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President,
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After more than 15 years of technical assistance and cooperation in the statistical field, the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) is now facing a new challenge: with the establishment of the “School for Statistics and Social and Economic Analysis” the Italian Statistical System has a unique opportunity to integrate training and cooperation activities, making Italy an important actor of the international network aimed

at supporting developing and emerging countries to improve their statistical systems.

Already in the past, the Italian contribution to international statistical cooperation has been based on a “technical assistance” approach oriented to the institutional building of national statistical institutes and systems, rather than providing “turnkey” services for the implementation of statistical surveys. We strongly believe in the cooperation philosophy that can be summarised in the simple, yet clear assumption: “from donorship to ownership”. We also believe that strengthening the role of training activities (including on-the-job training, open learning, e-learning, etc.) in all international cooperation projects can be helpful to communicate the pivotal role that official statistics plays in the organization of societies, in decision-making processes, especially at governmental level, in information dissemination systems and, consequently, in cultural habits.

According to several influential people, high quality statistics will become one of the key assets for XXI century societies. Statistical information can help all stakeholders, including citizens, to move towards a more evidence-based decision making and improvement of choices they have to make in their daily life. The development of national statistical systems is not a purely technical issue, but can have a strong impact on democratic governance, therefore on the progress of societies. More and more countries (including some emerging ones) are ready to support these developments, financing statistical enhancement in developing countries. This great opportunity needs to be supported by statistical offices of developed countries, who should make available their best experts, in order to share with receiving countries the best possible practices.

In this perspective, we feel the need to improve the communication within the international cooperation network and between the network and other interested parties. This is why Istat decided to launch this newsletter, in order to periodically report on activities undertaken and planned in the near future, as well as to share common experiences and exploit all possible synergies with present and potential partners. This newsletter is thus open to contributions from other statistical institutes, international organisations and members of the donor and receiving communities.

I do hope that, with your contribution, this new tool can help in making international cooperation and training on statistical matters more visible, effective and efficient.

welcome by
Enrico Giovannini **1**

insight
The first population Census in Kosovo: a challenge for the new country **2**

interview with
Edita Tahiri
Census: a priority for independent Kosovo **3**

activities in brief **4**

study visits **5**

in partnership with... **5**

in the pipeline... **5**

The first population Census in Kosovo: a challenge for the new country

Under EU funding, Istat is leading a crucial project of technical assistance to conduct the first population and housing census in Kosovo after a 30 years lack of reliable census data.



"I doubt that the statistics are a source of pleasure to those in power"; with those words, Bosko Jaksic, a Serbian journalist recently summarized the census challenges in the Balkan region. Yes, census will re-open still and understandably open scares of displaced persons and of their beloved; yes, evidence is not always providing good image of leaders' policies; yes, in a new-born State in search of recognition, census can be easily mixed-up with legitimization of right to exist, and in States facing difficulties in establishing the rule of law, gaining confidence in the use of information provided to institutions becomes a significant target.

This is the context in which Istat took over the gamble: provide technical assistance to Kosovo in conducting a fully recognized population census compliant with internationally agreed methodological rules and clauses after a troublesome period of three decades, giving back to the undertaking its real nature of statistical operation. This is indeed an historic time for Kosovo.

Thanks to over 10 million euro in trust fund pooling of financial resources and managed by an UN body, from Kosovo's budget and international donors, a population/housing census is going to be conducted among usual residents in Kosovo, for the first time in 30 years. It, in the light of the Balkan history, takes a politically significant flavor. Kosovo census shall be carried out in a traditional way.

From 1 to 15 April 2011, more than 5000 persons will actively canvass Kosovo door-to-door to help residents providing accurate information on their living conditions, personal socio-economic characteristics and family structures.

The Statistical Office of Kosovo is the key player in this vast undertaking. It is obtaining assistance through the EUCEP project, an EU-funded technical assistance project that is focused on both the methodology and logistics of implementing a successful census in Kosovo, and enhancing active public outreach and engagement at the civil-society level.

Together with three Consortium partners, namely CIRPS-Sapienza University of Rome, ICON Institut from Germany and Rrota, a Kosova company specialized in the communications field, Istat is leading the EUCEP project, which until end November 2012 will provide continuous experts' assistance to ensure that all the requirements of this complex and large-scale operation are covered.

Legal provisions have been at the starting blocks of the operation. Kosovo legal basis has been closely monitored by international experts and has been found compliant with basic international requirements.

It encompasses issues such as definition of the population to be enumerated, responsibility of bodies involved including a Central Census Commission and Municipal Census Commissions, as well as issues pertaining to data protection and confidentiality.

