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Expert-Grup
Independent Think-Tank



Presentation of the independent evaluation report on the piloting of the population and housing census in the Republic of Moldova 2024

April 2024

Project

From July to October 2023, with the support of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova, Expert-Grup acted as an independent observer during the main activities related to the pilot census:

- ▶ Refinement of questionnaires;
- ▶ Recruitment and training of temporary staff;
- ▶ Testing equipment and data collection application;
- ▶ Public awareness activities etc.

Purpose: To evaluate the process of preparation and running of the pilot population and housing census and to come up with recommendations to improve the organization of the actual population and housing census in 2024.

Methodological aspects

Methodological evaluation basis:

- ▶ **Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2020 Censuses of Population and Housing** (2015) published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE);
- ▶ **Evaluating a Pilot Electronic Census Guide** (2021), published by the US Census Bureau;
- ▶ **Evaluation Report of the 2014 Population and Housing Census in the Republic of Moldova** (2017), developed with the support of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation;

Methodological aspects

Evaluation methods:

- ▶ NBS documentation on the pilot census was studied:
 - ▶ Orders;
 - ▶ Contracts;
 - ▶ Strategies;
 - ▶ Manuals, instructions;
 - ▶ Survey results etc.
- ▶ Discussions with NBS staff on the progress of processes;
- ▶ Attending staff training, hands-on testing of tablets;
- ▶ Focus group with enumerators after the pilot census;
- ▶ Tracking the coverage of the census in the media.

Census topics / variables

It was checked whether:

- ▶ The questionnaires contain **mandatory questions** according to international standards;
- ▶ Questions have **historical continuity** with previous censuses;
- ▶ Census variables have been **discussed with users**;
- ▶ **Additional questions** have been included at the motivated request of data users;
- ▶ Questions for which alternative data sources already exist have been **removed**;
- ▶ The **wording of the questions** in the questionnaires has been checked by communication experts, it has been adjusted as a result of public consultations;
- ▶ The Russian **translation** of the pilot census questionnaires corresponds to the original Romanian version;
- ▶ The questionnaires do not impose an excessive **burden** on respondents.

Census topics / variables

Recommendations

- ▶ **Rewording** some questions and answer options, adding some **clarifications** to the instructions for enumerators;
- ▶ In the focus group with the enumerators who collected data for the pilot census, some questions that frequently caused negative reactions or were perceived as unnecessary/repetitive were reported. It was recommended to **explain in more detail** to the enumerators and the population the need and purpose of the questions that caused reluctance;
- ▶ To shorten the length of the interviews, it was recommended to **skip some questions** and **shorten the text** of the questions.

Recruitment of temporary staff

It was checked whether:

- ▶ For the pilot census the NBS has managed to **recruit a sufficient number** of temporary staff;
- ▶ **Reserve enumerators** have also been recruited, taking into account possible staff attrition;
- ▶ The recruitment of supervisors and enumerators has been carried out **locally via a competitive process** in the respective territories;
- ▶ Recruitment requirements for supervisors and enumerators were **reasonable** and **publicly advertised**.

Recruitment of temporary staff

Recommendations

- ▶ Recommendations have been made regarding the **skills and level of education** required of managers and enumerators in job advertisements.

Compensation of temporary staff

It was checked whether:

- ▶ How temporary staff pay is calculated and whether it is contingent on **performance**;
- ▶ Remuneration is **appropriate** for attracting and retaining staff;
- ▶ **Contracts** with temporary staff have been drawn up correctly, staff understand how and for what they are paid;
- ▶ Enumerators were **satisfied** with the remuneration they actually received;
- ▶ Workload was **realistic**; enumerators were able to fully accomplish their tasks.

Compensation of temporary staff

Recommendations

- ▶ To avoid unrealistic expectations, when signing the contract, staff should understand very clearly the **structure of gross compensation**: what part will go to taxes and mandatory contributions and what part will actually be paid;
- ▶ There should be solutions for compensating enumerators when they do not fulfil all the tasks by **no fault of their own**;
- ▶ Contracts with temporary staff should be signed **before training** starts.

Training of temporary staff

It was checked whether:

- ▶ The training curriculum has been developed by subject matter experts, the **content of the training** corresponds to the needs;
- ▶ **Training venues** of sufficient capacity, furnished with all necessary equipment, were provided; technicians were present on site to solve technical difficulties;
- ▶ For the staff coming to the training from other districts to Chisinau, **transport and accommodation** was provided; meals were provided for the participants;
- ▶ Training of temporary staff was carried out **separately for supervisors and enumerators**, with subsequent involvement of supervisors in the training of enumerators;
- ▶ In localities with a prevalence of ethnic minorities the training sessions for enumerators were conducted in **Russian**;
- ▶ How the enumerators themselves rate the **relevance and usefulness** of the training for the work they did in the field.

