



ANALYSIS:

THE CENSUS IS ABOUT DEMOCRACY, NOT JUST ETHNIC STATISTICS

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I Introduction

According to international standards, countries organize population censuses every ten years. A population census is considered to be a statistical operation which, in complex societies, provide in-depth insight in the situation on the ground and secure the basic information that later serves as basis for the creation of policies and development strategies in different areas.

In Macedonia, population censuses were always much more than an ordinary statistical operation. At that, it was not the case only in the period since Macedonia gained independence. Rather, the origins go back to the start of the 20th century. Although with many problems and tensions, the Republic of Macedonia managed to conduct the population censuses in 1990, 1994 and 2002 successfully. It should be noted that the last population census was held not a full year after the end of the conflict of 2001 and was seen, for that reason, as a symbol of reconciliation and the capacity of the state to conduct this complex operation, in spite of the sensitive and unfavourable context. It seemed that it would be the last problematic census in Macedonia. A decade later, the population census in October 2011 lasted just ten days or so, only for the state to decide to terminate it with the excuse that a forgery was prevented by that decision. The pressure and the appeals of the non-governmental sector, some media, the political opposition and the EU didn't help to shed light on the true reasons for the termination of the census. So far, nobody was accused of forgery, although the termination of this extremely important process caused huge damages to the public purse. The Government does not plan to conduct the census.

The greatest cause of concern is the fact that, over the past year, the population census almost completely disappeared from the public discourse. In those cases when it is mentioned, the dominant narrative of the debate on the reasons for the failed census is situated exclusively in the area of interethnic relations. Instead of the fundamental problems the result from the absence of the basic data, we have speculations about the "real" percentages of the total population that the ethnic communities account for, which further nourishes and stimulates nationalism. To illustrate that "battle of percentages", the nationalists on the Macedonian side claim that a proper census would show that Albanians account for less than 20% of the total population of Macedonia, which means that they, as a community, would lose the rights guaranteed in the Ohrid Framework Agreement. On the other hand, the Albanian nationalists claim that the census failed because it would have shown that the share of Macedonians in the total population dropped below 50%.

In that context, the data presented by the World Bank that 447,000 citizens left Macedonia over the past ten years, and the even more credible data of Eurostat that 230,000 Macedonian citizens have already regulated their status in one or the other EU member-state, created quite an uproar and stunned the Macedonian public. Such disastrous data cast the shadow of doubt on the fundamental policies of the Government. For example, without a proper census, it is impossible to measure the true effect of its economic and development policies. Having in mind the fact that a large majority of the citizens that left the country were young and educated, it is evident that the educational policies yield results that are quite opposite to the declared and desired ones. At the same time, the failure to conduct a population census has extremely negative effects on the democracy in the country. There are serious doubts about the accuracy and credibility of the voter registry and, by extension, of any elections that are held or will be held in a situation in which the country has not conducted a population census.

For the reasons listed above, it is necessary to raise the public awareness about the need to take a population census in the Republic of Macedonia, to strengthen the civic activism and increase the citizens' pressure on the government to take a census, in line with all international standards, as soon as possible. With that in mind, we need a change of focus of the dominant manipulative narrative from the ethnic to the more fundamental aspects of the census which are now dislocated and absent.

In order to strengthen and stimulate a public debate on the true meaning of the population census and the need for one to be taken as soon as possible, the NGO Infocentre, in partnership with the Macedonian Centre for European Training (MCET), the Media Development Centre (MDC) and "September 8" movement, and with financial support of the USAID Civil Society Project (implemented by the Foundation Open Society Macedonia (FOOM)), prepared the publication – "Census is about democracy not just ethnic statistics".

This analysis is an attempt to consider the reasons behind the failure of the 2011 Census. Furthermore, it is an attempt at an overview of the reasons why the population census is an extremely important statistical operation for the state and its development.

II Brief Chronology of 2011 Census

While the Law on Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia (hereinafter, the Census Law) was in adoption procedure, one could have assumed, with great degree of certainty, that the coming census will face numerous and serious political turbulences and obstacles, and that it wouldn't be treated at all as just a necessary statistical process of the state. Those assumptions were further confirmed in the session of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia of November 30, 2010, in which the new Census Law was adopted and in which the opposition MPs from the Albanian bloc accused the Government that the Law was anti-Albanian and discriminatory. The disagreements surrounding the Census Law continued after its adoption and went only until the decision to terminate the already started Census.

On December 14, 2010, the Government appointed the 25 members of the State Census Commission (hereinafter SCC), with a Decision for Appointment¹. It is unlikely that the general public would get so concerned and start following the work of SCC with such great attention if it weren't for the constant bickering between its members, just a month and a half before the planned start of the Census, scheduled for April 1, 2011. The media reported that SCC's session in mid-February passed in a tense atmosphere and that the representatives of the Albanian and Turkish ethnic communities left the meeting *"because of disagreements with certain procedures that need to be resolved by the State Census Commission"*. The media carried the assurances given by SCC President Vesna Janevska that all problems will be overcome and resolved². The cause for the conflict, according to the media, was the insistence of the majority members of the Commission that the census takers in the municipalities should be elected on 50:50 principle, i.e. one half of them should come from the largest community in the municipality, and the other half should be representatives of the second largest community. Representatives of the ethnic communities insisted that the census takers reflect the shares of the local population of each individual ethnic community in the census regions³. The proposal of the representatives of the ethnic communities was supported by Abdulmenaf Bexheti, the Vice-President of the Commission: *"The composition of the field teams should be combined – an Albanian and a Roma, a Turk and a Macedonian, an Albanian and a Macedonian – and not to have an obligatory presence of a Macedonian in the field team while the second member would come from another nationality. The Macedonian members of the Census Commission insisted on the latter and used their majority vote. It was as if we returned one decade back in time to the interethnic mistrust we had then"*⁴.

While the negotiations to convince the members of the Commission that decided to boycott its work were ongoing, SCC published the open call for applications for census takers in the

¹ <http://www.slv.esnik.com.mk/Issues/56201B24B635B14DB820F0209A10882E.pdf>, page 17

² <http://www.utrinski.mk/?ItemID=135D86E397DF144B9273BD8C2F7A423F>

³ <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=215112139137&id=9&setlzdanie=22208>

⁴ <http://www.dw.de/%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0/a-6440047>

daily newspapers⁵. According to media reports⁶, just 600 Albanians submitted applications to the open call that aimed to hire 16,000 census takers. It was a preview of the coming deepening of misunderstandings and problems that accompanied the Census until it was terminated prematurely.

On March 16, 2011, the media reported that the partners in the government coalition, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI, found the common ground and decided to postpone the census for a period of six months. The official explanation was that the Census was postponed because SCC and the State Statistical Office didn't exceed the prescribed deadlines. Unofficially, the Census was postponed because of the announced early parliamentary elections. The media noted that the parties didn't reach an agreement on the disputed points that caused the boycott of the SCC by the Albanian and Turkish community⁷.

After the Early Parliamentary Elections, the issue of the Census again gained prominence at the end of July of 2011, when the parliamentary group of the Democratic Party of Albanian (DPA) presented to the Parliament the Draft-Law on Supplements to the Census Law, proposing that the Census is moved from October 2011 to July 2012. The proponents of the Draft-Law stated that the proposed term for the Census was the most appropriate because it will coincide with the period when close to 200,000 Albanians working abroad will be back in the country for their summer vacations⁸. The leader of DUI Ali Ahmeti dismissed, in a briefing for the press, DPA's proposal claiming that Albanians will not boycott the census⁹.

Several days before the start of the 2011 Census, the media carried Ahmeti's statement that all citizens-Albanians who have been out of the country for a period of more than one year will be recorded: *"The Law is clear. All those who have entered Macedonia at least once in a period of one year and own property and houses, while they may not be here at the moment, shall be included in the total population"*¹⁰. According to the media, although Ahmeti appealed to avoid politicisation of the Census *"because of the fact that all details were agreed during the drafting of the Law"*, the Vice-President of SCC Bexheti announced that it was possible for Albanian to refuse to take part in the census, due to dissatisfaction with the interpretation of the provisions of Article 6 of the Law on Census.

The media reported of infighting in the SCC over the different interpretations of the coverage of the census and the definition of the term *"usual address of residence"* which is the reason why *"two days before the start of the Census, nobody knows who exactly will be recorded"*¹¹. In that context, several media brought up the interpretation of the Law give by Eurostat Director Peter Everers, that the census should cover only the persons *"who have permanent residence in Macedonia and, at the time of the Census, but no longer than 12 months before its start, were working abroad"*, so that the Census shouldn't record the persons who have worked abroad for a period longer than one year, regardless of the fact that they were in Macedonia at the time of the Census¹².

Late in the evening of September 29, 2011, just two days before the start of the Census, the media reported that the Vice-President of the Census Commission Abdulmenaf Bexheti and the other Albanian members of the Commission resigned because *"they were not satisfied with the technical and organisation conditions for the Census to be taken"*. The media reported, as the main reason for the resignation, the divisions among SCC members regarding the interpretations of Article 6 of the Census Law, i.e. the provisions on the

⁵ <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=215112139137&id=9&setlzdanie=22208>

⁶ <http://www.utrinski.mk/default.asp?ItemID=D8CF25128B74AB4DB279095A667A5A2A>

⁷ <http://dnevnik.mk/default.asp?ItemID=5269FD1268776D42B769D9AE5EEE7704>

⁸ <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/12994/DPA-bara-popisot-da-bide-vo-juli-slednata-godina>

⁹ <http://www.dnevnik.mk/?ItemID=6A1ACB5E507E99458BA91BEAA679554A>

¹⁰ <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=92911847498&id=9&setlzdanie=22393>

¹¹ <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=92911847498&id=9&setlzdanie=22393>

¹² <http://www.kapital.mk/MK/dneven-vesnik.aspx/74123/popishuvachite-makedonci-i-albanci-kje-rabotat-po-razlichni-zakoni!-aspx?ild=2372>

recording of citizens who have lived abroad for more than one year. The media pointed out that *"The Law prescribes to record the citizens who have lived abroad for a period of up to 12 months, while the SCC members of Turkish and Albanian nationality demanded that the Census cover also the persons that have lived abroad longer than one year"*¹³.

