

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP

I. Organization and attendance

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) organized the Workshop on Population and Housing Censuses in partnership with the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation (Rosstat) and the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISSTAT) and with financial support from the Russian Federation and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Workshop was held back-to-back with the meeting of the UNECE-Eurostat Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses (30 September to 3 October 2013).

2. The Workshop was attended by over 30 census experts and managers representing the following countries and organizations: Albania, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). Experts from the United Kingdom and CISSTAT facilitated the discussion.

3. The present report contains the summary of the discussion and the recommendations of the Workshop. The presentations made at the Workshop are available at the UNECE website¹.

II. Purpose

4. The purpose of the Workshop was to provide an opportunity to census managers and experts from participating countries to discuss their experiences with the census of the 2010 round, the difficulties they found in implementing the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) Recommendations for the 2010 census round, and their needs in view of the preparation of the CES Recommendations for the 2020 census round.

III. Summary of the discussion

A. Overview of the 2010 census round in CIS countries

5. In the first part of the Workshop, CISSTAT presented an overview of the 2010 census round in the CIS countries. It was noted that in most CIS countries, census data is the main and sometimes the only source of information on demographic and socio-economic characteristics of population.

6. Over the last decade, many CIS countries have established a legal base for the census by introducing a law on census or law on statistics. Several countries have shifted

¹ <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2013.10.census2.html>

from manual entry to scanning of the census results. More and more countries have also been using computers for data coding, thus moving away from manual data coding to automated coding. Software development and printing of forms has been the most often outsourced works of the census in CIS countries. CIS countries are also having one of the lowest census costs per counted person.

7. Challenges that the CIS countries had to face during their last round of census were the negative attitudes in society towards the census, difficulties in hiring and training the staff and the low wage levels for the interviewers in view of their high workload.

8. The UNECE Secretariat presented a comparison between CIS countries and countries in the European Economic Area (EEA) concerning the way census is carried out. For example, CIS countries use mainly personal face-to-face interviews and paper questionnaires, while countries in the EEA mostly rely on self-completion of paper questionnaire by respondents, and increasingly on data from administrative registers. Several CIS countries use paper publications as the main dissemination method (although electronic media are increasingly been used) while EEA countries use mainly interactive online databases.

B. Preparation for the 2020 census round

9. The representatives from CIS countries provided short oral reports on the census in their country, and on tentative plans for the 2020 round of censuses.

10. With regard to the 2020 census round, a number of topics were discussed on which changes are expected for the new census recommendations, and countries may need specific guidance. They include: measurement of economic activity (unemployment, voluntary work), marital status (facto and de-facto), migration (international and internal), emigration measures, data quality (change of census methodology), measuring data quality, timing of census, outsourcing (scanning and printing of census questionnaires), management and competences of the outsourcing project, public resistance, use of social media, dissemination of data, timing of a pilot census, use of consultancy companies (measurement of benefits), small area data (the smallest area possible), GIS technology (electronic mapping), use of administrative registers, set-up of a permanent census unit and census planning horizon.

11. It was mentioned that Armenia's plans to switch to a register-based census within the 2020 Census Round is an ambitious project that should be carefully evaluated and planned. The lack of experience and narrow time horizon was mentioned as a concern. Therefore, Armenia was advised to get support from and ask for cooperation with more experienced countries.

12. In terms of outsourcing, it was recommended to do the scanning and printing by one and the same company because otherwise problems may arise leading to inefficiencies and increased or unexpected census costs. The Russian Federation noted that they would not be able to follow this recommendation, because the census questionnaires must be printed by a state-owned company that is not specialized in scanning the documents.

13. Australia introduced its plans to move to mixed mode census in the 2020 census round and asked the participants about the possibility to use their census in improving the data quality of administrative registers and if other countries gave or plan to give incentives to people participating in the census. The Russian Federation observed that incentives were given to people who participated in the census operations like giving out diplomas to census staff after successful completion of the census operations.

14. Regarding Australia's question on administrative registers, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan both mentioned problem with their administrative registers for example the integration of regional databases into the national database or the updating of the address registers. Within the discussion, it was underlined the importance of people's support and the need to demonstrate to people how beneficial census data can be for each region and the country in particular as an incentive to participate.

15. With regard to the preparation of the new recommendations for the 2020 census round, UNSD explained the purpose of the global recommendations as basic advice and guidance on how to conduct a census. The regional recommendations (namely those by the Conference of European Statisticians) should adjust the global recommendations to regional needs and circumstances. Taken together, the regional and global recommendations deliver a full set of advice, technical support and guidance. It was mentioned that the global recommendation still focus on traditional censuses because the majority of countries within a global context conduct their censuses based on the traditional model but the new global recommendations will include increased hands-on advice how to use modern technology like tablet computers for data collection purposes.

16. Regarding methodology, the Russian Federation expressed the need for more advice on alternative methods of data collection within the new CES recommendations. Regarding technology, Tajikistan asked for more guidance within the recommendations on data coding and on the use of scanners.

17. On operational aspects, Ukraine asked for examples and experience from other countries on data quality and confidentiality. As a response, it was stated that the new recommendations would cover all relevant topics and methods regarding confidentiality. It was also stated by UNSD that a new global manual on post-enumeration methods would be published in the near future.

18. Regarding census information content, Ukraine asked for a clearer definition of disability within the new census recommendations. In response, they were referred to the short set of questions on disability prepared by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics. It was noted that disability is a difficult subject within a census and in particular in large surveys. A census could only identify people with a disability but a more in depth analysis, like in a follow up survey, is needed to cover all aspects of disability.

IV. Conclusions

19. Participants expressed appreciation of the Workshop as an opportunity to discuss census issues that are of specific interest to CIS countries. They found it particularly useful that the Workshop was organized back-to-back with the UNECE-Eurostat expert meeting, which allowed to link the discussions among CIS countries to the broader context of the UNECE region.

20. It was proposed to schedule a similar workshop for CIS countries before the main census meeting in Geneva in September 2014, to discuss the draft CES Recommendations for the 2020 census round. The workshop should be used to share experience and discuss further issues regarding the adoption of the new CES census recommendations.