As renowned Statistical Institute, Istat is largely involved in

guiding its partner, the Statistical Office of Kosovo, in the choice of appropriate methodology and in the development of relevant technology for the census. This is why questionnaires contents and design, census organization and supporting materials have been largely entrusted to Istat census specialists, as have been ICT strategic decisions and tools to acquire, capture and process data that will be gathered on the field.

It is worthwhile to mention that this project is not the sole player in Kosovo. From 2006, an International Monitoring Operation (IMO) jointly set-up by the Council of Europe and the European Commission is closely following the census preparations; its Steering Committee monitors all methodological aspects, additional focusing on outreaching activities to ensure that all groups will participate in the enumeration and that the census results will therefore be widely recognized.

On its side, IMO Management Group provides guidance and support at political level. The IMO will organize an international observation of the enumeration phase. Outreaching Kosovo population is a crucial issue.

An in-depth analysis of two pilot censuses respectively held in 2006 and 2008 revealed that there were not only many misconceptions, but also a total lack of basic knowledge on the process of a census within all segments of Kosovo population, that resulted not just in hesitation, but in some cases, in an outright refusal of participation in a census within whole communities.

As result the communication, outreach and awareness-building areas of expertise were identified as essential to overcome the weak spots identified during both pilot censuses.

Therefore, in addition to its purely statistical and technical assistance, EUCEP is putting lots of efforts in cooperating with all groups of the Kosovo population in order to encourage a general and reliable participation in the forthcoming census.

Rendering data meaningful for a weakly skilled public is the challenge we are expecting to face after the census will be over. Creating statistical literacy and promoting a proper use and understanding of census results is the next target.

Since the start of the project in June 2010, counterparts have already accomplished giant steps in their capacity to achieve a successful census. The assistance is presently intensifying in the form of technical assistance for the fine-tuning operations for the field organization, the trainings of field staff, the testing of data-entry applications, the finalization of the post-enumeration survey, the census monitoring strategy, the quality control of census processes and materials.

In total, during its 30-month duration the project will provide 1338 man-days of technical support to the Statistical Office of Kosovo, of which 1133 will involve expertise of senior level. In average, 45 days a month of assistance, a more than full and continuous support, demanding for our local partners yet essential for participating in a step forward towards enlighten decision-making in the Balkan area.

Isabelle de Pourbaix



Team Leader
EUCEP
CENSUS SUPPORT PROJECT 2010

Kosovo

Capital: PRISTINA
Estimates 2007
Surface 10.908 km²
Population (000) 2,130
GDP crt.p. (Million €) 3,433.6
GDP per capita (€) 1,612
Ethnic groups: Albanian 92 %
Serb 5.3 %, others 2.7 %
Source: SOK



Edita Tahiri
Minister
of Public Administration
Republic of Kosovo



interview with Edita Tahiri



CENSUS: A PRIORITY FOR INDEPENDENT KOSOVO

by
Isabelle de Pourbaix
Team Leader
and
Roberta Fontana
Istat

Minister Tahiri, this is the first time that Independent Kosovo began a comprehensive Census enumeration of people. Now, as the 2011 census is set to start in April, how do you consider it in the current context of the country?

The census on population and housing has been one of the main priority of the Government of Kosovo, since the independence of Kosovo in 2008. Accordingly, our Ministry, the Statistical Office and Census Office are fully engaged to carry out the Census in a successful and professional way. We aim at obtaining accurate results which would enjoy national and international legitimacy. The preparatory process has been rather complex and full of challenges, in terms of legislation, financial support, operational capacities and outreach campaign. We are moving ahead with preparations of last stage. I want to acknowledge the remarkable cooperation with international partners including EUROSTAT, ECLC, ICO, EUCEP, UNOPS, SIDA, DIFID, SDC, Luxembourg and Denmark governments, etc., which was critical for the success of getting a “green light” by International Monitoring Operation for the implementation of census operation on 1-15 April 2011. It is worth mentioning that 2011 Census shall fill the thirty years gap on official census data in Kosovo, caused by the difficult past it has gone through. Finally, Kosovo, as a new state, will have a picture of its population and housing as a basis for development planning for the future.

In the SOK Development Plan for 2009-2013 is mentioned: “There are two major concerns over the next five years. The first is the population Census (...)”. Which are the expectation of the country, with respect to the results of Census?

