SESSIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF STATISTICAL SYSTEM HELD ON 2023

THE FIRST SESSION - CONSTITUTIVE

The session was held on 25 January 2023.

After the defining the quorum for holding constitutive session of the Council of Statistical System and introduction of the director of Statistical Office, there is anonymously is selected president, vice-president and secretary of the Council of Statistical System.

Considering the second item of agenda, there are proposed and adopted technical corrections and amendment to Article 12 of the Rules of Procedure of the Council of Statistical System No 01-078/22-1844/1 of 30 May 2022 that states as it follows:

'*Net fee will be reimbursed to members and secretary of the Council for the membership in the Council, if there will enabled resources in the Budget of Montenegro, in accordance with Article 19 of the Law on Official Statistics and Official Statistical System and Article 4 of the Decision on Criteria for Defining Fee Amount for Work of Working Body Member or Other Type of Work'.*

Considering the third item of agenda, the members of the Council anonymously gave opinion on proposal to ***Report on Implementation of Annual Plan of Official Statistics for 2022,*** and further submitting to the Government of Montenegro.

Under item 'Miscellaneous', the director of Statistical Office informed the members of the Council that the Decree on Defining Period for Data Collection and Reference Moment of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings sent to the Ministry of Finance in procedure toward the Government of Montenegro, and by which it is envisages the period of implementing the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings from 1 to 15 November 2023.

SECOND SESSION

The session was held on 30 March 2023.

After defining the quorum, adopting the minutes, and agenda for holding a session of Council of Statistical System, considering the first item of agenda, presentation 'Plan of Activities for Preparation of Strategic Documents for Statistical System for Period 2024-2028' was held by Ms. Bojana Radojevic, MSc. Ms. Radojevic informed the members of the Council with:

- Table overview and legal framework of Montenegro statistical system;

- Legislative framework, preparations, activity plan, and obligatory contents of strategic documents in 2023.

Considering the second item of agenda, presentation ‘Current state regarding preparations of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings in 2023', was held by Mr. Ernad Koli, MSc. Mr. Kolic informed the members of the Council on:

- The Law on Census of Population,. Households, and Dwellings, adopted in the Parliament and relesead in the Official Gazette of Montenegro No 140/22;
- Decree on Defining Implementation Period of Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings and reference moment of the census (released in the Official Gazette of Montenegro No 25/23), implementation period for the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings defined for 1-15 November 2023, and reference moment is 31 October 2023 at 24:00.
- Organizational structure built and five commissions established for preparation and implementation of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings 2023, as well as special challenges and plans for the next period.

THE 3rd SESSION

The session was held on 28 April 2023.

In line with the recommendations of EC-Eurostat given in the Montenegro Peer Review Report on compliance with the Code of Practice and the coordination role of the National Statistical Institute, Statistical Office has an obligation to produce a clear definition of official statistics aimed at its harmonization on the European level, to assess which competent bodies produce the 'official statistics'.

Having in mind the mentioned above, the first item of the agenda was to become acquainted with the adopted Criteria for defining 'official statistics' and 'other official statistical producers' The Council's members were informed about them by Ms. Branka Susic Radovanovic, MSc, assistant director of Sector for Macroeconomic Statistics, National Accounts, and Prices.

About the mentioned, all interested can be informed in details via the official website of Statistical Office, in part ABOUT US/COMPETENCE OF MONSTAT/ORGANIZATION OF OFFICIAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM. Beside the legal framework of European and official statistics for defining criteria, there is also the Request form for entry in the statistical system of Montenegro on the website.

The request form can be sent not later than 10 June 2023, and statistical survey proposals for producing the Programme not later than 15 September in the year preceding the period for which the Programme is adopted.

The purpose of releasing them on the website is to provide necessary information and to encourage those that would like to be a part of statistical system to send timely the request.

