European Health Interview Survey
Draft implementing regulation for wave 3

*Item 4.1 of the Agenda*
1. PURPOSE AND EXPECTED OUTCOME

This document provides a summary of the proposal of the text and annexes of the implementing regulation (also referred to as Regulation in the following text) for the third wave of the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) following its first discussion with the EHIS Task Force (TF EHIS) in October 2016 and 1st joint consultation of the Public Health Statistics Working Group (WG PHS) and the Technical Group on HIS Statistics (TG HIS) in November-December 2016. It briefly presents the legal arrangements for the previous two waves of EHIS and the context for the development of the implementing regulation of EHIS wave 3. Then it presents the draft text and all annexes of this Regulation with focus on the main changes compared to the previous legal act. Finally, it presents the planned timetable for the development and adoption of the Regulation and other methodological documents.

The members of the TG HIS are invited to:

- Comment on the draft text and annexes of the implementing regulation for EHIS wave 3
- Comment on the envisaged way and timeline of the finalization and adoption of the implementing regulation for EHIS wave 3.

BACKGROUND

The European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) is the EU reference source for comparative statistics on health status, health determinants and use of healthcare services, aiming to provide statistical data supporting the development and monitoring of various health policies.

The first EHIS wave was conducted between 2006 and 2009 on the basis of a gentlemen’s agreement that is without a legal obligation.

Regulation 1338/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on public health and health and safety at work stipulates that EHIS is conducted every five years. The second wave of the survey was conducted in all 28 EU Member States and Iceland and Norway during the period 2013–15 on the basis of the Commission Regulation (EU) No 141/2013 and its subsequent amendment to take account of the accession of Croatia to the EU (Commission Regulation (EU) No 68/2014). This Regulation was accompanied by a Commission Implementing Decision granting derogations to certain Member States.

The future of EHIS has been discussed in the framework of a broader project on the modernisation of European social statistics in order to further streamline and integrate them. In this context all European Statistical System (ESS) social microdata collections (including EHIS) would be covered by one framework regulation, the so called Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS) in the future. The work on IESS started in 2014 and it is planned to be adopted by the European Parliament and Council in 2017.

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or 2018 and put in force in 2019, though the year of implementation can vary from survey to survey. IESS specifies the main survey requirements related to EHIS and other microdata collections such as the content (topics and detailed topics), frequency\(^4\) and data collection period, precision requirements, data and quality report transmission deadlines and sampling frames\(^5\). Other activities in the scope of the IESS Framework Regulation have impacted the development of the future EHIS, especially the **Standardisation of social variables** (including harmonisation of some concepts across surveys) and the development of health-related information in the **Statistics on income and living conditions (SILC)**. As part of the discussion on modernisation of social statistics, Eurostat presented two sets of proposals for health (including disability) surveys impacting EHIS to the Directors of Social Statistics in November 2013 and in April 2014\(^6\).

The development of the future EHIS also takes into account emerging policy needs, for example the need for comparable statistical data on disability (including children) and the development of the Joint Assessment Framework for Health.

The discussion on the future of EHIS with Member States started in the Working Group on Public Health Statistics (WG PHS) meeting in December 2014 and continued in meetings of the Directors of Social Statistics (DSS) in February 2015, TG HIS in October 2015 and WG PHS in November 2015. More specific discussions took place in the two meetings of the Task Force on the review of EHIS (TF EHIS) in May and October 2016, including the first discussion on the text and annexes of the draft implementing regulation for wave 3.

The 1\(^{st}\) joint consultation of the WG PHS and TG HIS on the draft Regulation took place in November-December 2016 and was also discussed in WG PHS meeting in November 2016. Based on the feedback received the text and annexes were slightly revised. Some comments related to the methodology and implementation will be dealt with in pre-testing and preparation of EHIS manual. A specific consultation on proposals from countries for possible inclusion or removal of variables was launched together with the 2\(^{nd}\) second joint consultation of the WG PHS and TG HIS on the draft Regulation which took place in January-February 2017.

