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Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses

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COMPLIANCE WITH CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopting the Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations in the 2011 United Kingdom census

Note by the Office for National Statistics, United Kingdom

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) Recommendations on core topics and census definitions for the 2010 round of censuses¹ form the basis of the requirements for outputs to be provided to Eurostat arising from the new European Parliament and Council Census Regulation², and so are mandatory for European Union (EU) Member States. However, the overriding need to meet national requirements may determine a different approach in some countries. The paper identifies those topics and definitions where the CES recommendations may not be fully adopted in the 2011 United Kingdom Census, but describes how alternative data sources may be used so that the EU obligations can be fulfilled.

¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (2006). *Conference of European Statisticians' Recommendations for the 2010 Censuses of Population and Housing*. ECE/CES/STAT/NONE/2006/4. United Nations, New York and Geneva. ISSN 0069-8458

2. The EU Council (Framework) Regulation on Censuses of Population and Housing² came into effect on 9 July 2008. The Regulation is a permanent piece of legislation concerned with establishing common rules throughout the EU for the decennial provision of comprehensive data on the population and on housing to be collected from traditional census or from alternative sources such as surveys and registers, or from combinations of such sources.

3. The Regulation is not concerned with prescribing the ways in which Member States should collect the information. Nor is it *itself* concerned with specifying the particular outputs to be provided or the means of supply. These latter issues will be the subject of a subsequent Commission (Implementing) Regulations. Such Regulations would be required for each successive census round. However, the substantive element of the Council Regulation is that it requires Member States to provide Eurostat with validated data and metadata covering a number of specific topics (covering the demographic, social economic and housing characteristics of persons, households, families, housing units and buildings) that have been designated as 'core' in the joint UNECE/Eurostat *Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses*¹ adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians in June 2006.

II. ROLE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM CENSUS IN MEETING THE NEED FOR INFORMATION FOR NATIONAL AND LOCAL DECISION MAKING

4. For over two hundred years, the United Kingdom has relied on the Census to underpin national and local decision making. Central government, local authorities, the health service, the education and academic community, commercial business, professional organisations, the third sector and the public at large all need reliable information on the number and characteristics of people and households if they are to conduct many of their activities effectively. This need is currently best met by conducting a Census every ten years covering the whole of the population, and by updating the population estimates each year benchmarked on the preceding Census.

5. The United Kingdom Government and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each need the information which is most relevant to form policy, to plan services for specific groups of people and, especially, to distribute resources effectively to local and health authorities to enable them to direct resources to where they are needed.

6. A Government White Paper³ published in December 2008 set out the key proposals for the 2011 Census in England and Wales focusing on the justification for the inclusion of each topic; a similar document covered the proposals for Census in Scotland⁴. A similar statement on

² Official Journal of the European Union (2008). Regulation (EC) No 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 on population and housing censuses. OJEU, 13 August 2008.

³ Cabinet Office (2008). *Helping to shape tomorrow*. Cm 7513. The Stationery Office. ISBN 978-0-10-175132-2. See <http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/2011-census-project/legislation/index.html>

⁴ Scottish Government Statement (2008). *Scotland's Census 2011*. SG/2008/214. ISBN 978-1-874451-78-8. See <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/policy-and-methodology/2011-census-gov-statement-and-supporting-docs/scotlands-census-2011-a-government-statement.html>

the proposals for Northern Ireland is scheduled to be published shortly. In its White Paper the Government noted that the topics proposed for the Census are those that have been shown to be most needed by the major users of census information and for which questions have been devised that can be expected to produce reliable and accurate data. In each case, no other comparable and accessible source of the information is available in combination with other items in the Census or relating to the same date or timeframe.

7. While the focus of attention was rightly given to the inclusion of those topics that would meet the national and local needs for information, acknowledgment was given to the fact that the need for information is shared by the EU. The European Commission needs to be in possession of sufficiently reliable and comparable data on population and housing in order to fulfil the tasks assigned to it, notably by Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty establishing the European Community. Accordingly, arrangements are being put in place, within the funding allocation that has been agreed for the Census, to provide for aggregated statistics to be made available to Eurostat subject to the necessary statistical disclosure controls to protect the confidentiality of the data.

8. However, it is recognised that not all the topics on which Eurostat has requested information have been treated with the same level of priority compared with many other key topics required for national purposes only. This paper identifies those topics in question for which the United Kingdom will seek to make additional provisions in order to fulfil its EU obligations. For all other topics the United Kingdom is confident that it can provide Eurostat with most - if not all – of the requisite information directly from its 2011 Census.

III. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

9. There is currently no intention to include a question in the 2011 Census that will collect, directly, consistent information on following ISCED levels of educational attainment:

- No education or less than ISCED Level 1
- Level 1 (primary education)
- Level 2 (lower secondary education)
- Level 3 (upper secondary education)
- Level 4 (post secondary, non-tertiary education)
- Level 5 (first stage of tertiary education)
- Level 6 (second stage of tertiary education)
- Not stated

10. Nor is there currently any data available for the resident population classified by such level of attainment.

11. Instead, information from differently worded questions on **educational and vocational qualifications** throughout United Kingdom will be used to assess educational achievement and labour market participation across the population, looking at demographic groups at a local and regional level and the particular barriers faced. This will help users to understand and respond to equality and diversity issues, in order to widen participation and fair access. Information on

intermediate and higher level qualifications is used in the derivation of the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC)⁵ and, in particular, assists the understanding of social patterns and local labour markets. Information on those people with no or low levels of qualification are used in deriving indices of deprivation which are used across central government and by public and voluntary sector organisations as the primary basis for identifying deprived areas for funding allocations and applications.

12. Information will be sought on the level of qualifications achieved with the primary intention of deriving the highest qualification and recognising any differences in qualifications across the country.

13. In order, therefore, for the United Kingdom to seek to fulfil its obligation under the EU Census Regulation to provide Eurostat with the required data on this topic, it is proposed to model ISCED levels from the data collected from the 2011 Census questions on educational qualifications in the same way that is adopted by the Government's Department for Children, Schools and Families from Labour Force Survey (LFS) data.

14. This methodology has been agreed by UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat. However, ISCED is currently being reviewed, with any revisions due to be finalised in 2011. Depending upon the scale of changes the United Kingdom might expect to begin reporting to the new ISCED around 2013 which will precede the completion of supply of 2011 output to Eurostat scheduled for March 2014.

15. However, there is not always a one-to-one match between the United Kingdom Census question responses categories and the ISCED levels. In particular, the United Kingdom will not be able to distinguish between ISCED Levels 5 and 6 in the case of higher degrees, nor between Levels 1 and 2 where no qualifications are recorded in the Census. Also, there seems to be an anomaly in the case of Level 4 (post secondary-non tertiary) which seems to have no direct parallel with any of the proposed Census qualification categories.

16. There may also be difficulties in assigning an ISCED level to professional qualifications since the LFS only separately identifies teaching qualifications, but here the default would be to assign all such qualifications to ISCED Level 5. However, there would seem to be no obvious means of assigning an ISCED level to 'other' or 'foreign' qualifications.

17. Therefore, the United Kingdom may need to devise a more comprehensive algorithm by which each census response category can be assigned to a single ISCED level, particularly as information on somewhat different lists of qualifications will be collected in Scotland and Northern Ireland leading to only partial comparability across the United Kingdom.

18. Alternatively, the United Kingdom may consider using data from the LFS itself (which is already supplied to Eurostat each quarter by ONS and includes a full ISCED breakdown). The LFS will, however, need to be re-weighted to the revised population totals based on the 2011

⁵ See <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/classifications/current/ns-sec/index.html> for more information.

Census and thus it is unlikely there would be gains in accuracy from modelling or linking directly to Census outputs.

19. Another option under consideration would be to use Annual Population Survey (APS) data with its larger sample size over the LFS (using four consecutive quarters of LFS data plus an additional boost to the sample). However, as ONS does not currently supply APS data to Eurostat this would involve considerable additional work and costs.

IV. EVER RESIDED ABROAD AND YEAR OF ENTRY

20. Currently the question on year of entry is limited to those born outside the United Kingdom. The EU is seeking this data in respect of all persons in order to measure returning migration. The proposed breakdown of output categories covers:

Ever resided abroad and arrived after 1979
2011
2010
2009
:
1981
1980
Ever resided abroad and arrived 1979 or before/Never resided abroad
Ever resided abroad and arrived 1979 or before
Never resided abroad
Not stated

21. A potential solution to this difficulty would be either to extend the 2011 question to cover all residents, or provide data only for non- United Kingdom born and regard all United Kingdom born as non-migrants, and to explain this in the metadata and/or through quality reporting. But a further issue to resolve is that Northern Ireland census data on 'date of entry' will be restricted to entry to Northern Ireland only and will thus not capture moves in which entry into the United Kingdom is via England, Wales or Scotland.

V. CITIZENSHIP

22. After years of pressure from Eurostat and the UNECE to collect information on citizenship, the 2011 Census will for the first time attempt include such a question – at least in parts of the United Kingdom. In England and Wales, the information from a new question to identify citizenship, will, together with the traditional question on country of birth, provide estimates of the numbers and circumstances of (sometimes small) immigrant communities from various countries, who may have particular needs, in order to support resource allocation and policy development.

