

**Joint UNECE-UNFPA Training Workshop
on Census Management in South East Europe
(Sarajevo, 18-22 February 2008)**

Summary of the main outcomes of the discussion

I. Setting census goals

1. In the first stages of census planning, it is important to set census goals. Setting census goals provide a framework within which the management of the census can proceed and decisions can be made. Clear goals should be set for various areas including for instance coverage, confidentiality, cost-effectiveness etc.
2. Needs and requirements of relevant stakeholders should be taken into account when establishing the census goals, through appropriate consultation mechanisms.
3. In setting census goals, it should be considered that one of the main characteristics of the population census, compared to other data sources, is that very detailed information is provided at all geographical levels, including small areas.
4. Separate goals should be set for the population census and the housing census, if this is also conducted. The housing census consists in the counting of all the housing stock (including vacation, secondary and vacant dwellings) and the collection of data on the characteristics of all housing units. Information on housing conditions of the population can be collected in a population census, without the need for a housing census (if information on vacation, secondary and vacant dwellings is not to be collected).

II. Publicity and advocacy for censuses

5. It is important to promote the undertaking of the census among the public and the various stakeholders. At this scope, a set of convincing arguments have to be developed to justify why the census is needed.
6. Catchy slogans and logos are useful to convey messages aimed at convincing the population to participate in the census.
7. In the negotiations to get funds for the census from national authorities or from international donors, it is important to present clear plans for the census as well as a detailed budget where money is allocated to the different areas depending on the established census goals and priorities.

III. Census methodology

8. Various methodological approaches have been developed in the recent years, in alternative to the traditional census and the census based on administrative registers.
9. Countries in the SEE region will continue using the traditional method, at least for the 2010 round of censuses. In fact, the advantages of the various alternative methods do not seem to apply to the context of the countries in the region.
10. For instance, the method based on traditional enumeration plus annual updates would require a very large annual sample survey, and countries in the region in general do not have the resources nor the expertise to conduct such a survey.
11. Administrative registers are available in some countries in the region, but their quality in general is not sufficiently good to use them as basis for the population census. Other problems were discussed with reference to this approach, including the difficulties in linking data from different registers, the possible opposition by the public to use data from registers for the census, and concern about data confidentiality.

IV. Quality assurance

12. The various dimensions of quality with reference to the census (including: accuracy, relevance, cost-effectiveness, timeliness) were discussed. There are often trade-offs between these dimensions. In these cases it is important to find the right balance taking into account census goals and priorities.
13. All the various teams working on the census play a role in ensuring quality. They can put in place a number of processes to assure quality during the census preparations and implementation.
14. The central census team, for instance, should ensure that quality is taken into consideration in the various phases of the census when census plans are prepared. Appropriate mechanisms for monitoring of census operations should also be developed, to ensure that quality standards are always respected.
15. In the period of census preparations, quality assurance should be included in the processes for the design of the census questionnaire, the printing of questionnaires and other census material, the cartographic/mapping operations and all other preparatory activities.
16. Quality assurance is particularly important with regard to field operations. During the enumeration period mechanisms for day-to-day reporting on the development of the operations should be set up, so that corrective actions could be taken in a timely fashion if problems emerge.
17. A key role with regard to quality assurance is played by supervisors. They are responsible for training enumerators, monitoring and reviewing their performance. The role played by supervisors with regard to ensure quality of field operations ultimately influence the overall quality of the census.
18. In the data processing phase, quality assurance should be included in all processes, including data entry (manual or optical), coding, editing and imputation.
19. With regard to data dissemination, consistency checks should be performed on census outputs before they are disseminated. Clear and complete metadata should be produced to provide users with full information on how data were produced and what are their characteristics. It is also important to co-operate with end users in order to ensure the relevance of the census products.

V. Field operations

20. With regard to the method of enumeration, all countries in the region will be using interviewer enumeration during the 2010 census round. In fact, while education levels in most cases are relatively high, there is a limited self-enumeration tradition and capacities. Most countries could not use postal service in connection with the census because the service is not sufficiently reliable. In addition, address lists in several countries are not available. Access to internet in general is limited, and the internet infrastructure is inadequate, which makes this option probably not feasible in most countries.
21. The role of the different players involved in field operations was discussed through a role-play exercise based on a number of scenarios/special cases, including the enumeration in ethnically mixed area, in violent neighborhoods, or in enumeration areas with physical barriers. Other situations were also discussed, when an enumerator is biased, or fake enumerators are reported.
22. Recruitment and training of field staff are two key aspects necessary for the success of the census. The recruitment campaign should ensure that field staff with the required characteristics for the different levels (enumerators, controllers, supervisors etc.) is recruited in sufficient numbers for all geographic areas. A certain number of reserve staff should be considered at all levels, to deal with cases of illness, withdrawals or replacement of staff.
23. With regard to field staff training, the discussion focused on the pros and cons of the two main approaches: the cascade approach (Training of Trainers) and the master training approach. It was noted that a balance between the two approaches can be found, that would allow providing training of adequate quality and coverage.

VI. Census monitoring and risk management

24. The discussion on this topic focused on the importance of census monitoring, in particular for the field phase, to make sure that census operations proceed smoothly and that, if problems arise, they are detected on time and appropriate corrective measures are taken.

25. Census monitoring also allows providing the public and the media with updated information on the development of census operations, and to respond to possible questions or issues that may be raised by the press or other census stakeholders.

26. In order to properly monitor census operations, an information management system should be developed capable to manage relevant information in an efficient, timely and coherent way. Given the huge amount of information potentially available, the process of selecting the information to be considered is particularly important. It was stressed that a small amount of good information is much more useful than a large amount of poor, incomplete or incoherent information.

27. A group work exercise allowed participants to discuss and identify what type of information should be acquired from the field to adequately monitor field operations at different stages: shortly (5 days) prior to the enumeration, during the enumeration period (on a daily basis), and at the end of enumeration.

28. The concept of risk management was discussed in relation to the population census. Risks that may potentially have a serious negative impact on the census, and that have a significant likelihood to eventuate should be identified in advance. For these risks, appropriate back-up plans should be developed so that they could be put in place if necessary.

29. A group exercise focused on three scenarios involving risks that can have an important impact on census operations: a blackout of a component of the IT system (field communication via SMS), a strike of enumerators, and a systematic problem with the scanners used for data entry. Participants discussed what to do to prevent these risks, what to do during the crisis (if the event takes place), and how to address the consequences of the risk.

30. From the discussion on risk management emerged how for some types of risks it is relatively easy to develop back-up plans, while for others this is not so easy, or it may not be possible.

31. The main risks that countries in the SEE region should actually take into account were discussed. They include some risks which are beyond the control of the census/statistical authorities, like the risk that financial resources are not available when they are needed, or political risks. For instance, Montenegro reported that the 2000-round census was postponed on several occasions.

32. The software tools that could be used for planning, monitoring and risk management were discussed. Some countries reported that as part of their census of the 2000 round, they used MS Project for planning, monitoring, and risk management. Information on other software used is presented in the UNECE publication on national practices in the 2000 round of censuses.

VII. Population counts and definition of place of usual residence

33. The different types of population counts were reviewed, with particular focus on the count on the concept of usual resident population. This approach, recommended by the Conference of European Statisticians, is adopted by all countries in the SEE region.

34. The importance of the definition of place of usual residence to be adopted in the census was stressed. The definition recommended by the CES was discussed in the detail, in particular:

- a. The need to consider the 12-month threshold as the minimum time a person needs to live in a place in order for that place to be considered the usual residence.
- b. The need to include the concept of "intention of staying" in the definition of place of usual residence, for person who changed residence in the 12 months before the census.

35. It was stressed that all countries should adopt the definition recommended by the CES, because this will ensure that each person will be counted in one place and only in one place. It is important to underline that, for census purposes, the definition of place of usual residence refers only to factual situation, without any reference to legal status or legal entitlements. One important goal of the census is to provide data for planning purposes, which need reliable figures on the resident population. This will also result in improved comparability of the census data from different countries.

36. The treatment of the “difficult cases” with regard to the identification of the place of usual residence was discussed in detail. For instance:

- a. For persons who live in a place different from the family home during the week, and then return to the family home on weekends, the family home should be considered as the place of usual residence.
- b. For primary and secondary students living away from home during the school period, the family home should be considered as the place of usual residence.
- c. For tertiary (university) students who live in a place different from the family home during their studies, instead, the place where they live during the studies should be considered as the place of usual residence.

37. It was noted that the counting of students is one of the most difficult aspects of the enumeration. Particular care should be paid in order to minimize the risk of double counting students or missing them.

38. Group exercises were dedicated to the definition of usual residence, showing the importance of adopting the definition recommended by the CES and to specify clear instructions for treatment of the difficult cases (students, people who emigrated, persons temporarily absent or present etc.). This will minimize the risks of double counting or missing persons in these groups.

VIII. Ethno-cultural characteristics

39. The census can be an important tool to collect information on ethnicity, language and religion. It was stressed that these topics have a strong subjective dimension and they can be politically sensitive in certain countries. For these reasons, in the CES Recommendations these topics are presented as optional (“non-core”) and not all the countries in the UNECE region included them in the 2000 Census Round (less than two thirds included the question on ethnicity, three quarters had a question on language and one half had a question on religion).

40. The discussion made clear that these concepts can have different meanings, for example information on language can be collected with respect to mother tongue, language used at home or knowledge of languages. On the other hand, information on religion can refer to identification with religion groups, formal membership, religious belief, or religious attendance. If a decision is taken to include questions on language or religion, it is necessary to identify the best concept with respect to the most important information needs existing in the country and to communicate it clearly to respondents.