On the following day, the media reported that Vesna Janevska, SCC President, submitted her resignation, too. Janevska said that her decision was forced by the Albanian and Turk members of SCC, whom she accuse of being involved in an attempt to falsify the Census, adding that she couldn't accept their insistence that the collection of Census data should be possible with photocopied documents, or the insistence that the citizens who live out of the country for a period longer than 12 months should be recorded. Sources in the Government still offered assurances that the Census will be held, regardless of the resignations¹⁴. The SCC held a session and elected Slobodanka Gievska as the new SCC President. Bujar Osmani was appointed to take the place of Abdulmenaf Bexheti.

Some ten days after the start of the 2011 Census (the collection of census data started on October 1, 2011) and just four days before its conclusion, the SCC submitted a collective resignation, the Commission was dissolved and the Census failed and was terminated. According to the media, *"it showed that the different interpretations of individual provisions of the Law proved to be an insurmountable obstacle for the successful completion of the whole process"*¹⁵. SCC listed the *"inability of the members of the Commission to find a common understanding on the issue of the methodology for implementation of Census"*¹⁶ as the reason for the failure of the Census.

The Census officially ended on October 11, 2011, following a heated debate in the Parliament¹⁷ and the adoption of the Law on Termination of the Census Law.

III Media Coverage of 2011 Census

The monitoring of media coverage of 2011 Census covers the period September 15 - October 15, 2011. The monitoring covered the daily newspapers (their web-archives): "Dnevnik", "Nova Makedonija", "Utrinski vesnik" and "Večer", as well as the central newscasts of nationally broadcasting TV stations (the archives kept by the NGO Infocentre): Alfa TV and Alsat M TV (its programmes in Macedonian language). Because of the fact that the monitoring was conducted retroactively, the selection of the media to be covered was based on the possibility to secure access to the complete materials referring to the period covered by this analysis.

Starting in mid-September 2011, the media regularly and timely followed the events and developments related to the 2011 Census in the Republic of Macedonia. The media mainly focused on the political disagreements inside the SCC. They focused, in particular, on the different interpretations of the provisions of the Census Law on which persons will be recorded and which documents will be used to identify the recorded persons, but also on the technical problems surrounding the taking of the Census and the issue of insufficient number of census-takers¹⁸ from the ethnic communities in certain areas of the country.

¹³ <http://www.dw.de/%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%87%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0/a-15428081>

¹⁴ <http://www.makdenes.org/archive/news/20110930/428/428.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/18520/Popisot-propadna>

¹⁶ <http://www.makdenes.org/content/article/24358459.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.makdenes.org/archive/news/20111015/428/428.html?id=24360415>

¹⁸ In addition to "census-taker", this text uses the term "enumerator" to denote the persons that do the field work of collecting data, which is the term used by the Census Law and the related secondary legislation, *translator's note*.

The fact that, even before the start of the Census, the emphasis of the interpretation of problems was placed primarily on the counting of the population along ethnic lines deserves special mention:

"Political interventions in previous censuses were the key for the final outlook of demographic and ethnic picture of Macedonia over the past 2 decades. The figures changed depending on whether an ethnic party would call for a boycott, or issued instructions that, for example, all Muslim population is recorded as belonging to a single ethnic community (the Albanian community, for instance), in spite of the fact that it is not the case", Nova Makedonija, September 23, 2011.

"Recently, many dissenting opinions appeared regarding the term for the realisation of the biggest statistical operation in the country. The opposition parties in the Albanian political bloc hold the position that the Census should not be taken in the period October 1-15 because, in their opinion, the majority of the ethnic Albanians are out of the country at that time, while they mostly come back to Macedonia in the summer months. They proposed that the Census should be taken in July. Others demanded, contrary to the prescription of the Law that the Census should cover the persons who have had residence in Macedonia for the past year, that the persons who have returned to the country at least one in the last year should also be recorded", Večer, September 30, 2011.

The media, referring to the events surrounding the previous censuses in independent Macedonia, in 1994 and 2002, again put an emphasis on the rights of ethnic communities, on local and national level, tied by the Framework Agreement with their percentage of the total population. It turned the Census from a statistical operation into an instrument for achievement of rights of ethnic groups:

"The right to employment in the public administration, the right to use mother tongue, the right to media information in the mother tongue and the right to receive education in the mother tongue depends on the size of the given ethnic community. The size of the community also dictates the amount of budget funds that will be allocated to certain policies – explains Vesna Babić Petrovska, Director of the Agency for Implementation of Rights of Communities", - Nova Makedonija, September 23, 2011.

Before the start of the population census in the Republic of Macedonia, the media covered the census in Albania, with emphasis on the problems faced by the smaller ethnic communities there:

"Macedonians and Greeks in Albania joined forces against, in their view, the discriminatory Census Law that the Government of Albania wants implemented. They were joined by the representatives of the other minorities that live in that country", - Dnevnik, August 19, 2011.

"The Macedonians in Albania will boycott the coming population census because of the fact that the Albanian Institute of Statistics didn't accept their demands to introduce a special field for the Macedonian nationality in the census form. Edmond Temelko, representative of Macedonians in Albania, confirmed that decision yesterday...", - Večer, September 30, 2011.

During that period, several reports and op-ed articles in the daily newspapers, for example, "Census Genocide in Albania" (Utrinski vesnik, August 28, 2011), "Censuses in the neighbouring countries devoured Macedonians" (Dnevnik, August 15, 2011), "Ahmeti negotiates with Priština and Tirana for more Albanians?" (Nova Makedonija, September 30, 2011), cast a shadow on the census and implied a possibility for renewed international tensions, placing the Macedonian Census in the wider context of the Balkans.

The media covered the work of the SCC regularly, including the fact that agreement on the composition of census committees was reached only in mid-September. The delays were caused by the differences in interpretations of provisions of Article 34 of the Census Law on

fair and equitable representation. SCC's members from VMRO-DPMNE and DUI couldn't agree on the ethnic structure of census teams. The Law stipulates that each census team shall be composed of two census takers – one from the ranks of the public administration, and the other selected in a public competition:

"Even when the Law was in the process of drafting, DUI demanded that both members of the census team are Albanians in those areas in which Albanians constitute the majority of the population. VMRO-DPMNE held the position that it was unacceptable to not have a Macedonian census-taker in each team. Last week, the Government responded to SCC's inquiry that it agreed with the Commission's interpretation on the issue of the precise composition of the ethnic structure of census-takers, meaning that each census team will be composed of census-takers coming from the two largest ethnic communities in the given census region". Nova Makedonija, September 9, 2011.

A fortnight before the start of the Census, the observed media offered little, if any, analysis of the negative consequences of the delays in the process of hiring and training almost 20,000 census-takers, and didn't comment on the late start of the public information campaign, either. We registered several journalistic articles on the structure of census teams, with special note of the fact that several journalists of the Macedonian Radio and Television (MRT) and prominent artists working in public cultural institution, because of their status as civil servants, were engaged in the Census as census-takers:

"The lists were late because of the long time it took to resolve the issue of the structure of census teams in the implementation of the Census. The field census-takers had to come from the two biggest communities in the census area in the given municipality, which was difficult to determine. Ultimately, we made a cosmopolitan choice. As a result, we now have Russians, Ukrainians, Slovenians and Montenegrins working as census-takers, we were told at SCC", - Utrinski vesnik, September 28, 2011.

"You should not be surprised if Dejan Lilić knocks on your door! The actor Dejan Lilić, the spokesperson of the Constitutional Court Jugoslav Milenković, about a dozen journalists from MRT, film directors, models, actors and singers are just some of the public personalities that may knock on your door after October 1, but not as a part of a reality TV show, but as census-takers. Although they have other professions, some of the above decided to test themselves in the area of statistics... The President of the SCC Vesna Janevska failed to explain yesterday how it could happen for journalists to be treated as civil servants", - Večer, September 28, 2011.

Several days before the start of the Census, the media intensively reported the disagreements in the SCC regarding the different interpretations of the provisions of articles 6 and 40 of the Census Law that stipulate which persons will be recorded and which documents will be used as proof of identity of the recorded persons. The main disagreements, which proceeded until the decision to stop the Census on October 11, referred to the claims that the census will exclude the persons that have lived outside the country longer than one year, but also whether it is possible and who shall have to right to affirm one's identity from a photocopy of personal identification documents:

"The State Census Commission spent the whole day yesterday seeking solution for the latest disagreement among its members, disagreement that emerged three days before the start of the Census. Yesterday, nobody had an official position how the Census will be implemented and whether we face a new postponement of the Census. The representatives of the Albanian and the Turk ethnic community offered their interpretation of Article 6 of the Law in the last session of the Commission. They demand that the Census includes the persons who have lived out of the country longer than one year, but have entered the country in that period. SCC Vice-President Abdulmenaf Bexheti said yesterday that such a position was in line with European standards. On the other hand, the majority of SCC members believe that it would constitute a violation of the Census Law. The disputed provision of Article 6 states that the persons who are residents of Macedonia but were out

of the country at the time of the Census, although no longer than 12 months, shall be recorded", Večer, September 27, 2011

"I don't think it is possible for family members to provide information about a person that is out of the country and present the original documents, knowing that everybody carries those documents, especially the passports, with him or her. We, therefore, believe that photocopied documents should be acceptable, our sources say. It is still unclear why provisions of the Law are disputed now, just two days before the start of the count. Several days ago, the leader of DPA Menduh Thaqi threw in his suspicions regarding the Census, noting that a forgery of population figures was being prepared, not among Albanians but among Macedonians", Utrinski vesnik, September 27, 2011

The media offered no analysis of the contradictory interpretations of the questionable provisions of the Law. They just carried the statements and opposed opinions, mostly presented in the exchanges between the SCC President Vesna Janevska and Commission members from the Albanian and Turk community. The general impression was that the political disagreements were restricted exclusively to the SCC and had no bearing on the relations in the ruling coalition between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI:

"Four days before the start of the population census, the debate who will be recorded and who will not re-emerged. Having in mind that this issue was not discussed before, we saw heated exchanges at the SCC today between President Janevska and the Albanian members of the Commission. They may be working on basis of one law, but they all read each provisions differently", Alsat M TV, September 26, 2011.