23. However, the problem still remains that the concept of 'citizenship' is not generally well understood by the British public, who have no tradition of recording such a characteristic as part of the various administrative procedures necessary to conduct everyday life. Tests have shown

that the best understanding of the purpose of the question is achieved by asking people ‘what passport do they hold’, and this may be the approach that will be adopted in the 2011 Census at least in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – though question testing is still in progress in order to devise a more readily understood wording. In Scotland, however, a decision on whether or not to include a similar question in the Census there has yet to be made. If it is not, then the General Register Office for Scotland would either model citizenship on the basis of responses to the Census questions on ‘country of birth’, ‘national identity’ and ‘year of entry to the United Kingdom’ or devise an alternative source of data to be integrated into the output database in order to provide the extensive set of proposed EU hypercubes for which this topic is a key component.

VI. HOUSING AMENITIES

24. The United Kingdom will not be collecting 2011 Census information on the availability within the living accommodation of:

Piped water
Flush toilet facilities
Bathing/shower facilities

25. The previous long-standing census question on whether or not households have exclusive use of such amenities is no longer regarded as being a sufficiently discriminative indicator in the allocation of resources for housing development and regeneration. Consequently, there is no national or local requirement to justify the continued inclusion of such questions in the United Kingdom Census.

26. To provide the very few tabulations being proposed by Eurostat for this topic, the United Kingdom will, therefore, either:

- (a) assume 100 per cent incidence for all three amenities; or (if it is possible);
- (b) use data from the records for those addresses recorded in 2001 Census and assign 100 per cent incidence for all those built since 2001.

27. There may be potential to use the ONS Longitudinal Study, which will link 2001 and 2011 households, for modelling purposes.

28. A question on the ‘type of central heating’ will, however, continue to provide a useful indicator of basic housing standards; the information will be used by central government, local authorities and other users to facilitate work on fuel poverty and deprivation. These long-standing requirements have been reinforced by new and emerging needs for better information on renewable energy sources and energy efficiency.

29. Eurostat have accepted, at a meeting of Directors of Social Statistics last year, that Member States may provide ‘estimates’ for such topics as amenities if not included in the 2011 Census but it is not clear that this will be specifically prescribed in the Implementing Regulations.

VII. PERIOD OF CONSTRUCTION OF DWELLING

30. This is a topic that has not previously been considered for inclusion in a United Kingdom Census. This is primarily because there is no major requirement for such information to be linked with other census-related housing characteristics, but also because it is unlikely that households would generally be able to report this accurately and so the quality of information recorded would be poor. Many owner-occupiers, without access to the deeds of the property, might only have an approximate idea of the date of construction, particularly for older properties, and those households who rent their accommodation would have even less accurate information to rely on.

31. The output categories proposed by Eurostat are:

- Built before 1919
- 1919 -1945
- 1946 -1960
- 1961-1970
- 1971-1980
- 1981-1990
- 1991- 2000
- 2001-2005
- 2006 or later
- Not stated

32. A potential solution would be to collect data in other surveys such as the Housing Conditions Survey or the Integrated Household Survey with those variables in which the topic is cross-classified in the proposed EU output tabulations and to model at lower geographic area levels. For example, the Survey of English Housing currently includes a question on the year properties were built and provides breakdowns for the following periods:

- Before 1919
- 1919 - 1944
- 1945 - 1964
- 1965 - 1980
- 1981 - 1984
- 1985 and later

33. But this is not exactly what Eurostat require, and there will be other limitations associated with sample size and coverage which would make the provision of the required data problematical.

34. Other potential administrative records, enabling a link to the 2011 Census outputs at the unit record level, are being investigated, but there may be logistical, statistical, financial and legal reasons which could prevent any such data source being utilised for the purposes of the Census – though the obligation on the United Kingdom, imposed by the EU Regulation, to provide this information would undoubtedly have some weight. Currently, therefore, the provision of consistent United Kingdom data for this topic poses particular problems that are not yet resolved.

VIII. CONCLUSION

35. We have seen why some of the core CES topics that are prescribed in the EU Council (Framework) Regulation on Censuses of Population and Housing are not being proposed for inclusion as specific questions in the 2011 United Kingdom Census, and what methodologies or other potential sources of information are available from which it may be able to derive broadly comparable data.

36. As a significant contributor to the preparation of the CES Recommendations over the period 2004-2006, the United Kingdom is a keen supporter, in principle, of the aims underlying EU Census Regulation – that is, to provide, in the long-term, consistent statistics on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population and its housing across all Member States. However, as the paper suggests, the primary purposes of *national* censuses must be to serve *national* requirements, and the funding of many national censuses is determined solely on this basis. Some patience, therefore, on the part of Eurostat and the EU Commission will be necessary before the United Kingdom and, no doubt, many other Member States will be in a position to become fully compliant with all aspects of the definitional and statistical content of the EU Census programme.
