EPUNet

EuroPanel Users Network

June 2004

The Source for Information on the ECHP http://EPUNet@essex.ac.uk

EPUNet was set up to encourage and support the maximum use of the European Community Household Panel data by independent analysts and to develop and maintain links between researchers analysing them. It is funded as a Thematic Network within the EU Fifth Framework "Improving the Human Research Potential and the Socio-Economic Knowledge Base" programme. This unique and valuable dataset makes a contribution to cross-country comparative research in two ways. It is the first regular large-scale social survey covering all the countries in the European Union to be available in a form that allows

direct analysis by independent academics. Secondly, the panel element provides a continuous record of the lives of European citizens over the eight-year period. Potential analysts face a number of problems, however.

There is a lack of information about the data's content, difficulties in gaining access to the data, technical problems, lack of contact with other users, and the general difficulties of interpreting variations (of outcomes, or of processes) between 15 countries.

EPUNet's services are designed to assist new and experienced users in overcoming these problems.

EPUNet web

The EPUNet website forms the basis of the majority of the EPUNet services. Basic and essential information on the ECHP, including a comprehensive User Guide and the Bibliography of publications based on analysis of the ECHP is included. Details of EPUNet Data Services and Research Opportunities including the online application forms

for access to them are also on the web. Access to papers of current and past EPUNet conferences, and online versions of Newsletters are also to be found there. It is maintained by Marcia Taylor at the University of Essex and is continuously updated. We would therefore recommend

"Connecting Users of the ECHP"

that you consult the site regularly at **http://epunet.essex.ac.uk.**

EPUNet's ECHP User Guide

This has now been updated following the December 2003 release of the Wave 1-8 ECHP User Database files. The User Guide is designed to provide a brief and concise introduction to the ECHP for new users of the UDB dataset. It points users

to a range of more detailed and in-depth resources available elsewhere, including on the Circa website and through other services provided by EPUNet. It can now

be accessed via the EPUNet website at **http://epunet.essex.ac.uk/echp.php** and either searched online or downloaded as a pdf file. An outline of its coverage appears on the next page in this newsletter.

Derived Variables

During most survey analysis, a new set of variables is derived in the course of the work. Some of these derived variables

may require substantial development work. The EPUNet-team at DIW Berlin created a database where the user has the opportunity to access algorithms for process, to reduce time-consuming steps in the course of the empirical work of ECHP users and to ensure comparability of empirical results based on the very research (This results from the fact that the exact same person identifiers had been applied to individuals in different country data sets). We would urge all users to submit their derived variables using the automatic entry form available on the EPUNet website. An outline of the database structure appears on page 5 in this newsletter.

Data Queries and Solutions

Apparent inconsistencies are relatively common in general purpose surveys, in panel surveys, and even more so in surveys undertaken independently in different countries like the ECHP. EPUNet's database on "Queries and Solutions" consists of a collection of queries reported by ECHP users and – if available – the corresponding solutions developed by them. Other analysts can easily check whether their own queries have been reported previously and an appropriate solution is already available. This database is updated frequently. It also includes details of changes between successive waves of the ECHP.

Both the query and the solution are entered in the database and are accessible to other ECHP users. This ensures a substantial increase in the accuracy and efficiency of analysis.

Currently, the register contains 41 entries which can be accessed and searched using a variety of index terms via the EPUNet website. Most queries refer to the topics "Income", "Data and Analysis Issues" and "Training and Education". Users of the ECHP are encouraged to submit to EPUNet any problems they

already existing derived variables. Users are also encouraged to submit their own syntax files to create new variables, along with a detailed description of the actual variable, information on the software and algorithms used, and an explanation of the rationale so that this variable and the relevant information can be added to the data base and be utilized by other research groups. After extensively checking and running a submitted syntax file, EPUNet publishes only an algorithm to generate those variables and the respective corresponding descriptive statistics; no micro-data are provided. The purpose is, beyond pure simplification of the research same data set. The copyright of the derived variables remains with the original authors (if they want to be known to the user community), and each research group using reported derived variables is expected to acknowledge the original analysts. The database of derived variables can be searched on-line on the EPUNet website. Among the derived variables received so far and implemented in the EPUNet-register are those covering the generation of poverty and deprivation indicators as well as more technical aspects like the generation of an individual identifier which can also be used in cross-country comparative

have encountered during their analysis including, where available, an appropriate solution. An automatic entry form is available on the EPUNet website. An outline of the database structure appears on page 4 in this newsletter.

