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Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses

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**COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS (CES)
RECOMMENDATIONS**

**In Compliance with CES Recommendations for the 2010 censuses and enumeration of
homeless people**

Note by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

1. This paper outlines several problems encountered in Serbia that have been faced in attempting to apply the 2010 recommendations for Censuses of population and housing.
2. When determining the place of usual residence, the crucial factor is belonging to a household. All household members are enumerated, no matter whether they are absent at the time of census, living in another place in the country or abroad, or they are present. For absent household members, information is collected about the reason of absence and duration of absence (less than 1 year or 1 year or more). During data processing, all absent members living abroad for 1 year or more were excluded from the household. In this sense, all third level students pursuing their education abroad are also excluded from the household. However, a unique treatment of these persons needs to be provided, particularly in neighbouring countries in order to avoid under coverage or double coverage of these persons.

3. For the first time, in the Census 2011, homeless people will be enumerated. Enumeration of homeless persons will be organized in cooperation with the Republic Institute for Social Welfare.
4. This paper emphasizes the particular dilemmas that have arisen during the process of the application of international recommendations, relating to the determination of place of usual residence, while at the same time preserving comparability with the results of the censuses previously conducted in the Republic of Serbia in the period 1948-2002 (seven censuses).
5. One of the most significant and most frequently used demographic indicators is the total number of population. At first sight, this seems an unambiguous and well-known concept.
6. However, statisticians know that even such simple data can sometimes contain unknown details. Which population categories, in the sense of their spatial and time mobility, should be included in total population number of a settlement, of a municipality or of a country? Namely, spatial redistribution of population presents the convention that is dominant in particular census cycle. Major principles and procedures are regulated by UNECE/ Eurostat Recommendations for Census conducting, also allows for specific national interests and solutions. In order to define the population of territorial units (settlements, municipalities, etc.) in a statistical sense, the most frequently used are the terms of “permanent population”, “usual resident population” or “total population”. Therefore, determination of place of residence is of crucial importance for calculating the population number of local communities and regions, referring to coverage of migrating population and also related to treatment of present and absent population.
7. Concerning all censuses conducted in the Republic of Serbia after World War II, the basis for defining place of residence was a person’s belonging to the household. Priority was given to statements of household members referring to their place of residence, as well as the statement related to the household members. Belonging to a particular household did not have to agree with the person’s legal status. Hence, a person might be officially recorded and registered in another place, although, in the census such a person was not taken to be the inhabitant of that particular place, but the inhabitant of the place in which his household lived¹.
8. In accordance with this approach, pupils and students studying in another place (this is the most frequent category of population who are absent from the place of residence) were enumerated twice, once as temporarily present in the place of studying and once within their households. The same relates to persons whose households are in one place, but who spend most of the time working in another place in the country, coming home on weekends or even more rarely.

¹ Exception to this concept refers to treatment of economically active population, i.e. persons working in another place in the Republic of Serbia and not coming back to the place of residence of their families (households), on regular daily basis (regarding the Censuses 1953, 1961 and 1971), being presented as permanent inhabitants in the place of working.

9. A reason for double enumeration of such persons is that data on absent members obtained in their households are more reliable than the data obtained in the places of working or studying. To be precise, absent household members belong to mobile part of population, often not reached by enumerators, and moreover, owners of dwellings rarely report their subtenants and thus avoid paying taxes on rent. According to calculations from the previous censuses, coverage of persons in their households was more than double, relative to their number in a place of temporary residence².

10. Additionally, when a household moved to another place in the country, members of the household were considered as inhabitants of that place, from the moment of moving, regardless of the time period that has passed from the time of settling.

11. As for persons who lived at census time in an institution such nursing homes, residential institutions for children and adults, monasteries, etc., the settlement in which the institution is located is considered the place of their residence. Exceptions are persons who are imprisoned or in preventive detention. In the pre-enumeration phase, those persons were enumerated in the place of their imprisonment. An auxiliary questionnaire was used for that purpose and afterwards sent to the place of residence of their households. This questionnaire was given by the household members to the interviewer so, the place of residence of households was considered as the place of residence of prisoners. The place of imprisonment of imprisoned persons not having their own households (one-person household) was taken to be the place of their residence.

12. In the Census 2002, as far as this methodological concept is concerned, according to which every person is the inhabitant of the place where her/his household lives, an exception was made for persons living abroad more than a year. They were excluded from the composition of their household. In order to ensure continuity and comparability with data from previous censuses, all household members were enumerated. However, based on the duration of the stay abroad, household members who lived more than a year abroad were excluded during the final processing of census results.