Due to the likely situation that IESS would be adopted only after the adoption of the implementing regulation for EHIS wave 3, Eurostat proposed to prepare the next EHIS wave 3 and the respective implementing regulation within the current framework regulation 1338/2008 and to start developing only EHIS wave 4 and onwards under the IESS framework regulation.

**PROPOSAL FOR THE IMPLEMENTING REGULATION**

This chapter presents a draft of the implementing regulation of EHIS wave 3 with the focus on changes compared to the previous legal act for EHIS wave 2. It starts with setting out the general principles for the development of EHIS wave 3. Then it gives an overview of the text of the Regulation and its annexes.

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\(^4\) Which was changed from 5 to 6 years for EHIS.

\(^5\) More details can be found in chapter 3 of the document prepared for the Working Group on Public Health Statistics meeting held in November 2015: [Future of the European Health Interview Survey](#).

\(^6\) An overview of the proposal can be found in subchapter 2.3.2 of the document prepared for the WG PHS meeting held in November 2015: Future of the European Health Interview Survey.
It should be added that the process of the development of the Regulation will further consist of preparing an act on derogations (if needed) and a cost/benefit assessment needed for the decision at the ESS Committee. The methodological guidelines (manual), including the model questionnaire for EHIS wave 3 is being developed in parallel with the Regulation but will still be finalized in 2017 (focus of discussion in the third meeting of the Task Force).

It should also be noted that any future implementing act for EHIS will take into account the results of the detailed analysis of EHIS wave 2 which has not been finalized at the time of preparing EHIS wave 3. Furthermore, the methodological recommendations and guidelines could be further elaborated in order to improve the quality of EHIS. This might include specifications regarding the use of proxy interviews, spread of data collection over the year, modes of data collection, imputation, weighting and sampling (for example, implementing EHIS as a follow-up of another survey or sampling more than one person per household).

Based on the general context and previous discussions in the DSS and WG PHS meetings on the future of EHIS, the principles for developing the Regulation were as follows:

- **To keep EHIS wave 3 outside IESS and use it as a bridge between the past (EHIS wave 2) and the future (IESS)**
  
  This would provide more flexibility for EHIS wave 3, for example, an opportunity to incorporate and/or test some new elements/modules on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, it would allow more time for the national adaptation to the requirements for EHIS under the IESS. And last but not least, it would provide room for further improvements and harmonisation for those countries that faced specific difficulties in the implementation of wave 2 before the new framework regulation comes to force.

- **To keep the continuity of EHIS wave 2**
  
  It would enable providing time comparison between waves 2 and 3 which is strongly requested by users. This approach would favour keeping even some (less) problematic variables unchanged provided that these are essential and for which there is no short-term solution for their improvement.

- **Not increasing the overall size of EHIS wave 3**
  
  It should contribute to balancing between the emerging policy needs and increasing demands for data on one hand and limiting the burden on national statistical authorities and respondents on the other hand (regarding at least the compulsory part included in the Regulation).

Following these principles should ensure a relatively quick process of the development and adoption of the Regulation for EHIS wave 3 and provide more time for possible new developments, including possible new modules for future EHIS waves.

The next part provides an overview of the structure (articles and annexes) of the implementing regulation for EHIS wave 3 (see also Annex A for the full text of the Regulation and Annex B for all the annexes of the Regulation) with a brief description of its content and changes compared to the previous regulation:

- **Introductory part**
  
  Content: General introduction with ‘whereas’ clauses.
  
  Changes: References to legislative acts adapted according to current practice.
• Article 1: Subject matter
Content: Scope of the survey.
Changes: No.

• Article 2: Definitions
Content: Definitions of private household, usual residence, microdata, pre-checked microdata, metadata.
Changes:
  – Definition of private household was adapted according to the definition proposed in the project on standardisation of variables and harmonisation of definitions
  – Definition of 'pre-checked microdata' was added according to IESS.