Easy Data Transcription Now Available

EPUNet now makes transcription routines for ECHP data available via the web in STATA, SPSS and SAS. Eurostat disseminates the ECHP data in a comma-separated variable (CSV) file, with the variable labels at the top. To avoid needless duplication of effort by isolated users, EPUNet services allows easy transcription into the correct analytical format. Variable names and labels are in English. The routines have been developed for the full User Database version of December 2003. If you are using a subset of these data (e.g. one wave only) you will need to edit out the variable labelling and formatting commands that do not apply to your database. You can download the routines you require at **http://epunet.essex. ac.uk/services_transcriptionroutines. phpservices_transcriptionroutines.php.**

The EPUNet Hotline

Despite available and detailed documentation about the ECHP (especially on EPUNet's website), novice as well as experienced users very often need to find out very particular pieces of information or they may find oddities in the underlying data set, based on a misunderstanding on the researcher's part, or a genuine problem in the data which needs to be sorted out. Whatever the case, ECHP users can e-mail the EPUNet hotline at DIW Berlin when they come across such a (potential) problem. Dealing with these queries *ceteris paribus* also helps to improve the services EPUNet can provide through its other query database.

The EPUNet Hotline **EPUNet-mail@diw. de** frequently receives questions from ECHP users as well as from interested researchers. Most frequent queries have been from users of the cloned data sets (which are available for Germany, UK and Luxembourg) who are interested in the algorithms underlying the conversion process. There have also been questions about the construction and the correct use of the weighting factors (especially with reference to longitudinal analysis).

Each mail to the hotline is received by Olaf Jürgens and Joachim Frick at the DIW in Berlin; in principle, answers are prepared and returned within a two-day period.

EPUNet Research Visits

Because the ECHP is a complex dataset that contains both cross-sectional and longitudinal micro-data, and set-up costs are high, EPUNet offers researchers the opportunity to become familiar with the data through short research visits to EPUNet institutions which already have access to the data and wide experience in their analysis. Some 24 research visits of approximately 3 weeks are planned. Complex discussions between EPUNet and Eurostat are underway so exact details are not yet fixed. Once the final decisions are made, full details will be placed on the EPUNet website.

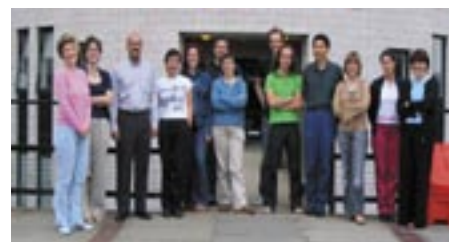If you wish to be informed of the final decision, please contact EPUNetl at: **epunet@isermail.essex.ac.uk.** We will let you know as soon as possible.

EPUNet Research Visits are organised by Eric Marlier of CEPS/Instead in Differdange, Luxembourg.

EPUNet Training Courses

The first EPUNet training course was held at ISER at the University of Essex in May of this year. 10 people attended the course, which was taught by Karen Robson and Cheti Nicoletti, experienced ECHP users and members of the ISER staff. Most of the students, who came from Spain, Italy, Germany, Denmark. Austria, the United Kingdom and the United States, were new users of the ECHP. Analysis was based on STATA. The course consisted of teaching and lectures in the morning, and hands-on laboratory sessions in the afternoon.

A second training course is planned for September 6th-10th, 2004 at the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin. The instructors will be Dorothy Watson, Bertrand Maître, and Bernadette Ryan, all of who have extensive experience in using the ECHP data for research. The research training session is designed to familiarise new users with the use of the

Above ECHP Training Course, May 2004, University of Essex. Instructors Karen Robson and Cheti Nicoletti (left)

ECHP Training Session

The research training session is designed to familiarise new users with the use of the European Community Household Panel data for longitudinal analysis.

