

# Report on the Pilot Population Census in Kosovo

## Summary of the results and recommendations from the pilot census of October/November 2006

*In the period 30 October to 14 November 2006 a pilot census was held in Kosovo. An International Monitoring Operation chaired by the European Commission (Eurostat) monitored the preparation, field work and analysis of this pilot census. In this report the results of the pilot census are summarised and the recommendations for a future census formulated.*

### **1. Background**

The need for a census in Kosovo has been recognised by the European Commission in the Communication on "A European Future for Kosovo" of June 2005 where it was stated that the European Commission would closely follow the first population and housing census in Kosovo. In March 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) on behalf of the Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) of Kosovo and the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The Memorandum gave the mandate for an International Monitoring Operation (IMO) aimed to establish the conditions to carry out a census according to international standards, so that the results could be acceptable to all parties involved. The IMO should be involved in all phases of the census, suggest necessary corrective measures and provide access to data and facilities.

As foreseen in the Memorandum of Understanding, a Management Group of International Organisations chaired by the European Commission (DG Eurostat) was established responsible for the overall coordination of the IMO. Furthermore, an IMO Steering Committee was set up consisting of high level, internationally recognised statistical experts, experienced in census, and appointed by common agreement between the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The Steering Committee should lead the professional side of the operation, in particular define the criteria and methods for the monitoring, identify problems in the preparatory stage of the census and organise the work of the field observers and the IT experts.

The IMO, started immediately after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. The activities of the IMO focused on assessing preparatory work of the census. The monitoring was done through desk reviews and field visits, including visits to the regional and local offices being responsible for the organisation of the field operations.

The Statistical Office of Kosovo (SOK) had no sufficient experience on census taking. To increase this experience and prepare for a full census a large scale pilot census<sup>1</sup> was held in Kosovo in 2006. This was monitored by the IMO.

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<sup>1</sup> A pilot census in general aims at testing the most important aspects of the entire census organisation with the objective to identify weakness and shortcomings in time to have them corrected before a full census is carried out.

## **2. The Pilot Census in October / November 2006**

The pilot census was conducted in a total of 25 enumeration areas (EAs) in the three municipalities Kamenicë/Kamenica, Pejë/Peć and Štrpce/Shtërpçë from 30 October to 14 November 2006. Among these EAs, there were 18 Albanian EAs, 6 Serbian EAs and 1 mixed EA. Members of the Steering Committee were present at their headquarters in Pristiana during all stages of the pilot census, while some of them also visited the municipalities in order to observe on a first hand basis the enumeration taking place there. Eight field observers working under the general supervision of the Steering Committee observed in the field how the pilot census was carried out and reported their findings to the Steering Committee. The final report of the IMO Steering Committee on the Pilot Census was approved by the IMO Management Group on 8 March 2007 and transmitted to the SOK on 15 March 2007. The report identifies a range of shortcomings of the pilot census and makes recommendations and plans for the way forward.

### *Shortcomings*

The pilot census revealed a number of shortcomings in the wording of some questions in the census questionnaires, examples of where the instruction manuals were not sufficiently clear and indications of where the training given to enumerators and their supervisors was inadequate and needs improvement. However the IMO was not overly concerned about these shortcomings because of two reasons: first, one of the main purposes of a pilot census is to reveal exactly this type of information so that corrective measures can be put in place prior to the full census; and secondly, once these weaknesses have been revealed, SOK and the Technical Assistance Project Staff should be able to resolve them in the time remaining until the date of a full census.

In contrast, the Steering Committee was particularly concerned from the lack of participation to the pilot census by the Serbian and Roma population. Of the minority groups in the included EAs only the Bosnians participated in the pilot census. Against this background, the Steering Group highlighted in its report that the conclusions and findings from the pilot census are limited to the Albanian speaking population and, to a more limited extent, to the Bosnian ethnic community. During the planning of the full census, the non participation of minorities will be a matter of considerable concern. The report outlines that there is a real risk of having a similar situation if the full census were to be undertaken too soon, thereby undermining the reliability and usefulness of its results. This concern has been shared with the Kosovo authorities who are aware of the existing problems and expressed their commitment to address them.

### *Recommendations*

The IMO report identifies further some shortcomings of a technical nature and recommends, inter alia, that better training routines are needed, that questionnaires require further improvement both in functionality and possibly in relevance, and that substantial human resources need to be made available on time. The concrete recommendations can be found in annex to this report.