"I was given the authority by the state to conduct the statistical operation responsibly and I intend to do that in accordance with the Law. The Law has been adopted, it is clear, the recommendations and the methodology of EUROSTAT are clear, and I am obligated to work in line with them", statement by SCC President Vesna Janevska for Alsat M TV, September 26, 2011.

"In accordance with the Census Law, and myself and the Albanian members of the Commission are convinced in it, Article 40 is very clear. It states, and I quote: For the family members absent at the time of the Census, the information shall be provided by a member of the immediate family or other person that has the information. It means the person that has some identification document. I think she said that as a personal opinion that is not related to the Census Commission, having in mind that the Commission never debated that matter", statement by Milaim Ademi, SCC member, Alsat M TV, September 26, 2011.

The media carried, without comments, the statement by Deputy President of the SCC Abdulmenaf Bexheti on his resignation and the resignations of the six Albanian members of the Commission immediately before the start of the Census, followed by the statement by President Janevska that *"everything was ready and the Census will take place"* and that: *"Bexheti confirmed his resignation today, but refused to offer an official explanation for that action. The President of the Commission Vesna Janevska was adamant yesterday that there were no doubts that the census shall be taken"*, Dnevnik, September 30, 2011.

The articles already identified the "culprits" behind the tensions that preceded the Census: *"The problems appeared after the representatives of the Albanian community asked for the census to cover the persons who have lived abroad for more than 12 months if they visited Macedonia at least once in the past year"*, Nova Makedonija, October 1, 2011. The statement by SCC President Vesna Janevska, given on the occasion of her resignation one day before the start of the Census, openly attacking the Albanian political bloc, specifically the Albanian party in the ruling coalition DUI, for an eventually falsified census results, was left to pass without any in-depth analysis or comments in the media. In her resignation letter, she indirectly confirmed that the Government discussed the situation in the SCC, but the media didn't offer any comments or positions presented by official government representatives or communication channels:

"I believe, and my estimate is that another major census forgery is being prepared in Macedonia, and that opinion is based on the facts I know. My colleagues at the SCC from the Albanian and the Turkish nationality, or ethnicity, I apologize, didn't allow even minimum of trust that the process will be conducted the way it is supposed to. We clashed on fundamental issues - whether the Census can use photocopies of personal ID cards or passports, which is contrary to the Law and absolutely in collision with the EUROSTAT methodology. The second important issue on which we clashed, and it was debated at a higher level, is the polling of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia who have been out of the country for a period longer of 12 months. That is absolutely against the Law and absolutely against the EUROSTAT methodology", statement by Vesna Janevska for Alsat M TV, September 30, 2011.

"I believe, and my estimate is that another major census forgery is being prepared in Macedonia – Janevska said explaining the reasons for her resignation. After her resignation, the Census Commission held a session and appointed Slobodanka Gievska as the new president of the Commission. Bexheti, who resigned yesterday, will be replaced in the seat of Deputy President of the Commission by Bujar Osmani. Lazar Trajčev, Orce Todorovski, Artan Grubi and Živko Pejkovski are the new members of the Commission. In spite of personnel changes, the Census will start on Saturday at 8:00 hours", Večer, October 1, 2011.

During that period, the only official reaction by the Government was the set of instructions it prepared for the census-takers: *"All sick leave notices and other documents presented by census-takers that come from the public administration seeking exemption shall be subject to checks by expert (medical) commissions and all abuses shall be sanctioned. That is the conclusion of the Government on the census of population and households in Macedonia that started on October 1", Večer, October 1, 2011.*

From the day of the start of the Census to its termination on October 11, the media reported extensively on the census process, with focus on the technical problems and the insufficient number of census-takers from the ethnic communities in a number of regions:

"Just 60 percent of the census teams were created and work. The census in Tetovo and Struga regions is not valid and it remains uncertain if the whole operation shall be completed by October 15, as prescribed by the Law. These are just some of the problems faced over the past four days since the start of the Census", Utrinski vesnik, October 4, 2011.

At the same time, the media dedicated extensive coverage to the accusations of numerous irregularities and undermined credibility of the operation voiced by the opposition, the dissonant views of SCC members regarding the interpretation of articles 6 and 40 of the Census Law, and they offered several articles that discussed the possibility to extend the Census beyond the legally prescribed end date. On a parallel track, they carried the conflicting statements by SCC President Slobodanka Gievska and the Deputy President Bujar Osmani:

"Yesterday, Osmani denied the allegations that he manipulated the media and that his statements on the Census differed depending on whether they were given for Macedonian or Albanian language media. He transferred the blame on the journalists. - There is the question why some journalists misinterpret my statements – Osmani says. He told "Alsat M" TV that all émigrés that visited the country over the past year will be covered by the census, while he told some Macedonian media that only the persons that have been living out of Macedonia for up to a year will be recorded", Dnevnik, October 4, 2011.

"Gievska wouldn't say if Albanian representatives in the SCC hold the position that support and demand that census is taken in a manner that she finds illegal. Deputy President Bujar Osmani demanded that the Census relies on that particular methodology on several occasions... The words of the SCC President Slobodanka Gievska is her

personal view and not the official position of the Commission, Deputy President Bujar Osmani reacts", Dnevnik, October 6, 2011.

*"In her comments on reports that her views differ from the views of the Deputy President of the Commission Osmani, **Gievska said that SCC has no obligation to reach positions based on consensus, but to work in accordance with the Law**", Utrinski vesnik, October 6, 2011.*

Still, the media didn't offer explanations or statements by official representatives of the Government and chose to seek the answers only from SCC and independent analysts:

"This is the same Census Law agreed by VMRO-DPMNE and DUI in the Government and voted in by their MPs in the Parliament. How comes, then, that what they agreed is not the chief bone of content? The events on the ground, with clear indications that not everything goes as legally prescribed, where incidents have taken place, reflect, in fact, the relations inside the State Commission. Just as what goes on in the Commission reflects the relations between the partners in the Government coalition. So, the Census, too, grew into an issue on which the Government policies break, and an issue that could dictate the future of the coalition", Utrinski vesnik, October 7, 2011.

That trend continued until the culmination of disagreements in the Commission which resulted in resignation of its members, dissolution of the SCC and technical termination of the Census. The sole reason offered for the termination of the Census was the different methodologies applied by census-takers in different regions, without any comments about the low percentages of covered population, especially in the western parts of Macedonia:

"The press release states that the Commission, in its session yesterday, concluded that the basic conditions for continued realisation of the Census have not been met. - That largely refers to the unequal application of the methodology defined by the State Statistical Office and synchronized with Eurostat in the segment that elaborates on Article 6, paragraph 3, Article 40 and Article 42 of the Census Law, states the press release of the State Census Commission, adding that for the said reasons, the Commission concluded that the Census can't result in relevant data and the SCC can't continue to meet its legal obligations", Dnevnik, October 11, 2011.

"The Government officially kept silent on the latest developments that resulted in the premature termination of the Census. Prime Minister Gruevski didn't want to respond what actions will be taken to overcome the problem. Instead of the PM, it was the Deputy Prime Minister Musa Xhaferi that appeared in front of the media. He announced that the Government will decide on the Census tomorrow, in an extraordinary session, and the Parliament will discuss the Census the day after tomorrow", Alfa TV, October 11, 2011.

Afterwards, the public discourse was dominated by open mutual accusations of the political parties that the failure of the Census was result of internal relations in the Government coalition, i.e. between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI. The media published the unconfirmed information that PM Gruevski prevented a Census fraud, and the information was supported by statements of MPs from VMRO-DPMNE. The emphasis of the coverage was on the numbers of Albanian population in the country and the claim that the percentage of Albanians in the total population would be lower than in the previous census:

"According to the conclusion that followed the meeting of the coalition partners, if the Census was allowed to continue, it wouldn't produce the real population numbers, especially of the ethnic communities and could question the 25.2% share of Albanian population in the total population, as counted in the last Census", Dnevnik, October 11, 2011.

After the adoption of the Law on Termination of the Census in an urgent vote in the Parliament, the volume of media coverage dropped considerably. The only comment on the reasons for the termination of the Census and the eventual new dates for a census to be

taken, were the statements of Deputy PM Musa Xhaferi, which put an emphasis on the stable relations between coalition partners.

“Any response that we do not feel responsible for the Census will not sound serious. To what extent, because of what, those questions are subject to analysis. We don’t avoid that task. From the day we agreed to be a part of the Government, we accepted responsibility in all matters. We need, however, to review all factors that contributed to it and why the whole process took the direction it took. We won’t allow ourselves to get into another stage unprepared. That was the answer that the Deputy PM for the Framework Agreement Musa Xhaferi gave in today’s briefing with the journalists to the question who will take the political responsibility for the termination of the Census in Macedonia. He believes that there is not need for a leaders’ meeting on the census and adds that DUI leader Ali Ahmeti and PM Nikola Gruevski maintain regular communication”, Dnevnik, October 14, 2011.

