



THE 2000 CENSUS ROUND IN EUROPE: SELECTED ISSUES IN COLLECTION METHODS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

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1. INTRODUCTION Population censuses are the oldest and most reliable way to take stock of people and their living conditions in a given territory. Censuses are now usually based on sound scientific methods, and taken at regular intervals. These surveys when taken in a traditional way - i.e. with a countrywide enumeration through house visits and manual data entry - are costly, and constitute a significant burden to the respondents. Nevertheless censuses are a fundamental source of information for most countries, useful from the national level to the smallest geographical units. They represent an indispensable tool for decision-making, forecasting and drawing statistical samples. For this reason in recent years such a survey has been performed at least once in most countries of the world (with only very few exceptions in Europe). The availability of international assistance often plays a significant role in deciding whether a census will take place or not.

This paper first presents some general information about the conduct of population censuses in Europe and the methods applied in the 2000 Round. There is a special focus on four countries that represent a cross-section of the now common methods and approaches and that are, in our view, among the interesting ones. The report then provides an overview of the approaches taken by countries in the public awareness and information campaigns.

2. COLLECTION METHODS OF POPULATION CENSUSES IN EUROPE: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND RECENT PRACTICES

Counting people has very early origins, with the oldest recorded census-taking place in the Babylonian Empire around 3800 BC. Army, tax and national administration were the main reasons to undertake such a complex operation. The beginning of the

modern population censuses can be placed around 1850. Counts with no particular fiscal purpose and, for the time, innovative procedures then were undertaken in several countries

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