

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 for countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), in partnership with the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) and with financial support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Workshop was held in Geneva on 28-29 September 2015, back-to-back with the meeting of the UNECE-Eurostat Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses (30 September – 2 October 2015).

2. The Workshop was attended by 30 census experts and managers representing the following countries and organizations: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, CIS-Stat, UNFPA, and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The meeting was also attended by representatives from the Eurasian Economic Commission, European Union (Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina), and the University of London, invited by the Secretariat. Experts from the United Kingdom (Mr. Ian White) and CIS-Stat (Ms. Irina Zbarskaya) 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 countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia to discuss about their plans for the next census of the 2020 round, and possible issues related to the implementation of the new *Conference of European Statisticians (CES) Recommendations for the 2020 Censuses of Population and Housing*. The Workshop also provided an opportunity to share experience from the 2010 round of censuses, especially for the countries that conducted their census in 2014.

¹ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=37904#/>

III. Summary of the discussion

A. National reports on censuses of 2010 round

5. In the first session of the Workshop, countries provided short updates on the operations related to their census of the 2010 round. Georgia and the Republic of Moldova provided more detailed reports on their censuses, conducted respectively in November and in May 2014. The presentations and the following discussion highlighted some interesting issues and difficulties encountered by countries, and lessons learnt from their census operations.

6. In Georgia the population census was conducted together with the agricultural census. The questionnaire introduced some new questions such as those on disability, and international migration including emigration. Georgia reported that they had finished data entry and were proceeding to data editing. Georgia also reported that they had a preparation time of 1.5 years, which next time would be extended to 3 years, due to the importance of proper planning. Georgia noted that dialogue with the government and users was important. They had used GIS maps for the first time during the 2014 census and this was found useful.

7. With regard to conducting the agricultural census together with the population census, Georgia noted that this resulted in a very long questionnaire, and that in some cases the head of household was not the best person to answer the questions on agriculture. It was reminded that FAO and UNFPA published in 2012 some Guidelines for Linking Population and Housing Censuses with Agricultural Censuses.

8. In the Republic of Moldova the housing census (conducted for the first time in the country) covered all dwellings, regardless of their occupancy status. Persons absent for more than 12 months were enumerated separately. The questionnaire included questions on disability. For the future census, the Republic of Moldova is planning to improve the legal frame, possibly adding a fee for non-participation and indicating the date of the census in law. They also consider including a personal code in questionnaires (which was not possible in 2014), extending both the training for interviewers and the enumeration period by a few days.

9. The other countries also gave short reports on their experience on their censuses of the 2010 round. Many countries reported having improved the census process based on lessons learned. Several countries reported using technology to improve the process, cut costs, check accuracy or expand the coverage of the census. The importance of the proper functioning of technology was highlighted as software that was not fully developed could affect the quality.

10. Armenia reported that they had received assistance from experts from the United States of America, which had helped them to spread information on the census more efficiently. Azerbaijan noted that their census was done in accordance with the recommendations from UNSD and UNECE/CES, which enabled them to be more thorough in their census process. Armenia and Kazakhstan had found that conducting a pilot census was particularly useful. Many countries reported the

limited training of census field staff as a main problem and noted that this is something they will pay attention to in the future.

11. The countries also reported on the different methods of raising awareness about the census among the public. Many countries had used SMS, Facebook, television advertising etc. to spread information about the census. Armenia had prepared a school book for children to educate about the census.

B. Status of dissemination of results from the 2010 census round

12. The participating countries reported on the status of dissemination of the census results. Several countries reported using electronic means of disseminating results (including CD-Roms and DVDs), although paper publications were still widely used. Some countries created a dissemination database allowing users to submit queries and obtain customized tables. Some countries also mentioned that micro- and/or metadata was made available.

13. It was stressed that it is very important to disseminate census results through modern dissemination tools, including in particular interactive dissemination databases. All countries were strongly encouraged to disseminate the census results using these tools. Various examples of free computer software that could be used for that purpose were mentioned, including PC-Axis (for which UNECE can provide technical support), Census Info, and Redatam.