“This shall not undermine the relations in the coalition that functions normally, claims the leader of DUI Ali Ahmeti”, Alfa TV, October 13, 2011.

The coverage didn’t offer information on the amount of funds spent to implement the failed Census, and there were announcements for application of a new census model:

“It shouldn’t come as a surprise if the coalition partners, in order to preserve the peace in the Government, to postpone the Census for a couple of years. According to high ranking party officials, they have already considered the possibility for complete change of the census model in line with Slovenian experiences where the population census is taken electronically”, Dnevnik, October 12, 2011.

After the termination of the Census, there were articles that attempt to downplay its importance and emphasize that the state knows how many citizens are there without a census, and that *“the statistical operation implemented by the state every ten years is a field test if the state’s institutions made a correct assessment, but also if they correctly recorded the citizens”* (*“We will get the count even if we have no census”, Nova Makedonija, October 15, 2011*). The article offers information on the different methods the state institutions use to follow the size of the population, its ethnic structure, internal and external migrations, birth rates, etc., without a census. That minimizes the importance of the census and emphasizes that *“in the period between two censuses, the state bases its policies regarding welfare packages, healthcare services, infrastructure, economy, education and the like on estimates provided by the State Statistical Office”*.

IV General Conclusions about the Media Coverage

The analysis of the media coverage of the 2011 Census shows that the media reported regularly on the preparatory activities, the disagreements and resignations in the State Census Commission, the different interpretations of the Census Law, which persons shall be covered and which documents shall be used to identify the recorded persons, the structure and insufficient number of census-takers, the reactions of the opposition and, ultimately, the termination of the Census. The reporters primarily registered the events, and offered little, if any, commentary or analysis. They rarely consulted experts for their opinion and relied primarily on statements by officials directly involved in the Census.

There is a significant absence of statements and information coming from the Government and its representatives, especially on the matter of the reasons that led to the termination of the Census. With that approach, the Government left the citizens uninformed and uncertain why this extremely important and expensive process was terminated and when would it be implemented again.

The media, the competent institutions, the political figures, even rare experts view the census primarily and above from the viewpoint of its ethnic aspects. There is the dominant narrative that the census is important to *“get an ethnic count”* of the population and that the

future use of the Badintaire Rule and the Framework Agreement will depend directly on the percentages of the ethnic communities as a share of the total population. Also, the events and developments surrounding the Census were viewed primarily from the aspect that it was to show if Albanians make up more or less than 25.7% of the population. The media followed the politization of the census imposed by the political parties and supported the assumption that the Macedonian society is divided along political and ethnic lines, without successful policies to resolve those divisions. The media reports were dominated by the position that the regular statistical operation is, in fact, a political process that makes deep inroads into the interethnic relations and creates ethnic tensions. There were ever more vocal and clear messages that the rights of the ethnic communities in Macedonia will depend on the percentage of the population they account for, and there were no op-ed articles or attempts to explain the practical consequences of the absence of real demographic data on the population of the country.

In other words, the ethnic component overshadowed all the other aspects of the census. Journalists and other relevant social actors paid very little or no attention to the importance of the census in terms of securing relevant and real data that will be used in planning and creation of future economic, social, healthcare, educational and other development policies.

V Analysis of the Legislation: Why did the Census Fail?

*“So, I believe that, if we want a true census in Macedonia, a realistic census, without recording of people that live here and yet they don't live here... We will have to change the very concept of the census. The way it is now it is impossible to take. So, it could work but it would have to pass the way the 2002 census passed. It is very difficult to pass, both back then and now,... now it would be even more difficult to conduct a census that wouldn't have any, and I should refrain from using stronger words here, some irregularities, ok, should I say forgeries or use some stronger words. Namely, we faced a situation in which the census started and, judging from the information I have from the Census Commission and the information I got in person, there were massive, truly massive attempts to cause irregularities (he makes quotation marks with his hands here, our note), to say the least. I shouldn't use any stronger words. The state could have started arresting thousands of people engaged in such actions. The normal procedure, secure the evidence, arrests, taking them to court, some would get detention, etc., or let them finish the job they intended. The State Election Commission decided to blow the whistle for the end. Stop the game. And I think that it wasn't a mistake. The information coming from the field was that thousands of people that don't live in the country were recorded in the census. The person is on Skype, holds the passport and then somebody writes that he was here and signs that. Than the other member of the team is pressured to sign the form, too. In 90 percent of the cases the pressure works and the other member would sign, and if he doesn't, somebody else would. And then you have to roam through that sea of paper to check which is the correct signature, which one is forged and which one is true. **I am talking about a mass phenomenon. We know who did it and which side they come from. Right? You should know that.** I don't see how, if we use the same method again, how can we have a normal census. The same will happen again, and then suspend it again, or should have we left them be and go on. In that case, the results... I can't stand behind them nor can the Census Commission stand behind such results”.*

Nikola Gruevski (“Milenko Late Night Show”, March 7, 2014)

An analysis of the legislation and the general legal aspects of the census could lead to findings about the disputed issues that ultimately led to the failure of the Census. Having in mind that the disputes surrounding the Census at the SCC started at the very first attempt to take it in early 2011, before it was postponed “because of the elections”, this analysis is focused on the available documents that cover that period, too. The analysis shows that the problems emerging in the second attempt to complete the Census (in October 2011) were, in fact, identical with the problems identified in the first attempt, and constitute its extension.

As the general public correctly identified it, the situation in SCC already heated up in early 2011 around the interpretation of articles 31 and 34 of the Census Law which regulate the fair and equitable representation of the members of communities that are not majority in the country. This is hardly surprising having in mind that even experience legal experts would find it difficult to understand the provisions which are not clear enough on the matter of the ethnic composition of area instruction and census taker teams (paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 31):

“While selecting the regional instructors and enumerators, the need to ensure fair and equitable representation of members of the communities that are not majority in the Republic of Macedonia shall be taken into consideration, as well as their expertise and competence”. “While selecting the enumerators, the social and national structure of the enumerated population will be especially taken into consideration, as well as the possibility for communication with the local population on their mother tongue”.

Article 34 aims to list detailed rules and may also be interpreted in different ways:

“(1) Two enumerators shall be appointed for each enumeration district, one of them selected from the ranks of the employees of the state, municipal and administration of

the City of Skopje, as well as the public administration, and one enumerator selected in a public call. (2) The selection of district enumerators shall take into consideration the need to ensure fair and proper representation of members of the communities that are not majority in the Republic of Macedonia in the unit of the local self-government of the corresponding census district, in accordance with the data collected by the 2002 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings".

The legislator charged the SCC with the obligation to provide detailed conditions for selection and appointment of enumerators, and Article 26 of the Law prescribes obligations for SCC which were then, without further elaboration, copied into the Book of Rules and Procedures of the SCC:

"(SCC) shall prescribe the manner and detailed conditions for appointment of members of census district commissions, district instructors and enumerators which are appointed from the ranks of the state and public administration; shall regulated the manner and the detailed conditions for selection and appointment of members of census district commissions, district instructors and enumerators selected on basis of a public call".

In January 2011, the SCC adopted the Rulebook on the manner and detailed conditions for selection and appointment of members of census district commissions, district instructors and enumerators selected on basis of a public call, and the Rulebook defines the manner in which the number and structure of enumeration teams shall be determined¹⁹. Article 16 of the Rulebook repeats the special conditions for selection of enumerators:

"A special condition that needs to be met for engagement of a certain number of members of census district commissions, district instructors and enumerators is the national structure of the local population that is being enumerated. The composition and structure of the members of the census district commissions, district instructors and enumerators that need to meet the conditions listed in Paragraph 1 of this Article shall be defined with the Decision mentioned in Article 2 of this Rulebook."

Article 2, on the other hand, instead of providing a definition for the necessary number of enumerators, the main "bone of content" in the SCC, prescribes that it shall be determined with a special decision:

"SCC shall define, with a decision, the number of participants in the Census on the level of census district and the units of the local self-government that fall within the outlines of the respective districts, taking into consideration the proportional and fair representation of the members of communities which are not in majority in the Republic of Macedonia, also taking into consideration the expertise and the competence of the candidates."

There is no such separate decision to define those issues (at least, we couldn't find it), which leads to the conclusion that SCC decided to regulate those issues with the Decision to publish an public call for selection of census-takers.

Several days before the publication of the public call for selection of members of census district commissions, district instructors and census-takers, the 10th session of SCC was held, and in the session, the Commission discussed the Decision to define the form and contents of the public call. It was the adoption of that decision that was the focus of conflict in SCC and led to the boycott of the Commission by its Albanian and Turkish members. The call itself (Picture 1) shows that SCC chose a model that ensured that census teams will always be composed by members coming from the two most numerous communities in the given community. According to that formula, in five municipalities in Macedonia - Vrapčište,

¹⁹ SCC has adopted another Rulebook that defines the criteria for selection of census-takers from the ranks of state, municipal and administration of the City of Skopje, and the public administration with the method of a draw. Article 2 of that Rulebook is identical to Article 2 of the Rulebook mentioned in the text.

Bogovinje, Studeničani, Šuto Orizari and Lipkovo, there will be no ethnic Macedonian in any of the district census taking teams. On the other hand, in all other municipalities where Albanians constitute an absolute or relative majority of the population, or are the second largest community, the census teams would have at least one member coming from the ethnic Macedonian community.

Picture 1: The Public Call

Although it was boycotted by the Albanian and Turkish members, the Commission continued its work²⁰ and held the regular 11th session on February 20. The session, among other points on the agenda, discussed the media coverage of the boycott of the Commission by its Albanian and Turkish members. Several media were noted of having engaged in "shameful vulgarisation and contamination" of proceedings in the Commission, and several members took the floor to comment on the public appearances and statements of SCC Deputy President Abdulmenaf Bexheti. They also invoked Eurostat's assessment that the Census proceeded in line with the international methodology. Some representatives from the smaller ethnic communities continued to present objections on the chosen model of composition of census teams, pointing to the absurd situation that may appear in some municipalities (for example, in the Municipality of Češinovo-Obleševo, *see below*). SCC President also addressed the arguments of the boycotting members of the Commission. In her view, "if the distribution of census-takers takes into account all ethnic communities that live in a given municipality, it could happen for some census districts to have two census-takers from the same ethnic community, which would be in violation of the Census Law".

