

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE STEERING GROUP ON POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES

Approved by the CES Bureau at its 19-20 October meeting (document ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/5)

I. BACKGROUND

1. During the last three years, the CES Programme on population and housing censuses has focused on the finalization of the CES Recommendations. The mandate given by the CES to the Steering Group related exclusively to the Recommendations. Following the adoption of the CES Recommendations in June 2006, this note now presents a proposal for a new CES programme on population and housing censuses oriented to address issues related to the implementation of the CES and Global Recommendations and of national census programmes.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE WORK

2. It is proposed that the ECE Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses coordinates and oversees the implementation of a new ECE Programme on censuses which will focus on:

- promoting the implementation of the newly adopted “CES recommendations for the 2010 censuses of population and housing” in the countries of the ECE region;
- facilitating the exchange of experiences among member countries on subjects such as census methodology, technology or census content (definitions, classifications, etc.);
- promoting the exchange of experiences in innovative methodology for census taking in collaboration with other regions;
- assisting UNECE to provide assistance to SEE and CIS countries, in the preparations for the next population and housing census;

III. PLANNED ACTIVITIES

3. The Steering Group will organize meetings and other activities related to the objectives of the work. In particular, the Steering Group will decide on the content and the form of the meetings, which will focus on the following topics:

Census technology

- Many countries are planning to make use in their census of innovative technological tools, such as handheld devices, Internet, or other systems for census data collection, dissemination, etc. Countries could benefit from an exchange of experiences in these areas, looking in particular at the lessons learnt from countries where a census was taken in 2005 or 2006. Outsourcing is also a topic where it would be useful to have an exchange of information.

Census content

- Based on the new CES recommendations for the 2010 censuses, some training activities should be organised to help countries, in

particular in SEE and the CIS, to implement the recommendations. These activities should be focused on specific areas where countries experienced difficulties in the last census round, or where different practices were followed, affecting the comparability of data. These areas include:

- treatment of migrants, particularly labour migrants, and counting of population living abroad (long-term migrants);
- economic characteristics (including activity status, status in employment, main source of livelihood, etc.).

Dissemination of census data

- While dissemination of census results is always dealt with at the end of the census operations, this should be brought to the attention of census managers at an earlier stage of planning. The UNECE meeting of census experts in 2008 should be organized during the same week as the UNECE meeting of the specialists on dissemination. This would allow for a one-day joint session to discuss issues related to the dissemination of census data.

Coverage and quality evaluation

- Although the evaluation of census results has always been an essential component of the census operation, the wider use of new ways of census taking has increased the importance of coverage and quality evaluation. There is the need for discussion and an exchange of information between countries to determine best practices in evaluating the quality and coverage for all types of censuses - including 'traditional' censuses and register-based censuses.

Census Methodology

- There is the need to better involve the countries in the region in a focused and technical discussion on census methodology. Such discussion should address issues related to censuses based on data collected through field operations and data collected from administrative records. Examples of issues to be addressed are:
- What is the best length for the enumeration period, considering the enumeration method, quality and the implications on census organisation and costs?
- In what circumstances and how should administrative registers be used for censuses (to reduce costs, for example), particularly if they do not cover all core topics or if the quality of their data is not very high?
- What are the possible uses of address/dwelling/building registers for the census? How can they be regularly updated?
- In what circumstances and how can sampling be used during the census?

IV. MEMBERSHIP

17. Canada (chair), Armenia, Finland, France, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, CIS Statistical Committee, UNSD, Eurostat and UNECE.

V. REPORTING

18. The Steering Group will report each year in October to the CES Bureau on the results of the activities that are carried out and the major actions proposed.

19. The terms of reference of the Steering Group will be reviewed by the CES Bureau in 2009.

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