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Steering Committee of the International Monitoring Operation on the Population and Housing Censuses in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Thirteenth Assessment Report

27 September – 18 October 2013

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Introduction and Background

1. A Population and Housing Census shall take place in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in accordance with the Law on the Census of the Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2013 as adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 3 February 2012. The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina has invited the European Commission to organise the international monitoring of the Census. Therefore, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina signed on 18 April 2012 a Memorandum of Understanding to agree upon the following:

- The general objective of the International Monitoring Operation (IMO) of the Population and Housing Census in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to monitor the compliance of the whole Census exercise, from the preparation to the data dissemination, with:
- International standards on population and housing censuses as defined by UNECE and Eurostat, and as adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians as Recommendations for the 2010 Censuses of Population and Housing;
- Regulation (EC) No 763/2008 on population and housing censuses, and its implementing measures;
- The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, adopted by the UN Statistical Commission, as well as the European Statistics Code of Practice, promulgated by the European Commission;
- Standards on data protection and confidentiality, as provided for in the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data of the Council of Europe, and the relevant European Union regulations in force.

2. The Operation will be carried out by a Committee of International Organisations, the Management Group (IMO MG) assisted by a Senior Census Expert, experts in population censuses, one or more experts in information technology and persons monitoring the census enumeration in the field.

3. The Senior Census Expert, the Census Experts and the IT Experts will assess the compliance of the Census in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the requirements listed in the Memorandum of Understanding, but they will not provide technical assistance.

4. Under the guidance of the Committee and the Senior Census Expert, the Census Experts shall:

- Examine the technical preparation of the Census including the pilot Census and post-enumeration survey, in particular the drafting of questionnaires and manuals;
- Monitor the collection, processing and dissemination of Census data, verifying the accordance with the requirements defined above;
- Control the fair and proper computation at all levels and whether the confidential nature of the individual data is fully guaranteed;
- Investigate any other matter with relevance for the Census.



5. The Management Group has designated Mr. Jean-Michel Durr as Senior Census Expert and Mr. Roberto Bianchini, Mr. Bent Noerby Bonde, Ms. Meryem Demirci, Ms. Katerina Kostadinova-Daskalovska, and Mr. Guido Pieraccini as experts in population censuses. The Senior Census Expert and the Experts in population censuses form the IMO Steering Committee (IMO SC) of international experts.

6. The first mission of the IMO SC was conducted from 23 to 26 April 2012. The objective of this mission was to assess the preparations for the population and housing census in their main components, including the preparation of the pilot census. The report of the SC was sent by the Senior Census Manager on May 12 to the IMO MG.

7. The second mission was conducted from 26 to 29 of June 2012. The objective of this mission was to assess the progress made since the first mission in preparations for the population and housing census, including the preparation of the pilot census.

8. The third mission took place on 17 and 18 of September 2012 and was conducted by two members of the SC, namely, Mr. Jean-Michel Durr and Ms. Katerina Kostadinova-Daskalovska. The objective of the mission was to assess the implementation of recommendations made in previous reports and to assess the preparation of the pilot census, planned for October 15-29.

9. The fourth mission took place between 10 and 29 of October 2012 and was conducted successively by the members of the SC (5 days each, except the senior expert from 10 to 19 of October). The objective of the mission was to observe the conduct of the pilot census in the field. In addition, a team of four observers, composed of Lidija Naumovska, Gabor Rosza, Jean-Paul Sardon and Per Schöning was present during the whole period of the pilot census. Each of them covered several municipalities, in order to observe the pilot census field operations in all the 60 enumeration areas (EAs) sampled in the pilot.

10. The fifth mission took place from 19 to 21 of November 2012 (3 days) and was conducted by one member of the SC, Ms. Katerina Kostadinova-Daskalovska. The objective of the mission was to observe the conduct of the Post enumeration survey (PES) of the Pilot census in the field. The expert covered all 6 EAs (in 6 municipalities) sampled in PES sample in order to observe the PES field operations.

11. The sixth mission took place from 10 to 13 of December 2012 and was conducted by four members of the SC: Mr. Roberto Bianchini, Mr. Bent Noerby Bonde, Ms. Katerina Kostadinova-Daskalovska and Mr. Guido Pieraccini. The objective of the mission was to hear from the Statistical Institutions about the lessons learned from the Pilot Census and to assess whether the preparations are on level that could allow conducting a census in April 2013.

12. The seventh mission took place from 12 to 15 February 2013 and was conducted by one member of the SC, Mr. Roberto Bianchini. The objective of the mission was to assess the situation on the progress of preparation and implementation of the IMO recommendations in the new context of the postponement of the census, with a focus on the achievement of the deadlines regarding cartographic preparations. A second objective was to collect information and materials for a more detailed assessment on the progress of census preparatory activities to be made by all members of the SC in March 2013.

13. The eighth mission was conducted by the complete SC from 18 to 22 March 2013. The objective of the mission was to assess in detail progress made in the preparations with re-



gard to the milestones given after the sixth mission in December 2012, when the SC recommended to postpone the census to October 2013.

14. The ninth mission was conducted by two members of the SC, Jean-Michel Durr and Katerina Kostadinova-Daskalovska from 22 to 25 April 2013. The objective of the mission was to assess the progress made in the preparations with regard to the milestones given in the sixth mission and updated in previous missions.

