

8. Detailed explanation of the content of the Census

Before this Project was performed, the draft was widely disseminated (even on the Internet), which, compared to other previous operations (when it was practically a draft of the project) focused specifically on stimulating a debate on the content of the census, analysing each of the questions in detail, even some that, at least initially, were not considered appropriate.

Thus, the users of the census were informed of the arguments that support not only the exclusion or inclusion of a certain question, but also in many cases, why a question is formulated in a specific way and not in another. This allowed them to provide new lines of argument and, consequently, contribute effectively to creating a census content that is as useful as possible and agreed by consensus.

In this way, the Content of the census that is detailed hereunder has been achieved after simultaneously studying all the observations received, and extracting conclusions from the two pilot tests, especially from the one performed in 1999.

Requirements a variable must meet to be included in the Censuses

- **It must be easy to understand**

Most of the census questionnaires are filled out by the respondent: there is no interviewer (in this case, the Census agent) that formulates the questions, clarifying them as necessary. Moreover, the census questionnaires are sent to ALL the citizens of the country.

Therefore, however interesting a question is, it will not be included in the Censuses if it is not simple.

- **It should not be offensive**

It is important to avoid the introduction of questions that some citizens could consider an invasion of their privacy.

Nevertheless, this criterion is not as easy as the previous one: in the 1991 censuses, one of the questions that raised most suspicion was *number of lavatories*; however, many countries included questions on *religion, race, health, trade union membership or income* with very good results.

In any case, it is important to consider this aspect and assess it in terms of the environment in which each census operation is performed.

- **All census questions must meet the requirements for statistical information which must be CLEAR, RELEVANT AND NOT COVERED APPROPRIATELY ELSEWHERE**

Each additional question introduced in a census questionnaire entails an added cost, both in strictly financial terms, and in the deadlines for dissemination, in terms of the burden for citizens, the greater difficult to design and control census procedures...

Therefore, the census should not include variables if their usefulness cannot be specified clearly, if the interest is too marginal or if it is considered appropriately in another investigation (i.e., sample surveys focusing on households such as the Active Population Survey(APS), the Household Budget Continuous Survey (HBCS), the 1998 Fertility Survey, the 1999 Disabilities, Impairments and State of Health,

EU Household Panels.). The Census should not include variables that are experiencing a boom at the time of the operation (for example, Internet access): regardless of how much the deadlines are reduced, as almost two years pass between the collection and the dissemination, the information on these variables would be totally outdated and this would reduce their usefulness.

• **There must be clear need for thoroughness when researching the variable in question**

There may be gaps in the country's statistical information which, given the relevance, should be covered as soon as possible, but do not require a thorough investigation. In these cases, sampling operations should be used, leaving Censuses for the features that really require information from all persons, dwellings, buildings...

B.- Characteristics of the persons

B.1 SEX AND DATE OF BIRTH

a) **Usefulness**

- Essential for estimates and population projections.
- Very useful for planning and monitoring social policies (pensions, healthcare or education expenses).
- Essential in any demographic study, either as the object of the investigation or as the classification variables.

b) **Collection method¹**

Printed beforehand on the register sheets.

They should only be answered explicitly by persons who are new to the register, or if any of the information is incorrect.

The data that are already available (in other words, the information that does not refer to new inscriptions or corrections) are taken directly from the register files and are associated, via a one-to-one identification, to the rest of the census information for each person. In this process, as generally occurs in all operations that combine register and census data, measures will be taken to strengthen and safeguard confidentiality, also considering the different nature of the information (chapter seven focuses exclusively on the issue of protecting the confidentiality of the information used in a census operation, placing special attention on register data, which are more vulnerable given their nominal nature).

Precisely to facilitate the subsequent association between all register data that are common to the Censuses and the rest of census data, the date of birth

¹The census information will be divided into five documents that are complementary and are connected to one another: the dwelling questionnaire, the register sheet printed beforehand, the household questionnaire (questions regarding the household and individual questions with a universal nature, like marital status), the individual questionnaire (only for persons aged 16 years old or older, who work or study) and itinerary notebooks with information printed beforehand (identification of *gaps*, either dwellings, commercial premises, and data on the buildings). For further details, see chapter four of this project.