Considering the second item of agenda, Ms. Snezana Remikovic, assistant director of Sector for Social Statistics and Demography informed members of the Council on the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings:

- The Law on Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings is adopted and published in the Official Gazette of Montenegro No 140/22;
- The Decree on Defining the Period of Implementation of Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings and Census Reference Moment (released in the Official Gazette of Montenegro No 25/23), period defined 1-15 November 2023 for the implementation of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings, and the reference moment is 31 October 2023, at 24.00h;

- Organizational structure built and five commissions for preparation and implementation of Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings 2023 established. One commission is for management of preparations and organization of the Census, and four commissions are thematic referring to logistics, methodology, spatial register, and IT support.

THE FOURTH SESSION

The session was held on 27 June 2023

After the quorum was constituted, followed by both agenda and minutes of the previous session, there was held a presentation by Mr. Ernad Kolic, MSc, regarding the data request from the Revenue and Customs Office which are necessary for Statistical Office. In addition to the legal basis of the Law on Official Statistics and Official Statistical System, Mr Kolic pointed out that there is prepared a document updated with the necessary data and harmonized with the EU *acquis* in domain of statistics – Eurostat's Statistical Compendium and strategic document of Statistical Office. The mentioned documents requires: improvement of existing variables, introduction of new variables, and transmission of new data.

The assistant director of Sector of Social Statistics and Demography, Ms. Snezana Remikovic informed the Council's members with the current state related to the preparation for the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings, and she pointed out that the *Decision on Amount and Distribution of Resources to Census Commissions for Financing Census* is in procedure and is expected to be adopted in line with the work programme of the Government, by which the adoption of the documents necessary for the preparation of Census under responsibility of institutions out of Statistical Office is to be finalized. Ms Remikovic reported that the established commissions for organization and preparation of census timely perform their tasks and meeting the deadlines. Ms Remikovic informed the Council's members that the Statistical Office released the most often questions and answers related to the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings. The first questions were released on 22 February 2023, and updated on 15 June 2023.

The assistant director of Sector for Macroeconomic Statistics, National Accounts, and Prices, Ms Branka Susic Radovanovic, MSc, informed the Council's members on the production status of Statistical Office's strategic documents.
Pursuant to Article 20 – 24 of the Law on Official Statistics and Official Statistical System (Official Gazete of Montenegro No 18/12 and 47/19), and the Government of Montenegro Programme of Work for the fourth quarter of 2023, there is defined an obligation to prepare:

- The 2024-2028 Development Strategy of Official Statistics, together with the Action Plan;
- The 2024 – 2028 Programme of Official Statistics;
- The 2024 Annual Plan of Official Statistics.

There is an ongoing preparation of strategic documents:

Development Strategy of Official Statistics 2024-2028, with the Action Plan and Programme of Official Statistics 2024-2028, that are in the draft phase, and regarding the Annual Plan of Official Statistics for 2024, there is ongoing entering of statistical surveys. Consulting regarding the production of strategic documents will be done inside the Statistical Office, at management and top management meeting, official statistical system, and official statistical producers, which are followed by informing the Council's members with the draft, as well as the members of the Chapter 18, organizing public debates for both secondary legislation (the Strategy and the Programme), and submission them to the General Secretariat of the Government that observes the strategic document drafts and gives the opinion with the recommendations.

After the received opinion of the General Secretariat of the Government, the proposal of strategic documents is submitted to the opinion of the Council of Statistical System and with the set of forms is transmitted to the Ministry of Finance, which is followed by the adoption of strategic documents at the session of the Government of Montenegro (the deadline is the fourth quarter of 2023, up to 31 December 2023).

THE FIFTH SESSION

The session was held on 31 July 2023

After the defined quorum, agenda and the minutes from the previous session, Ms. Branka Susic Radovanovic, Assistant Director of the Sector for Macroeconomic Statistics, National Accounts, and Prices, informed the member of the Council on the process of preparing the Development Strategy of Official Statistics 2024-2028.

Pursuant to Article 20 - 24 of the Law on Official Statistics and Official Statistical System (Official Gazette of Montenegro No 18/12, and 47/19), and Programme of Work of the Government of Montenegro, for the 4th quarter of 2023, there is defined the preparation of the Development Strategy of Official Statistics 2024 - 2028, with two-year Action Plan (for 2024 - 2025).