15. The tenth mission was conducted by the full SC from 28 to 31 May 2013. The objective of the mission was to assess whether the progress made in the preparations was sufficient to consider that the country was ready to conduct a census in October 2013.

16. The eleventh mission was conducted by three members of the SC, Mr. Jean-Michel Durr, Mr. Bent Noerby Bonde and Mr. Guido Pieraccini from 16 to 19 July 2013. The objective of the mission was to assess whether the preparations were still on track after the positive assessment of the 10th mission to conduct a census in October 2013. A special focus was put on the preparation of data processing.

17. The twelfth mission was conducted by four members of the SC, Mr. Roberto Bianchini, Mr. Bent Noerby Bonde, Ms. Katerina Kostadinova-Daskalovska and Mr. Guido Pieraccini from 3 to 6 September 2013. The objective of the mission was to assess the state of play regarding to forthcoming census field activities (including PES) and data processing activities following the field activities as well as the overall census preparations in accordance to the Census milestones and SC recommendations and advices given through the previous missions and SC reports.

18. The thirteenth and present mission was conducted by five members of the SC: Mr. Roberto Bianchini and Mr. Guido Pieraccini from 27 September to 4 October, Ms. Katerina Kostadinova-Daskalovska from 4 October to 11 October; and Mr. Jean-Michel Durr and Ms. Meryem Demirci from 11 October to 18 October. The objective of the mission was to monitor the enumeration of the census, including its final preparations and final operations. During this mission, the SC was assisted by a team of 27 international observers, deployed all over the country.

19. The present assessment is based on the information reported at the meetings during the mission, and on some direct observations during the mission. As a consequence, the comments and recommendations presented below are based on the understanding of the experts, and may not reflect the real situation. This report was prepared by the members of the Steering Committee on the basis of the reports of the international observers as well as their own observations, and was finalised by the Senior Census Expert.

20. The experts wish to express their gratitude to the directors and staff of the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHAS), the Statistical Institutes of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska (RS) for their availability and collaboration, and to the staff of Council of Europe for the perfect organisation of the mission.

Executive Summary

21. The objective of the mission was to assess the enumeration phase of the population and housing census. To achieve this objective, the SC was assisted by a team of 27 international observers, deployed over the country with the task of monitoring the work of all actors



involved and to assess whether the census data collection was conducted in compliance with international standards. All municipalities were visited at least once during the observation period and all municipal commissions met. More than 1000 interviews were observed (1093), corresponding to the enumeration of 3,500 persons.

22. Despite the resignation of many enumerators before the beginning of the operation and the late signature of contracts, the selection of fieldworkers was adequate. Many enumerators had a university degree and showed good understanding of the duties as well as strong commitment to their task. However, the training focused on the necessity to conduct the interview in an absolute neutral way, but did not give the enumerators the capacity to explain the goals of the census to the population or the meaning of some questions. In addition, it was observed that the enumerators rarely informed the population of its right to refrain from answering the questions on ethnicity and religion.

23. The Municipal and Cantonal Commissions functioned quite well and provided in most cases adequate support to the fieldworkers. Census materials were delivered on time.

24. The population was well aware of the census and eager to participate. However, some disinformation campaigns organised by political or religious groups, to tell people the “right” way of answering questions on ethnicity, religion and mother tongue, or to encourage citizens living abroad to come be enumerated in the country, polluted the conduct of the operation. Unfortunately, these campaigns and rumours were not contradicted by an efficient official communication campaign and systematic official reactions.

25. Very few incidents disturbing the conduction of the enumeration were observed, no more than are usual in a census, and these were immediately and appropriately handled by the Municipal Census Commissions (MCCs) as well as the statistical institutions.

26. Supervision of the enumerators’ work was conducted usually efficiently by municipal instructors and entity instructors who performed systematic controls of questionnaires.

27. The enumeration progress was monitored through the system CMIS at the level of municipalities and entities by relevant census bodies. It was observed that most of MCCs found this system very useful for daily monitoring and used actively during the enumeration.

28. Some misunderstandings of questions were observed, in particular when people were afraid of fiscal consequences of their answers to questions related to source of income or agricultural activities.

29. The main problem concerned people living abroad, either enumerated by a present member of a household, or coming to the country during the census period to be enumerated. The phase of data processing should help distinguish between the resident and non-resident population using the answers to questions 1 to 7, but also questions on the place of study or work, as some people were encouraged by some unofficial campaigns to answer to Q1-7 in a way to be considered as residents.

30. The release of preliminary results should occur less than 90 days after the census, using the information collected in the control forms. However, it should be noted that only the numbers of enumerated dwellings, households and persons can be released, and not any resident population figure.

31. The data processing phase should start in December, once the processing centre will have been set. The SC reiterates its strong recommendation to capture the questionnaires as

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such, and to define a set of decision rules to sort out whether an individual is part of the resident population or not, and to avoid any manual intervention on the questionnaires. This is the only way the SC will be able to assess the transparency of the process and the compliance with international standards and definitions.

32. The SC reiterates also its strong recommendation not to proceed with any kind of aggregation of answers related to ethnicity, religion or mother tongue during the data processing phase. All answers provided shall be kept in the final database. The SC will be particularly vigilant on this question.

33. In conclusion, the SC considers that despite some external pressure, the census enumeration was carried out smoothly and in accordance with the international standards. The SC will monitor in the next months the data processing phase to assess its compliance with international standards and best practices.