• Article 3: Data required
Content: Reference to the list of variables (Annex I) and precision requirements (Annex II), characteristics weighting factors, reference to EHIS manual.
Changes: Requirements regarding sampling frames, resp. the reference to 'national territories excluded from the survey' were moved to Article 7, resp. Article 4.

• Article 4: Reference population
Content: Definition of the reference population including national territories excluded from the survey (specified in Annex III of the IR).
Changes:
  – The part on the reference year moved to Article 5.
  – Paragraph on 'National territories excluded from the survey' revised and put here from former Article 3.

• Article 5: Data collection period
Content: Definition of the year of data collection and spread of the survey period over the year.
Changes:
  – New article (previously included in former Article 4)
  – The year of data collection set to 2019
  – Slight reformulation regarding the spread of the survey over the year.

• Article 6: Provision of microdata to the Commission (Eurostat)
Content: Standard specification, exchange standard and transmission deadline.
Changes:
  – The article deals only with microdata
  – Reference to 'pre-checked' instead of 'finalised and validated' microdata
  – Transmission deadline reformulated but stays in practice the same (i.e. 9 months after the end of data collection period).
• Article 7: Sampling frames
  Content: Characteristics of sampling frames.
  Changes: New article (previously included in Article 3); the formulation taken from IESS.

• Article 8: Provision of reference metadata to the Commission (Eurostat)
  Content: Standard specification, exchange standard and transmission deadline.
  Changes:
  – Former Article 5, now dealing only with metadata
  – Transmission deadline aligned with IESS.

• Article 9: Entry into force
  Content: Specification of the entry into force (time and countries coverage).
  Changes: Former Article 7 otherwise no changes.

• ANNEX I: Microdata to be submitted to the Commission (Eurostat)
  Content: Specification of the list of variables and their description.
  Changes:
  Technical variables:
  • New variable Final special individual weight (WGT_SPEC) was added following the discussion on the need to add a second weight to be used, for example, in the calculation of those indicators for which proxy answers are not considered.
  • Variable Reference date of the interview (REFDATE) combines the previous variables REFYEAR and REFMONTH.
  • Some variable codes were revised in order to facilitate their validation and processing (PRIMSTRAT, PSU).
  • Codes of the variable Data collection method used (INTMETHOD) were extended in order to include new methods of data collection.

  Background variables:
  In general, the variable names and codes were aligned as much as possible with the new standardised variables. As a consequence, the following changes were done:
  • Variables YEARBIRTH and PASSBIRTH replaced variable AGE, and together with technical variable REFDATE, will be used to construct the age of respondents in completed years.
  • Country of birth (BIRTHPLACE) and Country of main citizenship (CITIZEN) were extended - transmission codes are country codes.

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<sup>7</sup> In total, 8 new variables were proposed to be removed and 11 new variables to be added. One new technical variable WGT_SPEC with no direct impact on respondents, neither the merge of two pairs of other variables (HO1 with HO2 and HO3 with HO4) or changes in filters are included in this calculation.
New variables Country of birth of father (BIRHTPLACEFATH) and Country of birth of mother (BIRTHPLACEMOTH) were included to follow the developments in the list of standardised core variables.

Answer categories of variables Main activity status (self-defined) (MAINSTAT) and Status in employment in main job (JOBSTAT) were revised.

Variable Partners living in the same household (PARTNERS) replaced two former variables MARSTALEGAL and MARSTADEFACTO.

Two variables on the structure of household according to the economic activity (HH_ACT and HH_INACT) were removed.

Five out of six variables on the structure of household according to age (HHNBERS_14_64 and HHNBERS_65PLUS) were removed\(^8\). Only variable Number of persons aged 13 or younger (HHNBERS_0_13) was kept as it is essential for calculation of equivalised household income.

**Health status module:**

Two new variables on oral health were included: Self-perceived general oral health (CD2) and Difficulty biting and chewing on hard foods (PL9). Oral health was identified as an important missing topic in EHIS (based on results of the consultation of TG HIS and during the discussions within the EHIS TF), which could extend its analytical power by complementing already existing variables on the use of dental care and unmet needs for dental care (and possibly also with the new variable on consumption of sugar-sweetened soft drinks). As it was highlighted by the TF members, dental care represents an important source of social inequalities.

