Contents

Regional databases in Europe

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Over the past decade, awareness of regional differences within Europe has risen sharply. At the same time, a major part of EU spending under the Cohesion Funds has focused on identifying disadvantaged regions and instituting remedial programmes for them. Regional data collected by Member States and forwarded to Eurostat has been an essential part of this identification, planning and evaluation process. Eurostat's own regional database, the REGIO domain of New Cronos, has accordingly steadily expanded its coverage of indicators since its creation more than 20 years ago. In 1998, it was decided to obtain regional data from the then ten PHARE countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). Thanks to the whole-hearted co-operation of the countries concerned, data matching the REGIO holdings for EU Member States was obtained during 1999/2000 and integrated in the REGIO base.

In order to be in a better position to help identify further potential sources of regional data for very specific regional studies, Eurostat undertook a survey of regional databases in the spring and summer of 2002. All 15 member States and all 13 candidate countries were sent a questionnaire, key results of which are summarised in this paper.

Does a comprehensive regional database exist at present ?
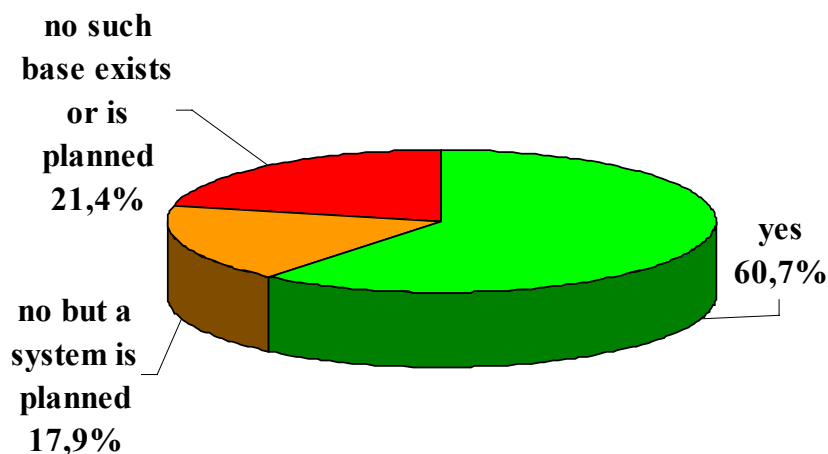
The increasing demand for regional data, information and analysis has led to the implementation of regional databases in 17 national statistical offices. Most offices intend to upgrade their existing system or install a new one. As shown in Chart 1, less than a quarter neither have nor plan such a system.

Grouping regional data in dedicated regional bases

The survey was prompted by the fact that Eurostat is often approached by users seeking data on indicators, or at regional levels, that its own, necessarily limited, regional database does not include. At the same time, there were a number of indications that regionalised data were being increasingly stored in specialised bases.

It was already clear from the above PHARE project that many candidate countries were establishing regional

databases in accordance with the regional breakdowns agreed between Eurostat and each candidate country. A similar, though probably slower, trend towards the establishment of regional databases could be assumed in the current Member States. Finally, growing numbers of regional publications in paper and electronic form are being sent to Eurostat. Quite clearly, these publications are compiled from existing databases, some of which have been set up as a result of cross-border regional co-operation.

Some well-established bases, many new ones

Three statistical offices have been running regional databases for more than 20 years. The oldest one – Integrated Statistical Information System (ISIS) administered by the National Statistical Office in **Austria** – was set up in 1974 and contains a great deal of social and economic data at the NUTS levels 2 and 5. Some data (gross value added and gross domestic product) are available at NUTS level 3. The Regional Database (ALTIKA) run by the National Statistical Office in **Finland** has presented regional data since 1981 (NUTS levels 3, 4, 5).

In eastern Europe, the T-STAR – Hungarian statistical database of settlements (local units) started in 1977. Since 1998, it has run under ORACLE, accessible via Intranet. The lowest territorial level in this database is NUTS 5, which can be aggregated to all the higher levels (NUTS 0-5).

The National Institute of Statistics of **Romania** established the database of Localities (BDL) at the equivalent of the NUTS 5 level and the database of Counties (BDJ) at the NUTS 3 level in 1985. Three years later, the SBG – Statistical Database Municipalities (NUTS level 5) – was set up by the Central Statistical Office of the **Netherlands**.

Chart 2 shows that the greater attention being paid to regional issues in the 1990s was reflected in the establishment of a number of regional databases.

