

Date last modification documentation sheet: 02-12-2011

Compared to previous version documentation sheet (15-07-2010) the following issues were adapted:

- Indicator title adapted to better match the indicator operationalisation
- Calculation updated according to new metadata Eurostat/WHO/OECD joint data collection
- Link to Eurostat meta-data 'Health care resources (non-expenditure data) updated

<i>ECHIM Indicator name</i>	D) Health interventions: health services 63. Practising physicians
<i>Definition</i>	The total number of practising physicians (medical doctors) per 100,000 inhabitants.
<i>Calculation</i>	The total number of practising physicians (medical doctors) by 31 December of a given calendar year, per 100,000 inhabitants (end of year population). Practising physicians provide services directly to patients. Practising physicians include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Persons who have completed studies in medicine at university level (granted by adequate diploma) and who are licensed to practice - Interns and resident physicians (with adequate diploma and providing services under supervision of other medical doctors during their postgraduate internship or residency in a health care facility) - Salaried and self-employed physicians delivering services irrespectively of the place of service provision - Foreign physicians licensed to practice and actively practising in the country. For a more detailed definition: see references (definitions on health care statistics (non-expenditure data), available in CIRCA).
<i>Relevant dimensions and subgroups</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calendar year - Country - Region (according to ISARE recommendations; see data availability)
<i>Preferred data type and data source</i>	Preferred data type: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administrative sources Preferred source: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eurostat
<i>Data availability</i>	Data are available for the EU-27 (except Ireland, Greece, France, Italy and Malta), Croatia, Turkey, Iceland, and Norway. Annual data are available as of 1985, though for quite some countries data are only available as of the 1990s. For some countries there are also data for the years 1970 and 1980. Data on practising physicians by region are available in Eurostat (NUTS II level). The ISARE project on regional data has collected data on number of physicians (indicator: number of physicians per 100,000 population).
<i>Data periodicity</i>	Data are being updated annually. Eurostat asks Member States to deliver the data for year N at N + 18 months, but some Member States have difficulties with this time table and deliver the data at their earliest convenience.
<i>Rationale</i>	Indicator widely used in assessments of accessibility and efficiency of health care services. It describes availability of staff for the whole country and the distribution of staff across the country. Time trends may help to identify e.g. staff shortages due to demographic developments such as migration.
<i>Remarks</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practising physicians per 100,000 inhabitants also is one of the (context) indicators of the indicators of the health and long term care strand of the Social Protection Committee (Open Method of Coordination). - Common definitions for the different categories of health care professionals were agreed with OECD and WHO. Three different concepts are used to present the number of health care professionals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'practising', i.e. health care professionals providing services directly to patients; - 'professionally active', i.e. 'practising' health care professionals plus health care professionals for whom their medical education is a prerequisite for the execution of the job; - 'licensed to ', i.e. health care professionals who are registered and entitled to practise as health care professionals.

	<p>In the context of comparing health care services across Member States, Eurostat and ECHIM give preference to the concept '<i>practising</i>', as it best describes the availability of health care resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eurostat metadata: “Health care staff data refer to human resources available for providing health care services in the country, irrespective of the sector of employment (i.e. whether they are independent, employed by a hospital or any other health care provider)”. - Eurostat metadata: “Some countries are unable to cover all providers of care (the inclusion of private providers seems particularly difficult) or are only able to provide data for selective regions”. - Eurostat metadata: “For health care staff, countries may use a central register for medical professionals, business registers or other forms of data collection (including sample surveys)”. “...the quality of the country data is subject to the way, in which health care provision is organised in countries, and which information is available to and collected by the respective institutions”. Comparability of the data between countries is therefore limited. - Eurostat data on health care staff are based on head count rather than on FTEs. The latter would provide a more precise estimate of available human resources. However, data availability is currently very limited. - The Eurostat data on physicians are not fully harmonised with regard to the reference period; some countries provide annual averages rather than end of year estimates. See references (annex describing original sources in the Member States) for more details. However, the reference period is not described for all countries in the annex. - As of 2010 Eurostat, OECD and WHO-Europe carry out a joint data collection in the field of health care non expenditure (human and physical resources). Publication of the (meta-)data is expected shortly.
<p><i>References</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eurostat database, Health personnel (excluding nursing and caring professionals) - Absolute numbers and rate per 100,000 inhabitants: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_rs_prs&lang=en - Eurostat database, Health personnel by region - Absolute numbers and rate per 100,000 inhabitants: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_rs_prsrg&lang=en - Eurostat, meta-data ‘Health care resources (non-expenditure data)’: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/EN/hlth_res_esms.htm - Eurostat, definitions and data collection specifications on health care statistics (non-expenditure data), available in CIRCA: http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/dsis/health/library?l=/methodologiessandsdatasc/health_care/estat-oecd-definitions-c/ EN 1.0 &a=i - Eurostat meta-data, annex describing original sources in the Member States: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_SDDS/Annexes/hlth_care_esms_an2.pdf - Health Indicators in the European Regions (ISARE) project: http://www.isare.org - Social Protection Committee (OMC), indicators of the health and long-term care strand: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_and_social_policy_indicators/omc_social_inclusion_and_social_protection/health_long_term_care_strand
<p><i>Work to do</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check with ISARE their precise indicator definition; do they also apply ‘practising physician’? - Consider adapting the indicator’s definition once availability of data based on FTEs has improved. - Monitor publication of (meta-)data collected in joint Eurostat/WHO/OECD questionnaire and update documentation sheet accordingly.