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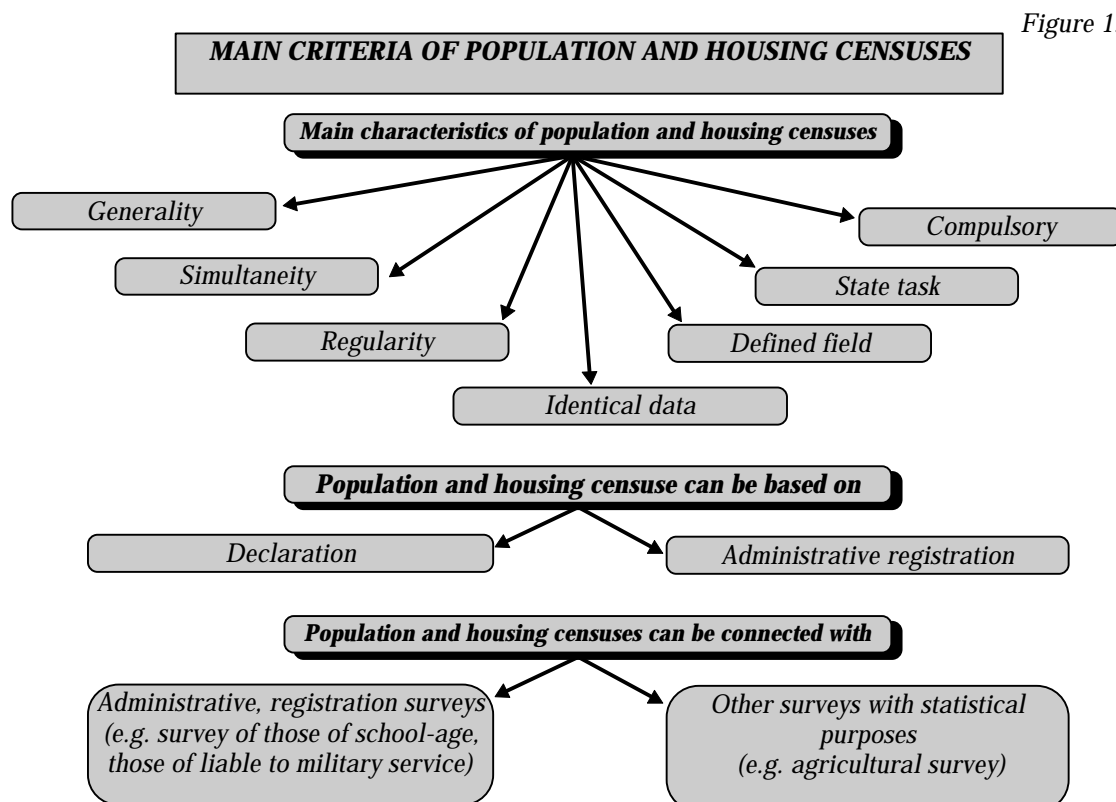
The role of population registers in censuses

Submitted by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office

I. Different aim and methodology of registers and censuses (household surveys)

a) Census characteristics

1. Censuses have been carried out regularly since the middle of the 19th century in most European countries. The methodological base of present censuses developed in this period.



2. Full coverage is their main characteristic: they include every person and dwelling in a certain area. There is a reference date regarding the collection of data and the data collection is carried out within a short period of time (usually two weeks). Censuses are repeated in certain intervals (usually ten years) and relate to personal data. Carrying out complete censuses is

usually a state task, since the necessary resources and organizations to carry out a work of such an enormous scale are in state ownership only.

3. Responding census questions is obligatory and refusal to answer entails sanctions. This is the main difference between censuses and other (usually sample-based) household surveys. Although giving information in accordance with the facts is compulsory, correctness of the declared data is not checked. If the census program includes the question of size (floor space) of the dwelling for example, declaration of a smaller area does not entail sanctions. Since the interviewer can not ask for documents they can not check correctness of the declaration. In case of censuses based on administrative registers (e.g. real estate register) the source of information is not a declaration but a certified register.