New variable on cognitive limitations - Difficulty in remembering or concentrating (PL8) was added in line with the effort to strengthen disability-related content of EHIS as foreseen by the modernisation of social statistics. In relation to this, the sub-module on Physical and sensory functional limitations was renamed to Functional limitations.

Age filter for variables on Personal care activities and Household activities was changed from 65 to 55\(^9\) years in order to cover pre-retirement population and strengthen disability-related content of EHIS as foreseen by the modernisation of social statistics.

**Health care module:**

Streamlining the list of variables on Use of inpatient and day care by merging former HO1 and HO2, resp. HO3 and HO4 variables into one variable.

Recoding of variables on Preventive services from PA to PS (see also sub-module on Physical activity).

Clarification and change of transmission codes for variable Last time of vaccination against flu (PS1) in order to facilitate their validation and processing.

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\(^8\) Variables HHNBERS_14_64 and HHNBERS_65PLUS were excluded after the 1st consultation on EHIS wave 3 regulation in order to create more space for new health variables.

\(^9\) The age was lifted from 50 to 55 years after the 1st consultation on EHIS wave 3 regulation.
Health determinants module:

- Sub-module “Physical activity / exercise” renamed to “Physical activity” and variable codes changed from PE to PA (see also sub-module on Preventive services).
- New variable on sedentary behaviour - Time spent sitting or reclining on a typical day (PA9) - added into sub-module on Physical activity.
- Sub-module “Fruit and vegetables” renamed to “Dietary habits” and variable codes changed from FV to DH in view of extending the scope of the sub-module.
- New variable on sugar intake was included: Frequency of drinking sugar-sweetened soft drinks (DH6). Also, a variable on Frequency of drinking pure fruit or vegetable juice (DH5) was included, even though it means only separating the consumption of fresh juices from variables DH1-DH4 (former FV1-FV4).
- New variables Former daily tobacco smoking (SK3), Number of years of daily tobacco smoking (SK4) and Type of electronic cigarettes or similar electronic devices behaviour (SK6) were included.
- Removing former variable Kind of tobacco products consumed (SK2), which would still enable providing information on smoking of non-cigarette products. This change together with introducing three new variables (see above) requested renumbering the variables on smoking.

- ANNEX II: Precision requirements
  Content: Specification of precision requirements.
  Changes: The annex was completely revised and aligned with IESS. The precision requirements are expressed in terms of (maximum) standard errors and not any more in terms of minimum effective sample sizes. This change was already presented to WG PHS in 2015.

- ANNEX III: National territories that are excluded from the survey
  Content: List of national territories that are excluded from the survey.
  Changes: No changes.

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10 This variable was included after the 1st consultation on the EHIS wave 3 implementing regulation.
**NEXT STEPS**

The draft text of the Regulation presented in this paper might further be revised based on the final discussion during the meeting of TG HIS in February 2017 and feedback received from the written consultation of the WG PHS and TG HIS (launched in January 2017). After that, the formal adoption process will start in April 2017. The adoption of the Regulation is then foreseen for January 2018. The timeline for adoption of the EHIS wave 3 implementing regulation is the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January-February 2017</th>
<th>Second consultation of the Public Health Statistics Working Group and Technical Group HIS</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>Consultation of the Directors of Social Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2017</td>
<td>Vote at the European Statistical System Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>Scrutiny procedure with European Council / European Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2018</td>
<td>Adoption of EHIS wave 3 regulation by the European Commission</td>
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The methodological guidelines (EHIS manual), including the model questionnaire for EHIS wave 3 will be developed together with the TF EHIS and TG HIS and is envisaged to be finalized by the end of 2017.

**Annexes:**

Annex A: Draft Commission regulation on EHIS wave 3

Annex B: Draft Annexes to the Commission regulation on EHIS wave 3