

as the collection's main distributor, produces also an ASCII version of the data files, and includes SAS and SPSS data definition files.

While the 1990 round project fulfilled its objectives, and was judged a success by most parties involved, it raised a number of issues. First, the project was underfunded and the PAU lacked the computational infrastructure and human resources to sustain a project of such a large scale. Second, the UNECE lacks the necessary legal framework to archive and disseminate microdata, so for the 1990s-round related work this was resolved by signing data-release agreements with each participating country. Third, having only one census-round and the complex sample design limited the research and policy-analysis value of the collection. All this led the PAU to seek partnerships in its work related to the 2000-round of censuses. The IPUMS project, under the direction of Steven Ruggles at MPC, offers means of addressing many of these issues. The MPC is a leader in the web-based dissemination of anonymized census microdata, including "restricted-access" samples. In addition, the MPC has developed a web-based microdata access and extraction system, which facilitates the use of the data. Hence, it was only natural for the PAU and the MPC to capitalize on their respective experience and relative strengths in a project, which aims to provide a better coverage in terms of countries and censuses, and to facilitate data access and use.

THE ICM EUROPE INITIATIVE The result of the collaboration between the PAU, MPC and four European institutions is a new project to anonymize, integrate, and make accessible for research use microdata samples based on multiple rounds of censuses in as many European countries as possible. In addition to the censuses of the 1990-round, this project will cover also the 2000, as well as earlier rounds. The samples created under the new project will be better integrated/harmonized and documented compared to PAU's samples from the 1990 census round. In order to ensure an adequate funding for this project, a grant proposal was submitted to the European Commission within the 6th Framework Programme for Research, on the behalf of a consortium, which includes the six institutions mentioned above. Among the countries that have signed the standard data access protocol are: Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain. The Netherlands, Greece has also signed this protocol. More countries are expected to join the project at a later stage.

Special efforts will be made to build solid methodological foundations for the integration of the micro- and meta- data, by developing standard concepts, categories, classifications, nomenclatures and coding schemes, which will be largely based on those used by the IPUMS International project. The documentation for the samples will follow the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) international metadata standard. Data formats and record layouts will also be changed in