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Conformément au règlement (CEE, Euratom) n° 354/83 du Conseil du 1er février 1983 concernant l'ouverture au public des archives historiques de la Communauté économique européenne et de la Communauté européenne de l'énergie atomique (JO L 43 du 15.2.1983, p. 1), tel que modifié par le règlement (CE, Euratom) n° 1700/2003 du 22 septembre 2003 (JO L 243 du 27.9.2003, p. 1), ce dossier est ouvert au public. Le cas échéant, les documents classifiés présents dans ce dossier ont été déclassifiés conformément à l'article 5 dudit règlement.

In accordance with Council Regulation (EEC, Euratom) No 354/83 of 1 February 1983 concerning the opening to the public of the historical archives of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community (OJ L 43, 15.2.1983, p. 1), as amended by Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1700/2003 of 22 September 2003 (OJ L 243, 27.9.2003, p. 1), this file is open to the public. Where necessary, classified documents in this file have been declassified in conformity with Article 5 of the aforementioned regulation.

In Übereinstimmung mit der Verordnung (EWG, Euratom) Nr. 354/83 des Rates vom 1. Februar 1983 über die Freigabe der historischen Archive der Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft und der Europäischen Atomgemeinschaft (ABl. L 43 vom 15.2.1983, S. 1), geändert durch die Verordnung (EG, Euratom) Nr. 1700/2003 vom 22. September 2003 (ABl. L 243 vom 27.9.2003, S. 1), ist diese Datei der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich. Soweit erforderlich, wurden die Verschlussachen in dieser Datei in Übereinstimmung mit Artikel 5 der genannten Verordnung freigegeben.

# COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(81) 391 final

Brussels, 15 July 1981



Proposal for a  
COUNCIL DIRECTIVE (EEC)  
derogating in favour of the Kingdom of the Netherlands  
from Directive 73/403/EEC on the synchronization of  
general population censuses

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(submitted to the Council by the Commission)

COM(81) 391 final

## REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

1. Article 1 of Council Directive of 22 November 1973 on the synchronisation of general population censuses stipulates that Member States shall conduct a general population census on a date between 1. March and 31 May 1981. Article 2 of the Directive stipulates that the Commission, in collaboration with the competent authorities of the Member States, shall draw up a programme of statistical tables to be prepared on the basis of such censuses, covering certain demographic, professional and social characteristics of individuals, households and families.
2. In a letter dated 15 September 1980 the Permanent Representation for the Netherlands conveyed a request from the Netherlands Government for a derogation from this Directive in the following terms:

"Re: 1981 population census

On behalf of the Netherlands Government, I should like to apply to the Commission for the Netherlands to be released from its obligation to carry out a general population census between 1 March and 31 May 1981 inclusive, as laid down in Council Directive N° 73/404/EEC of 22 November 1973 (Official Journal N° L 347) on the synchronisation of general censuses. The reasons for this request are as follows:

- (i) The experience gained in the course of the sample surveys carried out in 1979 in preparation for the general census originally planned for 1981 has given rise to serious doubts as to whether the population is sufficiently willing, in the current situation, to take part in a new census. The total non-response rate in the sample surveys was 26%, with wide variations from 21% in rural areas to 37% in the big cities.
- (ii) Fears as regards the anticipated relative unwillingness on the part of the population to take part in a new census are reinforced by the findings of a qualitative survey of people's views on population censuses in general. It has been found that the concept "population census" in the Netherlands has strong emotional

connotations in that the word is associated with the idea of personal registration. The general political and social debate on the importance of protecting the individual's privacy has a bearing on the population census.

This association clearly gives rise to feelings of fear and reluctance to take part in the census. Although there are no real grounds for such fears, the fact is that the resultant social and psychological climate does not augur well for a successful population census in the near future. The climate can only be improved by a lengthy public relations exercise and the institution of adequate legal provisions to protect the individual's privacy.

- (iii) In view of the need to take all due care in this matter, the important political discussions on the draft law on personal registration will not make sufficient progress for the population census to be prepared by the deadline (end of February 1981).
- (iv) In view of the above considerations and given the fact that the Association of Dutch Municipal Authorities has given notice of serious reservations as regards the scheduled census date (clashing with the Second Chamber elections in 1981), the Government, having heard the opinion of the Central Committee on Statistics, feels that the census planned for 1981 should be postponed to a later date some time in the 1980s. This will require the creation of appropriate legal provisions, and a draft is now being prepared and will shortly be submitted at the Second Chamber. The aim of this legislation will be to revoke the current obligation (based on the current Population Censuses Act) to carry out a census in 1980 or 1981, and to make possible for a general population census to be held at some later time in the 1980s by general government decree."

3. As six Member Countries were proceeding with arrangements for the carrying out of population censuses within the period of the 1973 Directive, while three others were seeking derogations to permit postponements of their censuses by up to one year, the Commission did not feel justified, on the basis on this request, in recommending a derogation removing completely

the obligations of the 1973 Directive in respect of the Netherlands. The Netherlands was, therefore, asked whether it could indicate when a census of Population would be taken and, if this could not be in sufficient time for the results to be included in the Community tabulation programme, what alternatives existed for completing those tables in respect of the Netherlands. The reply in a letter dated 3 April 1981, was as follows:

- "(i) Pilot tests organised in 1979 revealed serious difficulties, putting in doubt the success of the census.
  
- (ii) Efforts are being made to introduce legal measures to resolve these difficulties, which have their origin in the present socio-psychological climate surrounding the census of population. Besides creating conditions essential for the success of the census, legal measures have already been put in hand to permit the organisation of a census of population before the end of 1986.
  
- (iii) The statistical tables in respect of demographic characteristics contained in the 1981 Community census of Population Programme will be completed using data obtained from current demographic statistics.
  
- (iv) The other tables of the 1981 Community census of population programme will be compiled on the basis of data collected at the labour force sample survey, organised in the spring of 1981, for which survey the usual sampling fraction for the Netherlands is being raised to five percent."

4. Having regard to the difficulties experienced by the Netherlands in complying fully with the provisions of the 1973 Directive, the Commission considers that in the circumstances these proposals of the Netherlands government represent a satisfactory compromise. Accordingly the Commission recommends that a derogation be granted as requested in the letter of the Permanent Representation of the Netherlands of 15 September 1980.

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THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community,  
and in particular Article 213 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Whereas Council Directive 73/403/EEC (1) stipulates that Member States shall  
conduct a general population census on a date between 1 March and 31 May 1981,

Whereas serious administrative difficulties, which could not have been foreseen  
at the time when the Directive was adopted, have arisen which prevent the  
successful execution of a census of population in the Kingdom of the Nether-  
lands between the said dates,

Whereas it is now proposed to derive the information required by the Directive  
partly from current demographic statistics and partly on a sample basis,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE

Article 1

By way of derogation from Directive 73/403/EEC, the provisions of the  
Directive shall not apply in the case of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Article 2

This Directive is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels,

For the Council  
The President

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(1) OJ N° 347, 17.12.1973, p. 50.