This secondary legislation represents a development framework of statistical system of Montenegro that defines strategic aim, vision and mission and five long-term operative aims of statistical system of Montenegro. The aim of the Strategy is to improve the current measures, mechanisms, and instruments of statistical system of Montenegro, and to develop new ones.

The presentation on the draft Law on Census of Agriculture 2024 was held by Ms. Natasa Vojinovic, Assistant Director of Sector for Statistics of Agriculture, Fishery, Business Statistics, Environment, and Forestry.

The Census of Agriculture is planned to be implemented from 1 October to 1 December 2024.

Information on new organization of official statistical system for period 2024 – 2028 was provided by Ms Branka Susic Radovanovic who reported that the Statistical Office adopted the Criteria for Defining Official Statistics and Other Producers of Official Statistics with the Request for Entering Statistical System of Montenegro.

Respecting the adopted criteria for defining official statistics and other producers of official statistics, and line with the new Programme of Official Statistics 2024 – 2028, pursuant to the Law of Official Statistics and Official Statistical System, the official statistical producers will be: Statistical Office, Central Bank of Montenegro, Ministry of Finance, and two institutions – Public Health Institute of Montenegro and Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of Montenegro who timely submitted the Request for Entering Statistical System of Montenegro, and after the decision of the Commission for defining the status of producer of Montenegro, obtained the positive opinion on the sent request.

Under item “Miscellaneous“, Ms. Snezana Remikovic, Assistant Director of Sector for Social Statistics and Demography, informed the members of the Council on the current state and preparation for the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings, that are timely implemented and meeting the deadlines.

Under item “Miscellaneous“, Ms Branka Susic Radovanovic informed about the amendments to the Law on Official Statistics and Official Statistical System.

The opinion of the Council’s members and the conclusion of this session is that defined procedures for amendments to the Law on Official Statistics and Official Statistical System should be respected.

The SIXTH SESSION

The session was held on 29 August 2023.

After the established quorum, an agreement of all members of the Council was reached, and the minutes from the previous session of the Council, as well as agenda of the today's session.

Ms. Snezana Remikovic, Assistant Director of Sector of Social Statistics and Demography informed the members of the Council about the current state related to the preparations for the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings.

• Within the activity of establishment of census commissions, official letters are sent to the local self-government and to the Cadastre and State Property Administration. The answer is waited from three local self-government units and the Cadastre and State Property Administration, and there will be sent an urgent official letter to meet all deadlines. Pursuant to the Law on Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings, there will appointed state instructors among the representatives of the Statistical Office, so that the decisions on establishment of census commission in all self-government units are finalized.

• A training on methodology of census for the members of census management commissions was held.

• The methodology for the implementation of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings has been finalized, and together with the set of census forms translated in English language. A complete documentation will be sent to Eurostat and European Commission.

• All envisaged public procurements have been completed, all contracts signed and started to be implemented.

• The first activity to open the public campaign on correct reporting on census is organization of meeting and education of media.

• Logo which is presented at the previous session will be redesigned, due to the comments, and there is defined also a census slogan.

• Sending offers and specifications for the rent of business premises for the implementation of the census is in the process.

• Updated of spatial register is in the final phase. For three local self-government units, Podgorica, Tuzi, Zeta, the demarcation can be done in some next period, and data can be released with the explanation.

Under item "Miscellaneous", the members of the Council are informed that public discussion regarding the Programme of Official Statistics 2024 – 2028 and the Development Strategy of Official Statistics 2024 – 2028 is to be held in period from 11 to

31 August 2023, and the “round table” will be held on 31 August 2023 at 10 a.m., i.e. 11 a.m. in the Statistical Office.

THE SEVENTH SESSION

The session was held on 18 October 2023.

After the defined quorum, there was achieved the consent of all members of the Council, and the minutes were adopted from the previous session of the Council, as well as agenda of the today’s session.

