



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Regulatory Scrutiny Board

Brussels,
D(2016)

Opinion

Title **DG ESTAT – Impact assessment on a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households**
(draft version of 18 February 2016)*

(A) Context

The current system for the production of European statistics on persons and households is fragmented into separate domain-specific regulations which rigidly fix the topics to be covered and the technical requirements for the data collection (sample size, quality criteria, transmission requirements, etc.). There are currently five legal bases for European social surveys, namely for the Labour Force Survey (LFS), EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), Adult Education Survey (AES), European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), and Survey on ICT usage in households (ICT-HH). Two European surveys are conducted on the basis of an informal agreement only, namely the Household Budget Survey (HBS) and the Harmonised European Time Use Survey (HETUS). The present initiative aims to streamline social statistics collected via surveys and to render the data collection process more efficient.

(B) Overall opinion: POSITIVE

The Board gives a positive opinion, on the understanding that the impact assessment report will be significantly improved, particularly with respect to the following aspects:

- (1) Clarify the context, scope and problem analysis;**
- (2) Streamline and simplify the options by clarifying their link to the core problem of domain defragmentation;**
- (3) Deepen the analysis and quantification of impacts, with a focus on costs, burden reduction and simplification potential of this REFIT initiative;**
- (4) Further develop the monitoring framework to ensure that the actual impacts of the proposed measure will be properly measured.**

The lead DG shall ensure that these recommendations are integrated in the report prior to launching the interservice consultation.

* Note that this opinion concerns a draft impact assessment report which may differ from the one adopted

(C) Main recommendations for improvements

(1) Clarify the scope, policy context and problem analysis. The scope of the initiative should be clarified from the onset of the report by explaining that it only addresses one of the three categories of social statistics (i.e. surveys, whereas census data and administrative registers will be dealt with at different stages of the modernisation process). The concept of domain fragmentation and what it means in practice should be better explained. The problem statement should also be expanded to include issues associated with the burden faced by data providers such as National Statistical Institutes and the respondents themselves, which would be alleviated by the proposed measures.

(2) Streamline the policy options. The intervention logic should be strengthened by more clearly linking the options to the core problem of domain fragmentation, discarding options that are not relevant to address this issue at an early stage. Building on the problem statement, the feasibility of domain defragmentation, the extent to which it can be achieved by various options and the main obstacles to its application should be more systematically presented.

(3) Enhance the analysis and quantification of impacts. The impacts of the different options should be further developed and the position of all relevant stakeholders towards them presented in more detail. The description of impacts should more clearly explain who will benefit from and who will bear the costs of the proposed changes. The REFIT aspects of this initiative should be highlighted: the costs as well as the potential for burden reduction and simplification from streamlining surveys (e.g. avoiding duplication of data collection, shorter questionnaire, lower periodicity...) should be further substantiated, preferably with quantitative evidence (if this is not possible, the report should explain why).

(4) Strengthen the monitoring framework. The report should clarify what dimensions are covered under the concept of data quality (e.g. relevance, timeliness, accuracy,...) and ensure that the monitoring framework covers all of them. The monitoring framework should also support the measurement of actual cost reduction and the identification of potential trade-offs between cost and quality of social statistics.

Some more technical comments have been transmitted directly to the author DG and are expected to be incorporated in the final version of the impact assessment report.

(D) Procedure and presentation

The report should be shortened and simplified in order to increase its readability for policy makers and third parties.

(E) RSB scrutiny process

Reference number	2014/ESTAT/002
External expertise used	No
Date of RSB meeting	16 March 2016