Project Information Document/ Identification/Concept Stage (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 18-Jun-2018 | Report No: PIDC158523

BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)	Environmental Assessment Category	Project Name
P167583		C - Not Required (C)	SUPPORT TO PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2019 POPULATION CENSUS IN BELARUS
Region	**Country**	**Date PID Prepared**	**Estimated Date of Approval**
EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	Belarus	18-Jun-2018	
Financing Instrument	**Borrower(s)**	**Implementing Agency**	**Initiation Note Review Decision**
Investment Project Financing	Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus	National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus	The review did authorize the preparation to continue

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	1.90
Total Financing	1.90
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	1.90
Program to Support Statistical Capacity Building in ECA	1.90

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

In Belarus per capita GDP grew at a rate of 8.6 percent per year during the 2000-2008 period. This performance exceeded the average for the ECA region; Belarus was located at the 80th percentile of per capita GDP growth performance among ECA countries. The rate of growth also exceeded the average performance of other Upper Middle Income countries, as well as that of oil importing countries, or countries designated by the IMF as “Emerging and Developing” – all countries groupings of which Belarus is a member.

With the advent of the financial crisis in 2009, growth stalled (GDP per capita grew by 0.4 percent in), but then quickly rebounded to 8 percent in 2010. During the 2010-2015 period, the economy of Belarus, and of the ECA region as a whole, grew at half the pace of the 2000-2008 period, with the performance of Belarus aligned with the ECA average, but still high in comparison with Upper Middle Income, and especially with OECD countries.

Pre-crisis economic growth was underpinned by strong domestic demand, as well as large public investments. Strong economic growth among key trading partners in the CIS, particularly in Russia, as well as terms of trade gains (prices of oil products doubled, and prices of fertilizers tripled, during 2006-2008), and cheap energy supplies from Russia (the implied oil and gas subsidy for the period 2001-2008 is estimated at 14.5 percent of GDP annually) were also among key drivers of growth (World Bank, 2012).

Economic growth in Belarus was not only strong, but also had a high degree of inclusivity in comparison with other ECA countries. According to latest available data, Belarus exhibited the highest rate of the growth of expenditures of the bottom 40 percent of the population among ECA countries (based on a 5 year periods bounded for all countries by 2007 and 2013), only comparable to the performance of Kazakhstan, and much higher than in the ECA countries that are part of the European Union. Boosted by rapid growth, the incidence of PPP 5.5/day poverty fell from 65 percent in 2000 to less than 1 percent in 2016.

However, following the financial crisis of 2008, the growth model has started reaching its limits. Real GDP growth became increasingly dependent on capital accumulation, but increasing capital-labor ratios in Belarus did not result in higher total factor productivity growth. Competitiveness deteriorated, as total factor productivity dynamics in the tradable sectors worsened vis-à-vis the non-tradable sectors. The steep fall in the price of oil in the world market after June 2014 and the subsequent tightening of the external borrowing constraint facing Belarus triggered a recession in 2015, the first recession since 1995.

Growth rates are unlikely to pick up because of structural rigidities, the declining subsidy margin on fuel imports, slow recovery of Russian demand, and tighter foreign debt conditions. In the absence of structural reforms, it will be difficult for Belarus to achieve rapid improvements in living standards, or to maintain the past inclusiveness of growth. GDP growth is expected to average around 2 percent over 2017–20, growth in incomes -- modest, and fiscal and debt constraints on public services will remain severe (World Bank, 2018).

Sectoral and Institutional Context

The national strategy for the development of Government statistics of the Republic of Belarus through 2022, adopted in 2017[1], outlines a number of strategic objectives and priorities for the development of the national statistics system for 2017-2022, including, among others, the following:

1. modernization of the national statistical infrastructure;
2. introduction of modern ICT technologies;
3. improving the effectiveness of working with respondents;

4. improving the approaches to publishing and sharing of official statistical information with users.

The strategy notes that the main sphere of activity in the area of socio-demographic statistics during 2017-2022 is the implementation of the Population Census in 2019. As part of this work, the strategy emphasizes the importance of:

1. coordination and cooperation among government bodies for the purpose of collecting and using data from administrative sources;
2. transition to electronic format of the system of collecting data, inclusively on migration-related information;
3. development of methodologies of computing demographic statistics based on the results of the 2019 Population Census.

The importance of the implementation of the Population Census in 2019 is reinforced by the fact that it will not only provide data on the population of the Republic of Belarus and its characteristics (demographic, economic, and other), but will also allow for cross-validation of statistics obtained from other data sources, inclusively from sample surveys, allowing to validate and increase the precision of many indicators of the country's socio-economic development. The Census is also the only source of such information for small geographic areas and population groups, the basis for the population estimates in the inter-censal period, and a tool for establishing a reliable general population for sampling.

Belstat has started preparation for the population census of the 2020 round which is planned for the year 2019 and which will be the third population census of independent Belarus. The 2019 census will feature changes in the socio-economic life of the Republic of Belarus not only for the period from 2009 through 2019, but also in historic retrospective taking into account previous censuses. The information on the demographic, economic and social status of the population and its distribution across the regions of the country sourced from the census will serve as a basis for demographic projections as well as estimates and programs of socio-economic development of the country for a short-term and long-term perspective.

The main issues that should be taken into account in preparation for the population census have already been defined: strengthening of legal and institutional capacity for collection, processing and dissemination of statistical data; aligning of statistical methodology and techniques with the international standards; strengthening of user confidence in statistics through better dissemination strategy and statistical marketing; implementation of modern information technologies at all stages of the population census. Along with the traditional questions, the census program will be expanded with a list of questions related to labor, commuting and international migration.