### *Way forward*

The European Commission and the international community are committed to continue their support to monitor the full census, including providing experts and financial support. The preparations for a full census should continue at the Statistical Office of Kosovo.

From a technical point of view, the IMO Steering Committee's assessment is that with adequate efforts, especially through increasing the human resources, and with the continued support of international experts, the technical conditions for a full census could be met in a matter of six months. However, other elements of a more political nature, such as the non participation by minorities, or of a financial nature, such as the allocation of sufficient resources in the budget of Kosovo for this exercise would also have to be addressed and dealt with before the census.

***Recommendations from the International Monitoring Operation from the Pilot population census in Kosovo, held October/November 2006.***

**Recommendation:**

The maps to be used by enumerators in the full census should be updated so that they will be more accurate and up-to-date than the incomplete and outdated ones that were used in the pilot census. There are important resource requirements associated with this that the SOK Management has estimated. The Steering Committee of the International Monitoring Operation has reviewed those resource estimates and considers that they are reasonable. Therefore, the relevant authorities should make every effort to provide them so that maps of the required quality will be available in time for use in the full census.

**Recommendation:**

The IT and other resources currently available within the Statistical Office of Kosovo (SOK) were insufficient for doing all the required work associated with the pilot census on their own, and therefore SOK had to rely heavily on the Technical Assistance Project Team to enable the work on the pilot census to be undertaken. Although this arrangement was somewhat satisfactory for the pilot census, the workload involved in the full census will be both much heavier and much more complex, and therefore this approach cannot be relied on for the full census. Consequently, the IT and other resources currently available within SOK will have to be strengthened considerably well in advance of the full census in order to enable SOK to carry out the full census successfully, even with support from the Technical Assistance Project Team.

**Recommendation:**

Sufficient numbers of skilled data entry operators will need to be sourced about two weeks before the data entry phase begins. They will need to be trained to such a degree that the number of key depressions per hour is of a sufficient level to enable the data capture phase to be completed in three to four months, so that the production and release of the census data will not be delayed.

**Recommendation:**

The Statistical Office of Kosovo and the Technical Assistance Project Team should expand the planned training programme by at least two days to ensure that enumerators will be thoroughly familiar with the various parts of the questionnaires, and better able to conduct the enumeration.

**Recommendation:**

When the full census takes place the Steering Committee, the Management Group and possibly even senior representatives of the Government and of all major ethnic communities should play a much more pro-active role both prior to it and during it aimed at promoting the full participation of all ethnic communities in the census.

**Recommendation:**

A more thorough and in-depth analysis of the reliability of data ought to be made by comparing census data with corresponding data from other sources. Plans should also be drawn up requiring that a Post Enumeration Survey be conducted immediately after the full census.

**Recommendation:**

It is important that the Statistical Office of Kosovo develops and implements a consultation programme with interested parties in relation to outputs that they would like to have produced from the census. The timescale for the agreed output programme should also be advertised in advance.

**Recommendation:**

Plans for conducting the full census should be amended to allow time for the Kosovo authorities to conduct a thorough analysis of the reasons why the Serbian and Roma populations refrained from participating in the pilot census; the Kosovo authorities and the international organizations should also assess the serious risks involved in proceeding into the field to conduct the full census without first addressing any major concerns of the ethnic communities which resulted in their not taking part in the pilot census.

**Recommendation:**

The planning and preparations for the main census should continue, even if current conditions in Kosovo and uncertainties associated with the boycott that occurred in the pilot census make it inadvisable to take a firm decision in the near future on the actual date for the full census. In order to be prepared on time for the full census, the decision for taking the census should be made at least 6 months prior to the date of the census.

**Recommendation:**

The Statistical Office of Kosovo and the Technical Assistance Project Team should amend the census questionnaires and the census manuals in order to fully address the weaknesses that were identified in them during the pilot census. The wording of some of the questions will have to be modified and improved, and some additions and other types of improvements will have to be made to the questionnaires and the manuals.

**Recommendation:**

Prior to fixing a new date for the full census, provision should be made to enable a further meeting of the Steering Committee to be held in Pristina at some point in the coming months, in order to enable the Steering Committee to (i) review and assess the measures that the Kosovo authorities and the international organizations have taken aimed at promoting the active and full participation of all ethnic communities in the full census referred to in a recommendation above; and (ii) review the changes the Statistical Office of Kosovo and the Technical Assistance Project Team have introduced into the census questionnaires and the census manuals in order to address the weaknesses in them referred to in some of the recommendations above.