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Session 4– Invited paper

**THE USE OF ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF TOTAL POPULATION FOR DECISION
MAKING IN THE EU**

Submitted by Eurostat*

1. With effect from 1st of November 2004, when a decision is to be adopted by the Council of the European Union by a qualified majority, a member of the Council may request verification that the Member States constituting the qualified majority represent at least 62% of the total population of the Union.
2. In implementing this provision in practice, it is necessary to establish detailed rules regarding the definitions used for total population and the procedure for their annual updates.
3. The joint *UNECE / Eurostat recommendations for the 2000 censuses of population and housing* have served as the basis for defining the concept of total population. The Council has decided to adopt the concept of *usual residence* as being the most appropriate for the annual population estimates. The respective Council Decision can be accessed at the following address:

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2004/l_319/l_31920041020en00150016.pdf

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4. Due to the high political importance of the annual population estimates, it is necessary to ensure that data transmitted to Eurostat are calculated according to the above mentioned guidelines. As a matter of fact, in implementing these recommendations, countries are experiencing difficulties with various categories of international migration. For purposes of illustration, we attach a table which describes the classification of students in several of the EU Member States. Information on this table has not been thoroughly discussed with Member States and it is far from been complete. The aim is to highlight actual and potential difficulties in implementing international recommendations, and to underline the need for adopting more detailed implementation rules.

5. This table is based on responses received from national data providers to a question¹ which was addressed to them at the beginning of October 2004.

6. It can be noted that there are considerable variations in the degree to which Member States are able to implement the Usually Resident definition with regard to the treatment of students. Due to these differences, it is likely that some students who migrate to study abroad may either be excluded from the statistics (not counted in either their country of origin or their place of study) or double counted (recorded as resident in both their country of origin and their place of study).

7. In some cases, the definition of the usual residence of students (and indeed other groups of migrants) is influenced by the limitations of the data sources available for the recording of migration. Where a person must register as a resident if they stay or intend to stay in the country for a certain period, then this reference period is frequently adopted as the time definition that distinguishes a migrant from a visitor. Typically, this reference period may be 3 months as in Germany or 4 months as in The Netherlands, rather than the 12 months or more referred to in the UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration.

8. It is also worth mentioning that, in several Member States, there are no systematic checks regarding the accuracy of local population registers; it is often left to the persons concerned to request their de-registration.

9. In some other Member States, students are defined separately from other migrants because they are viewed as essentially temporary residents of their country of study (even though their duration of stay may exceed 12 months) who are expected, at some future date, to return to their country of origin. This can be seen for Cyprus, where Cypriot students who leave to study abroad are considered to remain resident in Cyprus, and in France where foreign students studying in France are not counted as being usually resident in France. Although this conflicts with the UNECE/Eurostat definitions of the Usually Resident population, this counting of students as resident in their country of origin is in line with the definitions used for National Accounts statistics.

¹ The question was worded as follows: 'According to the definition of usual residence, students should be counted in their term-time address, i.e. in the place of their study and not in their home country. Of course, we refer to studies which last / or are intended to last for more than 12 months; those, for example, who are on short courses like language courses should be counted at their home residence, as they are temporarily absent.'

I would be very grateful if you could inform us (rather quickly) whether this definition applies to the population figures you have supplied to Eurostat. In cases of a different definition, could you please give us an estimate (order of magnitude) of the number of students concerned?'

10. In the EU 25 there were nearly 900.000 foreign students in tertiary education (ISCED 5-6), in 2002. The duration of studies in this level of education typically lasts more than 12 months (3 to 5 years). Over or under-estimation of the number of foreign students may have a significant effect both on the total usually resident population of a given country and the EU as a whole.

11. The *case* of foreign students has been used as an example that demonstrates the difficulties which Member States encounter in the implementation of international recommendations. Similar problems exist with other categories of migrants. We believe that the revision of the international recommendations for the next round of population and housing censuses represents a unique opportunity to address some of these problems. In view of the increasing political importance of population estimates in the EU, Eurostat is planning an in-depth review of national practices regarding the implementation of UN recommendations.

Definition of usual residence: the case of students following courses of more than 12 months

COUNTRY	Application of UN recommendations: Y / N / ?	Remarks
BE	No answer	
CZ	?	
DK	Y	
DE	Y (?)	<i>Registered, with intention to stay for more than 3 months</i>
EE	No answer	
GR	Y	
ES	Y (?)	
FR	N	<i>Concept of National Accounts ; risk of double counting of French students studying abroad and non inclusion of foreign students studying in France</i>
IE	Y	
IT	No answer	
CY	N	<i>Risk of double counting of Cypriot students studying in another EU country</i>
LV	No answer	
LT	No answer	
LU	N (?)	
HU	No answer	
MT	?	
NL	Y (?)	<i>Registered, with intention to stay for more than 4 months</i>
AT	Y (?)	<i>All those registered ; in near future, it will be possible to identify persons according to duration of stay</i>
PL	No answer	
PT	Y	
SI	?	<i>Concept of permanent residence</i>
SK	?	<i>Concept of permanent residence</i>
FI	Y	
SE	Y	
UK	Y	