Considering the fact that the Republic of Belarus has never conducted agricultural census, the population census program will be complemented with a separate module of questions on agricultural activities. Combining of the two censuses will allow for minimization of related costs.

Relationship to CPF

Promoting greater use of data and access to information in public decision making is a core cross-cutting theme of the recently adopted Country Partnership Framework for FY18-FY22 (World Bank, 2018a). The access to information theme reflects a finding from the recently completed Systematic Country Diagnostic (World Bank, 2018b) and CPF consultations, namely that transparency of information is lacking, the use of impact data is insufficient, and public-private dialogue remains weak. All of these factors limit well informed decision making by both private and public sector actors.

The project thus aims to support directly advancing data-informed decision-making in Belarus. The 2020 Population Census will provide vital information key qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the population. This data received will play an important role in decision making as related to socially significant priorities of the country. Considering the fact that the Republic of Belarus has never conducted agricultural census, the introduction of an additional module of questions on agricultural activities of households will provide vital information on an important livelihood source for many households, and will thus help improve the national and World Bank's estimates of poverty and living standards in Belarus.

The census results will be accessible at the national, regional and international levels through publication and dissemination of a census report, development of a data bank with the possibility of its further use in research activities and construction of demographic projections. The population census must provide government bodies, mass media, international organizations and other users with statistical data.

The project is also complementary to activities under the Structural Reform Technical Assistance Support Program in Belarus (P164043), which supports the implementation of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), one of the two largest global household survey programs. MICS will contain five questionnaires, for men and women of 15-49 years, children of 5-17 years, and under age five. It is thus an important statistical instrument for regular poverty monitoring and vulnerability analyses, and will generate data for 188 indicators, which can be disaggregated by regions, residence, gender, education, age, wealth, migration, and other characteristics. The data provided by the MICS survey are expected to help inform more efficient social protection and social policy measures, including by the means of improved targeting of social support.

C. Project Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The project supports methodological and technological innovations for the 2019 Population Census, including (i) transition to computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI); (ii) exploring the feasibility of internet self-interviewing; and (iii) enhancing the usability of spatial information from the Population Census through modern GIS technologies.

Key Results

Key results for Component 1:

1.1. Methodological base for collection, transmission and processing of the census data on CAPI support is improved;

1.2. Technical/technological base for collection, transmission and processing of census data, inclusively for self-enumeration through the Internet, is improved;

1.3. Population Census promotion and outreach strategy is developed and informed by international good practices;

Key results for Component 2:

2.1. National and subnational information from the Population Census available to users through the online system of access and through the geostatistical (GIS) portal

D. Preliminary Description

Activities/Components

The project has two main components: (i) preparing the national statistical system for the Population Census; and (ii) ensuring access to the non-confidential Population Census data and indicators. Activities for each of the 2 project components are described below.

Component 1: Preparing the national statistical system for the Population Census

Outcome 1.1 Methodological support to population census is improved.

Activities

1.1.1 Provision of international expertise on the methodology of collection, transmission and processing of the census data (including questions on agricultural activities), use of administrative sources at pre-enumeration and data processing stages; use of GIS technology for preparing cartographic materials.

1.1.2 Visits of the Demographic Statistics and Population Census Department staff to the Central European countries to study the experience of preparation for and conducting of the population census.

1.1.3 Elaboration of a census evaluation program based on the recommendations of a relevant international expert and taking into account financial and human resources available at Belstat and WB funds allocated for the census evaluation according to the project budget. The census evaluation program can include quality analysis of collected information and the process of its collection on the basis of monitoring of the census operation, data from administrative sources, demographic analysis (comparison of the current and previous census results in the context of demographic processes).

1.1.4 Post-enumeration survey, demographic analysis.

Outcome 1.2 Technical/technological support of the population census is improved.

Activities

1.2.1 Provision of expertise on technical and technological aspects:

(i) collection, transmission and processing of census data, including assessment of capabilities of national and international institutes and companies for the development of AIS "Census 2019"; drafting a terms of reference for the development of AIS "Census 2019"; formulating tender conditions for selecting a contractor for the development of AIS "Census 2019";

(ii) use of GIS in the process of census preparation, collection and processing of census data, and development of information products for potential users of the census results (geostatistical portal);

(iii) self-enumeration using the Internet.

1.2.2 Development of subsystem for storage and processing of census data.

1.2.3. Purchase of ORACLe DBMS products required for data storage and processing subsystem functioning.

1.2.4. Acquisition of the necessary equipment for collection, transmission and processing of the census data. This will be performed on the basis of Belstat's request after specifying the needs for equipment.

1.2.5. Development of software application for self-enumeration via the Internet.

Outcome 1.3 Population census promotion and outreach strategy is developed.

Activities

1.3.1 Public awareness campaign, including the following components:

(i) organization of press conferences, "round tables", briefings, scientific conferences;

(ii) public addresses of persons involved in the census preparation and operation in the mass media or personally;

(iii) informing the population by means of efficient advertising and active information distribution programs about the population census in the mass media;

(iv) organizing and advertising support of special projects for individual target groups;

(v) distribution of information messages, leaflets, posters, promo videos, etc.

Component 2: Ensuring access to the non-confidential Population Census data and indicators

Outcome 2.1 Final census results are prepared for publication and dissemination at the national and international levels.

Activities

2.1.1 Evolving of the automated information system "System of access to the 2009 population census results via the Internet" by complementing it with the 2019 population census data.

2.1.2 Development of a geostatistical portal for integrating census data with digital maps, statistical analysis and modeling.

SAFEGUARDS

E. Safeguard Policies that Might Apply

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No	TBD
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01		X	
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04		X	
Forests OP/BP 4.36		X	
Pest Management OP 4.09		X	
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11		X	
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10		X	
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12		X	
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37		X	
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50		X	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60		X	

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