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## **Economic Commission for Europe**

Conference of European Statisticians

### **Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses**

Online, 29 September – 1 October 2020

## **Report of the online expert meetings on Population and Housing Censuses**

### **Note by the Secretariat**

#### **I. Attendance**

1. The event was attended by representatives of the following countries, territories and organizations: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bosnia and Herzegovina, European Union (represented by participants from Eurostat and from the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina), Eurasian Economic Commission, European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), IPUMS International and IntCensus.

2. The meetings were supported financially by EFTA and UNFPA.

#### **II. Organization of the meeting**

3. Andres Vikat of UNECE chaired the meeting on 29 September. Eric Schulte Nordholt of the Netherlands, chair of the UNECE Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses, chaired the meeting on 30 September and 1 October.

4. The event was divided into two parts:

(a) *Population and Housing Censuses in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia*, on 29 September, with sessions on:

i. Countries whose censuses have already taken place;

- ii. Countries with censuses in 2021 (planned for 2021 or postponed from 2020);
  - iii. Countries with censuses further ahead (2022 onwards).
- (b) *Population and Housing Censuses and the Covid Pandemic*, on 30 September – 1 October, with sessions on:
- i. International perspective on the 2020 census round;
  - ii. First results and lessons learned from censuses of the 2020 round;
  - iii. Current and recently conducted censuses;
  - iv. Forthcoming censuses;
  - v. Assessing the quality of administrative sources for use in censuses: work of the ECE Task Force;
  - vi. Priorities for international work on censuses and population statistics for the ECE region.
5. Discussions were led by Zhanna Vasilevskaya, Belarus; Aurelia Spataru, Republic of Moldova; Irina Zbarskaya, CIS-Stat; Olivia Blum, Israel; Thomas Körner, Germany; Valérie Roux, France; and Jean-Paul Kauthen, Switzerland.
6. Documents and slides presented at the meeting are available on the meeting web page, [bit.ly/UNECECensus2020](https://bit.ly/UNECECensus2020).

### III. Summary

7. Discussions throughout the meeting highlighted the new and often sudden challenges brought about by the pandemic, experienced by countries at a range of stages in their census plans or operations and using various census approaches, from traditional to fully register-based. Many of the presentations showed increased use of internet self-response and/or moves to greater use of administrative data. The pandemic may in some cases have impacted the quality of administrative sources. In several discussions it became clear that the challenges have given impetus to innovation and improvement, testing and learning from new techniques, and encouraging moves towards alternative approaches that may already have been under consideration.
8. In cases where censuses have been postponed, there was a common view revealed in the discussions that additional time must be used wisely to improve methods of conducting censuses and assessing quality, to enhance contingency plans and to strengthen collaborative partnerships.
9. In an online poll, approximately 40 per cent of participants indicated that the pandemic had accelerated trends in conducting the census in their countries that were already in progress; another 40 per cent indicated that the pandemic had had little or no impact on their country's census; while around 20 per cent felt that census-taking had changed course. About 30 per cent of participants reported increased use of administrative data or accelerated research into such use in the future.
10. Reflecting on the impacts of the pandemic, respondents indicated that it will be very important for ECE to review several issues when revising the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) *Recommendations for Censuses of Population and Housing* for the 2030 round. These issues include assessing the quality of administrative sources; use of new data sources and combining sources; revisiting central concepts of censuses such as simultaneity and usual residence; strengthening recommendations for emergency preparedness and contingency planning; and improving definitions (such as those of secondary residence, pendulum migration etc.).

## IV. Conclusion

11. Participants welcomed proposals from the Steering Group:

(a) To develop a work plan for preparation of the 2030 Recommendations for the ECE region by the end of 2020, to be reviewed by the Bureau of the CES in February 2021;

(b) To solicit updates from member States for the ECE Census wiki on the conduct of censuses of the 2020 round, including brief information about impacts of the pandemic on timing, methods, dissemination and other aspects;

(c) To oversee preparation of an analytical paper on the impacts of the pandemic on census-taking in the region, drawing both on the content of the present meeting and on the Census wiki updates;

(d) To explore possibilities for further online discussion or other forms of interaction related to censuses during 2021, to cover topics that could not be covered in the present meetings and/or other topics as identified in the participant feedback form for this meeting.

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