The course will last 5 days and includes class sessions and lab experience of data analysis using SPSS. The number of participants will be limited to 10 per session. Some funding is available to cover travel and subsistence of participants. Applications should be received by July 23rd 2004.

September 6th-10th 2004
Economic and
Social Research Institute
4 Burlington Road,
Dublin 4, Ireland

EPUNet

Register of Queries and Solutions

Topic	Field		Searchable
Variable Label	Household level information: HD: Demographic Information HI: Household Income HF: Household Financial Situation HA: Accomodation HB: Durables HL: Children	Personal Level Informarion: PD: Demographic Information PE: Employment PU: Unemployment PS: Search for a Job PJ: Previous Job PC: Calendar of Activities PI: Income PT: Training and Education PH: Health PR: Social Relations PM: Migration PK: Satisfaction with Various Aspects of Life	Yes
Countries included	Belgium Denmark Finland France Germany Greece Ireland	Italy Luxembourg Netherlands Portugal Spain Sweden United Kingdom	Yes
Software version	SPSS, Stata, SAS		Yes
Waves	1994–2001		Yes
Keywords	Components of Income Intra-Household Distribution Income distribution Non-monetary indicators of living standard Poverty Social Exclusion (general) Housing Education	Health Social Participation Data and Analysis Issues (quality, comparability, methodology etc.) Family and Children Labour Force Demographics Gender Life cycle and Ageing	Yes

Structure of the Queries and Solutions Database

  The Queries and Solutions Database on the EPUNet website can be accessed by any researcher interested in the ECHP data. The outline above indicates the fields on which searches can be made. An online submission form can be used for entry of queries and eventual solutions. We would urge you to enter any information on problems you may have encountered in using the ECHP data, any queries you may have, and any solutions you may have found.

http://epunet.essex.ac.uk/services_queries.php.

Register of Derived Variables

Topic	Field		Searchable
Variable Label	Household level information: HD: Demographic Information HI: Household Income HF: Household Financial Situation HA: Accommodation HB: Durables HL: Children	Personal Level Information: PD: Demographic Information PE: Employment PU: Unemployment PS: Search for a Job PJ: Previous Job PC: Calendar of Activities PI: Income PT: Training and Education PH: Health PR: Social Relations PM: Migration PK: Satisfaction with Various Aspects of Life	Yes
Countries included	Belgium Denmark Finland France Germany Greece Ireland	Italy Luxembourg Netherlands Portugal Spain Sweden United Kingdom	Yes
Software version	SPSS, Stata, SAS		Yes
Waves	1994–2001		Yes
Keywords	Components of Income Intra-Household Distribution Income distribution Non-monetary indicators of living standard Poverty Social Exclusion (general) Housing Education	Health Social Participation Data and Analysis Issues (quality, comparability, methodology etc.) Family and Children Labour Force Demographics Gender Life cycle and Ageing	Yes

Structure of the Derived Variables Database

Users can search the file of derived variables on each of the fields indicated in this schematic structure of the database. Entries are made by users of the ECHP, using the online submission form and include the algorithm to generate their derived variables and the respective descriptive statistics. No micro-data are provided or distributed by EPUNet. **http://epunet.essex.ac.uk/services_derived.php.**

Narrative Explaining Rationale of Variable	– Insert narrative –		No
Algorithm (to be made available for downloading)	– Insert algorithm –		No
Permission	Please indicate whether you wish your name to be published on the web site		No
	Please send a copy of this form to my email address		No

European Community Household Panel data for longitudinal analysis.

The course will last 5 days and includes class sessions and lab experience of data analysis. The number of participants will be limited to 10 per session.

Some funding is available to cover travel and subsistence of participants. A limited subset of the actual ECHP UDB dataset will be used in the course, which will use SPSS for data management and data analysis.

The sessions for new users are intended for researchers with some experience in data analysis but who are new to the ECHP. This course requires a working knowledge of SPSS. All those conducting research in a research institution in the EU and Associated States under the FP5 of the European Commission (the 25 EU member countries plus Bulgaria, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein, Norway and Romania) are eligible to apply for a training session. Only researchers using, or intending to use, the ECHP data for non-proprietary research (who are entitled to publish the results of their work in the open literature) may apply. Applications should be received by July 23rd, 2004.