The Regional Statistics Database in **Germany** was created in 1993 and holds data at NUTS levels 2 and 3 for a very wide range of categories.
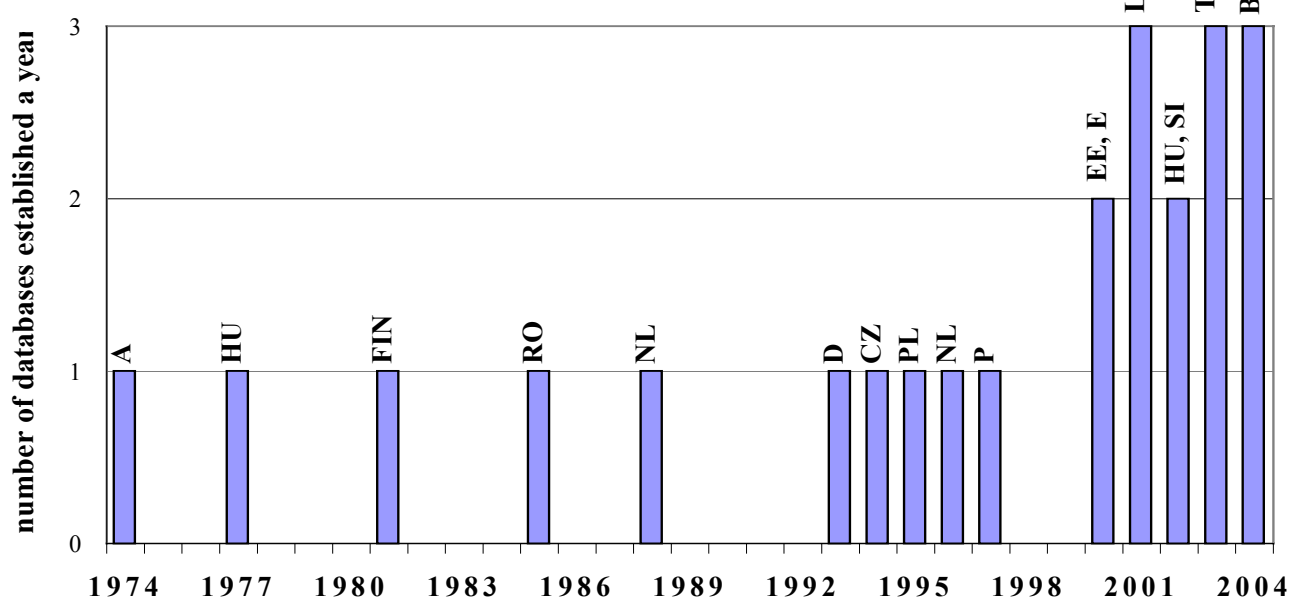
The Statistical Office of the **Czech Republic** runs two regional databases. Firstly, the KROK database contains data from regions and districts (NUTS levels 2, 3 and 4), secondly, the MOS database contains data from municipalities (NUTS 5 level). Both databases were established in 1994. On-line access is planned for 2004.

The Regional Data Bank (RDB) in **Poland** has been stocked since 1995 with regional data on the socio-economic situation of gminas (NUTS level 5), powiats (NUTS level 4) and voivodships (NUTS level 2). Data at the NUTS 3 level (subregions) created in 2000 is also being expanded.

The National Statistical Office in **France** (INSEE) has been running a regional databank for more than 7 years. The SEDDL database was set up in 1995 and contains extensive social and economic data at the NUTS 5 level (and can be aggregated to higher levels).

The second **Netherlands** database – RSB – Regional Statistics Database, which contains data at NUTS levels 2 and 3, was set up in 1996. The **Portuguese** regional database "INFOLINE – Indicators Territories database" has been in existence since 1997.

Year of (scheduled) establishment of a regional database

number of databases established a year (y-axis: 0, 1, 2, 3)

Bar labels: A (1974), HU (1977), FIN (1980), RO (1986), NL (1989), D, CZ, PL, NL, P (1993–1996), EE, E (2000), LT, UK, RO (2001), HU, SI (2001), TR, LV, MT (2003), BG, B, SK (2004)

x-axis: 1974, 1977, 1980, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004

Several of the databases created around the turn of the century were in candidate countries. The **Estonian** Regional Development Database was founded in 2000, as was the INEBASE regional database in **Spain**. Development of the regional database of Statistics **Lithuania** (some 420 indicators, presented as Excel files) was started in 2001 as a PHARE–funded project. As part of a 3-year, €120m development of neighbourhood statistics (NeSS) at NUTS 4 and below throughout the **UK**, a pilot base for Northern Ireland was established in 2001. The **Slovenian** regional database was created in 2002.

