



accurate and complete. In order to turn Bulgarian citizens into committed supporters of the census an effective and well targeted communications strategy was developed. It is now a standard practice to apply marketing approach to the output of official statistics, but it has not been applied on such a scale to the Census data collection. The collection phase of Census 2011 was a significant communications exercise. More than 3 million households needed to be aware of the importance of Census but also to understand how and when they might participate and in particular, how to use the internet opportunity.

It was not enough to talk about the importance of census and to generate interest in the up-coming results. The public communications campaign had to address a number of issues related to the innovations in the census methodology and implementation. It had to provide answers to a number of questions: Why the residents should be willing to participate? How they could use e-census opportunity? Why it was necessary to be co-operative with census interviewers? In answering all the challenges and innovations related Census we had faced serious budget constraints and the data collection had to be carried out at the lowest possible cost.

This paper describes the content, goals and stages of the communications campaign for Census 2011 as well as outlines its main components and channels (media campaign, national and local partnerships, social media, on-line interactions and trainings) that prompted participation and led to the Census success. Lessons derived from our experience can help other national statistical offices in the preparation of their own communications campaigns and efforts for informing, motivating and getting support of citizens and institutions.

2. Goals and Scope of Communications Campaign

In the preparation of Census 2011 we identified a number of new challenges that have not been existing before and that, in turn have influenced the scope and the content of the public communications campaign. Proliferation of new communications channels, emerging of social networking, increasing importance of privacy concerns, appearance of citizen journalism and existing of mistrust of governmental institutions among some societal groups are among the phenomena that require a change and reshape in the communications and dissemination policies of official statistics in general and in the preparing and implementing census in particular.

In addition to the general challenges listed above the public communications campaign needed to reflect innovations in the organization and implementation of the Census.