For details on how to apply, see **http://epunet.essex.ac.uk/training_ access_opportunities.php#guidelines**

Further courses will include an advanced course in late 2004, another basic course in early 2005 and a further advanced course in late 2005.

EPUNet training courses are organised by Dorothy Watson at the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin.

EPUNet 2004 in Berlin

The latest in the EPUNet research conferences is being held in Berlin in June. EPUNet 2004 is being held in conjunction with the annual conference of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study. 28 papers based on analysis of the ECHP were chosen (from 67 submitted papers) for presentation, with a further 10 being presented in the Conference Poster Session. The event, at which over 100 researchers will be present, provides both a showcase for some of the most innovative and revealing research projects using the ECHP and an opportunity for previously isolated researchers to exchange information and experiences in using the dataset.

Above Book Exhibition at EPUNet 2003, University of Essex, July 2003.

EPUNet 2003 was held in Colchester in conjunction with the bi-annual conference of the British Household Panel study. Some of the 28 EPUNet papers presented there were given extensive press coverage and many have now been published in refereed journals.

Papers for EPUNet 2004 are available for download from the EPUNet website **http://epunet.essex.ac.uk/conference/ conference2004.htm** and those from EPUNet 2003 at: **http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/activities/ conferences/epunet-2003**

Dates for EPUNet 2005 have not yet been set, but it is likely to be held in Essex in conjunction with the BHPS conference in June or July. Announcement of the time and place will be posted on the EPUNet website as soon as it is known.

EPUNet Research Register and Bibliography

To facilitate dissemination of results from the ECHP, and collaboration among researchers, EPUNet has developed a database of research projects and outputs based on the ECHP. This will be of interest to both researchers and policy-makers. The database is available on the EPUNet website and can be searched by author, title, keywords, wave of ECHP data used, countries included and the title and text of the abstract. There are now almost 240 entries in the database, including working papers, conference presentations,

journal articles, book chapters, research projects and books. In many cases, a more complete project description or the full paper can also be downloaded. Sources of the publication references include the Eurostat-produced PAN 170 listing of ECHP research contracts, EPUNet conference papers, publication lists provided by EPUNet partners, and European Panel Analysis Group Working Papers. A form is also provided on the website which allows all users to enter references to their own, or other known, publications. We would urge all users to make use of this form to submit details of current research projects, working papers and publications. The Bibliography is maintained by the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin. ■

EPUNet Research Register and Bibliography

Field Name	Type	Searchable
Type (publication/working paper, ongoing research project)	List	Yes
Author(s) (allow up to five authors)	Text	Yes
Title	Text	Yes
Language(s)	Text (EN,DE, FR etc.)	Yes
Keyword(s) – see list below	List	Yes
JEL Codes (where these are provided)	Text	Yes
Reference (full reference for publications/working papers)	Text	Yes
Abstract (including table of contents if a book)	Memo (up to 250 words)	Yes
Link to online document (where possible)	Link	No
Waves of ECHP Used (searchable; up to 8 waves allowed for)	List	Yes
Countries included (searchable; up to 15 countries)	List	Yes
Link to derived variables online (where applicable)	Link	No
Institution involved (several institutions may be involved)	Text	No
Link to current contact information for main author	Link	No

Keywords	
Income Distribution Components of Income Poverty Social Exclusion (general) Non-Monetary Indicators of Living Standards Intra-Household Distribution Family and Children Gender Education	Labour Force Life Cycle, Ageing, Retirement and Pensions Housing Social Participation Health Data and Analysis Issues (quality, comparability, methodology, etc) Education Demography and Migration

Gaining Access to the ECHP

EPUNet does not distribute the ECHP data. Interested institutions can buy the ECHP Users' Database (UDB), which contains anonymised ECHP micro-data re-organised in a more user-friendly format after signing an ECHP research contract stipulating in detail the data use conditions, and in particular the strict confidentiality rules to be applied by any ECHP data users. Access and contract arrangements are currently under revision.

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