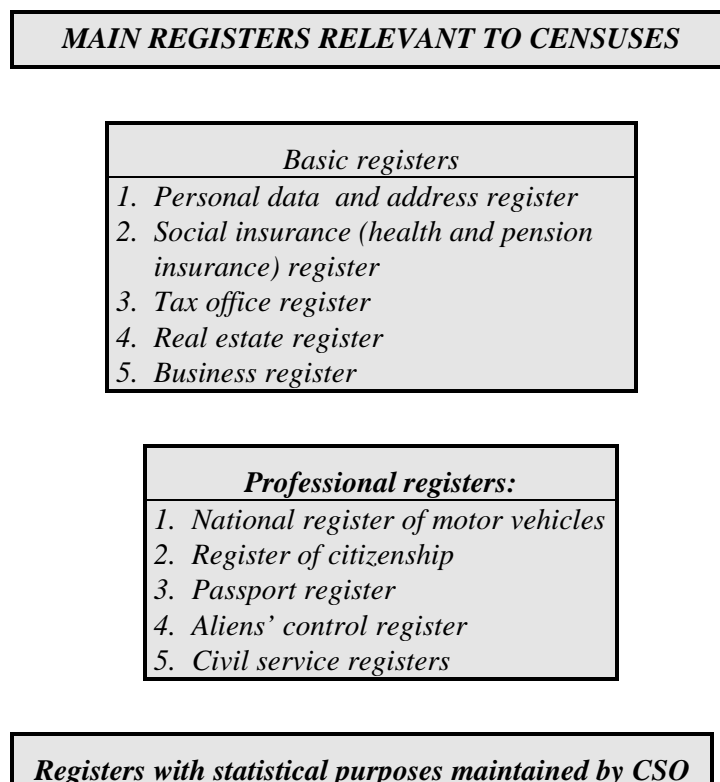
4. Thus censuses can be based on declaration (data of that can be used only for statistical purposes) and - if there are registers of suitable quality - on administrative registers (data of that were collected for administrative purposes mainly). Censuses can be based on the combination of these two sources, too, as it is usual in Northern-European countries.

5. There were censuses connected with administrative surveys in Hungary, too (e.g. in 1949). Surveys with statistical purposes could be connected with censuses, too. Subsequent statistical surveys aiming a deeper examination of a certain theme (e.g. the situation of the disabled) based on census data has also been usual.

b) Classification of registers and their evaluation with respect to censuses

6. As a result of economic and technological development, more and more information piles up in the developed world, which is thematically more or less equivalent to the data collected in traditional censuses. The use of computers gave an impulse to the enlargement of information based on registers. There have been population, real estate and other administrative registers established in some developed countries, so the administrative information base has increased significantly.

Figure 2.



7. Registers must be authentic, up-to-date, the sources of maintenance must be well defined, data security concerns must be asserted and users have to be identified. Some of these principles (e.g. being up-to-date) must be enforced more strictly in case of administrative registers than in case of registers with statistical purposes.

8. Personal data and address register is the most suitable register for census purposes according to international experience. The following data of the register can be used in censuses: *name (sex), place and date of birth (age), citizenship, permanent/temporary place of residence*. This register covers the whole population (theoretically), therefore it is a complete database.

9. Significant proportion of the population is included in health and pension insurance register and in tax office register. Data content of these registers is not easy to comprehend.

10. Health and pension insurance register could include and handle the following personal data, in accordance with the relevant laws (Acts LXXX. and LXXXI. of 1997) :

- "- personal data (name, place and date of birth)*
- permanent/temporary place of residence*
- occupation, work, sphere of activity*
- health and disability data*
- income related data"*

11. Population included and data handled in health and pension insurance registers are not the same, but the above data are the most useful in terms of a census. Tax and business registers are additional important registers. They can be the source of income and employer related data.

12. Simultaneously with the population census, a housing census is carried out, too. Unfortunately there is no complete building and dwelling register in Hungary, therefore data of the real-estate register could be used only. Real-estate register, however, does not include the main census-type criteria of dwellings (e.g. floor space, number of rooms, equipment status). Place of the real-estate, rights and facts related to its ownership are only included.

13. There are a lot of professional registers containing census-type data which could be used as complements. Aliens' control register could be especially important in view of examining international migration. Civil service registers, unemployment registers and criminal registers could contain census-like data, too.

14. Knowledge of data contents and methodological problems of other registers relevant to censuses needs further examination.

c) Advantages and disadvantages of the use of the three data sources

15. As stated above, there exist three types of data sources: sample-based household surveys, full-scale data collection on the population and administrative registers. The following table shows the relative advantages and disadvantages of these data sources by eight criteria. Advantages are indicated by "*" -s (in case of more "*" -s, advantages are emphasized).

Figure 3.

| <i>Comparison of the three data sources by eight criteria^{a)}</i> | | | |
|--|----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| <i>Criteria</i> | <i>Sample survey</i> | <i>Full-scale data collection on the population</i> | <i>Administrative register</i> |
| <i>Rich, complex, varied, flexible</i> | *** | | |
| <i>Exact, relevant</i> | * | | ? |
| <i>Cheap</i> | ** | | *** |
| <i>Actual, timely, seasonal</i> | *** | | * |
| <i>Precise (great and complex)</i> | | * | * |
| <i>Detailed data even for small areas</i> | | ** | * |
| <i>Coverage of the population, credibility, PR respects</i> | | * | ? |
| <i>The population is specific in terms of the examined topic</i> | *** | * | |

^{a)}Table prepared by Leslie Kish

16. The main characteristic of population sample surveys is carrying out rich, varied programs, where it is possible to examine certain target population groups (e.g. the elderly, the unemployed). Furthermore it gives more recent data than censuses carried out in every ten years. Population sample surveys are cheaper than complete censuses, since there are

significantly less respondents. At the same time, decennial censuses give such detailed data related to smaller areas, especially settlements and enumeration areas which cannot be obtained from sample surveys. The address list of censuses is a further advantage in terms of sample surveys, too. The address list serves as a base for sample surveys and can be regarded as reference for further examination of some basic variables during ten years.