Ms. Snezana Remikovic, Assistant Director of the Sector of Social Statistics and Demography, informed the members of the Council with the current state related to the preparations for the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings:

• Census commissions were established for every unit of local self-governments;

• Five-day training for state instructors was held in period from 22 – 26 September 2023;

• Three-day trainings for instructors will be organized in period from 23 – 25 October 2023, and two-day training for enumerators from 28 – 29 October 2023;

• Progress has been achieved by making video presentations in cooperation with the Radio and Television of Montenegro, which will be uniform for all training sites and for entire Montenegro;

• Public announcement for the selection of enumerators is to meeting the number of necessary enumerators, extended in municipalities Bar, Budva, Cetinje, Kolasin, Kotor, Tivat, Savnik, and Zabljak, at the latest 20 October, which does not endanger the planned trainings;

• Ms. Remikovic mentioned that the lack of candidates for enumerators is not the unknown and this is the same challenge faced by colleagues in the region, but there are also measures to solve this problem (to extend the public procurement; to engage enumerators from other municipalities, to extend the enumeration period);

• Ms Remikovic pointed out that the enumeration period is purposeful defined by the Decree, and not by the Law, so that it can be extended if necessary in simpler manner;

• Methodology and questionnaires are submitted to the Eurostat for opinion, and the Eurostat has no comment to this, except for the expected part that the Statistical Office respects the official statistics principles, and recommendations of UNECE;

• For the purpose of transparency, the Statistical Office released the Methodology for Preparation, Organization, and Implementation of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings on 11 October 2023, on the website,

Link: https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=2152&pageid=1992

• The members of the Council were informed by Ms. Remikovic about the monitoring of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings, which can be performed over certain activities by an expert at the same level or expert of higher level available in the body who organizes and implements the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings, in this case, just Eurostat as an umbrella statistical office of the EU;

• Herewith, the Statistical Office has for the first time sent the request to Eurostat for the organization of monitoring of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings in February 2023. The response by Eurostat was negative, and on 3 October 2023 the request was re-sent, but was also rejected with the explanation that it is essential that the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings is implemented by the Statistical Office professionally and independently;

• Communication with Eurostat is published at the website of Statistical Office,

Link https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=2155&pageid=1992

Director of Statistical Office pointed out that the conditions for the implementation of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings fulfilled, both formally legal, administrative, as well as technical and safety, and proposed that the members of the Council give their opinion on the postponement of the census, i.e. respecting the law, secondary legislation, profession, professionalism and data preciseness which are obtained by the implementation of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings in the envisaged period.

The director of Statistical Office informed the members of the Council with the e-mail communication too between the representatives of the Statistical Office with the mission of Montenegro in Brussels, which refer to doubts and recommendations related to the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings.

THE CONCLUSION:

At the session of the Council of Statistical System the unanimous opinion is of all present members of the Council that the 2023 Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings should be implemented in the envisaged period in accordance with the Law, i.e. secondary legislation, and to send the official letter to the Ministry of Finance and the Government of Montenegro and to attract the attention to expectations and recommendations intended for higher levels which goes beyond competences and responsibilities of the Statistical Office, and in this way to contribute additionally to independence, professionalism, and transparency within the implementation of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings 2023.

THE EIGHTH SESSION

The session was held on 26 October 2023. After the quorum was established, a consensus of all members of the Council was reached, and both the minutes of the previous session of the Council, and agenda of today's session.

The director of the Statistical Office pointed out that the Statistical Office acts professionally and in accordance with its competences, and the law, implements the final activities for the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings. The director mentioned the current overview of situation related to the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings:

• No requirement of political party representatives has been received on the official address of the Statistical Office, but there were responded also those received via media articles;

• Political campaign which announces the boycott opens the questions related to the insufficient number and leaving enumerators on the field, unpleasant situations the enumerators can face, obstruction in the majority of local self-government units;

• One of the consequences of the boycott is also its impact on the population coverage, and depending on the size of boycott, there will be also defined the estimation method for the lack of data;

• Announcement of mandatary that there can happen the postponement of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings for a new period;

• Request to the Police Administration for the assessment of safety of enumerators' work, and security of training sites in all local self-government units;

• Holding a meeting with the representatives of the Agency for Protection of Personal Data, who will be informed on what the Statistical Office can or cannot accept;

• Statistical Office has contacted several addresses: Eurostat, the Government of Montenegro, and line Ministry of Finance, whose responses are expected;

• In addition to the mentioned, the mission of Montenegro in Brussels sent the official letter to the Statistical Office indicating that relevant General Directorates of the European Commission draw attention that the circumstances in Montenegro out of competences of the Statistical Office and that there is required to be activated higher levels.

