

UNECE-UNFPA Training Workshop on Population and Housing Censuses

Geneva, 5-6 July 2010

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

1. The workshop was organized back-to-back with the Joint UNECE/Eurostat Meeting on Population and Housing Censuses (7-9 July 2010) and was attended by census experts and managers representing the following countries and organizations: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
2. The main purpose of the workshop was to increase the knowledge of census managers and experts from participating countries on various aspects of census-taking and dissemination of census results, with reference to the data on population and on housing.
3. A summary of the main items discussed at the workshop is presented below.

DRAFT SUMMARY OF ITEMS DISCUSSED AT THE WORKSHOP

I. General issues

- A. FUNDING PROBLEMS
 4. In Armenia, because of funding problems, the pilot census was postponed from April to October 2010.
 5. In Georgia, the census has been postponed to 2013.
 6. Also in the UK, there could be cuts to the census budget, but since most of the money was already spent/allocated, they could only affect the dissemination or evaluation programs. This is not likely to happen.

B. AVAILABILITY OF LONG FORM INFORMATION

7. In Russia, only one form for individual (25 questions) will be used because of budget cuts. In 2002 there were two forms: short and long form.

C. TRAINING OF INTERVIEWERS

8. The importance of accurate selection and training of staff in the census process was stressed.
9. Kyrgyzstan is proposing extending the training of enumerators from 3 to 5 days.

D. LENGTH OF QUESTIONNAIRE AND DURATION OF INTERVIEW

10. The number of questions may vary depending on national needs. According to CES recommendations, countries should include at least the questions corresponding to the 29 core topics (16 on population and 13 on housing).

11. The questionnaire's length and quality will have an impact on the duration of the interview. Kyrgyzstan reported an average duration of the interview of 40-45 minutes. In other countries it is longer (around one hour).

E. PARTICIPATION IN THE CENSUS

12. It was discussed whether the participation should be compulsory and enforced, and whether persons refusing to participate should be taken to court. In many countries participation is mandatory, but only a few cases (if any) are taken to court.

13. Special attention was devoted in Moldova to the necessity of conducting outreach activities aiming at informing the population about the importance of the census and at increasing the participation of the population in the census.

F. DISSEMINATION – GENERAL DISCUSSION

14. Countries normally produce census outputs in a mix of traditional (printed publications) and electronic (CD-Roms, DVDs, static web pages, online databases) media. GIS mapping tools are used in the most countries. Countries also discussed the importance of disseminating census microdata.

15. Each country has to assess how much census results should be published in printed publications, in consultation with the users.

16. Interactive online databases are planned in Russia and Ukraine.

17. Uzbekistan asked how the use of the website can be monitored. UNECE reported on the use of Google analytics, a free service, to monitor the access to the UNECE website but also the data downloads from the UNECE online database.

18. In the UK, users must register (for free) and accept conditions of use in order to download the data. This allows collecting information on the users.

19. Concerning what are the uses of census data, the UK reported that in the last years there was an enormous increase in the use of census data, for many different purposes.

20. Russia and UK stressed the problems with mass media. In Russia special seminars are regularly organized to “educate” journalists on how to use statistical data. For other groups (including policy-makers and public officials) it is more difficult.

21. Countries stressed the problems in dealing with preliminary and final results of census. It's not only statistical problem but may be more political. There is the question: “Is it necessary to

publish preliminary results if there could be significant differences with the final data? How to explain this situation?”

G. DISSEMINATION – TECHNOLOGICAL ASPECTS

22. UNECE presented the application of the generic view of statistical process to population censuses, and the use of PC-Axis to disseminate census results. PC-Axis is suitable for large datasets including multidimensional tables (like the census data), and is relatively inexpensive compared to commercial software, as it is maintained by a consortium of national and international statistical agencies.

23. Ukraine uses PC-Axis. The Republic of Moldova will use PC-Axis for dissemination, including for the census results.

24. Countries interested in PC-Axis may contact the UNECE or Statistics Sweden.

H. DISSEMINATION – POPULATION DATA

25. The issue of households where all members are temporarily absent at the time of the census was discussed. Some countries use administrative data in some cases (Belarus). In UK (where forms are compiled by the households) the form is left and can be returned within six months. Asking information from neighbors may produce inaccurate data and infringe legislation on data protection.

26. A coverage survey (PES) may help assess the quality and coverage of the census conducted.

II. Specific issues/census topics

A. POPULATION/PLACE OF USUAL RESIDENCE:

27. Need to respect 12 month rule in order to make sure that everybody is counted once and only once.

28. Some countries may want to show the population according to a different definition, but it would be important that the internationally agreed definition (according to CES Recommendations) is used in tabulations, for international comparability.

29. Risk of double counting when persons who emigrated for one year or more are still counted in the place of origin. For some countries, like Moldova, the share of such persons in the total number of population is significant.

30. Countries that experienced important emigration flows may consider using the census to collect information on the size and characteristics of long-term emigrants, i.e. persons who are living abroad for more than 12 months. Some CIS countries reported demand for such data.

B. HOMELESS

31. Counting the homeless is one of the most difficult aspects of the census.

32. About half of the participating countries is counting the homeless.

C. ETHNICITY

33. The question is potentially very sensitive, and should be treated with special caution.

34. Armenia reported problems in finding the right wording for the question.

35. In Russia, there was a problem with legislation on confidentiality: the question was modified to allow the respondents to fill themselves the response. Problems with groups that do not speak Russian language.

36. Ethnicity should be self-declared and respondents should have the possibility not to answer, or to answer “no ethnicity”.

37. At least the main 4-5 ethnic groups should be included, plus an open (“write-in”) box. Countries should allow answers with multiple ethnic groups or combinations of ethnic groups.

38. The training of interviewers is particularly important, as they should not influence the response.

39. In the UK, the question focuses on identity and includes race categories (like “white”). Furthermore, missing information on ethnicity is imputed, in order to have the best estimates of the size and characteristics of the ethnic groups.

D. HOUSING

40. For many countries in the region, a housing census (covering the whole housing stock and including vacant dwellings) will be conducted for the first time.

41. In Moldova, there are cases when “dachas” are reported as main residence for all/most of the year by people with no other residence. According to the CES recommendations, if the dwelling is designed for habitation all year round, then it should be considered as a conventional dwelling.

42. In Kyrgyzstan, the destruction of part of housing stock after census, in the recent tragic events, is a serious problem for conducting further research.

E. VACANT DWELLINGS

43. Collecting information on vacant dwellings is generally difficult. For multi-store apartment buildings, it could be assumed that apartments at different floors may be similar, but this assumption may not always be valid.

F. INTERNET ACCESS

44. Information about the availability of internet access is collected in different ways in different countries. For instance, the availability of internet connection in the housing unit can be considered, or the existence of a connection in the building. Countries should consider the information that is demanded by the users (this is a non-core topic).

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