In the integrated European Union, national censuses are of greater value if their results can be compared between Member States. This is why the European Union is taking steps to harmonise census outputs.

There were European census programmes for the 1980, 1990 and 2001 rounds. The framework set up at European level for the 2011 round continues this work on a larger scale. The objective is to disseminate more detailed data in a user-friendly way, and to make the date more comparable.

For the 2011 censuses, EU-wide reporting will provide transparency about the quality of census outputs.

This can then become a basis for an informed discussion within the EU Member States and at European level. It can foster best practice in census-taking and thus bring benefits to the dynamic evolution of census methods and to the fundamental function censuses perform for demographic and other statistics.

The European Union’s legislation on population and housing censuses aims to achieve comprehensive and flexible dissemination of census data, plus transparency about their quality. At the same time, it respects the diversity of traditions and methods in the Member States. This publication describes and explains the current legislation.

Census Knowledge Base