That approach to the determination of the number of census-takers could result in some absurd situations. For example, in the small Češinovo-Obleševo municipality, according to the 2002 Census, the Vlachs are the second largest community with 30 members (0.4% of the total population), and the Vlach community would have 19 census-takers. On the other hand, the Turkish community is the third largest in the Municipality of Gostivar (app. 8,000 members or 10% of the total population of the municipality), and yet it won't have a single census-taker.

The next, 12th Session of SCC was held on February 27, 2011, and it reviewed the reports from the public calls, the information on the testing of candidates, the decision to determine the dates for the tests, etc. It is evident from the available documentation that the 14th Session

²⁰ Among the points on the agenda, SCC discussed the proposal to create a working body for communication with the municipalities, a working body to organize the testing of persons that applied to the public call, the decision on the contents of the agreement between SCC and the Ministry of Information Society and Administration to prepare a software solution.

was held on March 1, 2011, which discussed and decided, without major issues or problems, on ongoing activities.

After the elections, during the second attempt to execute the Census, the outstanding issues that have led to the boycott of the Commission remained unresolved. Four extensions of the 19th Session of the SCC were held in the attempt to resolve the problem, but there was no compromise. As a result, on August 31, 2011, one month before the scheduled start of the Census, SCC filed a Request for opinion to the Government of Macedonia to get a clear interpretation of the legal solutions that were subject to different interpretations. The SCC prepared the Request on basis of a conclusion adopted in its 21st Session.

Excerpts:

In its work, SCC faces the need for urgent and quick solution for the issue of the composition and structure of district census-taker teams, due to different interpretations of the provisions of Articles 31 and 34 of the Census Law. The matter was debated in five extensions of the 5th Session of the SCC and was the reason for the members from the Albanian and Turkish communities to leave the Commission. The adoption of the Law on Supplements to the Law on 2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia created the conditions to hold the Census and organize a new procedure for selection of district census-takers. The same matter was discussed also in four extensions of the 19th Session of the SCC and we still have different interpretations of the Law's provisions on the composition and structure of district census-taker teams, i.e. the question if the two census-takers in a census team should come from the two largest ethnic communities in the respective municipality... Was the intention of the proponent of the Law for the Census to be executed by pairs of district census-takers from different ethnic communities, representing the two biggest ethnic communities in the units of the local self-government in the corresponding census district, in accordance with the results of the 2002 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings?.. Having in mind the short and preclusive time-frame and the objective need for a quick decision on this issue, the different interpretations of the Law within SCC, and the position the Commission has adopted in its 21st Session to follow the proponent's intention, we ask you to present us with your opinion on this matter in the shortest time possible".

On September 5, 2011, the Government informed SCC that it discussed its Request and presented it with instructions on disputed issues. The Government's interpretation and instructions confirmed the position of the majority in the SCC. Following is an excerpt from Government's information, explaining its intentions:

According to the Law on the 2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings, the selection of district enumerators shall take into consideration the need to ensure fair and proper representation of members of the communities that are not majority in the Republic of Macedonia in the unit of the local self-government of the corresponding census district, in accordance with the data collected by the 2002 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings.

Accordingly, one member of the district census team should come from the largest, the most numerous ethnic community in the respective district, and the second member of the team should come from the community that was second largest, in accordance with the results of the 2002 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings. Therefore, it is fully aligned with the principles of two census taker teams, the representation of ethnic communities and the principle that the two members of a team should come from the different ethnic communities (the first from the most numerous, and the second from the second most numerous community in the respective municipality, in accordance with the results of the 2002 Census).

As a general principle, the authentic interpretation of laws are not sought from the entity that proposed them (even if it was, as in this case, the Government of Macedonia), but from the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, in accordance with its competences listed and defined in Article 68 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. Specifically, indent 3 of Article 68 of the Constitution is clear that the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia *"adopts laws and gives the authentic interpretation of laws"*. That is only logical because the Assembly is the legislative body that needs to interpret its intentions in order to assist the teleological interpretation attempted by the State Census Commission. Let's imagine a situation in which the Census Law was not proposed by the Government, but by one of the other authorized initiators, for example, 10,000 citizens or one or group of Members of the Assembly. Let's imagine a situation in which the Census Law was not proposed by the Government, but by one of the other authorized initiators, for example, 10,000 citizens or one or group of Members of the Assembly. As a result, the SCC asking the Government for an interpretation and, furthermore, the Government providing its interpretation are in themselves unconstitutional and absurd.

The analysis of the legal acts that provide guidelines for the execution of the Census leads to conclusion that the legal framework itself, but also the related by-laws leave a void on the matter of composition of census teams in accordance with the ethnic structure of the population of the municipality in which the census is taken. The dilemma was resolved with a legal absurd, a so-called authentic interpretation given by the initiator of the Law and not by the legislator. On the other hand, the manner of composition of census teams is of fundamental importance for the results of the Census. SCC and the Government approach this issue seriously, aware of the fact that the execution and the results of the Census will depend largely on the persons that execute the activities, i.e. the ethnic composition of census teams. This systemic weakness ultimately led to the unavoidable early termination of the Census, i.e. the failure of the extremely important statistical operation for the state.

VI Importance of Censuses in Contemporary Society

According to international standards, countries organize population censuses every ten years. Censuses are viewed as statistical operations which, in complex societies, provide in-depth insight in the situation on the ground and secure the basic information that later serves as basis for the creation of policies and development strategies in different areas (political system, economy, social and welfare policies, education, healthcare, decentralisation, agriculture).

In order to gain an insight and present the comprehensive and multifaceted importance of the population census, we conducted a survey that aimed to identify those areas of public policies and everyday life that depend on and need correct census data. The research led us to six key areas that use the demographic data collected by censuses and which do not depend exclusively on the ethnic background of recorded citizens: 1) Fair and democratic elections (voter lists and persons ID cards), 2) Education, 3) Healthcare, 4) Agriculture, 5) Social policies, and 6) Economy.

With this research, we aimed to demonstrate that the population census in Macedonia is much more than just ethnic count and that the media and the politicians completely neglected, in the public discourse on the issue, the wider and, in our view, much greater and fundamental importance of this statistical operation on planning of policies and everyday life of the citizens, both in the medium and in the long run.

For the purposes of the survey, in addition to documents and comparative texts originated from other countries, we conducted ten in-depth interviews with experts in various fields (statistics, demographics, political system, economic development, social policies, healthcare, education and agriculture). The analysis uses the responses of the interviewees, some of whom insisted on their anonymity. In order to respect their wishes, and to level the text, we decided that we shall not disclose the identity of any of the interviewed experts.

1) What makes the census an important statistical operation?

All interviewees were in unison that the population census is an extremely important operation for any state, and its importance is not exhausted by far with the simple issue of doing an ethnic count of the population. For statisticians and demographers, the census is the most comprehensive and most complex statistical operation, executed in line with the recommendations provided by the United Nations (UN) and Eurostat. The censuses are taken every 10 years because they are expensive and complex processes that require careful preparation and involvement of huge numbers of people. Censuses aim to provide comprehensive, high quality and real data on the population, households and dwellings in a country. The data collected in a census are used for various purposes, with special care being paid to the need to ensure continuity of the data and comparison with the data from other countries and the data collected in previous censuses. The demographic data collected in a census, for example the sex, age, marital status, occupation, literacy, has to be comparable with the data collected in other countries. Therefore, we have to follow the recommendations given by the UN and Eurostat.

All countries in the Balkans conduct censuses using the same or similar methodology and we can see that all countries of former Yugoslavia, with exception of Macedonia, conducted census operations. The recommendations given by the UN and Eurostat aim to ensure the comparison between data from different countries, and if we don't have such comparable data, we, as a country, won't be included in any international activities. Practically all sectors create international lists that show where we rank in the world in terms of, for example, total population, age structure, number of dwellings, education structure, etc. Therefore, the census data is necessary for a country and without them it can't engage in successful policy creation, or compare where it stands with other countries.

The UN Resolution 2005/13 is binding for Macedonia as UN member state. The EU Regulation 763/2008 is binding for the countries of the European Economic Area (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and the EU member-states, with exception of Croatia, which membership still needs to be ratified by all member states). Although the EU regulation is not binding for Macedonia, the official statistical institutions need to bear its provisions in mind when planning the census, in view of Macedonia's strategic aim to become a member of the EU and the obligation that arises from our status as candidate-country to submit data to Eurostat.

The census has great importance and great goal. It has to provide quality and relevant data that provide the basis for future solutions in the areas of demographic and economic policies, as well as in development of education, healthcare, social and welfare protection, infrastructure, etc.

2) Why did the 2011 Census Fail?

The persons we talked to offered interesting interpretations of the reasons for the failure of the 2011 Census. Almost all of them were convinced that the Census failed for political reasons or, to be more specific, ethno-political reasons. One interviewee offered the following comments: *"I wouldn't say there were one or two reasons, but rather a whole set of circumstances that didn't work in favour for the ruling parties. Both parties had the agenda to determine the actual sizes of ethnic communities, i.e. the numbers of citizens belonging to different ethnicities, and agenda that would provide the basis for their party policies and plans. If we add to that the fully politicized and unprofessional administration charged with the execution of the Census, the whole operation was integrated into the scene of political and party interests that were then presented as administrative procedures"*.

