht statistical data with the needs and possibilities in the Member States, and will therefore include representatives of the Community and their opposite numbers in the Community statistical system.

To sum up, it will be the Committee's job to suggest to the Community authorities how they might improve coordination of the various Community and national statistical programmes, in particular by ensuring that the work undertaken is economically viable and of improved quality and that greater account is taken of the suggestions arising from the surveys.

■ STATISTICAL COOPERATION WITH POLAND

A Eurostat delegation went to Warsaw at the end of February 1992 to meet the new Director of the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) and review the EC-Poland statistical cooperation programme.

The GUS delegation stressed the fundamental importance of statistics in a period of transition, especially as regards prices, the parallel economy, the small sectors and the main indicators. GUS has developed a long-term statistical publication and study programme which has been accepted by the Council of Ministers.

It was decided that statistical cooperation would be reviewed in the light of the new GUS priorities and that the projects on:

- national accounts;
- price statistics;
- data processing;
- and publications

would be reorganized.

A new agricultural statistics cooperation programme is being launched in 1992.

An important item on the agenda was the Polish position on the TES-ECO programme (Training of European statisticians from East and Central European countries) and the prospects for CESTAT (Central European cooperation in statistics). CESTAT was set up by the Presidents of the Polish, Czech and Hungarian statistical offices with a view to close statistical collaboration between countries with economies in transition.

The Eurostat representatives, accompanied by a GUS delegation, were received by Mr Eysymontt, a Minister and Head of the Polish Central Planning Office, who highlighted the fundamental importance of statistics in a modern economy, particularly when it came to guiding the development of trade and private business. The Eurostat delegation pointed to the need for a proper balance of short- and long-term objectives and to the political support which the Polish statistical system needed, particularly as regards the financing of statistical cooperation within the Phare programme, which is to come from national funds after 1992.

A GUS delegation led by the official in charge of statistical coordination and the GUS statistical programme then visited Eurostat on 9 to 13 March 1992 to complete the development of the 1992 cooperation programme. The time and energy put in by members of the GUS delegation and Eurostat staff made this a very useful visit.

■ STATISTICAL COOPERATION WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Mr Franchet took part in the general discussions on statistical cooperation at the invitation of the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republics (CSFR), and signed the joint declaration on statistical cooperation between the FSO and Eurostat. The signing ceremony, which took place in Prague on Friday 6 March 1992, was attended by Mr Dlouhy, Czech Minister for Economic Affairs.

The Eurostat delegation met the Presidents and senior officials of the Czech Statistical Office in Prague and of the Slovak Statistical Office in Bratislava. Cooperation between the statistical offices of these two republics and the Federal Office was one of the main items on the agenda.

At the request of the statistical offices, Mr Franchet gave talks on statistics in a modern society in both Prague and Bratislava. His main points were:

- the need for the statistical offices to be independent;
- total confidentiality of data on both individuals and businesses considered individually;
- a complete overhaul of the role of the statistical offices in the countries of Eastern Europe following the recent political changes.

Mr Hoffmann, Czechoslovakia's Deputy Prime Minister, received Mr Franchet in Prague, and Mr Klepac, Vice-President of the National Slovak Council, received the Eurostat delegation in Bratislava.

■ STATISTICAL COOPERATION WITH HUNGARY

A programming mission went to the Hungarian Statistical Office (HCSO) on 17 to 20 February 1992 to:

- finalize the organization of a business statistics seminar scheduled for 18 to 20 March in Budapest;
- settle the medium-term cooperation programme to be set up as part of the regional facility;
- finalise the invitation to tender for the ECU 9.5 million project on computerization of the HCSO;
- discuss Hungarian participation in the TES-ECE programme.

The Eurostat delegation had the opportunity to meet Mr Vukovich, President of the HCSO, Mr Lendvai, Vice-President responsible for economic statistics and the coordination of statistical cooperation, and Mr Helt, Vice-President in charge of information and data processing. Eurostat invited Mr Lendvai to come to Luxembourg at the end of March to prepare Mr Franchet's visit to Budapest and fix details of the medium-term programme.

A Eurostat delegation, headed by Mr Nanopoulos, attended the Budapest seminar organized by the HCSO with Directorate D and financed by the Phare programme. The main purpose of the meeting was to:

- look at the present situation, ongoing activities and plans of the HCSO;
- pass on the Member States' experience, since this could prove useful to Hungary;
- draw up precise proposals on business statistics;
- finalize details of the medium-term cooperation programme.

