

TooLS for developing comparable local surveys



Supported by the European Union

Executive summary

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1. Institutional background

The legal status of the two participating KOSIS associations is that of public institutions under civil law. Members are mainly municipalities cooperating on the basis of their statutes that have in addition to a general assembly, an executive agency and a steering group each and represented by the executive agency.

The “KOSIS-Gemeinschaft DUVA” has been engaged in the development of an information management system since 1989 and now has 55 members. The development is jointly funded by licence fees and annual service contributions. The executive chair is held by the city of Freiburg i. Br. since 2001. More information can be found on the Internet at www.duva.de.

In close cooperation with the 40 Urban Audit cities and the federal and state statistical offices, the “KOSIS-Gemeinschaft Urban Audit” has been organising the European data collection on the quality of life in the cities. In the new round of data collection all other cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants are also incorporated. The latest reference year is 2009, and the data collection in three-year intervals goes back to 1992. The project is funded by the EU. The executive chair of this association is the City of Nuremberg. More information can be found at www.kosis.de/urban-audit.html.

The “Institut für Soziologie” of the Freiburg University (IfS) and its associated “Freiburger Institut für angewandte Sozialforschung e.V. (FIFAS) engage in research closely related to this project. Prof. Dr. Baldo Blinkert is the Director of IfS, and Mr. Jürgen Spiegel is the Managing Director of FIFAS.

2. Tasks and objectives

The development of “TooLS” focuses on the demographic change and the challenges of an ageing population. The task of managing and countering these changes with suitable measures will confront the local communities with great and still growing problems. Their solution first of all requires reliable information through continuous monitoring and repeated structural analyses. They have to be based primarily on the available secondary data.

The development of comparable surveys at the local level is to provide local planning and policy making with information needed for targeted programmes and policy measures, but which cannot be obtained from national and European surveys. Qualitative data are just as important as secondary statistics. The European Urban Audit and the European Perception Survey are useful data sources for this purpose. In Germany, additional data are provided by the “coordinated surveys on the quality of life”, applying the same list of questions and the same methodology as the European Perception Survey.

The following types of data are to be covered by the TooLS project

Type of data	1 “Objective” data	2 “Subjective” data
A Available (secondary) data	1 A From other than local sources: Urban Audit a.o.	2 A From other than local sources: Perception Survey a.o.
B Primary data through surveys	1 B Modules of questions for local administrations and service providers	2 B Modules of questions for citizens, especially senior citizens

The project does not explicitly include projections, although projections and scenarios of future developments are certainly among the most important preconditions for targeted

policy measures. The projections also include the collection and preparation of the basic data for such calculations and the methods for it, as the case may be.

The topics to be covered depend very much on the practical needs. They will be developed and finally defined in the course of the project. The intended surveys will help to clarify this point.

The modules of questions to be developed will cover “objective” as well as “subjective” issues, like for instance the assessments and priorities of the affected citizens, the responsible administrative departments and the service providers. The results of such surveys will either become part of the monitoring system or assist occasional structural analyses.

Local surveys may cover the entire city, but they can also focus on selected city districts.

3. Data sources

3.1 The Urban Audit - a source of comparable city data in Europe

The Urban Audit is a data collection for periodical comparisons of European cities based on available statistical data. On a voluntary basis, the EU member states, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Croatia and Turkey collect data for the participating cities on 335 uniformly defined variables, from “demography” to “culture and recreation”. This data serves to describe the quality of life in the cities and reveal existing disparities. 53 variables are collected for the sub-districts of these cities (with a size of 5,000 to 40,000 inhabitants each). In total, 372 Urban Audit cities and, with a reduced list of variables, all other 235 large cities are incorporated in this data collection. As an approach to the functional urban area, the so-called Larger Urban Zones (LUZ) have been defined, for which 170 variables are being collected. For a reduced subset of the data, this collection goes back to 1992. A description of the project can be found at www.urbanaudit.org. All data can be downloaded free of charge from Eurostat's database at

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/region_cities/city_urban/data_cities/database_sub1

The description of the variables and their definitions can also be found there.

Eurostat requests this very comprehensive list of variables every 3 years and in the intermediate years, only a core set of variables to indicate important changes at an early stage. In Germany, the project partners decided in 2008 to collect the complete set of data annually.

3.2 The European Perception Survey

The quality of life of citizens in an “objectively” described environment is essentially determined also by personal attitudes, behaviour and expectations. The GD Regional Policy of the European Commission therefore conducted population surveys, first in 31 selected cities in 2004, and then again in 75 cities in 2006 and 2009. Telephone interviews with 300 persons were made and later with 500 randomly selected respondents. The results are well documented and can be downloaded from the Internet.

Most of the questions asked may also be relevant for the TooLS project, naturally only for those cities that were included in the survey. Like in 2006, an exchange of the data with the German “Coordinated Survey” was agreed upon with the EU so that in 2009, 26 German cities can be analysed in the light of their citizens' views.

