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**SEMINAR ON POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES
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Population and Housing Census 2001 in Albania¹

Submitted by the Institute of Statistics, Albania

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the Second World War, eight censuses have been held so far in Albania. The first four were held every five years, the next three every ten years, and the last census was carried out twelve years later.
2. The censuses during this period were ascribed to the land administrative organization of the country and the local governments.
3. The 1989 census of population in Albania was carried out on the basis of the instructions and bylaws promulgated by the Council of Ministers. Not all the censuses recorded the number of dwellings. Generally speaking, censuses that focused on a closed population were held during one day, and the individuals had to confirm their identity through relevant certificates.

¹ This paper has been prepared at the invitation of the secretariat.

4. Up until 1989, much effort was put into the population census to bring its requirements closer to those of West European countries, and to expand the scope of coverage concerning not only the population but also the buildings and dwellings. The concept of an enumeration area was introduced for the first time in 1989, and the country's territory was divided into 1,404 zones of registration. This census was conducted within a week, with the targeted individuals being free to move around during this period. However, their characteristics had to be confirmed by way of documents issued by the registrar's offices, or by their employers.

5. The latest census of population and dwellings was carried out in 2001 in full compliance with the international recommendations given by Eurostat and the United Nations Statistics Division. The census was based on the free statements of individuals belonging to an already open population. The census took place over a period of one month, and the country's territory was divided into nearly 10,000 enumeration areas.

A. Why did Albania need a new population and housing census?

6. The answer to this question is that there was no correct data concerning the population on the basis of age, gender, and districts until 2001. The last census was undertaken earlier, in 1989. The great social-economic and political changes during the 1990s brought about great demographic changes: a very high emigration (1/4 of the Albanian population has migrated), and a noticeable fall in birth rate. There were no data sources or other means to identify either of these changes.

7. From 1950 through to 1990, Albania's population experienced decades of rapid growth, even though it has fallen progressively since. Fertility was much higher than in any other country in Europe. Although decreasing mortality was relatively comparable to the Mediterranean model, migration was almost zero and moving from one district to another was very limited during this earlier period.

8. In this transition situation, the undertaking of the Population and Housing Census 2001 was very much a necessity. The Albanian government considered the Population and Housing Census as a priority project, extremely important both for economic and social purposes, development planning at national level, and for multilateral and bilateral cooperation projects.

9. The Population and Housing Census is a large and very difficult undertaking, with an immense importance on economic reforms and the life democratization in the country.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CENSUS IN ALBANIA

10. The first and most basic objective of the 2001 census was to answer the question "exactly how many?", but also to understand distribution of gender and age in the population.

11. The needs of the population, in particular at the local or regional level, are decisively influenced by population size and by some of its basic characteristics. For example, the number of schools is proportional to the number of young children; kilometers of new pipes for the supply of water is determined by significant population growth, e.g. newly wed couples seeking housing for their family, etc. Planning services and equipment, whether public or private, are

based on the quantitative knowledge of the population to be served and equipped. The census is the main source of this knowledge.

12. Among all the population characteristics, age is probably one of the most relevant for at least two reasons: first, based on age, individual needs are very different: education when young, a job and a place to live when adult, health support and care when older, etc. Populations where there are many children will place more emphasis on school equipment than will “old” populations, which are more oriented towards medical services. Second, age is an important indication of future developments. Today’s adolescents are tomorrow’s young adults, whose numbers and quantified needs can be anticipated. If a census offers a sound basis for population projections, the volume of additional jobs and new houses needed on their arrival in the labour and housing markets may be estimated from the time of the census on.

13. The census is a snapshot of the present population, informing people of who they are. However, it also contains the various dynamic elements of a movie scenario. Through the census, knowledge is obtained of that which has occurred in the past (how many emigrants left the country? How many children have been born recently?), and a solid basis is provided for an estimate of the near or longer-term future. The census in Albania speaks for the whole country, as well as regional and local levels. More than anything else, the census is an insuperable source of knowledge covering the past, the present and the future of the population in the districts.

A. Why call it a new census?

14. Census 2001 used, for the first time, some new concepts according to definitions, and a new process of gathering data. The census was mostly based on the free declarations of the population. It used the concept of “open population” and the concept of household (a group of persons living together in one dwelling and who have a joint economy. The household may consist also of a single person) was also used for the first time.

15. The methodology and the definitions of the 2001 Albanian Population and Housing Census were completely synchronized with Eurostat and other international institutions’ requirements and recommendations, meeting the essential features of a census as defined within the UNECE region:

- (a) individual enumeration: The information on each enumerated person and household was obtained so that their characteristics were separately recorded;
- (b) specific reference period: The last population and housing census was performed in April 2001 based on Law Nr. 8669, “Albanian Population and Housing Census, April 2001.” The reference date was midnight, March 31, 2001;
- (c) universality: The census was designed for enumerators to contact every person and household;
- (d) small-area data: The census produced data down to the individual “enumeration area,” subject to confidentiality protections; and
- (e) defined periodicity: After World War II, the census was conducted every five years. Now Albania seeks to conduct the census every 10 years.

III. THE SCOPE OF THE CENSUS

16. The main purpose of the Population and Housing Census was to provide an actual and precise overview of the demographic, economic and social reality of the country. For countries like Albania, the census was a starting point for installing a solid system of actual population statistics based on surveys.

17. The Population and Housing Census is a very important long-term investment for the statistical system of the country. The census could be a very important tool for other activities in the future as well, such as modernizing the system of civil registers, building an address system and decentralized registers of the population, and making further efforts to modernize the entire administrative system of the country, both at regional and national levels.

IV. MAIN OBJECTIVES OF CENSUS

- (a) To provide data on demographic and socio-economic indicators (very important at national and local levels).
- (b) To improve the purpose and the quality of the information.
- (c) To provide and update information on phenomena like education, labor market, migration, the impact of these phenomena on the life of women and men, and problems of living conditions and inequality.
- (d) To develop local capacities for research and survey purposes, in order to improve local human resources that deal with social politics and their implementation.
- (e) To provide statistical tools for decision makers and to help government to plan and allocate resources according to population distribution.
- (f) To build an address system (this is missing in Albania).

V. FIELD OPERATION WORKS

18. The 2001 Population and Housing Census in Albania was a very traditional one. The method used was face-to-face. On the basis of a map of the urban areas and a list of Heads of households for the rural areas, the Enumerator goes to each dwelling and household to conduct the interview. He must be polite and communicative with the persons he interviews. He should not divulge to outsiders any of the information gathered.

19. Censuses covering the total population and housing stock are indispensable for providing statistics on the population, family, household and housing situation. The characteristics of the population include geographic, demographic, economic, educational, household and family characteristics.

20. In Albania the traditional method of using a census questionnaire can vary. Specially designated enumerators can be used to complete the questionnaire, or the self-enumeration method (by household or person being enumerated) can be used. The questionnaire was designed to take into account the method used and to comply with the recommended definition and classifications. The enumerator is a key person, completing the questionnaire or giving advice

and answering questions as required.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

21. The data of the 2001 Census documents this change and the consequences for the Albanian demography, economy and society. The results of the 2001 census underline some of the main challenges that Albanian society has to face at the national and regional level. These include:

- (a) the creation of future oriented employment opportunities in the industrial and service sector that are attractive for educated young generations;
- (b) a more balanced regional development that stops the exodus from mountainous and rural parts of the country and reduces the attraction of the capital area;
- (c) the development of urban and regional planning and a functioning housing and real estate market that overcomes rigidities created by privatization; and
- (d) the support of gender equality in education and employment, which is one of the main achievements of Albanian society.

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