



AWARENESS AND MEDIA CAMPAIGN - A KEY FACTOR FOR THE SUCCESS OF CENSUS 2011

*Mariana Kotzeva**

1. Introduction

On 1st February 2011 Bulgaria conducted seventeenth Population and Housing Census in its modern history. Data collection took place in two stages. From 1st to 9th of February 2011 for the first time Bulgarian population was offered the opportunity to fill in census questionnaire via internet. In the last three weeks of February (from 10th till 28th of February 2011) the interviewers visited households to conduct face-to-face interviews with those who had not used the internet option.

The Census was an overall success. It is well recognized in Bulgaria that Census 2011 appeared to be the largest population mobilization in recent Bulgarian history, a period of full support to the survey by all stakeholders - government, local authorities, media, citizens and communities, a time of active NSI presence reflected in a positive manner by media. A key factor for the successful preparation and implementation of the Census was the nationwide, well targeted and comprehensive integrated public communications campaign.

The Census 2011 public communications campaign was one of the most extensive and far reaching marketing campaigns ever conducted in Bulgaria. Census is a complex exercise and the final outcome depends strongly on the population participation rate. Therefore the campaign attempted to motivate each person to take part in it and to make its feeling like it is a crucial part of Census. For a very limited time frame our marketing activities reached 3 millions of households.

A key milestone in the preparation of Bulgarian Census 2011 was the understanding that communications had to be indispensable part of the whole process. In the previous Censuses the focus was on the dissemination of results. As regards to the communication side the emphasis was on the public awareness promoted mainly through media channels. Changing media landscape and the development of modern ICT technologies have shifted focus from a simple dissemination to a more interactive way of communications with users and respondents of official statistics. Census as the largest in scope statistical survey is not an exception. Furthermore, having the importance of census itself it is absolutely essential to ensure that the data collected are

* Ph.D. Associate Professor, President of the National Statistical Institute up to 20.03.2012