

**An Abridged Report of the Seminar on Population and Housing Censuses
held by the Conference of European Statisticians**

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Introduction

1. The Seminar on Population and Housing Censuses was held by the Conference of European Statisticians in Paris on 14 June 2006. The seminar was made up of three sessions and the following points were discussed at each session.

Session 1: The role and use of censuses

2. This session dealt with the functions of the census in national statistical systems with the objective of clarifying its unique and important contributions. The analysis of the role and use of censuses help in understanding how censuses may evolve over time and what alternative sources and approaches in terms of census content, definitions, and methodology can be used to better respond to demands for census data.

3. In the discussion, the following points were made:

- The role and use of censuses are evolving in many countries to adapt to changes in society, to respond to new demands from users and respondents, and to increase the efficiency of the census for the whole statistical system;
- In order to respond to demand for up-to-date population data, an increasing number of countries adopt census methodologies that allow the production of such data on an annual basis, such as censuses based on registers, rolling censuses, or decennial counting with annual updates based on large sample surveys;
- The main driver for the population census remains the total counting of the population that provides the benchmark for the population estimates; and other points were also discussed.

Session 2: Design and essential features of censuses

4. The session considered the emerging methodologies for census taking and the essential features of a census in this regard. The various approaches used by the countries in the UNECE region, including traditional, register-based and rolling censuses.

5. In the discussion, the following points were made:

- An increasing number of countries in the region are moving towards the use of administrative registers to derive census data;
- The register approach can be a cost-effective solution, in particular in countries where a register system is already in place;
- In countries where a register system does not exist, creating a new one for the exclusive purpose of the census may be too costly or currently unacceptable from a privacy

perspective;

- A significant number of countries will continue to conduct traditional censuses, for a number of reasons; and other points were also discussed.

Session 3: Challenges in managing and implementing censuses

6. The session discussed the wide range of challenges in delivering censuses successfully. The problems that countries face relate to the uses of census data, the coordination and funding of the census, as well as the practicalities of acquiring comprehensive and accurate information. Some of the challenges are being met by introducing a range of new census-taking technologies and methodologies. In other cases, countries are looking to outsource some or all activities related to data processing and other aspects of census-taking. The session also discussed the implications of quality control and confidentiality.

7. In the discussion, the following points were made:

- The increased mobility of the population is an additional challenge to the conducting of population censuses. The definition of the population and the different migrant populations, including illegal migrants, affect population counting and intercensal population estimates;
- Quality is an important factor in the census regardless of the methods used;
- The use of technology can help to address some of the challenges in the new census round;
- Countries increasingly involve the private sector in certain tasks involved in conducting the population census. This may provide more cost-effective solutions; however, the selection of tasks that can be outsourced and the long-term implications of outsourcing versus internal development should be carefully evaluated.

Concluding remarks

8. The following key points of the seminar were made as concluding remarks:

- The main aim of the census is provide the official counting of the population and to measure the size and structure of the population;
- The census is the main basis for population estimates;
- The census should be considered as part of a statistical system and not as a separate entry.
- There is no one "ideal" approach to census taking, the choice of methods depends on the circumstances in individual countries;
- Given the different innovative approaches to censuses being developed in many countries, international requirements should focus both census output and on methods;
- Migration and mobility make population estimation difficult; methods should be developed for capturing migration and mobility in and between censuses;
- Making efficient use of technology for censuses is a continuous learning process; and
- The success of a census is also linked to the image of the national statistical office, its integrity and public trust. The statistical office's pledge of confidentiality and the importance of census for good governance should be communicated to the public.

Adoption of the CES Recommendations for the 2010 Censuses of Population and Housing

9. The Conference adopted the CES Recommendations for the 2010 Censuses of population and Housing.

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**The summary of this report was based on the Report of the 54th plenary session (ECE/CES/70).*