Eight national statistical offices (Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Turkey) are planning new or additional regional databases. Work on the regional database TEMPO in **Romania** began in 2001 and it will be accessible on-line by 2003. The **Hungarian** Statistical database of the counties and regions (MR-STAR) is scheduled to be in operation in 2002. The lowest regional level will be the county (regional level 3). The planned regional database in **Turkey** is intended to improve the quality and consistency of regional statistics, as a well as serving as a basis for data dissemination. A comprehensive regional database at national, regional

and sub-regional levels in **Latvia** is planned, starting in 2003 as an MS Access database. The NSO in **Malta** is planning to start running a regional database in 2003 at regional levels NUTS 3, 4 and 5. The National Statistical Institute of **Bulgaria** is planning to set up a regional database in 2004. This database will contain data down to the NUTS 5 level based on the existing three databases with individual records (population, enterprises, statistical register), aggregated thematic data (mostly at the NUTS 4 level) and data from other organisations (such as unemployment, municipal budgets, insurance and social welfare).

In the case of Statistics **Belgium**, the most important regional data are currently held in the general database but the intention is to extract that information to build a separate on-line database (starting in 2004). This will be used for the website but also to produce some publications with regional statistics. The BELREGIO database will be accessible on-line by 2005. The building-up of a regional database in the **Slovak Republic** of the REGSTAT type is planned within the framework of the Phare 2002 Programme budget. The relevant project was approved by the European Commission in June 2002 and will be implemented in 2003/2004.

Accessibility of the base

There is increasing awareness that statisticians, researchers and planners in other countries are often keen to access the data but do not have the necessary language skills. A growing number of bases now contain headings, or can be searched, in English as well as in the national language of the base (see **Chart 3**). Even more frequently, the publications disseminating the data from the base are bilingual.

Chart 3. The languages used in the regional databases

□ only national language(s)

■ national language(s) + English (including English-only bases in Malta, Ireland and the UK)
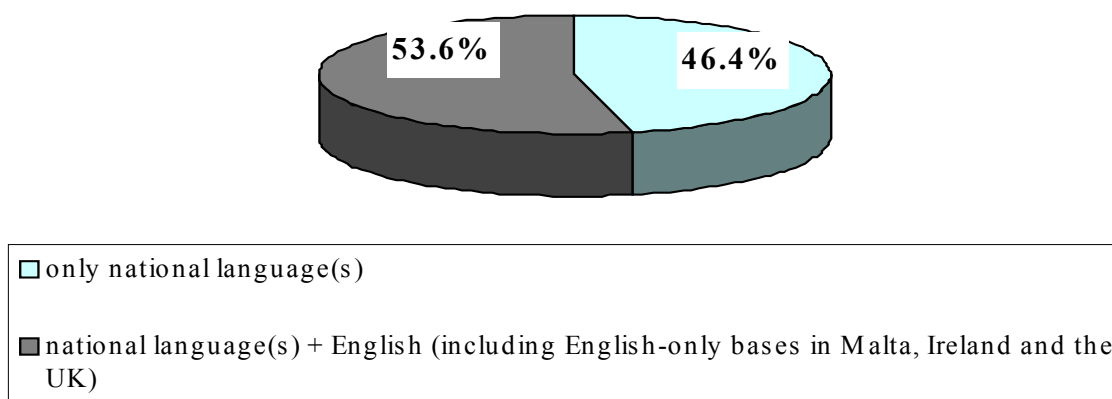
Most of the regional databases are accessible to the public via Internet (see **Chart 4**). In the case of databases still being planned or established, on-line access will be possible in one or two years. Access to the base is usually via the homepage of the national statistical offices but some databases have their own websites. For most databases, on-line access is free of charge. **Table 1** contains a summary of the access options for each of the EU Member States and candidate countries.

Chart 4. Is on-line access possible (28 bases)?

eurostat
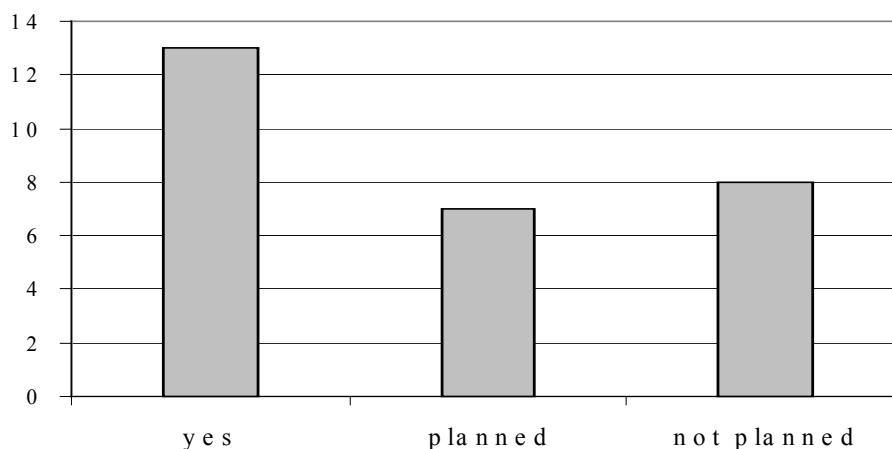
Other sources

Where a comprehensive database does not exist at the moment, the relevant regional information can be found in other databases run by the different departments of the relevant National Statistical Institute.