13. In the Census 2011, when balancing population for each territorial unit the concept of the usual place of residence will be applied for the first time, in line with the definition and treatment of certain groups of population as defined in the recommendations (paragraphs 157-179).

14. However, in order to avoid non-coverage of temporarily present persons in the enumeration place, once again all absent persons, i.e. temporarily present persons in the enumeration place, will have to be counted twice, once as absent and then as temporarily present persons. During the data processing, and based on the information on the reason of absence/presence, duration of absence/presence, and on that on for how long the persons intend to be absent/present, an indicator will be attributed to each person via which we will be able to determine the place of usual residence.

² According to 2002 Census results, 45,462 persons were enumerated as absent, working in another place in the Republic of Serbia, as well as 119,037 absent persons, studying in another place. At the same time, 12,057 persons were enumerated as temporary present, working in the place of enumeration and also 52,954 temporary present persons, being present due to education.

15. This does raise several questions:

- (a) *The change of household composition, household size, number of families in the households and the change of family type because of the exclusion from the household composition of the members being absent a year or more, students studying abroad and of persons working in another place and “rarely” returning to the place of residence of the household.* According to the above defined methodological concept it is obvious that all household members are enumerated in the place of residence of their household whether they are present at the moment of the enumeration or absent because of work, studies or any other reason. The reference person is a person aged as a rule over 18 years for whom the members of the household state that she/he is the head of the household. Traditionally, in Serbia, household members insist that this person be a male even if he is absent because working abroad, even for several years. Therefore, the enumerator enters the reference person and then all other household members. The name and code of relationship with the reference person are entered for each household member. The Statistics excludes one or more persons from the household composition during data processing and based on the criteria used for determining the usual place of residence. What happens with the codes of relationship with the reference person? This is particularly problematical when we have a household which comprises more than one family, as well as when other persons live in a one-family household in addition to the family members, which is common in Serbia³. In addition, when excluding certain household members, the number and type of family often change, which slows down and adds further difficulties in data processing. Therefore Serbia would be very grateful if other countries, which conduct a traditional full scope census based on door to door interview, would share their experiences in solving this problem.
- (b) Also, Serbia is interested in knowing what other countries do when the entire household is absent during the census, and information on household members is provided by neighbours, acquaintances or persons from local authorities units, so that only names and surnames, and ages of household members are collected. Is there a criterion, i.e. rule that defines when a person is considered being enumerated? For example, in the Pilot Census 2009⁴ there were 1, 87 per cent questionnaires in which only the name, surname and gender of the person, and the

³ In the Census 2002, enumerated were 2,521,190 households: 246,303 one-family households where there were members not belonging to the family, as well as 211,465 two-family households and 14,108 households with 3 or more families.

⁴ The Pilot Census was carried out from 1 to 15 April 2009 in 36 municipalities and 40 settlements, on a sample of 50 enumeration areas (which is 0,1 per cent of the total number of enumeration areas). The Census covered 10,628 individuals and 4,262 dwellings.

date of birth were written. Should those questionnaires be included in the processing or not?

- (c) According to the recommendations, third level students who are pursuing their education abroad, and have household members in the country will be excluded from the total population. However, it is very important here to have a uniform methodological approach of the countries that once were part of the former Yugoslavia. Namely, as university centres and settlements in neighbouring countries are not geographically far one from each other, and as visas are not required, those students often return on week-ends or several times during a month to their families so that at the time of enumeration they could be present in their households. In order to avoid non-coverage in some countries and multiple recording of this situation in others, it is necessary to treat those persons the same way, as far as methodology is concerned.

16. In the Census 2011, Office of Social Welfare of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) will try for the first time to collect data on so-called primary homeless, i.e. for persons who live in the street, parks, under bridges, etc. In defining how to enumerate the homeless, it has been concluded that they use from time to time, shelters, and other institutions specialized in sheltering homeless persons for 24 hours or less. This is especially so during the winter. The Office of Social Welfare of the Republic of Serbia, as the competent government institution of social welfare for homeless, will send the statistics office addresses of all shelters in the country. In March 2011, in agreement with competent persons in the relevant institutions, the statistics office will organize the enumeration of the homeless, but only for those who used over that period the services of the institutions. The filled out questionnaires will be forwarded to SORS for processing. The places where shelters are located will be the places of usual residence of the homeless.
