Conference

„Towards 2021 Census“

**Main conclusions**

1. The 2021 Census will be conducted for less than three years (so it is right behind the corner). For its successful realization, it is not enough only the expertise and engagement of the statisticians/statistical institutes, but also the appropriate support of international and state institutions, the scientific community and the general public.
2. What makes the census unique? First of all, the census data represent a rich and irreplaceable material on the different structures of the population, households and dwellings, both for the state level and for the lowest territorial units. The census is the primary and sometimes the only comprehensive source of data (on demographic, ethno-cultural and socio-economic characteristics of population), which represent the basis of efficient planning, development, economic, social, population and other policies.
3. If countries, that will use IST in the following census, were interested, the IST could provide a common dissemination of census data, "BalkanHub" - based on the reputation of the Eurostat Census hub. This would certainly contribute to greater visibility of census data, but also for researchers and users interested in comparable data about the region, would make easier to access the census data and download them from "one place" - so called One-stop-shop apporoach.
4. It is emphasized that innovation becomes a standard practice, which makes the census inevitably technologically evolve in relation to the previous cycle. However, with the consensus reached on the necessity of introducing innovations in the following census, numerous challenges that accompany this process are realistically considered: legislative, organizational, methodological and technological. The question is - how to choose an appropriate technology while maintaining the integrity of the existing statistical system and ensuring the confidentiality of the census data. For this reason, it is important to carefully and fundamentally consider and test all planned innovations in order to minimize potential risks. But one thing is certain, even small improvements in the census technology can result through the significant gain in the quality of the overall census operation.
5. Most of the countries in the region will implement the 2021 traditional census, with certain technological innovations in the method of data collection. Existing administrative registers will be used in different stages of the census preparation and implementation. All countries plan to move from traditional to the register based census after 2021, based on Slovenian method.
6. The Conference provided firm arguments on the necessity of statistical cooperation among institutes during the preparation of the 2021 Census, bearing in mind that all countries will apply unique methodology and that most countries in the region will use similar technology for collecting census data.

Good and successful cooperation between statistical institutions is crucial for the exchange of experiences and good practice. Although cooperation has been raised to a much higher level in the last few years, it is certainly necessary its further improvement in the upcoming period.

Also, through the fourth session, it could be seen that it is extremely important to establish a functional and efficient mechanism of cooperation and exchange of experience between statistics and scientific institutions, which in our case is continuously progressing (the example are various studies and special publications based on census data).

1. Regardless of possible differences in the methodology or method of conducting census in the future, we agreed that its key importance will remain the same - analysis and assessment of economic and social development and monitoring the implementation of state policies and strategies in different social spheres.