

## **Second EU-SILC/ EU LFS User Conference Mannheim 31 March - 1 Apr 2011**

The conference, hosted by the Leibniz Institute for Social Sciences (GESIS), gathered about 100 academic and government researchers as well as representatives from [Eurostat](#) and national statistical agencies, all of whom were regular or occasional users of the European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) or the European Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). Discussion included plenary sessions with Eurostat and national data providers, as well as thematic workshops where substantive and methodological issues were discussed in more depth.

Sessions with Eurostat representatives Jean-Marc Museux at the beginning of the conference and Jean-Louis Mercy and Joachim Recktenwald at the end gave EU-SILC and EU-LFS users the opportunity to hear the latest information about the future of EU data provision as well as raise their issues about either survey. The audience particularly welcomed the announcement that EU-LFS and EU-SILC data was going to be made available without charge to academic users from 1 April 2011. Other presentations also included an overview of the future EU Commission Regulation on Access to EU Confidential Data for Scientific Purposes due to be passed in 2012 through which access (including remote access) to EU microdata will be simplified and broadened. Users are encouraged to contact Eurostat with their comments about microdata access.

Substantive presentations were organised around three broad themes: income, labour market and household and families and covered a wide range of topics such as transitions between non-employment and employment, household borrowing and indebtedness, and gender gaps in sickness absence. The full programme, as well as the presentations, remain available on the GESIS [website](http://www.gesis.org/veranstaltungen/konferenzen/european-user-conference-2/) at <http://www.gesis.org/veranstaltungen/konferenzen/european-user-conference-2/>.

Another set of presentations revolved around methodological and data quality issues. Speakers highlighted their solutions to address some of the known issues with the EU-LFS or EU-SILC datasets, such as techniques to reduce standard errors when estimating poverty indices, discrepancies between countries in the phrasing of some of the questions (for instance on health related topics), or the challenges of designing a coherent calibration strategy when producing longitudinal weights.

In relation to these, several participants asked Eurostat representatives as part of their 'wish list' to dedicate more resources to disseminating and translating national data documentation in order for users to be better aware of potential comparability issues in their analysis. Allowing access to the national datasets feeding into the EU-LFS, in particular their longitudinal component was also mentioned several times. In summary, most participants, whether researchers or from government agencies, welcomed this second user meeting as a worthy opportunity to improve the standards of both European data provision and the quality of analyses based upon them.