Several interviewees believed that *"it didn't suit somebody to complete the Census (especially one of the two political parties in the ruling coalition). The Census is a snapshot of the size of the population of the country (both inside the country and abroad), i.e. we are*

supposed to learn how many of us are there and where we are. To see what is the internal national structure, but also the sex and age structure and the property status of the population. Judging from the general disposition of this Government, there is little chance we will see a proper population census executed in any foreseeable future".

Another interviewee claims, on the other hand, that "there were no official information why the census failed and when it could be completed. We had two opposed explanations at the level of speculation. The first is that the number of people who left Macedonia has increased and the number of Albanian in the country shrank. The second explanation is that, at the time of the termination of the Census, it already counted over 4 million persons. That number is unrealistic, meaning that the census was not conducted in line with international standards".

Almost all interviewees placed the responsibility for the failure of the Census with the ruling parties: "It suited both ruling parties to manipulate the public funds intended for different social categories. When you programme the money for different social categories of citizens, you need to be able to say what proportion and structures of the population will be eligible to use those funds. The census is the only tool that may show the structure of income and expenses of the population, its educational and age structure, etc. The census is the only tool that can provide such relevant data. It doesn't suit them to conduct a census because they want to have free hand to manipulate the funds intended for various social categories of citizens".

One interviewee noted that "another important question is where did the money intended for the census go. The money was spent, and we didn't get the necessary figures about the society that we live in. The political parties should offer a logical and real explanation for the failure of the census. The whole census-taking structure was created and funded only for everything to turn back. That was a shameful move by the ruling parties".

Another interviewee thought the guilt for the failed census lied with the inability of the ruling structures to admit a failure claiming that "the date received from the government's structure in the field didn't encourage their belief that the population has grown. We know that the Government implemented many policies aimed to increase birth rates, while on the other side was the rather complex economic situation. Demographers say that Macedonia's population has shrunk by 400,000 citizens compared to ten years ago. For a Government that advertises itself and boasts new successes every day, those facts could be lethal. It obviously had to find a reason to stop the census and to prevent that the unfavourable results are seen".

Some of the people we interviewed, in their comments on the character of the whole operations, say that "the census failed because of the fact that we view an operation that the whole world views as statistical as a political matter. It turned out that we lack the capacity to implement the instruments for the execution of the census. Moreover, there is no political will to implement those instruments. This is a shame for Macedonia. For a country that aims to join EU, the execution of a statistical operation like the census is the basis for evaluation of its qualities and capacities".

Similarly, one of the interviewed persons said that, although we lack official information on the reasons for the failure of the census, the conclusion imposes itself: "Somebody got scared of the possibility that the final results would not show the numbers we are used to, that we know and process. The question is, do we fear for the number of Macedonians, the number of Albanians, or perhaps both. In any case, it is clear that the results of the census would be quite different than the Government's projections".

Statisticians and demographers believe that the decisive factor for the failure of the census was the lack of implementation of international recommendations and methodologies, as well as the different interpretations of definitions and standards: "The census covers the total population that lives in the country, as well as the population that works temporarily abroad for a period of up to 12 months. We, as a state, have no quality information how many people leave the country and how long those people stay abroad. Temporary returns can't be considered as a decision to move back. Namely, if you spent 30-40 months out of the country

and, during that time, you have returned home just once, for a period of a month, you shouldn't be counted in the total population living in the country. The problems surrounding the census, the disagreements in the SCC, the boycott of the Commission by some of its members, the resignations of SCC members, have led to different interpretations of standards and methodologies of the census, and it ultimately resulted in its termination. A lot of money was spent and we see no results whatsoever. There are a number of omissions and mistakes in the Census Law, in the procedures for creation of census bodies, etc. We have faced problems in previous censuses, but they were always resolved in accordance with UN's recommendations and through establishment of quality practices".

3) What is the damage Macedonia may suffer from the failure to conduct a census?

In their responses to this question, most of the experts we interviewed made it clear that the lack of proper census causes huge damages to the state and that, while alternative sources of data may help, they can't truly replace the biggest and most important statistical operation in a state that dictates all policies: *"A normal state would lose a lot if it failed to conduct a census. One state, placed in the abnormal situation with the current approach to governance, will not lose too much over the short-term, but in the long run it loses its credibility and relevance on the international scene. That is because it has proven incapable of providing official data about the internal situation, it has no exact idea about development trends, no idea what happens in those areas of society that need corrections or fortification, or the profiles that it needs to build to improve the general situation. Internationally, all data about our country will be suspected. I could use the situation in Turkmenistan as an illustration. There, the international organisations received the data presented by the state institutions with great reservations, because of the fact that everything was placed to serve the state, and not to present the true and real situation in the society".*

According to one interviewee, *"Macedonia today functions on basis of unrealistic statistical data. The lack of census causes a lot of damage. Macedonia doesn't know if a given publicly released statistic, that should provide the basis for the decision-making process, is true or false! The institutions adopt all decisions on basis of unrealistic data, in all areas. The state loses quality and correct information that would provide the basis for future projections! Macedonia projects its future on basis of false facts".*

Regarding alternative data gathering, the expert says that such methods can't replace the census because of the fact that we don't know the number of people living in the country or, for that matter, the number of young people in the country: *"in view of the fact that, according to some international think-tanks, close to half a million citizens left Macedonia in recent years, we don't know if Macedonia has two million citizens, if the population grew to 2,2 million or dropped to 1.8 million. The distorted data presented by the Statistical Office may be politically motivated, with the aim to create a false picture of unemployment in the country. The Statistical Office sometimes presents information that has no political/party background. However, without a proper census, even that information is of little help".*

According to one interviewee, the alternative methods of collection of data exist and are used, but exclusively in favour of the ruling parties. *"In a party dominated state with overemphasis on the role of the police, I believe that security agencies have the data on the total population. I could say that they hold concrete data on 90 percent of the population. It can be seen in any elections, when political parties miraculously know who will lean in what direction and they know it even for all members of a family. That is a machine designed to produce electoral product intended for the political parties. I am convinced that, at this very moment, the Government or the institutions have data on the exact population and on the ethnic, religious or party affiliation of the population. The same goes for the economic sector or the social situation in the country".*

Some interviewees, in the attempt to give a clearer picture of the damages suffered by Macedonia, use international census standards as a reference point: *"little is known in*

Macedonia about census standards and the fact that it is a global, organized activity agreed by all states. The states are obligated, under the UN system, to conduct a census every 10 years, preferably in years ending in a zero (for instance, 2000, 2010, 2020, etc.) with possibility to postpone it for up to two years (therefore 2001 or 2002). Macedonia today is one of just seven countries in the world that have neither conducted nor scheduled a census."

Regarding the other, alternative methodologies to determine the size of the population, one interviewee claims that *"they rely on surveys of representative sample, which is the reason why a census is the only activity of the states that can provide real and concrete picture of the people and the situation in a country, and if you lack that, the programming of your policies is unrealistic".* The expert emphasized: *"I have to say that the most developed countries in the world, Australia or Canada, for example, conduct censuses every five years because they are aware of the social dynamics and want to have relevant data that would cover a shorter period than the global standard of ten years"*.

According to consulted experts, the alternative surveys are conducted on basis of results of a census. If the census data is old or incorrect, the preparation of a representative sample is questionable. Without a census, almost all surveys and statistics are irrelevant and invalid.

Another interviewee continued along that line, saying that *"the census is the sole instrument that collects detailed data on all families. If we, the 1.5 million people that we are, can't conduct a census, what should the countries with 10 or 20 million inhabitants say"*.

As far as the damages of the failed census are concerned, one of the interviewees claimed that, because of the information gap, we as a state *"can't estimate and evaluate the effects of all policies implemented in the period from the last census in 2002 and today. Huge resources were spent and we can't evaluate whether those policies were successful, was there a positive, negative or no effect, what were the problems and omissions. We can't determine that because we don't have relevant statistical figures and we can't know, as a state, whether we succeeded or failed"*.

The same expert raised serious questions about alternative sources of demographic information, which in her view are always partial, subject to challenge, and concluded: *"knowing the context in which we live and the dominance of politics in our society, especially in view of the fact that the Constitutions lists decisions based on numbers, not on rights, the lack of proper numbers is the worst that could happen in this country"*.

One of the consulted persons claimed that the inability of the Government to finish the Census *"shows that we don't deserve to be considered even a 'banana republic'. You can't implement a fundamental process, developmental by nature, you have no capacity for that and you don't deserve to be a state. The objective responsibility lies with the Government"*, concluding that *"without a census there is no basic data to build strategies in all areas: Economy, healthcare, welfare, etc. We continue to go blind, praise ourselves in ads and campaigns and wonder, how comes we can't see the progress if we stand that good"*.

Another interviewee, on the other hand, places the emphasis on the strategic planning and says that *"no mid-term or long-term strategy, in any area, can be planned without a census. Reality tells us that the figures of the last census are now incorrect. How, for example, are we supposed to calculate the GDP per capita if we don't know how many citizens are there. All analyses without a census have a built-in mistake"*.

On the alternative demographics, he says that *"no institution with its findings can replace the figures received in a census. The Ministry of Interior, for election purposes, gives data to the State Election Commission, but the list is inaccurate because it is based on the number of ID cards issued. There are people in Macedonia without biometric ID cards and citizens with ID cards, but who have moved out of the state and don't plan to return"*.

4) What has to be done to execute the census?

Asked what has to be done for Macedonia to execute a census, some of the interviewees responded that the census will be taken once there is no more money to divide between the parties in power, so they will lose the interest to postpone it.

