
THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE POPULATION AND DWELLINGS CENSUS, BUCHAREST, NOVEMBER 22-23, 2012

The International Conference on the Population and Dwellings Census has been organised by EUROSTAT together with the National Institute of Statistics of Romania, being considered a remarkable event, a genuine festival for the statisticians, indicating the completion of the provisions of the **World Programme of the Population and Dwellings Censuses 2011**, document adopted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

A number of 135 countries have participated to this programme. The implementation of the population census has been an enormous effort for the statisticians, and the **Round 2010 of the census at global level** has been regarded as a most special edition because it mirrored the technological innovations produced during the last ten years. Innovations have been introduced in both the implementation pattern of the census – such as the use of the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and of the on line Questionnaires – and the way of data collection – from face to face interviews to data multi-model collection.

The aim of the conference was to revise the experience and the lessons resultant from the implementation of the population census and to draw out some guiding lines for the future. The conference has taken place within the context of the regional cooperation in statistics in the South-Eastern Europe. Since 2008, the General Directors from several countries in the region met in Bansco/Bulgaria and informally decided to strengthen the cooperation relationship. A year later, they met again in Budva/Montenegro and the regional cooperation became known as the **“Budva Initiative”**. The first conference of the Initiative was organised in Skopje on the subject of the Agricultural Census.

The conference in Bucharest was the second major event, organised in the context of the “Budva Initiative”, which focused on the Population Census. Similar events will continue to take place in the future as the exchange of expertise has proved to bring about countless advantages.

On the 22nd and 23rd of November 2012, there were lectures at the NIS Romania that presented aspects related to the methods, the management, the problems regarding data dissemination, the difficulties and obstacles and the challenges of the Population and Dwellings Census 2011, but also the perspectives for the future rounds of the censuses.

Besides the representatives of the National Institutes of Statistics, of the member states of the Budva Initiative, EU Member States, the Conference was also attended by the representatives of international organisations, three special guests who presented what is called “invited papers”, a section dedicated to the review of the latest tendencies resulted from the Round 2010 of the census in the European Union. It was very clear that the Round 2010 of the census in the European Union was significantly different from the previous round. The existence of the EU legislation regarding the censuses represented one of the most important changes. Another fundamental change was the diversification of the census methods, mainly related to the enlarged use of Administrative Records.

The three invited lecturers, Mr. Bianchini from the Sapienza University in Rome, Mrs. Ambrozaitiene from the Statistical Office of Lithuania and Mr. Šanda from the Statistical Office of the Czech Republic, presented various novelties from the Census 2010, technological innovations, the use of records and of the non-traditional methods for data collection.

Mr. Bianchini (The University of Rome) presented the lessons and the future challenges related to the use of digital maps, spatial data bases and the address, building and dwelling records in the Round 2010. Several European countries performed a combined census or based on records in Round 2010, while the countries of the “Budva Initiative” performed a traditional census, based on the “door-to-door” interview method. As to the combined and traditional censuses, GIS has improved the coverage of the census, analyses for the validation (PES and other validation methods) being still necessary. They have reached the conclusion that the spatial data bases developed by the national offices of statistics within the context of the Census 2010 will become important for the next round of the census in case they are going to be well managed and improved. The main technical aspects to be taken into consideration are the correctness of addresses and of the unique identification code for buildings and dwellings. Taking into consideration the national context, some countries were recommended to create a Record for buildings and dwellings in the near future.

Mrs. Ambrozaitiene presented the novelties of the Population and Dwellings Census 2011 from Lithuania. In spite of the fact that Statistics Lithuania used for the Census 2011 data from the main administrative Records, because of the lack of data in those records, the decision of a total review of the population was adopted (via Internet and by face-to-face interviews with printed questionnaires). Over a million (34%) residents of Lithuania were reviewed via Internet. The amount spent for the census in Lithuania was an average of 2.3 euro per inhabitant. The Geographical Information Systems (GIS) were

used for planning the review areas and for the innovative presentation of the census results. The main lessons consist of the following: the necessity of a time period for preparing and testing the electronic questionnaire and the easy operation for the users; the externalization proved to be a good practice; the free circulation of the population represents a real challenge for the census operators and it should be taken into consideration; of crucial importance is to adopt the measures for ensuring the quality of administrative data and the use of the review computerized system and of GIS technologies leads to the success of the census.

Mr. Šanda (Statistical Office) presented the combined Census in the Czech Republic. The main objective of the presentation was to assess the conformation of the administrative data to the fact of life, by comparing the number of the registered population with the number of the resident population. Although data collected on field, on the site of the common residence, do not represent a perfect reflection of the reality, this similitude could lead towards the formation of an idea on data quality regarding the registered residence. It is a fact that data based on the registered residence do not completely show the changes in the territorial distribution of the population. Hence it appeared that the population is ready and desires to use the electronic services; the innovative electronic census was a successful project that saved time and money for the Statistical Office and the state budget; the vision for the **Round 2020** of the census is that of an action based entirely on Records. That will be the moment for launching the project and for the collaboration with the administrative data holders, researchers and experts. The permanent cooperation with the Records holders will be essential for the improvement of data quality and – if possible – for adjusting the records according to the census necessities. It is the only way to ensure comprehensive and high quality information for the next population census.

Here is a first conclusion to the question “How will the Census 2020 look like?”: There was a general agreement that the Census 2020 will be characterised by a combination of data collection methods and sources. The implementation of the Census will be influenced by the technologies available at the respective moment. When choosing the implementation technologies, one should consider the particularities of the respective country.

A second major conclusion following the proposals expressed at the Conference regard the preparation of the next census that should start long before, focusing on quality and taking into account the use of several data sources, the Records included. The activity related to the strengthening of the

role and position of the National Institute of Statistics in confidently using the Records in 2020 should start this year. Another important aspect that needs clarification regards the role of GIS in associating persons with households.

The research to a greater extent of the census experience and its implications on the rest of the official statistics, for instance as sampling base for the sample surveys, as well as of the way to elaborate statistics according to the capacity developed during the census implementation, both under the aspect of the human resources and of the equipments used, constituted the third important conclusion.

As to the future collaboration within the Budva Initiative (the regional cooperation of the countries in South-Eastern Europe), there was a general consensus: **Everybody benefits from experience exchanges.**

For EUROSTAT, the event was also considered as being extremely useful, knowing that there are a lot of implications as to the activities to be performed within the **European Statistical System**. The administrative sources are crucial for the ESS. EUROSTAT is already working for amending Regulation no. 223 regarding the European statistics, in order to strengthen the role of the statistical authority in shaping the sources of administrative data.

Within the SSE, a debate will be organised on a set of projects for a more efficient collaboration regarding the enlargement of the data sources use and the transition from a rigid to a sharing approach (e.g.: common IT applications, development costs, etc.).

The Programme of the International Conference in Bucharest, particularly dense in the topics presented, opened with the Welcome addressed to the audience by Mrs. Mariana Kotzzeva, EUROSTAT and by Mrs. Elena Mihaela Iagăr, Vicepresident of the National Institute of Statistics of Romania. During the two days, the representatives from all the participant countries presented papers, by sections, according to the Programme.

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