A large number of statisticians attended the seminar. Speakers included representatives from the Netherlands and French statistical offices and the British Department of Transport.

¹ OJ L 59, 6 March 1991 and EC Bull. 1/2-1991, point 1.6.4., Commission proposal: OJ C 212, 25 August 1990 and the 24th General Report, No 970.

S TATISTICS AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE

An amazing best-seller
A Eurostat collection

*Europe in Figures*¹ is undeniably the Commission's best-selling publication – a surprising achievement for a work on statistics, a difficult subject if ever there was one. The appearance of the third edition provides an opportunity to explain its success.

THE BASIC CONTEXT

After the signing of the Single Act, the Commission established priorities as regards informing the general public. Subjects were listed for a series of specific publications, under the 'Objective 92' logo and accessible to various, clearly targeted audiences, as DG X (Information, communications and culture) had requested.

Tradition overturned

Eurostat's job is to publish scientific reference works which are highly methodological in nature, offer exhaustive coverage, etc. The request revealed a gap. Nowhere on the market was there a relatively simple European statistical reference work which did not require sophisticated notions of statistics. Designing a documentary statistical work geared towards teaching was overturning tradition.

The first objectives

What should the target audience be? How should it be reached? It was decided that education (end-of-secondary students and undergraduates) should be the target. Eurostat was to provide its share of the data, plus the texts to back them up and make them understandable. Since a journalistic style was what was wanted, a 'rewriter' was invited to redraft the texts.

Massive distribution

The first edition was designed in 1986 and came out in late 1987. It was the first publication of its kind. The figures were laid out attractively, with plenty of colour and comments, figures, photographs and so on, and the print run was 200 000.

Despite massive free distribution, sales reached 50 000 very quickly and it was decided to produce a further edition in time for the European elections in 1989.

A new approach

Students – more precisely, 17 to 20 year olds – remained the target. Media coverage of the elections was exploited to the full. Data collection from various Eurostat services was put in the hands of a teacher and, in less than three months, the whole edition had been rewritten and partly completed.

A certain ambiguity

'There too, ambiguity had to be avoided, since a statistical work could not also be a means of promoting the ideas and concepts of the Single Act. *Europe in figures* will now be concentrating more on sales, because free distribution is no way of measuring the real impact on users or even of getting a sufficiently clear idea of their motives or the groups they belong to. And we cannot let this publication be used as a broadsheet.'²

CONFIRMED SUCCESS

The second edition ran to 130 000 copies, 90 000 have been sold so far and they are still selling.

As Annette Vestergaard, who has taken over the publication's secretariat in conjunction with Professor Pracht, said, 'this is a publication to make Europe better known, so it is important for it to be distributed in the language of countries where least is known about Europe' – an aim reflected in and best served by the wide range of distribution circuits used.

CRITICISM AND THE THIRD EDITION

People on the sales network are regularly asked for their opinions and have suggested improvements. A collection of European statistics cannot be sold in bookshops just as if it had won the Booker prize. The magazine-type presentation has had to be dropped – the page count has jumped from 64 in the second edi-

tion to 256 in the third – and what we have now is a real book which will hold its own in the shops.

Shifting the sights

There has been no dedicated course on Europe in secondary schools so far. Books about Europe may constitute useful source material for the teacher, but they do not appear on students' book-lists. So the sights need shifting. And more must be done to reach undergraduates, who study both statistics and Europe in greater detail.

Covering all the policies

'We have tried to show that every policy has its statistical side. Insisting on presentation, we used a lot of documentation from the various DGs and we produced a synthesis, concentrating particularly on the budget, to make it clear to the reader just how these funds were spent.'³

Better explanations...

The chapters were set out in a fairly simple manner before, but now we are trying to add the various possible interpretations and consequences of these figures. 'For didactic reasons, we have put a lot of emphasis on good presentation.'³

AN EFFICIENT EDITORIAL TEAM

The first editorial team of its kind managed to galvanize the 30 or so soundly motivated data-providers, who made a remarkable contribution – although stressing the meta-data or 'information on information' aspect does not come naturally to statisticians.

The result is a compendium, because the author, Eurostat, was able to get the cooperation of a large number of the Commission's Directorates-General.

DEEPER REASONS

Eurostat had deeper reasons for putting so much work into making a book on a subject as dry as statistics suitable for the general public.

A considerable investment

In terms of financial resources, Eurostat is spending virtually half its annual publications budget (130 'paper' publications) on one work.⁴ It took a major decision, a strategic one almost, to create a publication of this type, which highlights the need for and the point of statistics and at the same time increases awareness of Eurostat as supplier of European statistics.

Not just useful – vital

Europe in figures aims to bring statistics to the maximum number of users, right down to the man in the street, and to show how these figures are behind any political decision. 'Even the man in the street has to be able to assess a policy properly. But if he is to have a proper grasp of the workings of European Union, the involvement of the various partners, cooperation schemes and so on, he has to look at the figures, which encompass all these implications. Our distribution drive is intended to show a very wide, non-specialized public just how fundamental statistics are, for without them no policies are ultimately possible. Statistics are a vital part of any democracy.'²

... but more publicity required

'Who in Europe can provide better "European figures" than Eurostat? Eurostat is the only body to have all these data. It is the driving force behind European statistical integration and one of the leading protagonists in international statistical harmonization.'² And Eurostat will be marketing a really appealing product. *Europe in figures* will also serve indirectly as a clearly compiled catalogue and synthesis of the range of information which Eurostat can supply.

A new outlook

The distribution of *Europe in figures* will be accompanied by press conferences, special mailshots and displays at trade fairs and exhibitions (Seville in particular). Links will be set up with all the European NSIs, which can use the book to promote their own work.

'The special drive in 1992-93 will focus not only on this publication but on the dissemination of all our products. A combination of various databases and press services should mean we can extend our distribution systems and increase awareness of Eurostat, not just in Europe, but throughout EFTA and in Japan and North America too. The success of *Europe in figures* suggests we are working in the right direction.'²

¹ See News items, p. 33.

² Interview with François de Geuser, Head of Unit A2, and Annette Vestergaard, Eurostat, 3 April 1992.

³ Louis Pracht, Professor of History and Geography and former teacher at the European Schools, Eurostat, 3 April 1992.

⁴ A catalogue of Eurostat's publications and electronic services can be obtained by writing to:
Eurostat
Information Office
Bâtiment Jean Monnet
L-2920 Luxembourg
Tel.: (352) 4301-4567
Fax: (352) 43 64 04.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON STATISTICAL CONFIDENTIALITY

Dublin, 8 to 10 September 1992

The first International Seminar on Statistical Confidentiality, held on Eurostat's initiative and run by the International Statistical Institute (ISI), comes at the right time. This is a particularly important subject for both the Commission and the statistical offices in the Member States.

WELL-TIMED

The event itself, involving close co-operation between the countries of the European Community and EFTA, Statistics Canada and the US Bureau of the Census, will take place during the implementation phase of Council Regulation EEC No 1588/90 on statistical confidentiality. This Regulation sets out the legal framework within which even confidential data will be forwarded to Eurostat.

A VITAL TOPIC

If there is one area in which professional confidence is sacrosanct, that area is statistics. Before taking up his post, the government statistician has to sign an undertaking to respect all legal and other provisions on confidentiality.

For the Commission

For the Commission, this seminar is a unique opportunity to pass on the message that statistical confidentiality and the protection and security of data in general are areas in which Eurostat brings all its know-how to bear. This expertise offers every guarantee, so the statistical institutes in the Member States should have no qualms about forwarding to Eurostat the data so essential to the Commission's system of economic information with a view to the single market.

For the Member States

This is an important opportunity for the Member States too, because it is the first chance they have had of getting together to discuss a subject which has recently attracted increased attention and has yet to be developed in depth.

The conclusions expected of the various forums and panels will lead to the establishment of common rules and procedures, thus allowing closer collaboration among the various national institutes and between themselves and Eurostat.

For businesses

Businessmen may mistrust governments in general and statistics in particular for many reasons, and the seminar will be investigating what these reasons are. Greater mutual understanding between interviewers and interviewees will help remove barriers to the circulation of economic information.

ORGANIZATION AND REGISTRATION

The seminar is to be held in the Dublin Castle Conference Centre, in Dublin, on 8 to 10 September 1992. Details of the programme and how to register can be obtained from:

ISI
International Statistical Institute
428, Prinses Beatrixlaan
PO Box 950
NL-2270 AZ Voorburg
Tel: 00 31 70/33 75 737
Fax: 00 31 70/38 60 025

The working languages are English, French and German and interpreting will be available.

FOLLOW-UP

The next issue of *Sigma* will be devoted to this topic, and the work of the seminar will therefore figure prominently. Particular attention will be paid to the implications of confidentiality for businesses.