Training of temporary staff

Recommendations were made in terms of:

- ▶ Expanding the **practical part** of the training, reserving more time for tablet practice and field trips;
- ▶ Adding to the Enumerator's **Manual** some aspects that were not sufficiently clarified during the training.

Outreach activities

It was checked whether:

- ▶ A **communication and outreach strategy** has been elaborated;
- ▶ A **web page dedicated** to the pilot census has been created; a **hotline** has been set up;
- ▶ NBS staff participated in various media **interviews and broadcasts**, meetings with representatives of ethnic, religious minorities;
- ▶ Posters and other printed **information materials** were available;
- ▶ Information about the pilot census has been disseminated on **social media**;
- ▶ How the **media covered** the pilot census; if there have been any manipulative and dissuasive interventions and if the NBS reacted to them;
- ▶ **Effectiveness of outreach**: whether respondents knew about the pilot census and through which channels they learned about it (from the NBS survey);
- ▶ **Badges, T-shirts and caps**, bags, stickers for bags and tablets with the 2024 census logo, other materials have been provided for enumerators;
- ▶ How the enumerators themselves rate the **quality and quantity** of clothing items and other materials distributed to them.

Outreach activities

Recommendations

- ▶ Given the high risk of a dissuasion campaign, a **more substantial effort** was recommended, and not solely by the NBS, in the information and outreach campaign for the main census;
- ▶ The communication strategy should be coordinated with **other public institutions** and the Government's communication team; at the same time, **politicization** of the process should be avoided;
- ▶ Recommendations were made regarding the **uniform** of the enumerators;
- ▶ Recommendations were made on the content of the **Q&A section** on the census webpage;
- ▶ The most common **myths** about the census spread in the information space were collected and debunking them was recommended.

Data collection equipment

It was checked whether:

- ▶ The tablet used for data collection is appropriate in terms of **screen size**;
- ▶ The **memory** of the tablet allows the installation and running of the census application and supporting applications;
- ▶ The **internet** connection works properly;
- ▶ **Battery life** meets specifications and is sufficient for the completion of enumerator tasks;
- ▶ **Enumerators' impressions** about working with the tablet and accessory equipment.

Data collection equipment

Recommendations were made in terms of:

- ▶ Balancing tablet memory with the **needs of installing** and running census applications and security systems;
- ▶ Input procedures and **level of detail** of some of the data collected;
- ▶ **Testing** of devices prior to the start of the census to identify those with issues; addressing technical deficiencies reported by staff.

Data security

It was checked whether:

- ▶ Users are prevented from installing/using **unnecessary apps** on the tablet;
- ▶ The possibility to **monitor** the technical status and to configure the tablet remotely is ensured;
- ▶ Staff **authentication** is done using an ID and a PIN;
- ▶ Where the collected data is stored and who ensures the **security of the physical infrastructure**; how logical security is ensured;
- ▶ **Additional replacement equipment** is available in case of major failures;
- ▶ Uninterrupted **power supply** is ensured;
- ▶ Daily incremental **backups** and weekly full backups are provided;
- ▶ **Backups** are stored on a separate platform; data restoration from backups has been tested;
- ▶ Load **tests** have been performed, loss of server access situations have been simulated.

Data security

Recommendations

- ▶ It was recommended that an **IT audit** of the data collection/transmission/storage system be conducted to identify security vulnerabilities in more detail;
- ▶ It was recommended that **penetration and stress tests** be performed;
- ▶ Some recommendations were made on the **usage of tablets** by enumerators.

Data collection software

It was checked whether:

- ▶ The questions in the app, the answer options and the skips from one question to another **correspond to the approved** pilot census questionnaires;
- ▶ The collection and processing of responses to questions does not create major **coding or extensive processing** problems;
- ▶ In case of interruption of the interview, the app provides the possibility to save the partially collected information and to **resume the interview** later, the possibility to **correct** wrongly entered data is also provided;
- ▶ **Consistency checks** work; in case of inconsistent answers, the app prompts the enumerators to revise the answer;
- ▶ The application interface has been **translated** from English;
- ▶ For supervisors and managers, the possibility to **monitor the progress** of the census process is provided;
- ▶ **Temporary staff impressions** about working with the app, logging in and out, saving corrections, using the dashboard for monitoring.

Data collection software

Recommendations were made in terms of:

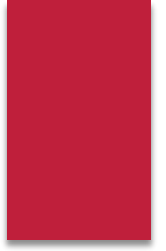
- ▶ **Ordering** of response options within the app;
- ▶ Proper operation of **consistency checks**;
- ▶ **Translating** interface elements;
- ▶ Additional **training** of staff on the use of the data collection app and monitoring dashboard.



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Thank you for your attention!