

Study visit by MED experts

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Since 1989, the National Statistical System has consisted of the Higher Statistical Council (CSE) and the National Statistics Institute (INE).

The CSE brings together the bodies and voices of not only government authorities but also a wide membership from the private sector, civil society and academia. As part of its competencies for orientation and co-ordination, it can also, on its own initiative, promote functional decentralisation and propose the delegation of INE's powers to other public bodies.

INE's task is to produce and disseminate high-quality official statistical information, promoting the co-ordination, development and dissemination of national statistics. It is linked for this purpose to Eurostat at the European Union level and, at the national level, to the organisations to which powers have been delegated.

The main statistical operations which help to describe the labour market, that is, to provide information on the main variables in the economic activity and educational standard of human resources, are the Population Census, the Employment Survey and the statistics relating to education and training and lifelong learning.

The Population Censuses (Censuses) are traditionally a headcount of the population in a country; in more recent times, these have been extended to provide improved characteristics and include a survey of the housing stock. Through the Census it is possible to obtain a 'snapshot' of individuals and their living conditions for each geographical level. In addition, by comparing the data from past censuses, the changes in society can be analysed, in both demographic and socioeconomic terms, while still enabling a comparison to be made with the structures and social dynamics in other countries. Thus, the Censuses are a unique, renewable source of data which, by describing the population and the housing stock, emerge as useful diagnostic, planning and intervention tools in a wide variety of areas. In Portugal, the Censuses are carried out every ten years, the last one having taken place in 2001.

The following are the main variables observed directly: literacy, frequency of education, level of education, higher education, situation with respect to economic activity, profession, position within the profession, number of hours worked and branch of economic activity. A number of variables were observed indirectly (derived variables), the most conspicuous being academic qualifications and socioeconomic group. All these variables can be cross-linked between themselves and also with a further huge set of information, such as: normal place of residence, sex, age, civil status, naturalisation, nationality, existence and type of disability, degree of incapacity or principal livelihood, amongst others.

Every quarter, the INE carries out the Employment Survey (IE), a national version of the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS), whose main objective is to describe the population with regard to the labour market and permit an analysis of the labour market in terms of the dynamic reality and thus be a point of departure for drawing up socioeconomic policies. Thus, the IE provides an internationally-comparable indicator of the labour market and, throughout the year, it estimates the level of employment, unemployment,

available manpower and it also enables regional employment phenomena to be compared.

The IE is a survey based on sampling, carried out continuously among the members of a universe of households (about 20 000) which are a sample selected from a methodologically-defined base (Amostra-Mãe, continuous sample method), the results being made available every quarter. The information provided by the IE is the result of extrapolating the data collected, a process which uses a system of weights obtained from independent estimates of the population, with sex, age group and geographical scope as the variables.

The following are the most important variables collected: total population, active and inactive by age group and sex; population employed and unemployed by age group and sex; rate of activity and rate of unemployment by age group and sex; active population by level of education completed; structure of the population by job situation; structure of the employed population by sector of activity and sex; structure of employment per profession, position within the profession and sex; etc.

The statistics on professional training, mainly produced by bodies external to the INE, as a result of delegation of powers, and which take part in producing national statistics, come under the INE 'Education and Training' area of activity. In terms of education and training, the INE's activities include the production, co-ordination and dissemination of statistical information relating to higher education and non-higher education and professional training, as well as the analysis of information and its incorporation into a coherent system, geared towards a lifelong learning approach.

Lifelong learning is currently one of the main areas of European policy debate. New statistical requirements are called for to meet Europe's strategic objectives in this area, in particular in terms of improving existing statistical information, but mainly in the orientation of statistical collection towards the individual, the key element in the learning process.

Following the decision to draw up an *ad hoc* LFS Module on 'Lifelong Learning' and with a view to helping to improve the information available on lifelong learning activities in the surveys of households, a 'Lifelong Learning' Working Group was set up in 2003. The Working Group, whose task is to support the implementation of the above survey in Portugal, was made up of various organisations, namely the National Statistics Institute (INE), the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSST) and the National Agency for Adult Education and Training (ANEFA).

The main aim of the survey was to describe the participation structure and the total amount of time spent on learning activities by individuals in the last 12 months. The target population was the resident population aged 15 and over, and was structured as follows: Academic level – subject area; participation in formal education; participation in non-formal education; participation in informal learning activities. The main indicators obtained were: a) Number of people who took part in learning activities during the last 12 months by type of learning, job situation, level of education, sex and age in relation to the total population in the same category; b) Number of hours spent on courses, seminars, conferences, etc., during the last 12 months, by job situation, level of education, sex and age.

Three types of learning were considered as part of this Module: formal education and training, non-formal education and training and informal learning.

INE's participation in the Lifelong Learning Survey was the first step in creating a more comprehensive statistical information system with a new orientation towards the individual, unlike the traditional data collection system based on the education and training establishment and on companies.

In the context of a legally-based proposal on lifelong learning statistics which EUROSTAT has since submitted, the INE is planning to form a new Working Group in 2006 to support Portugal's involvement in the EU survey on Adult Education, which will be carried out in 2007. More specifically, it will support the work by analysing the documentation produced, by discussing concepts and nomenclatures and by transposing them into the national context, as well as by identifying the most relevant indicators.