The conclusions are:

• To send an official letter on behalf of the Council of Statistical System – information on the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings to the Government of Montenegro, and to call an online session where all members of the Council can give their opinion on the contents of the draft letter,

• To publish the communication with the Government of Montenegro and the line Ministry of Finance on the official website of the Statistical Office.

THE NINTH SESSION

The session was held on 27 October 2023.

The online session was held on the occasion of the official letter of the Council of Statistical System to the Government of Montenegro, and subject of the official letter is: Information on the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings 2023.

The members of the Council expressed their views on the proposal of official letter, and more than half of the Council's members voted for the proposal by which the conditions were created that the official letter on behalf of the Council of Statistical System is submitted to the Government of Montenegro.

THE TENTH SESSION

The session was held on 3 November, from 11.30 a.m. to 6 November 2023 to 9 a.m.

The online session was held upon the proposal – initiative of NGO representative, Mr. John M. Barac to establish the working group in accordance with Article 17 of the Law on Official Statistics and Official Statistical System, and Article 11 of the Rules of Procedures of the Council of Statistical System, so that the members of the Council show that they are active participants of the entire process and that they want to give contributions, as the professional body and to prevent further postponements and problems related to the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings 2023.

More than a half of the Council's members expressed their views in favour of the proposal of initiative by which the conditions are created to establish the working group composed of Prof. dr Nevena Mijajlovic, Prof.dr Bozidar Popovic, and John M. Barac.

THE ELEVENTH SESSION

The session was held on 24 November 2023.

After the defined quorum, the consensus was reached by all members of the Council and anonymously adopted the minutes from the previous session of the Council and agenda of today's session.

The Council's members have been informed on the Development Strategy of Official Statistics 2024 – 2028 with biannual Action Plan (for 2024-2025), with the proposal of the

Programme of Official Statistics 2024-2028, and Annual Plan of Official Statistics for 2024.

After voting, all three strategic documents anonymously received positive opinion of the Council's members.

The explanation considering the draft law on the Census of Agriculture for 2024, was provided by Ms. Natasa Vojinovic, Assistant Director of the Sector for Statistics of Agriculture, Fishery, Business Statistics, Environment and Forestry. The Council-s members anonymously gave a positive opinion to the draft law on the Census of Agriculture for 2024.

Ms. Snezana Remikovic, Assistant Director of the Sector for Social Statistics and Demography, informed on the activities related to the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings and listed:

- the Government of Montenegro adopted the Decree Amending Decree on Establishing the Period of Implementing Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings, and the Reference Moment of Census No 07-040/23-4873 of 31 October 2023, released in the Official Gazette of Montenegro No 98/23 of 31 October 2023;

- New Decision on Amending Decision on Amount and Allocation of Funds to Census Commissions for Financing the 2023 Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings

- Amending the Law on Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings in the parliamentary procedure;

- Census commissions were extended in accordance with Article 15 paragraph 3 of the Law on Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings;

- Public Announcement for Instructors and Enumerators released again;

- Training of instructors, which were selected by members of the census commissions, performed;

- Public announcement for enumerators is closed and the list of selected enumerators in all local self-government units, the old royal capital and the capital, will be published on 24 November 2023, and trainings will be organized on 25 and 26 November 2023;

- Presentations for persons that passed the tests and passed the trainings, to listen once more on 27, 28, and 29 November 2023, and to update all defined by the Methodology for Preparation, Organization, and Implementation of the Census;

- Packing and distribution of census material were done to all local self-government units, the old royal capital, and the capital;

- Three documents were adopted in accordance with the suggestions of the Agency for Protection of Personal Data: Plan for Protection of Special Category of Personal Data; Rulebook on Protection of Personal Data; and Annex to the Methodology for Preparation,

Organization, and Implementation of the Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings.