

Draft note on the new European data collection on Weekly Deaths Counts

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Introduction

Besides its major impact on people's lives and populations' economy and health care system, the Covid-19 pandemic has triggered a tremendous interest on related statistics. Whilst the international comparability of data associated to the Covid-19 may still be arguable due to possible different rules of disease / causes of death classification and coverage issues, high-frequency data on overall mortality offer a viable alternative for internationally comparable monitoring and analyses of direct and indirect effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The new Weekly Deaths Counts data collection

In April 2020, in cooperation with the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of the European Statistical System (ESS), Eurostat set up a new temporary special European data collection on weekly death counts (EuroWDC), in order to support the policy and research efforts related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Data on the weekly deaths up to the latest available week are transmitted by the NSIs to Eurostat on **voluntary basis**. These data are cross-classified by sex, 5-year age-group and NUTS3 region (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics NUTS2016 classification). When such cross-classification is not possible for the reporting countries, less granular data may be provided to Eurostat.

Eurostat requested from the NSIs the transmission of a back time series of weekly deaths for as many years as possible, recommending as starting point the year 2000. A long enough time series is necessary for temporal comparisons and statistical modelling. Shorter time series, imposed by data availability, are transmitted by some countries.

Taking in due consideration the urgent need of statistical information for mortality monitoring, EuroWDC has been designed having **timeliness** as primary quality criterion. Data are expected to be transmitted by the NSIs as soon as available, even as provisional or estimated figures (flagged respectively with “p” and “e”), and the validation processing in Eurostat is kept to a minimum to allow a prompt dissemination. Data are processed and disseminated by Eurostat as soon as they are received. In general, the latest available weekly data are transmitted by the NSIs to Eurostat every week or every two weeks, depending on the processing time needed in each NSI to receive and prepare the information. The online series are expected to be revised according to the most recent data released and sent to Eurostat by the NSIs.

Eurostat's efforts are concentrated on providing quickly statistics that show the changing situation of the total number of weekly deaths from early 2020 onwards under the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, incoming weekly statistics are not submitted to Eurostat's regular validation process. Internal consistency of the weekly deaths data is checked but it is not done against the annual or the monthly deaths series available in Eurostat's online tables (demo_r_magec3, demo_r_magec, demo_magec and demo_mmonth up to 2018).

All deaths occurring to the usually resident population in the territory of each country should be reported to Eurostat. However, some NSIs may have information only referring to a subset of territories (e.g. municipalities) at the time of data transmission to Eurostat.

Eurostat's recommendation for the definition of time of death is by date of occurrence, but data by date of registration are also accepted. The place of the event should refer to the place of residence of the deceased person. The time format for the weeks complies with the ISO 8601 standard.

Finally, the 2020 data is generally considered as provisional and revisions can be made by the participating countries. However, this mainly concern the latest week(s) transmitted for which the numbers are generally incomplete but after few weeks, the data is very close to the final one.

Table 1 at the end of this Note provides a summary overview of the main characteristics of the EuroWDC data available by country as of 22 June 2020.

Work is ongoing to improve data quality and user friendliness of the EuroWDC tables. They are disseminated on Eurostat web site at:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography-migration-projections/data/database?node_code=demomwk

Table 1: main characteristics of the EuroWDC data in Eurobase as of 22 June 2020

Country	Start year	Start week	Latest year	Latest week	Date of occurrence/ date of registration	Lowest NUTS level breakdown	Lowest age breakdown	Sex breakdown
BE	2000	1	2020	23	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
BG	2010	1	2020	23	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
CZ	2005	1	2020	17	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
DK	2007	1	2020	24	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
DE	2016	1	2020	20	Occurrence	National	10-years age group	Total
EE	2000	1	2020	24		2000-2019: NUTS3; 2020: NUTS2	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
ES	2000	1	2020	21	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
FR	2013	1	2020	23	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
IT	2015	2	2020	19	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
LV	2020	14	2020	24	Registration	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
LT	2000	1	2020	24	2000-19: Occurrence, 2020: Registration	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
LU	2000	1	2020	17	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total

Country	Start year	Start week	Latest year	Latest week	Date of occurrence/ date of registration	Lowest NUTS level breakdown	Lowest age breakdown	Sex breakdown
HU ¹	2000	1	2020	21	Occurrence	2000-2019: NUTS3, 2020: National	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
AT	2000	1	2020	21	Occurrence	NUTS2	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
PT	2000	1	2020	23	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
SI	2000	1	2018	52	Occurrence	National	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
SK	2000	1	2020	18	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
FI	2000	1	2020	23	2000-19: Registration, 2020: Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
SE ²	2000	1	2020	24	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
UK	2020	10	2020	23	Registration	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
IS	2000	1	2020	22		NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
LI	2000	1	2020	21		NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
NO	2000	1	2020	23		NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
CH	2000	1	2020	23	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
ME	2020	1	2020	14		NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total

¹ Data for unknown week are transmitted by the country for 2000 and 2001 but they are not online

² Data for unknown week are transmitted by the country for 2000-2020 but they are not online

Country	Start year	Start week	Latest year	Latest week	Date of occurrence/ date of registration	Lowest NUTS level breakdown	Lowest age breakdown	Sex breakdown
RS	2000	1	2018	52	Occurrence	NUTS3	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
AM	2020	1	2020	13	Registration	National	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total
GE	2014	1	2020	1	Occurrence	National	5-years age group	Women, Men, Total