Most of them believe that, in order to conduct a successful census in the foreseeable future, the Constitutional restraints and threats that connect the rights of the ethnic communities with a certain percentage of the total population will need to be relaxed. *“One question would resolve many problems that we face now, related to the census. I think that we need to delete from the Constitution the 20% threshold put there in the context of the Framework Agreement, but, in that process, nobody should lose any right or benefit prescribed by the Agreement”.* According to that expert, *“the moment we start relieving ourselves of the pressure and our fixation on numbers and percentages, the so-called dangers of a real census will be eliminated. Once we are not obsessing about the numbers, there will be no reason preventing us to take a count of how many we are. Once certain rights and benefits don’t depend on some percentage point, we will be more relaxed and will be able to conduct a census, and planning and strategies will be based on real numbers”.*

Nevertheless, almost all persons we interviewed believe that the most important thing is to achieve **a political consensus to conduct the census**. Some of them note: *“The state and the local administrations, as well as the politicians, should work to create the conditions for citizens to be able to express themselves freely, to monitor the situation and prevent all attempts for illegal campaigns, influence and pressure on the population, and if such attempts are reported, to sanction them without delay”.*

Several respondents believe that the State Statistical Office (SSO) needs to work to improve its public image and to increase the public confidence that it works in accordance with international standards. The Government and state institutions should support those efforts by the SSO. Some believe that the *“the role of the SCC should change or the Commission should be disbanded altogether. If it exists, it should be an expert body, not composed of persons that will politicize the census. The SSO needs to be the main agent in all stages of preparation and conduct of the census. The Government should only, and through appointed representatives, provide logistical support for the activities and to assist in the elimination of eventual problems”.* The census commissions, some respondents say, should play logistical role and have no contact with the census materials (to avoid a situation in which the citizens would fear that their neighbours could view their personal data). The state administration should not be involved in the census as source of census takers. For reasons of greater trust, census-taking pairs can be created with members from different ethnic background in communities with mixed ethnic structure, something that was done in 1994. The citizens need to be educated and informed about the benefits of the census, the use of census data and the fact that the registration of the ethnic background should be free expression of the sense of belonging of the recorded person. In order to avoid any possibility for manipulation, the education and information campaign should focus on technical issues and to be implemented by the SSO.

VII Influence of the Census on key social areas

The detailed nature of the data collected in a census provides solid foundations for the planning of policies in various social fields.

This survey identified six such areas:

1) Fair and democratic elections (voter lists and persons ID cards)

In addition to the place of birth, the census takers collect the date on the regular place of residence, i.e. whether the person continuously lives at the usual address in the place of birth.

Then, the enumerated persons need to list the reason for which they moved, if their place of birth and the usual residence are different - work, education, family reasons, marriage, returnees from abroad, forced displacement, etc.). The answers to these seemingly standard questions can be quite important in creation of many policies. It could, for example, lead to the true number of citizens living in individual municipalities and the reasons why citizens decide to move from one municipality or region to another. Also, it provides data that could be compared with the number of voters listed in the **voter registry**. This is a matter of extreme importance, knowing that in Macedonia it is the voter registry that is seen as irrelevant and unconsolidated and as one of the key reasons why the opposition chose to declare the 2014 Presidential and Early Parliamentary Elections illegitimate.

In that regard, the persons we talked to were united in the opinion that a census has to be taken as soon as possible, because *“if we had the results of the census, we would have a better and more serious picture of the people with the right to vote. There is mistrust of the voter registry, and to restore the trust of the people that it is an exact list of who lives in Macedonia and who in immigration, we need a census. We need to determine the number of citizens that truly belong in the voter registry”*.

With those arguments in mind, the obvious question is whether Macedonia can hold valid and democratic elections and whether the principle of "one person one vote" is still valid here. In the process of preparation of the current Electoral Code, the election districts were organized in such a way that all districts have approximately the same number of citizens of voting age. After the failure of the census, at this moment we can't have precise insight whether that balance is maintained and whether all electoral districts in Macedonia have enough votes to support 20 MPs. There may already be a real need to redraw the electoral units to align them with the "one person one vote" principle.

With all that in mind, almost all interviewees have no dilemma that a population census, as soon as possible, is the *condition sine qua non* for fair and democratic elections in Macedonia.

2) Education

The census data provides a general overview of the educational structure of the population, i.e. what kind of education the citizens of Macedonia have completed. In addition, if cross-referenced with the employment data (or data on how long citizens have been unemployed) it would give a precise picture of the professional profiles that face difficulties in finding employment and provide directions for changes in education policies. On that subject, one of the interviewees said that *“it is important for the state to know how many people have completed primary, secondary or higher education, how many of them are illiterate and how many literate. All official data on the educational parameters available now is incorrect because it is based on the data from 2002”*. At the same time, he noted that the absence of up-to-date data influences the quality and quantity of multiethnic education *“because we don't know what kind of effort, intervention and policies in the area of education are needed with the individual ethnic communities”*.

Also, knowing that in this day and age, the literacy is equalized with computer literacy, the census would provide a clearer picture of the population's computer skills, how many households have a computer, internet penetration, and how they related to the level of education, poverty, etc.

A census provides the age structure of the population, a figure that dictates the need to increase or reduce the number of education institutions in the country. That figure is of great importance for the policies related to mandatory (elementary and secondary) education, but also with policies in the area of pre-school education. Simply said, only with a census the competent institutions may know where they need to close a school or kindergarten, and where to build new. The lack of such data can hardly be compensated with the alternative and administrative data kept by the institutions. For that reason, one of the persons we consulted believes that *“the administrative data can help us learn the number of children enrolled in*

kindergartens, but how can we know the number of children that are yet to be enrolled if we don't have a complete number of the population in the state or the population that moved abroad. It is the same with all other levels of education. So, even if we knew the current situation, we can't estimate the necessary interventions without the gross number of school-age population. This is just one example of the limitations of the otherwise valid administrative statistics held by the institutions. All data extrapolated from samples based on the census are questionable because they are already outdated".

One interviewee makes an interesting claim that *"the sole indicator of the population of a given municipality is the number of opened or closed primary school classes. That indicator points out at a clear trend of dropping number of primary school classes all over Macedonia, therefore lower numbers of enrolling students, and increase of numbers of students who leave the primary education. It indicates increased migrations both inside the state, but also abroad (mostly to Europe, but also to the U.S., Australia and Canada)"*.

Several interviewees raised the issue of "brain drain" of young educated people from the state and the educational needs of the youth: *"the brain drain puts additional obstacles to the efforts to assess the profile of young people in Macedonia and their educational needs. The state doesn't know how many people have left and what they do where they moved, nor does it know how many people returned and what they do here. The state doesn't know what education profiles are needed by the young people, i.e. what kinds of education programmes could and should be developed to stop the youth from leaving the country"*.

Finally, the persons we interviewed raised the question of relevance of research activities in the area of education and youth, but also in all other areas, without proper census data: *"the relevance of the research activities is questioned because of the fact that the basic parameters are 12 years old"; "the research is credible, but the question is how representative they are and to what extent they can serve as basis of general conclusions, recommendations and directions for creation of policies"*.

3) Healthcare

The data collected with a census provide the basis for future planning of health policies in the state. For example, the census gives overview of the general health situation of the population: Sight, hearing, climbing steps, concentration, memory, ability to communicate, chronic, inherited difficulties, injuries, etc.).

One of the interviewees, speaking about the importance of the census in the creation of health policies, noted the following: *"To calculate the population growth we need to know the numbers of newborns in relation to the number of deaths, but we always say that it is necessary to calculate the ratio for a given territory and for a given period of time. The population growth rates shall exhibit great differences if calculated for a territory with high birth rates or municipalities without young people, municipalities with outward migration, high mortality rate, etc. It is for that reason that in Macedonia, especially in the eastern parts of the country, we have the phenomenon of depopulation. We have the same situation that happened to Hungary – the young people don't want to create families, and the old people live longer. We need to be aware of the current situation, not work with 15 or 20 years old figures. We are talking about situations that change quickly and that don't allow for arbitrary estimates. We need to conduct a population census to learn the exact figures for the population growth, vitality index and birth rates. Then, we don't have real numbers on fertility of women, the ability to give birth between the ages of 15 and 49. The morbidity statistic on illnesses of the population is also very important, both the general and specific morbidity statistics. We don't know which illnesses kill our population. All those important parameters are calculated for a given population, on a given territory, in a given time period and we need the latest data for them.*

If we don't know the exact number of the population, we can't calculate how many physicians, nurses and auxiliary medical personnel are needed to satisfy the needs of a given

territory. To avoid overstretching and arbitrary spending of funds, all planning activities in the healthcare system need to know numbers of newborns, children of preschool and school age, the numbers of productive people of working age, the numbers of the elderly and senior citizens.

Without accurate healthcare related data, any planning of healthcare policies makes no sense”.

4) Agriculture

The census forms contain questions designed to yield important data on the situation in agriculture, which is necessary for the process of designing an effective and efficient agricultural policies. For example, in the question on the economic status, the enumerated person may select between several options – does he/she own agricultural company, does he/she employ workers, does he/she work on the family farm.

The questionnaire for the households, on the other hand, lists question whether the enumerated household owns agricultural estate, how much agricultural land it owns, the number of livestock, beehives, etc.

In view of the above, the interviewees believe that the census would provide a much more accurate overview of Macedonian agriculture, its problems and the needs of the population that works the land. It would provide information on the available human resources in the agricultural sector in the country.

In other words, the census is the main condition for definition of current situation, existing potentials and needs of the agricultural sector that would serve as basis for development and implementation of successful agricultural policies.

Agriculture is one of the sectors in the state for which a special, agricultural census is taken. The agricultural census uses data from the general population and households census, but contains more details on the capacities for agricultural production (for instance, the area of arable land) and the available work-force in the sector.

One interviewee believes that *“we can’t have rural development without an agricultural census (both for production capacities and the available work-force in agriculture)”*. However, agricultural census cannot, in any case, replace the basic census, having in mind that the *“agricultural census is intended primarily for legal entities”* and its successful execution depends on the general population census as the main condition.