Census data are important in many aspects. First, they will support the Government of Kosovo in policy planning of economic and social development that will respond to the realities on the ground. Second, I believe it is an important input for foreign investor in their potential investments in Kosovo. Kosovo population is young, educated and integrated in digital trends, and the Census provides indicators of this reality. Third, it helps to study demographic trends in our country as a post-conflict society. Fourth, it serves the academic purposes. I remember myself lacking the census data of my country during my studies at Harvard University in 2001-2002, which compelled me to choose other countries as a case study. With this Census, Kosovo is entering the world map of statistics.

Do you think that there are findings in the Census holding particular importance for the improvement of social and economic development of Kosovo?

No doubt that Census results will have a positive impact on economic and social developments.

A democratic society uses statistical information to plan, administer, monitor and discuss alternative actions in different areas. Are the Kosovar decision makers ready to adjust their policies on the basis of the Census results?

As you might know, Kosovo government has done tremendous efforts to hold the census since the end of war in 1999 and the placement of Kosovo under international administration. However, despite the preparation of many years, obstacles were of political nature, given its undefined status. Since 2008 when Kosovo declared independence and received bold recognition by international community, conditions got ripe to hold the census. I believe that long term institutional strive to hold the census answers the question of readiness to make use of this important data in policy making and in taking right decisions for the good of our citizens.

Statistical Office of Kosovo is advancing in the process of establishing a statistical system, but of course time is required to achieve a comprehensive and integrated system, fit to the local situation and in line with international standards. After the Population and Housing Census, which will be the next steps?

Achieving a comprehensive and integrated statistical system requires empowering reforms in the SOK with the goal of making it capable of responding to its challenges and responsibilities. I think SOK needs further capacity building and continuous update with international trends and standards. In the draft law on SOK, subject to adoption by Kosovo Parliament, the role and responsibilities of SOK are defined in the harmony of international standards with emphasis on its autonomy as provided by EU standards. The implementation of this law should be supported by adequate budget that enables SOK to advance and reach the goals of integrity and competence, following the advanced models of other countries.



Albania

Support for the alignment of Albanian Statistics with EU standards

Implemented by: Istat (main contractor), Statistics Sweden, MIPA
Financed by: European Commission
Duration: March 2010- March 2012

The objective of the project is the reinforcement of the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) capacities in National Accounts as well as the implementation of the Economic Census of non-Agricultural Enterprises and the Agricultural Census. Concerning NA, the actions for the improvement of the data sources and methods for the estimation of annual NA by production and expenditure approaches have continued with the collection of available statistical and administrative data for the year 2009. A special attention was paid to the administrative data necessary for the estimation of GDP by expenditure side. In this respect, several meetings were held with representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Albania and other institutions, having as objective to identify the data for investment and inventory and to establish the relationships for further cooperation.

Activities also continued as concerns the methodological concepts and methods for the estimation of the Supply and Use Tables, of Non-Observed Economy and quarterly NA. The economic census started in November 2010 and the fieldwork is now concluded.

Some remaining field operations concerning the Albanian regions of Shkodra (hit by floods and bad weather conditions) and Tirana (where the response rate is still low due to difficulties in locating some enterprises) were completed in January 2011.

Currently the phase of scanning the questionnaires is taking place. The Census of Agriculture (CAH) has been postponed to June 2012. The work for the preparation of the methodological framework for the CAH in line with EU requirements is continuing and actions are being taken to activate inter-institutional cooperation with other government bodies involved in the process.

Albania

Household Budget Survey 2008 – 2009

Implemented by: World Bank
Financed by: World Bank
Duration: June – December 2010

Consultancy services have been provided to the World Bank for the data cleaning (editing and imputation), sample weights adjustment and estimation of average monthly expenditure of the HBS 2008 – 2009 implemented by INSTAT. All the related procedures have been developed in SAS. Training was provided to INSTAT staff on SAS applications for editing and imputation processes.

Kosovo

Population and Housing Census (EUCEP-2011)

Implemented by: Istat (main contractor), CIRPS-Sapienza University of Rome, ICON-Institute Public Sector and Rrota.
Financed by: European Commission
Duration: May 2010 – November 2012

The project aims at the improvement of the capacity of the Statistical Office of Kosovo (SOK) for the preparation and implementation of the first Population and Housing Census of the Independent Kosovo and for the dissemination of its results. The enumeration will be carried out in the first half of April 2011.

A demographer, with the function of Team Leader, leads the local international team supported by an expert on Communication and Outreach, an Assistant of Communication and a local Office Manager. The joint work of the International Experts and SOK's Census Office Team is bringing to improvements in different areas of the project: preparation of methodological and operational planning documents, organisation, coordination and supervision of the fieldwork activities and implementation of a significant, visible and constructive outreach strategy to ensure the fully involvement of the population in the Census.