41. Information on ethnicity is highly needed in many countries of this region in order to have a better understanding of composition of the population and geographical distribution of ethnic groups, to know their socio-economic characteristics and monitor time trends, to target integration or anti-discrimination policies. Information on ethnic composition can also be used to distribute resources and to assign political representation to the various ethnic groups. In some cases the collection of data on ethnicity is mandated by law.

42. However, the collection of data on ethnicity poses specific challenges because of its sensitivity. Not all respondent may wish to disclose their ethnic affiliation because of fears of social stigmas or uncertainty about their origin. Moreover some uses of data by ethnicity, especially those referring to distribution of public resources and political representation, can put a heavy pressure and scrutiny on statistical authorities that carry out the census. Therefore, special care should be taken when deciding whether to include the question on ethnicity in a census. In particular, the inclusion of a question on ethnicity should not affect the overall quality of census and, more specifically, it should not influence the exact count of total population at national and sub-national level.

43. If a question on ethnicity is included, special care should be taken in order to :
- guarantee free self-declaration by respondents (open question to be preferred),
 - allow respondents to declare multiple ethnic affiliation, or to indicate “none” or “not declared”
 - make sure that interviewers do not influence respondents
 - make all necessary provisions to guarantee data confidentiality

IX. International and internal migration

44. Various aspects of international and internal migration were presented, describing the related information needs as well as the most appropriate ways to collect statistical information at the population census. In particular the following aspects were considered:

- Stocks of international immigrants
- International immigration flows
- Internal migration flows
- Nationals living abroad

45. *Stocks of international immigrants*: the most important population groups related to international migration were presented (foreigners, foreign-born and ever-international migrants) and the related census questions described (respectively: citizenship, country of birth, ever-resided abroad). The methodological and operational challenges to include these topics in a census were discussed by participants. It was stressed that particular attention is needed in collecting information on citizenship (including multiple citizenship) and place/country of birth given the territorial and political changes that took place following the break-up of former Yugoslavia. The collection of information on periods of residence abroad and the timing of arrival in the current country is important to have information on returned citizens as well as to determine if migration moves took place before or after the splitting of former Yugoslavia. The discussion made clear that the three topics indicated above, which are “core” topics in the CES Recommendations for 2010, are very relevant to information needs of countries in this region.

46. During the discussion it was also underlined that legal status of individuals should not affect their inclusion in the count of resident population, which should be based on the residency rules (with particular reference to the 12-month rule). Participants expressed interest also for collecting information on reason of migration, especially for moves due to forced displacement, employment and study. The question on reason for migration can be very relevant for policy-making but it poses specific methodological difficulties. In case such a question is included, it is suggested to make reference to the main reason of migration and to pay particular attention to provide a clear and comprehensive list of options.

47. *International immigration flows*: the use of census to collect data on flows of international migrants was presented and the related questions discussed. The census can be an effective tool to collect data on recent immigration flows, through the question on time of arrival to the country or the question on place of residence at some point in time prior to the census (usually 1 or 5 years before the census or at the time a certain ‘well-known’ event took place). It was remembered that the topic on time of arrival to the country is indicated as core topic in the CES Recommendations for 2010.

48. *Internal migration flows*: Information on internal migration can be collected through the question on previous place of usual residence and data of arrival in the present place. The CES recommendations specify two alternative modes to ask such question. In certain countries, there can be specific information needs on the reason for migration also for internal moves.

49. *Nationals living abroad*: specific attention was devoted to the use of census to collect information on emigration. In particular the use of the census to derive estimates of national citizens living abroad was discussed. The UNECE presented results of a comparative analysis of the experience of four countries that used an ‘emigration module’ in the last population census (Georgia 2002, Moldova 2004, Poland 2002 and Tunisia 2004).

50. From the analysis of practices adopted by these countries and the following discussions it was made clear that countries collecting information on emigrants should strictly apply residency rules, with particular reference to duration of absence. More precisely, persons living abroad for 12 months or more should be excluded from the count of resident population.

51. Through the comparison of census data on emigrants with corresponding data supplied by the main destination countries, it was made clear that emigration modules/questions at the census are not able to provide an accurate count of the total number of emigrants residing abroad. However, such approach can be useful to collect information on selected groups of emigrants, as for example on those who emigrated recently and/or on those who have close family ties in the country of origin.

52. Countries wishing to include an emigration module at the next census should pay attention to the following aspects:

- Clear separation between count of resident population and count of emigrants, with the latter being excluded from the resident population if their absence lasts 12 month or more
- Identify the group of emigrants that can be covered by the emigration module, such as those emigrated in the years immediately before the census;
- Clear definition of who should be the respondents, in order to avoid the risk of over counting
- The use of a separate module, different from the main census form, is preferable since it makes clear the distinction of resident from non-resident population

53. Finally, participants agreed that the use of immigration data produced by destination countries is an extremely useful source of information on emigrants, especially on national citizens living abroad. The use of statistical data from destination countries should be encouraged and it could provide a fairly accurate count of citizens living abroad.

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