In their comments on the implications that the lack of proper census data may have on concrete agricultural policies, some of the persons we consulted believe that *“at this moment, the subsidies are distributed on basis of the last agricultural census held in 2007. That data is still valid, but in view of the fact that we have huge numbers of unregistered migration from rural areas to urban centre and abroad, the figures and, by extension, agricultural policies are subject to serious questions. Also, “rural life is increasingly unattractive because of deteriorating social and economic conditions. We all know that but we can’t face the numbers. What kind of development we expect to have if nobody stays to live in the country?”*

In his conclusion on mistakes in creation of agricultural policies, one interviewee noted that *“some policies are oversized which makes their practical implementation impossible. We have spent a lot of money on inadequate development of sophisticated irrigation networks or industrial capacities that can’t start normal operation because of lack of work-force, or investments in primary agricultural production which has no effect because there are no people who will work with and use those investments”*.

The conclusion of almost all interviewees was that there is no alternative, especially not in agriculture, that could replace a proper census as a fundamental instrument for collection of data and basis for future policy-creation.

5) Social Policies

In the area of social policies, the census provides detailed and precise data on a series of indicators that are used to measure the poverty rate. The citizens provide data on their economic status and activities (are they employed or unemployed, what type of employment, what is the environment in which their working day proceeds, etc.), whether that are active job-seekers, how they earn a living, i.e. if they support somebody or if they are supported by other people.

The interviewees believe that *“there can be no social policy without a census”*, and for that reason, the lack of a new census *“has huge implications on the social policies”* in the country. In the comments on the alternative methods of collection of relevant data through different institutions, one of the interviewees say: *“The Statistical Office, the Health Insurance Fund and the Employment Agency produce some data on different categories of persons which are part of social policies on annual level, but, we have to note that none of the said three institutions holds date on every household in the country. Only a census could provide analysis of every family. For instance, how many are employed and how much money are available to each family, the education structure, the number of old, young people and children there are in the family, etc. At the same time, there is no registry of persons with disabilities, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies is supposed to create a strategy for early detection, protection and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. How can it do that if it has no accurate number of those persons, or any data of their geographic distribution”*.

Another interviewee emphasized that *“we have no data on the number and whereabouts of the vulnerable groups and categories of citizens. We pull that date from various ad hoc surveys conducted by institutions or NGOs, but those surveys are far from comprehensive and that is exactly why we need a census”*.

Another example of policy directly concerned with the census, mentioned by several interviewees, was the policies in the area of measure for promotion of employment: *“employment policies created by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, implemented by the Employment Agency, are created on basis of irrelevant data. The data on demand and offer on the labour market are equally irrelevant. In other words, there are no conditions for any planning activity. If we don't meet that condition, there is small probability that the policies will proved to be successful”*.

Another of the persons we consulted claims that there are deep political and social reasons why nobody, at this time, collects data on social policies. The data on single parents, disabled persons, persons on welfare allowance are lacking. *“Without a census, we have politically motivated tendency to exclude all socially undesirable persons. So, just to present some progress in the state, we are prepared to artificially “reduce” the number of welfare recipients, persons who live in poverty, unemployed and other undesirable categories. Official data doesn't show deteriorating situation, and yet that is the situation on the ground. We analyzed the 2011 data of the Statistical Office which, on the poverty map of the country, indicate that the quality of life in eastern Macedonia is better than in the western parts of the country. We all know that the actual situation on the ground is quite the opposite”*.

Related to that phenomenon, the interviewee claims that *“the government loses nothing by not holding a census, it is the population that loses the most... In the midst of the economic crisis we received praise from Europe for the fact that we didn't reduce budget spending on social transfers. Who are we fooling? We may fool Europe, but we can't fool the people. What happened really? The funds were programmed for more people, and were distributed to fewer people. We cut into the social transfer by artificially reducing the number of users. The Budget and the need to manipulate the money use them as the Government sees fit is the leading factor that led to the failure of the census. So, we programme money for things that don't exist, and we cut the spending on things we truly need”*.

6) Economic development (regional development, infrastructure, energy sector)

One expert we consulted for this analysis went further to claim that the strategic documents in the field of economic-social policies, for example the Strategy for Regional Development, are useless without a census: *"several years ago, we introduced the strategy for regional development that reorganized the country into eight planning regions. Today, we don't know the population figures for different regions, how many available jobs are there to know the potentials of a given region, and we can't develop any relevant regional development policy. If we go to a lower level, municipalities should have their own data how many people live, are born and leave the municipality. Such micro-level data is sporadic and the municipalities can't develop their own policies without that basic data. So, there are huge gaps between the data on national, regional and local levels"*.

Another person noted the Strategy for Regional Development as an example for the damages that the lack of census causes to the state: *"there is a legally prescribed minimum of 1% of the Budget that the state has to invest in regional development. The State Audit Office released the information that, at this moment, Macedonia spends just 0.1% of the Budget on regional development, which is just one tenth of the legal minimum. How can we know and support the planning regions in the state in a balanced way without proper demographic data? You can't design the development of a region and the development on micro-level without a census"*.

Census forms offer abundance of questions on the physical infrastructure (roads, housing and dwellings, water and sanitation systems, means of transport). The form also lists questions on how far from work the citizens live and what means of transportation they use to get to their workplace. That data would make fine contribution to the design of transportation policies.

The census forms also ask questions about dwellings, types of dwelling, home-ownership status, etc. It also records the housing units that are not used for living but for business activity. There is also data on the total area of dwellings, number of rooms per dwelling, whether they have full kitchen, bath and toilet facilities, whether they have their dedicated parking space and how many automobiles are registered per household.

The census collects data on the year in which a dwelling was built, how many floors has the building and the material of which the main frame was constructed. In other words, the state is not interested just in the number of dwellings and housing units, but also in their type and quality of construction. Equally important is the data on connections to waste disposal and sanitation systems – a census would provide a clear picture of the number of households connected to public waste water disposal systems. A census provides clear picture about the families' access to drinking water and what type of access they have (privately owned well, public water supply system, etc). All the data listed above would help identify the problems faced by the communities and direct investments to find solutions for priority problems.

There are series of questions related to the energy sector that, in addition to the area of energy efficiency, could contribute to the design of other policies, for example, environmental protection policies. As an illustration, the census form on households and dwellings asks the citizens to say how they heat their homes (home system or public distance heating system), and what type of energy they use to heat their homes. Another question asks them if they use electricity and if they own an air-conditioning unit.

In view of the above, one of the persons consulted for this analysis concluded that without a census *"we lack the basic idea what most of the people do, what are their aims and goals in life, what are the available resources and development goals so that we can plan the infrastructural objects and facilities. There is no data of what is going on in the state, and therefore no directions what comes next"*.

VIII General Conclusion

I believe that we need, and we are already working on it, a computer software that will register precisely the presence of every citizen in the country at any given moment, every minute... who is in the country and who is not, and that software could be upgraded so that everybody could express his ethnic and religious identity, if he or she wishes to do so, some may refuse, but everybody should be approached. However, we first need to establish who is in the country, who is out and for how long. That would require a complex and powerful software - the institutions are already working and I hope that, perhaps not before the elections but rather immediately after the elections, we will have an international tender for procurement of such software from a serious supplier, but also a hardware solution because powerful hardware would be necessary to support such a complex software, so that we can have registry, at any moment, of all citizens in and out of the country. And for how long they have been abroad. Then you know exactly who is in the country and who should enter... what's its name, the list of residents or whatever, and then one can conduct a census, ask them about their religion or ethnic background for the purposes of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the related Constitutional provisions. Another approach would face many difficulties.

Nikola Gruevski ("Milenko Late Night Show", March 7, 2014)

The population census is an extremely important operation for any state, and its importance is not exhausted by far with the simple issue of doing an ethnic count of the population. For statisticians and demographers, the census is the most comprehensive and most complex statistical operation, executed in line with the recommendations provided by the United Nations (UN) and Eurostat. The censuses are taken every 10 years because they are expensive and complex processes that require careful preparation and involvement of huge numbers of people. Censuses aim to provide comprehensive, high quality and real data on the population, households and dwellings in a country. The data collected in a census are used for various purposes, with special care being paid to the need to ensure continuity of the data and comparison with the data from other countries and the data collected in previous censuses. The demographic data collected in a census, for example the sex, age, marital status, occupation, literacy, has to be comparable with the data collected in other countries.

Knowing all of the above, Macedonia has to follow the recommendations of the UN and Eurostat. The UN Resolution 2005/13 is binding for Macedonia as UN member state. In view of Macedonia's strategic aim to join EU and the obligation to submit data to Eurostat that arises from our status of a country candidate for membership, while the EU Regulation 763/2008 is not binding, we should bear in mind its provisions in the planning and execution of the census.

In other words, Macedonia has to conduct a census. Any further delay has harmful effects on the reputation of the country and prevents proper planning and implementation of successful development policies in all areas of society. Without a census, there can be no successful policies in the fields of economy, energy, infrastructure, healthcare, education, welfare, rural and regional development, agriculture, etc. The census also provides the basis for creation of an accurate voter registry.

The census in Macedonia should be held hostage to the politics that have reduced the statistical operation to an ethnic count, i.e. how many Macedonian and how many Albanians and members of other ethnic communities live in Macedonia.

A successful census requires a climate of trust which, on the other hand, requires a change of the wider context of trust in the society. The government has the greatest responsibility for the conduct of the census. Other stakeholders - the opposition, the civil society and the media - may play a role, but their role is of secondary importance. They don't

have the power to decide. Rather, they can be the agents of public pressure and can contribute to the creation of a climate of mutual trust.

Therefore, the census requires a clear political will of the government, clear and precise legal framework and, of course, fine technical preparation and organisation.

If not, Macedonia will remain one of the handfuls of countries in the world that have not conducted a regular population census.