C. UNECE Study on national practices in the 2010 census round in EECCA countries

14. Mr. Ian White presented the main results of the study, based on information collected in the 2013 UNECE survey on national practices in the 2010 census round.

15. In the discussion that followed the presentation, the participants discussed about the advantages of outsourcing specific census activities, like scanning, data processing, recruitment of enumerators, training etc. Concerning dissemination, the online database created by Belarus was mentioned as a good example that other countries in the region could follow.

16. Some countries commented on the inclusion in the census of topics that are considered important for national needs. In Moldova, for instance, questions on emigration were included given the strong demand for this type of information.

D. Results of April 2015 UNECE consultation on national plans for 2020 round and possible support activities

17. The UNECE presented the main results of the consultation, with regard to census methods that countries plan to use in the 2020 round, the possible use of administrative data and internet response, and international activities that countries requested to support them in preparing their census.

18. Most countries are planning to use in the 2020 census round the traditional method based on full field enumeration. There are general plans by most countries for using administrative data to support the field enumeration, but not to derive directly census data.

19. Four countries indicated that they could possibly use the internet response option in their censuses, subject to the results of tests that will be conducted. It was noted that the internet option is useful to capture, for example, the young people who are on the move and difficult to locate. It was, however, stressed that the development of the internet solution is costly and requires special measures and tools to ensure that the data is well protected. Thus, a careful consideration as well as testing is necessarily before the internet technology is adopted.

20. With regard to support activities, two countries asked for support with regard to the possible use of registers for future censuses. This could include, among others, quality assessment of register data, evaluation on how to adapt the data from administrative sources for census purposes, and examination of ways to interconnect the registers. It was noted that using registers could be considered a way to reduce census workload and costs, however quality risks exist if the use of register data is introduced too fast. The Nordic countries experience was mentioned as example, where it took many years to develop registers before they could be used to replace the census. A great deal of work and a number of conditions need to be met before using registers for censuses. Normally this process is followed to create a complete register-based statistical system, and not only for the census.

21. Several EECCA countries expressed interest in possible support activities on technology (internet response, use of GIS and electronic maps, portable mobile devices, etc.)

E. Plans for next censuses of 2020 round

22. In this session, countries provided a short update on the preparations for the census of the 2020 round, informing about progress made and highlighting the major challenges.

23. The Russian Federation shared experience on the conduct of “microcensus 2015”, the start date of which was 1 October 2015. The microcensus is planned as a first step to the census 2020 and aims to provide current demographic and socio-economic information about the population of the country in the period between censuses. The data collection is carried out by trained interviewers. They interview the residents in their communities and enter the responses on tablet computers with specialized software. The software allows validation procedures to ensure quality of the data, e.g. checking for consistency of the responses, etc. This is the first time that Rosstat will do a census in an electronic way. For the 2020 census, the participation should be obligatory, but this requires changing the Census Law.

24. In Armenia there are plans to use the traditional method, which gives good quality results and has a low cost because Armenia is a small country. In the future Armenia can consider the use of registers.

25. In Azerbaijan, the preparatory work for the census is under way. Currently there is not yet a decree issued. After the decree is issued it will be decided whether internet will be used or other innovative approaches.

26. In Belarus, it is planned that the interviewers will use tablets and the process will be automated in order to ensure quality. Registers are planned to be used for information related to the name, sex, place and date of birth. Only stationary points will be used for the first days. While the stationary points will continue to be operational, in the following days the interviewers will start to interview residents at their homes. An additional form will be introduced with questions on agriculture, e.g. how much land they have, land location, structure of the land, etc.

27. In Georgia, the decision of the statistical office on how to conduct the next census depends on the technology developments and what the state of technology will be at the time of the census. It also depends on the current work of other administrative bodies, e.g. project on internet availability in every village, development of a system of addresses.

28. In Kazakhstan, the plans are to conduct the 2020 census in the traditional way and to use innovative methods, by means of internet and tablets, if the costs are affordable. The statistical office plans to pre-load the personal data of the respondent and data on its residence on the tablets before giving them to the interviewers. Data from housing registers and enterprise registers could be used. GIS systems will be also used. Preparatory work is undergoing with establishing the normative basis and ensuring its compliance with the international recommendations. In 2018 there will be a pilot census in preparation for 2020.