Mozambique

Support to INE for the development of innovative methodologies in the sector of economic statistics

Implemented by: Istat
Financed by: Italian Cooperation
Duration: June 2008 – December 2010

The Institute concluded in 2010 a project in cooperation with INE, aimed at exploring the possibility to obtain estimates of the Informal Sector through the analysis of data from the Household Budget Survey – IOF2008, by creating a specific additional module in the primary questionnaire. Based on the experience and knowledge gained during a previous project financed by the Italian Cooperation and focused on the thematic survey on the Informal Sector, INFOR2004, the project centred on the updating of information on the Labour Force component of the Informal Sector in the country and its main indicators.

Mediterranean

Statistical cooperation in the Mediterranean Region (MedStat -Phase III)

Implemented by: Adetef (main contractor), INSEE (France), ISTAT (Italy), ONS (UK), INE (Spain), INE (Portugal), KSH (Hungary), Statistics Lithuania, InWent (Germany), ICON-Institut (Germany), Sogeti (Luxembourg), DOS (Jordan), HCP-DS (Morocco)
Financed by: European Commission
Duration: April 2010 – December 2013

MedStat III builds its objectives on the achievements of the two previous phases of the Euro-Mediterranean Statistical cooperation to further strengthen the national statistical systems of beneficiary countries and to promote harmonisation with EU and international standards. Special focus in this third phase is on six thematic sectors: Agriculture, Energy, Migration, Social Statistics, Transport, Trade and Balance of Payments, plus two horizontal sectors, training and dissemination. The consortium started its technical assistance activities in the second half 2010. Istat will be in charge of the training course on Quality statistics.

26-27 January 2011: delegation from the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia on “**An overview of SILC and HBS in Italy**”

14 December 2010: delegation from Georgia on “**System of planning and control, quality approach and audit for quality**”

6-9 October 2010: delegation from Serbia on “**Implementation of NACE Rev 2**”



In partnership with...

FAO - Statistics Division Duration: October 2010 – October 2013

The Memorandum of Understanding with FAO recognizes the importance of the establishment of international standards, norms and classifications for the production and dissemination of high quality statistics, and the need to strengthen the cooperation between international and national organizations to enhance the understanding and implementation of statistical methodologies and best practices. The Memorandum promotes joint research on estimation methods, integrated survey frameworks, innovative ways for survey conduction and GPS techniques, focusing on agriculture statistics and rural development.

Cape Verde - INE Duration: June 2009 – June 2012

The Memorandum of Understanding with INE focuses on agriculture statistics and census, agriculture accounts, sample surveys development of IT systems and infrastructures, methodologies and tools for strengthening the national capacity of the country's statistical system. It recognizes the importance to adopt and disseminate international standards, norms and classifications.

Cooperation with Cape Verde dates back to early 2000s, with the launching of the project 'Strengthening of the statistical system of the Ministry of Agriculture – Establishment of a permanent system of agricultural statistics'. The project, funded by the Italian Cooperation, was implemented by Istat with the Ministry of Environment and Rural Development and INE.

Tunisia - INS Duration: December 2009 – December 2012

The Memorandum recognizes that an effective cooperation can contribute to the development of statistical systems, to a better understanding and a easier exchange of information particularly through the adoption of international standard methodologies, norms and classifications. The cooperation between the two institutes will focus on sector statistics (social, demographic, economics, environmental and national accounts), statistical methodologies, use of administrative sources and technical tools for statistical programming and coordination. The Memorandum has been signed during the implementation of a EU Twinning project (April 2008 – April 2010) on business statistics and register.

In the pipeline...

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Twinning Project “Support to the State and Entity Statistical Institutions, phase V”

Implemented by: Statistics Denmark (main contractor), Destatis (Germany), ISTAT, Statistics Finland and Statistics Lithuania
Financed by: EU, Duration: 2 years

The new European Twinning Project aims at enhancing the capacities of the state and entity statistical institutions in BiH to produce reliable and regular business statistics according to EU standards, to analyse the results of the first extended version of the Household Budget Survey, and to strengthen the institutional capacity and horizontal cooperation within BiH. The following areas will be covered by the project: further development of Business Statistics, improvement and development of Statistical Business Register (SBR), development of the structural business statistics, improvement in the production of the tourism and short-term indicators, the Extended Household Budget Survey (HBS), strengthening the institutional capacity for BiH Statistics, preparation of the long term development strategy for the BiH statistical system, metadata system development, web dissemination, and classification system development.

Study visits

7-8 March 2011 and 21-22 March 2011: delegations from the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo on “Farm Structure Services data transmission issues”.

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