

Eurostat
Unit A5 Phare

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Phare**

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Employment Bulletin

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Point 4.3 of the Agenda



EUROPEAN COMMISSION



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Management Group on Statistical Co-operation Phare Fourth Meeting on 14-15 March 2002

MGSC/2002-2/07A Employment Bulletin

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1. OBJECTIVES

The CECs Employment Bulletin followed on to the “Employment Observatory: Central and Eastern Europe” which was published as a twice-yearly bulletin between the end of 1991 and the end of 1995 by the Directorate General Employment and Social Affairs of the Commission. In 1997 it was decided to start a similar series of publications for wide dissemination under Eurostat’s responsibility. In contrast to the first series of publications Eurostat opted for an approach of homogeneity of data sources, i.e. to base the publication essentially on the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

The primary objectives of the project are:

- Regular transmission of data to Eurostat
- Timely information of decision makers, media and general public
- Detailed analysis of selected topics
- Improvement of the LFS in CCs

2. IMPLEMENTATION

In each of the 1997, 1998 and 1999 Phare MC programmes EUR 300 000 were allocated to the production of a total of 8 bulletins to be released between September 1999 and the end of 2002. The contractor for the first year was OIR Vienna, for the two remaining years ICON Cologne. Initially the project was run entirely by Unit A 5, as from the second contract Unit E 1 became increasingly involved.

Other than for the majority of Eurostat's publications, translation and printing was covered by the contracts and therefore under the responsibility of the contractors. OPOCE was put in charge of the dissemination.

There were three group meetings with colleagues from participating countries in Vienna in May 1999, in Warsaw in March 2001 and in Cologne in February 2002. Data transmission via STADIUM was progressively installed in all 10 participating CCs. A final meeting is planned for June 2002.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS

3.1 INTEGRATION OF CANDIDATE COUNTRIES INTO EUROSTAT'S LFS DATA COLLECTION

At the beginning of the project LFS there were virtually no LFS micro data from the Candidate Countries available in Eurostat. Therefore, the first two publications were based on an ad-hoc data collection by the OIR directly from CCs' NSIs. As regards the technical side of data transmission to Eurostat, the STADIUM system was operational for only 2 countries at the beginning of the project. In the meantime it is in production already for all 10 participating Candidate Countries. STADIUM did not pose technical problems to CCs' NSIs, but sometimes financial restrictions delayed its implementation.

3.2 POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR LFS DATA COLLECTION

In some Candidate Countries LFS data used to be regarded only as a secondary source of information by national authorities. This made it difficult to obtain the necessary funds and occasionally even provoked a discontinuation of the survey. The regular flow of data required by the project proved to give additional momentum to the requests for financial resources in the NSIs.

3.3 IMPROVEMENTS OF THE LFS IN CCs

During the project LFS implementation in CCs has made steady progress, in particular as regards:

- **Periodicity:** At the beginning of the project only a minority of CCs had implemented quarterly LFSs. In the meantime all ten are conducting quarterly surveys, the majority of which are continuous.
- **Timeliness:** The majority of participating NSIs sends LFS micro data to Eurostat within the deadlines foreseen by the regulation, some are even ahead. The routine use of STADIUM has had an additional positive impact on timeliness.
- **Missing variables:** The completeness of variables has steadily improved, some NSIs have already achieved full coverage of all obligatory indicators.
- **Filter and consistency errors:** Due to regular feedback from Eurostat Unit E 1 and some ad-hoc assistance activities, filter and consistency errors have become much less frequent, in some countries almost non-existent.
- **Quality reporting:** During 2002 the Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary are participating in the first test round of quality reporting simultaneously with three Member States. They will prepare a first report until June.

- Regional data: As from 2002 Candidate Countries are transmitting LFS micro data with level 3 regional codes, which are required for regional policy preparations. In order to achieve sufficient sample sizes, only annual data (aggregated on the basis of 4 quarters) will be disseminated.

3.4 DATA DISSEMINATION AND ANALYSIS

Throughout the duration of the project the publication provided comprehensive tables with national data. In addition, detailed articles provided analysis on problems of general interest, notably on regional labour markets, youth and long-term unemployment and employment structure.

The bulletin was made available in a free mailing to more than 3000 recipients in over 30 countries in English, French and German. In addition, pdf files were prepared for onward electronic distribution.

During 2002 the data will be fully available on New Cronos and after that Directorate E will take over responsibility for dissemination by publications, as considered appropriate.

3.5 BENEFITS TO OTHER AREAS OF STATISTICS

The project is providing for considerable synergy effects with other statistics, in particular:

- Regional statistics: Level 3 LFS data will become available for the preparation of EU structural funds actions still in the course of 2002.
- Structural indicators: Most of the structural indicators which were adopted for regular reporting at the Lisbon summit will be available from the current CCs' LFS data. There are only very few problematic cases left like jobless households, life-long learning and early school leavers.
- Infra-annual statistics: Due to the increasing availability of longer quarterly time series, work on the calculation of seasonally adjusted and monthly rates will begin soon. In the course of 2003 the first data will be available from some CCs' NSIs.

4. SHORTCOMINGS

4.2 COUNTRY COVERAGE

The eligibility criteria of the Phare MC programmes did not allow a flexible adaptation of the ongoing project to the developments of the enlargement process. The project included three non-CCs during the first two years (AL, BA and MK), which were not allowed to continue their participation under the 1999 programme. On the other hand, it did not cover Cyprus, Malta and Turkey. Whereas Cyprus joined the system of regular

data transmission to Eurostat only in 2001, there is still no sustainable data flow established from Malta and Turkey.

As time went on, in particular the non-participation of Cyprus, Malta and Turkey became problematic. For all three countries there is still a lack of LFS harmonisation as well as unsatisfactory data transmission. In Turkey there is an additional problem linked to the national legislation, which does not yet allow the transmission of micro data to Eurostat.

4.2 TRANSLATION AND PRINTING

Both translation of the original texts into French and German were part of the contracts and not done under the responsibility of Eurostat and the OPOCE. It appeared during the implementation of the project that both contractors had seriously underestimated the delays that are caused by high-quality translation, proof-reading and printing. As a result, the objective of publishing the collected data quickly was not always achieved. The conclusion to be drawn from this experience for similar future projects is that translation and technical production are better organised in-house by Eurostat.

5. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

At the end of the project a number of Candidate Countries will have achieved a performance in terms of compliance with the 1998 regulation, timeliness and quality, which is comparable to that of most Member States.

Unit A 5's involvement ends with the release of the last bulletin towards the end of 2002. By then LFS data from the participating CCs will be fully accessible via New Cronos and Unit E 1 takes over full responsibility for the dissemination of data and the possible production of future publications.

Further technical co-operation can be financed from the Phare MC 2000 project on employment data reconciliation.