A great advantage of the surveys is that they provide micro data, enabling the combination of variables and their manifestations as they are needed in the analyses. Thus, for instance, senior citizens can be selected and their statements compared with those of younger people.

3.3 Collection of indicators by survey methods

In the EU as a whole, the proportion of the elderly will rise from 26 to 53 percent, and in Germany from 31 to 59 percent. This change will affect, in a varied and complex manner, the economy, culture and the social living conditions in the EU zone. It will change the availability of resources; it will affect the quality of life; it will require new strategies to manage problems at the national as well as the local community levels. It facilitates and requires adjustments by the individuals, which result in changes of their concepts of life. The demographic change leads to conflicts and problems and also to new opportunities, something frequently overlooked in the public debate. Too little notice is also taken of the fact that the demographic change must be interpreted - because of its far-reaching consequences - as a comprehensive change in the socio-cultural conditions of life.

The demographic change affects all age groups and ultimately the society as a whole. But, as a selection must be made to develop the questions in the TooLS surveys, focus is placed on people aged 50 and above and questions relating to them. The number and the proportion of people of 50+ age will increase in all countries of the EU. This has some contradictory, even paradoxical consequences.

On the one hand, it must be realised that not only the life expectancy, but also the time period in which we are fit, healthy and productive have generally increased. This gives rise to the assumption that the "degree of activity and mobility" of the age group of 50+ might change in the European countries.

On the other hand, the proportion of people who experience a ("fourth") stage in their lives has grown, in which stage they have to rely to an increasing degree on services of the health system and social support, thus depending on the solidarity of the community. It must therefore be expected that the "need for solidarity" is also increasing – namely the need for "solidarity in the neighbourhood" provided by members of the family, as well as the demand for "long distance solidarity" to be provided by the civil society as a whole.

These developments not only create specific challenges for the local communities – and also for the regions and the countries – but they also create new opportunities.

The opportunities: Trend towards an "active society" or "active community"?

In the course of the demographic change, two paths for the development of the opportunities can be thought of: one leading to a more "resigned/passive society" and local community and the other one to an "active society" and community.

Indicators to be included in the survey and to be incorporated in an index could be:

- The number of the economically active in the 50+ age group; the change of this potential in the course of time; regional disparities
- Participation and interest in professional training/qualification of the 50+ age group,
- The interest of this age group in civic involvement and commitment,
- The subjective well-being of the 50+ age group: Does the position on this "active/passive" continuum affect the well-being of the people? Are people in active societies/local communities happier, more content, healthier than in passive/resigned societies/local communities? Or, is it rather the opposite: Does resignation from the job and from public life and the relief of the burden lead to a greater well-being, contentment and health?

The challenges: Increasing needs for care and nursing – social networks and the demand for supportive infrastructures

Increasing life expectancy is related to a trend that sees more and more people reach a stage in life where they depend more frequently and more heavily on the support services provided by others. Parallel to this trend, the "informal nursing potential" might decrease dramatically, i. e. the opportunity of rendering non-professional care for people in need of care at home.

A comprehensive list of questions is being developed for these issues:

- Which are the supporting networks that the 50+ age group can count on?
- What experience do these age groups have with the need for care?
- To what degree are they prepared and capable of to take over responsibilities of care?
- What are their ideas regarding their own care, if they need care and nursing?

The following indicators, among other things, will be included in the survey:

- The structure of 50+ people by social milieus: Information on the structural resources of the respondents (educational qualification, training, income) and on their concept of life
- Information from a “standard demography” by age, gender, type of household or family, housing situation

To limit the costs involved, the method applied will mainly be a postal survey, possibly also telephone interviews or an online survey using the DUVA data entry module. It can be said for all three modes that relatively simple questions are to be preferred, that a structured and standardised questionnaire is to be designed and that in its basic form only very few questions may be possible on the topics of “migration”, “safety”, “need for security” and “shrinking cities”. This may be extended by locally specific modules, if cities are interested and willing to provide the necessary funds. The survey instrument should therefore consist of a “core” and should allow for an addition in the margin. The “core” should be used to continually collect information on the same topics over a longer period of time applying the same method. The addition would provide an opportunity for country-specific and city-specific variations.

As regards the length of the questionnaire, it should be designed in such a way that answering it does not require more than 15 minutes.

In the pre-test phase of the project, a minimum of 300 respondents of the 50+ age group per city should be picked at random. For postal interviews, this would cost about Euro 1500 per city, assuming the data management and the analysis are undertaken by the ToolS project. For the nine selected partner cities, the costs will be covered by the project funds.

4. Further development and application of the technical DUVA instruments

According to the objectives of the ToolS project, information from different sources and from a multitude of institutions is to be collected and evaluated in combination. This not only requires comparability based on uniform definitions as well as uniform territorial and topical classifications, but also technical instruments that support a cooperative organisation of data management and data use. The information management system **DUVA**, which covers all phases of data processing – from data collection to the presentation of results, is for this reason especially suited to satisfy this requirement and will therefore be further developed in the ToolS project for a Europe-wide application.