In **Greece**, for example, there are about a dozen separate thematic regional databases, each covering a very narrow range of statistical data. Sweden stores regional data in the general statistical database but there is a section of the English part of the SCB website which gives an overview of the regional data available.

Although not covered in the questionnaire, which was addressed to national statistical offices, there are also increasing numbers of databases being operated at a range of regional levels and by equally heterogeneous organisations. These include regional statistical offices (for example the Autonomous Communities in Spain or the Länder in Germany), individual cities or larger urban agglomerations, and cross-border or interregional co-operation bodies, including Euregios or Euroregions or cross-border partnerships of statistical offices.

Although in the first two cases, the statistical publications are predominantly monolingual, this is rarely the case for the cross-border bodies. In general, their on-line and paper dissemination of data is at least in the languages of the countries involved (which may be as many as four), and often in additional languages, particularly English.

Acknowledgements

Table 1. Summary table of regional databases

Countries	Regional database	Is on-line access possible?	Languages
Belgium	BELREGIO	planned for 2005	French, Dutch
Denmark	No such base exists or is planned	–	–
Germany	Statistik regional (Regional statistics)	http://www.brandenburg.de/statreg	German, English planned 08/2003
Greece	No centralised base exists; some thematic bases have regional data	–	–
Spain	INEBASE	http://www.ine.es	Spanish, English (partly)
France	SEDDL	–	French
Ireland	No such base exists or is planned	–	–

Countries	Regional database	Is on-line access possible?	Languages
Italy	No centralised base exists; some thematic bases have regional data	–	–
Luxembourg	No such base exists or is planned	–	–
The Netherlands	SGB (Statistical Database Municipalities) RSB (Regional Statistics Database) StatLine	http://statline.cbs.nl http://statline.cbs.nl http://cbs.nl/en/statLine/index.htm	Dutch (English version is not yet available) Dutch Dutch
Austria	ISIS (Integrated Statistical Information System)	http://statistik.at	German, English
Portugal	INFOLINE (Indicatores Territoriais)	http://www.ine.pt/prodserv/ pesqut/pesqut.asp	Portuguese, English
Finland	ALTIKA. Some thematic bases have also regional data	http://tilastokeskus.fi/tk/ tp_db/altika/altika.html	Finnish
Sweden	No specific regional database is operated by Statistics Sweden, the regional data being included in the main databases. However, the RAPS base operated by NUTEK is commercially available	http://www.se/databaser/ English overview of regional statistics at http://www.scb.se/eng/regioner/ Regioner.asp	Swedish; translation into English is planned
United Kingdom	Neighbourhood Statistics (NeSS) Scotland Neighbourhood Statistics Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Statistics	http://neighbourhood.statistics. gov.uk http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/ neighbours/tables/neighbours.asp http://gis.nisra.gov.uk.mapxtreme/ intro.htm	English English English
Bulgaria	A regional database does not yet exist. A system is planned in 2004/5	–	–

Countries	Regional database	Is on-line access possible?	Languages
Czech Republic	KROK (database of regions and districts) MOS (database of municipalities)	http://www.czso.cz (on-line access is planned for 2004) ditto	Czech, English Czech
Cyprus	No such base exists or is planned	−	−
Estonia	Estonian Regional Development Database	http://www.stat.ee/statistics	Estonian, English
Hungary	MR-Star (Database of counties and regions) T-STAR Statistical database of settlements (local units)	Some indicators on the HCSO site: http://www.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/index_eng.html Currently Intranet only	Hungarian, English Hungarian
Lithuania	Regional database	http://www.std.lt (on-line access is planned for 2003)	Lituanien, Anglais
Latvia	A regional database does not exist. A system is planned in 2003.	on-line access is planned	Latvian, English
Malta	A regional database does not exist. A system is planned in 2003	−	English
Poland	Regional Data Bank	http://www.stat.gov.pl	Polish, English (for CSO Intranet users only)
Romania	TEMPO BDL, BDJ	http://www.insse.ro (on-line access is planned for 2003) −	Romanian, English Romanian,
Slovenia	SURS RDB	−	Slovenian
Slovak Republic	A regional database does not exist. A system is planned in 2002/2003. 2002/2003.	Planned	Slovak
Turkey	A regional database does not exist. A system is planned in 2003.	−	Turkish

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