29. In Kyrgyzstan, the census legislation is being established. A special methodology is being developed with respect to migration data. Population register is currently being developed.

30. In the Republic of Moldova, work for the 2014 census is still under way. The next census is planned for 2021. A project on developing and improving the address system should be finalized by the 2018. Other improvements could concern aspects of quality assurance and management, IT technologies, and GIS mapping.

31. In Tajikistan, the census will be conducted in 2020. The census legislation is almost ready. Currently the statistical office is working to address difficulties that occurred during the 2010 round, related to funding, training of interviewers, geographical material, and data quality. The census is one of the most expensive statistical activities in Tajikistan. Combining the information sources, use of internet and pre-filling of the questionnaire can help reduce the cost. The preparatory work includes testing the use of tablets in 2017 and using internet questionnaire in Dushanbe and other major cities. The use of optical scanning technologies, collecting and storing of data will be extended. The statistical office plans to involve international partners in the census.

32. In Ukraine, where no census was conducted in the 2010 round, preparatory work is underway. The census is planned for 2016, while the decision is currently pending with the Government. The basis for the next census will be what was prepared for the census of the 2010 round. The statistical office plans to use

administrative data sources to analyze the results. IT and optical recognition of symbols will be used. Lists of population points and system of addresses are also prepared. There is no population register in Ukraine at the moment and the plan is to establish one in the coming years. The 2020 round should be consistent with previous rounds and in compliance with the international recommendations.

F. Draft CES Recommendations for the 2020 census round

33. Ms. Zbarskaya gave a presentation on the possible difficulties in the implementation of the new CES Recommendations in EECCA countries. Difficulties can be expected with regard to the definition of usual residence (especially for persons temporarily present or absent) and migration characteristics, as well as changes in economic characteristics as a result of latest resolution of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians.

34. It was proposed to set up a group of CIS countries to work on a common harmonized approach to census questionnaires. The group could discuss in particular the harmonization of migration and economic characteristics, and provide additional guidelines to supplement the CES recommendations. It was noted that CIS-Stat promoted projects on migration statistics and labour statistics. There was general support to this proposal.

35. The representatives of various EECCA countries commented on possible difficulties with regard to adopting the new CES recommendations. Possible problems are expected with regard to financial limitations, selection of enumerators, issues about usual residence measurement (de facto vs de jure), how to measure informal employment, measurement of migration (common approach, labour migrants who plan to return, long term vs short term migration). It is noted that it is often difficult to collect the information from respondents in line with the recommendations (e.g. usual residence).

36. Data quality issues were also discussed: how to check quality of data and communicate it to the users, what to do when results are adjusted, how to communicate this to public, how to assess the quality of new sources (e.g. administrative data).

G. Work plan for future activities to support the 2020 census round

37. With regard to the 2020 census round, CIS-Stat noted the need to organize and hold censuses around the same year, and produce a minimal set of indicators for countries in the region, selected among the topics in the CES Recommendations.

38. Some countries noted that international organizations could provide support to help NSIs receiving the funding required for the census (in addition to technical support). In this context, it was suggested that NSI could underline the importance and the value of the census results for the country, when requesting the funds to their governments.

39. Concerning UNECE activities to be promoted in 2016, there was general agreement that a review of the availability of administrative sources and their possible use to support field data collection could be useful in EECCA countries. There was limited support to the proposal to assess the quality of administrative sources.

IV. Conclusions

40. Participants expressed appreciation of the Workshop as an opportunity to discuss census issues that are of specific interest to countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

41. It was proposed to schedule a similar workshop for countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia before the next UNECE-Eurostat expert meeting on censuses in Geneva, tentatively on 26-27 September 2016 (dates to be confirmed). The 2016 workshop could be dedicated to the following topics:

- a. Review of the availability of administrative sources and possible use to support field collection
 - b. Technological innovations for the 2020 round, including:
 - Internet response
 - Mobile devices, tablets, GPS
 - Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
 - c. Implementation of the CES Recommendations for the 2020 round (usual residence, migration, economic char.)
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