City statistics – nomenclature of territorial units

Statistics Explained

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The aim of this chapter is to provide information on the new coding and labelling system for city statistics, which will replace the current one in the Eurostat's database in 2020.

In 2017, the Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 on the establishment of a common nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) was amended to include a number of territorial typologies: including cities and Functional Urban Areas (FUAs) (the city plus its commuting zone). The Commission Implementing Regulation (Tercet) (EU) 1130/2019 of 2 July 2019 is providing the uniform conditions for the harmonised application of territorial typologies pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council (NUTS).

The new principles for coding and labelling of the spatial units used for city data collection are designed to facilitate the data collection at city level using the legally recognised territorial typologies.

This article forms part of Eurostat 's City statistics manual .

General principles

- The statistical unit to be classified are the urban territories built up from Local Administrative Units (LAUs) following the TERCET Regulation, namely: Functional Urban Areas and Cities.

- In some cases, the urban centre stretches far beyond the boundaries of the central municipality and 'Greater cities' are defined. This shall be transparent from the labelling. The 'Greater cities' will be the default city level. Cities that are components of greater cities will be no longer part of the data collection as "stand alone" cities.

- The classification and coding shall allow to group areas that are characterised by certain common properties: all cities in a country; all capital cities.

- The classification and coding shall allow the running of certain algorithms. These algorithms shall be able to process information summarised in the code to produce relevant information.

- It shall be possible to easily calculate the population of all cities within a country without double counting.

- The classification and coding shall provide the opportunity to implement changes (adding, modifying or removing a city).

- The classification and coding shall be defined in a way that favours stability. Preferably, code changes shall be an exception. In the case of a modification of the underlying territorial entity (city or FUA), codes will persist but data will be flagged with 'break in time series'.

These new principles allow for the grouping of all cities in a country without double-counting and also for all capital cities in Europe. It will be transparent from the labelling that Madrid (greater city) is not identical to the municipality of Madrid. Further improvement is that the concepts of cities and FUAs will be reflected in the coding in a consistent way. The new classification and coding provide the opportunity to implement changes (adding, modifying or removing a city).

New coding

- CCxxxF Functional Urban Area (FUA)

- CCxxxC City/Greater City

Where:

- CC is the country code

- xxx is a running number;

- The same running number (xxx) indicates that the City is included in the FUA. However, a FUA can include multiple Cities so not all Cities within a FUA will have the same running number; all Cities shall have a FUA. If a city has no commuting zone than the FUA is identical to the city.

- All capitals will be coded as xxx=001;

- Cities which are bigger than the municipality will be labelled as 'greater';

Main changes

- The FUAs will receive 'F' instead of 'L' in order to avoid unnecessary reference to the old Larger Urban Zone concept;

- 'K' will be no longer used in the coding (K indicated Kernel; this concept is no longer used);

- The numbering will be updated to remove holes and the 500 codes;

- Cities which are components of greater cities will be no longer part of the data collection;

- Codes will remain stable. Changes will be stored in an attribute table, which might for instance be joined with the LAU list. In case of changes to the city boundaries with more than 1 % population moving, data will be flagged with "break in series (b)";

- The version code will be dropped.

Examples of new and old codes in the classification:

Old code	Old label	New code	New label
AT001C1	Wien	AT001C	Wien
AT001L2	Wien	AT001F	Wien
BE004C1	Charleroi	BE004C	Charleroi (greater city)
CH002T1	Genève transnational LUZ	CH002T	Genève transnational FUA
NL002C2	Greater Amsterdam	NL001C	Amsterdam (greater city)
NL002L3	Amsterdam	NL001F	Amsterdam
FR506C1	Colmar	FR070C	Colmar
FR506L1	Colmar	FR070F	Colmar
ES027C1	Barakaldo	No longer code, name and data provision required since Barakaldo is a component of Bilbao (greater city)	
IT044C1	Busto Arsizio	No longer code, name and data provision required since Busto Arsizio is a component of Milano (greater city)	

History of the coding

The collection of statistics for cities - the so-called "Urban Audit" - started two decades ago. The ultimate goal was to contribute to improving the quality of urban life by:

- supporting the exchange of information between cities;

- helping to identify best practices;

- facilitating benchmarking across the EU;

- providing information on the dynamics within the cities and between cities and their surrounding areas.

Within the Urban Audit, cities were previously referred to as 'core cities' and 'kernels' - now called cities and Greater cities, while FUAs were previously referred to as 'larger urban zones'. In the past, the coding was adjusted and extended according to the changing scope and needs of the data collection and it became partly inconsistent and non-transparent to users. For instance:

- Most capitals have the 'running number' 001, but not all (for example NL002C2 Greater Amsterdam).

- Some cities were taken over from the former 'Large City Audit' list. The Large City Audit was executed between 2007 and 2011. It included all, at that time, 'non Urban Audit' cities with more than 100 000 inhabitants. For these cities, the running number of the code starts with 5. DE502C1 Mannheim is an example.

- The version numbers (the last digit of the city and FUA code) indicate very well that changes occurred in the boundaries; however, they do not give information on the time when the change happened. This hinders the swift production of map layers since the information on LAU boundaries of which year are to be used to build the City/FUA is missing.

- Kernels have been suppressed; however, some codes still use the letter 'K'.

- The Greater Cities are used together with the Cities, which can lead to double counting. For instance, data on the municipality of Barcelona and the Greater city of Barcelona are in the same dataset.

- The former 'Larger Urban Zones' have been redefined and renamed and are now called 'Functional Urban Areas'. However, their code still uses the letter 'L'.

See also

- City statistics manual
- Territorial typologies manual

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