EUROPE IN FIGURES

Third edition
New layout, new design

This publication has been reworked, redesigned and expanded since it first came out in 1987. The new look – a different design for an even more sharply targeted audience – should catch the eye in the bookshop.

TELLING THE MAN IN THE STREET

This publication, previously one of the Commission's 'Objective 92' series, enables the Statistical Office to make an efficient job of one of its tasks – that of informing the European citizen about trends in Community policies so he can base his choices and decisions on figures with meanings, definitions and methods of collection which are standard throughout the Community.

A COMPLETE PICTURE

The graphics, tables, maps, illustrations and comments provide a synthesis of European integration, outstanding European events and the place of the European Community in the world.

There are 18 chapters on the statistical themes covered by Eurostat:

1. General statistics
2. Economy and finance
3. Population and social conditions
4. Energy and industry
5. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries
6. External trade and the balance of payments
7. Services and transport
8. Environment

For further information

Other Eurostat publications providing useful additional information (and the intervals at which they are published) are listed at the end of each section under the heading 'For further information'.

FASCINATING FIGURES

This third edition of the Commission's best-seller is bound to appeal to all those for whom objective, properly presented and commented figures are a vital complement to existing information. Managing directors, research and statistical supervisors, product/market leaders, decision-makers, advisers, teachers and students, in short anyone who wants to find out more about Europe will be fascinated by this wealth of figures.

A knowledge of what this publication contains would be an extremely useful background to decisions on a wide range of economic, social, political, strategic and other subjects.

With 1993, Europe comes to a crucial stage in its construction and everyone involved must be in a position to gauge all the implications in his particular fields of interest.

SALES

Europe in figures (third edition), Catalogue No CA-70-91-895-EN-C, can be obtained from the sales offices of the Office for Official Publications of the European Community, the addresses of which are given on the inside back cover. It costs ECU 16.50 (exclusive of VAT).

HUMAN RESOURCES IN EUROPE AT THE DAWN OF THE 21st CENTURY

Proceedings of the Conference, Luxembourg, 27 to 29 November 1991.

This is Eurostat's report of a Conference at which both the organization and the contributions were of a very high standard.

AIMS

The Conference was organized at Eurostat's initiative, with the help of the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the European Parliament and the Commission of the European Communities, to find out just what the challenges were when it came to human resources in Europe at the dawn of the next century, to analyse (with the help of scientists) what the demographic, economic and sociological components were and to discuss (with political and economic decision-makers) what strategies should be put into practice now.

More than 500 people from 52 countries and many walks of life joined in this collective discussion.

STARTING POINT

Jacques Delors' closing speech was full of hope. The subjects discussed and their future developments will be dealt with in greater depth by the European Forum for Population Studies frequently referred to in these pages.

A VALUABLE REPORT

The proceedings of the Conference are an important piece of work, probably the only one to date to cover all these subjects in such depth, and they contain information that is vital to most political and economic decision-makers.

The document (Catalogue No CA-74-92-112-4A-C) can be obtained from the sales offices of the Office for Official Publications of the European Community, the addresses of which are given on the inside back cover. It costs ECU 40 (exclusive of VAT).

NEW TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR STATISTICS

Proceedings of the Conference, Bonn, 24 to 26 February 1992

Sponsored by the Doses research programme, the Conference helped to identify the domains in which major progress may be expected and in which developments should be encouraged. The record of proceedings published by Eurostat contains copious information of great interest to everyone who produces and uses statistics.

RAPID CHANGE

New technologies have clearly marked the development of statistical sciences and official statistics in general. New techniques draw on the latest information technology, GIS (geographical information system) technology, artificial intelligence and new communication methods.

It enabled them to examine and discuss users' requirements, recent solutions, strategies and policy issues.

More than 250 participants from 22 countries attended this three-day conference organized by Eurostat and the Gesellschaft für Mathematik und Datenverarbeitung (GMD) in close cooperation with :

- the Member States' national statistical institutes;
- the US Bureau of the Census;
- Statistics Canada, and
- the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS).

LARGE NUMBERS ATTENDED

The Conference aimed to explore the potential of new tools and to assess their impact on statistical theory, how information systems are built up, their procedures, the data collection process and data quality.

The Conference served as a forum for researchers, statisticians, national and international organizations involved in statistical R&D and users interested in new techniques and technologies.

The document (Catalogue No CA-74-92-306-3A-C) is available at a price of ECU 8 (excluding VAT) from the sales offices of the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, the addresses of which are given on the inside back cover.



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