

prime time. Printed publicity included the use of newspapers, posters and leaflets. Electronic support was further provided by toll-free phone lines, the Internet site of the national statistical agency INSEE, and information provision through MINITEL, a widely used electronic bulletin board system independent of the Internet (but increasingly integrated with it).

Special efforts were directed at school children via "Educational kits". Difficult-to-reach segments of the population such as the elderly, foreigners, the handicapped and the unemployed received special, often personal, attention.

Data collection followed the traditional enumerator-driven model, although registers, especially the property tax file, were used for control.

Dissemination includes the usual mix of standard products (printed reports, magnetic and optical media), as well as a range of analytic publications. The Internet and MINITEL serve on-line information users.

A special challenge was created by the fact that INSEE while it was completing the 1999 Census also developed and started to implement the concept of a rolling census. This entails that there will not be a one-off massive headcount once every seven-to-nine years. There is to be an ongoing enumeration effort throughout the decennium, using a carefully considered sampling pattern, and traditional questionnaires. As a result there will be no particular point in time at which actual and precise population figures are being generated. But the population estimates over time can become much more accurate than they used to be. The effort has to be considered in the light of the fact that France has no population register and there are no plans to establish one. Census population figures therefore carry exceptional weight.

The refreshing concept of the rolling census requires a massive public awareness campaign to educate both the public and information users. While the results promise to provide welcome greater quality and timeliness, the underlying concepts are more complex than those used before, and need to be fully explained. This task is already being undertaken.

A full "round" of the rolling census will take five years. Each year the **legal** population of the administrative districts will be established, as well as associated statistical results, for a point of time about three years back. The figures will be obtained by combining the information collected during the last five collections. If a small community had only been surveyed before the reference moment, the result will have to be determined by extrapolation. If there exists a survey from after the reference moment, interpolation is possible. The new Census will also provide estimates using only the results of the last annual collection. Published at the end of the year, these will cover approximately 8.4 million surveyed persons, i.e. one in seven.

The idea of a rolling census addresses many problems experienced by statistical offices, among which the need for an exceptional effort once every so-many years, which can be difficult to manage. INSEE will produce the standard census reports to international agencies using secondary methods.