There is, first of all, a description of the data that will be used uniformly for the different datasets. In this way, data of different origins can be combined in evaluations and in joint presentations. These data descriptions, which are documented in a “search system”, can also be used in DUVA to automatically produce templates for data entry. The data entry tool can even support data capturing via the Internet. It is applied in the German Urban Audit by the participating cities to enter city data and sub-city data and to correct them in a protected area. On the output side, the search system provides the data descriptions for the requested selection, combination and aggregation of variables and the presentation of results – tables, graphs and simple maps – producing unambiguous and clear headings that permit further revision. DUVA’s existing capabilities related to the Internet will be further developed in the project.

Regarding the monitoring system to be developed in the project, it is especially helpful that DUVA can supply reporting systems with the most recent data and thus with no extra effort provide decision makers periodically or ad hoc with an overview of the latest developments and structural changes in their cities and support this information with comparable data from other cities.

The DUVA module has already been designed in such a way that headings, the output of notifications on errors, etc., can be converted into any foreign language. The intention is to enable all modules to be completely multilingual.

DUVA is already using the international standard format XML internally for the exchange of information. It is possible to modify this XML interface to additionally support an exchange with other metadata systems.

The web catalogue is already available as a means of presenting and exchanging data via the Internet. Further improvement of the applied techniques, the user interface and other available functionalities are scheduled. The web catalogue will be completely adapted to the requirements of this project in terms of its layout by customising the html and CSS files.

The data navigator as the new central web access tool to the DUVA metadata has already been conceptualised. It will comprise interfaces to the existing DUVA modules for the production of tables, graphs and maps. In addition, new interfaces will be implemented to give access to GIS tools and free open-source tools for web-based data analyses and the production of reports with tables and graphs.

DUVA observes the German regulations on data protection. The Federal Institute for Security in Information Technology (BSI) in Bonn offers an internationally recognised security certification of software products on the basis of the Common Criteria standard. This satisfies the requirements increasingly put forward by public institutions. The starting point is an evaluation according to the Common Criteria stage EAL 1. The time span for such a procedure is about 12 months.

5. Incorporating more municipalities: Cities as partners and pilots

TooLS is intended for application in European cities. Incorporating more partner and pilot cities is therefore an important goal. The test surveys will be conducted in these cities. They should test the technical instruments, accompany the intended monitoring system and use it as foundation for their plans and programmes.

The project results are most likely to be applied in practice by the cities, if the cities are already involved in the discussion of the concept. The instruments are after all intended to help satisfy their information needs and practical requirements. The concepts for the individual elements of the project are jointly drafted by the KOSIS associations – DUVA and Urban Audit – and the University of Freiburg and subsequently discussed with the partner cities. The drafts are to be checked by experts of these cities to ensure the utmost practical relevance and feasibility.

It is an important goal of the project to organise information in such a way that it can be collected and retrieved according to the needs of the user at the least possible cost. The tools that have been developed and applied in the KOSIS association DUVA over the last twenty years are a good precondition to achieve this goal. If DUVA has not yet been used in a city, it may be installed and used free of charge for the duration of the project. The subvention offered by the EU will speed up the intended advancements that will further improve the user-friendliness of the tools. Its testing will mainly be the task of the statistical offices, who will try out their practical application together with the other participating city departments.

The KOSIS association Urban Audit will make the data of the Urban Audit and the Perception Survey centrally available for download from the Internet. This data will have to be supplemented by more data from the cities, which are relevant for monitoring and

managing the demographic change. It includes results of population and household projections as well as information on the relevant infrastructure, the provision of services and networks. The responsible departments of the test cities will support the data collection and comment on their usefulness in the monitoring system.

The survey modules designed by the Freiburg University for interviewing the citizens are to be discussed with all participants in the project and adapted to their practical requirements. The working group of the German municipal statisticians "Coordinated Surveys" will also be consulted to discuss the survey modules with the aim of offering them later to other interested cities and city networks.

The partner cities support the test interviews to be financed by the project by addressing the selected citizens, issuing press releases if necessary and commenting on the results. They will name a contact person who will be in charge of these tasks, including conducting the interviews with the responsible departments and service providers.

In the framework of this project, two international conferences are proposed to be held in Amsterdam and Helsinki. Furthermore, the project will be discussed at three national conferences in each country. The partner cities will send experts to participate in these conferences. Travelling expenses of the partner cities will be funded by the project.

The demographic change confronts the cities with special tasks for many decades. The aim of this project is to help the cities to cope with these challenges by providing them with better comparable information from outside the region. The EU commission expects the results to be continuously used and developed further. An enlargement to include other topics is desirable. The participating cities, however, have not undertaken a formal obligation to fulfil this expectation.

All the cities are more or less already dealing intensively with the demographic change. The project wants to give them systematic support in inter-city cooperation. The only additional input required by the project is their mainly advisory cooperation and support as far as possible. The advantages of the qualified additional information will more than outweigh the additional cost. The opportunity to create awareness of the urgently required debate on the demographic and social change in the city council and administration with the aid of the project results alone will make the effort worthwhile.