17. In terms of thematic richness, variability and flexibility, censuses and administrative registers can not reach the level of population sample surveys. Both of these sources, however, can provide detailed data even for smaller areas (censuses are a little more tendentious in this respect). At the same time, administrative registers are more timely, since their database must be updated permanently for administrative purposes. (According to data security law it is obligatory to handle only real and actual personal data in Hungary.)

18. The fact that administrative registers are cheaper than censuses is considered to be a great advantage of registers. In Finland, for example, 93 % of basic data is obtained from administrative registers and only 7 % is obtained from the population. We understood that providing this 7 % of data, however, costs 30 % of the annual budget of the Statistical Office of Finland. When calculating the costs, we should not forget that establishment of administrative registers what can be used for statistical purposes takes a long time (several years) and entails significant costs. Updating databases has costs, too. Carrying out decennial censuses is a great expenditure once, however, if we divide it for ten years, the relative expenses are not that enormous. Considering all these factors, the use of a well functioning, credible and up-to-date administrative register for statistical purposes must be cheaper.

19. Accuracy and credibility are the most uncertain criteria in case of the two big data sources.

20. Traditional censuses collect data for statistical purposes exclusively. The methodology is based on declaration for some reasons. Earlier registers were not developed enough for census purposes. The majority of respondents are probably more willing to declare the true situation in censuses. Since interviewers do not ask for documents, data are considered not to be used for other purposes. Good publicity can convince the population and urge most of the respondents to declare true data.

21. Data collection of administrative registers is not driven by statistical purposes primarily.

22. Registration of the name and other information of citizens takes place in order to prove some title (or lack of it), i.e. to create legal relations mainly. This respect of providing data query whether information refer to the real situation. Citizens could have interests what do not urge them to declare the real situation (e.g. registering the dwelling, property status). Making registers up-to-date would require the activity of citizens and technical preparedness to enter changes into the registers immediately. (A typical example is the Act LXVI of 1992 in Hungary, which orders the striking off those from the register who had been registered to a temporary address for more than two years and did not renew their registration. This large-scale liquidation of temporary addresses took place on 30 June 1994. There were 900 thousand registrations ceased on administrative way, two thirds of which took place between different settlements and one third took place within settlements. So the scale of unreal addresses piled up until 1994 was almost a million, simply because citizens missed to register their earlier temporary addresses.

23. The quality of administrative registers is connected with the economic development of a country, the cultural attitude of the population and the state and political structure. The more people identify themselves with the political and social structure of their country and the more satisfied they are with its economic performance the better the registration system reflects real situation.

24. The relationship of trust between citizens and the state (which is a characteristic of societies with stable values) is developing now in transitional countries. Quality improvement of registers in these countries is going to be in close connection with the consolidation of market economy and legal system, the strengthening of the middle class and the increase of cultural level.

II. Practical experiences and possibilities of the use of registers for census purposes in Hungary

a) The connection of Hungarian censuses and registers

25. Administrative registers had not been used for census purposes until 1990 in Hungary.

26. There had not been any easily available register with census like structure covering the whole population which could have been used for census purposes. Censuses - as the only full counts covering the total population - had been used for the establishment of registers. Surveys with other purposes had been connected to censuses in some cases, too.

27. CSO has been compiling the Gazetteer of the Hungarian Republic (functioning as an administrative register) from the very beginning (from the beginning of the 1870s). Censuses provided data for this work at all time. The 1869 census did not publish data of settlements, for instance, but the number of dwellings and population by settlements was published in the 1873 Gazetteer.

29. An example of the use of census data is the 1912 survey of the blind. The first step of data collection was to prepare the name list of the blind (based on the 1910 census data). The lists were sent to the clergymen of different denominations. They completed and corrected the lists. The final list was the base of the survey, which started in 1912 and finished in the next year. The survey was carried out by civil servants, official physicians and oculists above all.

30. Because of historical reasons, censuses between World War I and II (1930, 1941) and the 1949 census were connected with surveys with administrative (register) purposes.

31. A separate register (address list) of companies, industrial factories, craftsmen and merchants was to be prepared during the 1941 census. Similar registers had been prepared already in the data processing of some earlier censuses, too (e.g. in the 1930 census).

32. It was in the 1960 census that lists of streets and street-numbers for every settlement were prepared at first. Earlier, interviewers had got only the name of streets bordering the enumeration area earlier.

33. In the preparation of the 1990 census the most problematic question group (that of occupation and education) was to be asked on a so-called employer questionnaire. According to our plans, the employer should have filled this questionnaire for active earners and those on maternity leave. The employer should have used their own labour register which were checked up and updated before the census. Questionnaires filled by employers and given to employees before the enumeration should have only been corrected. A complete occupation-education

questionnaire should have been filled in only if the respondent did not get or could not get a pre-filled questionnaire. Because of the experiences of pilot censuses and the protest of employers, however, the employer questionnaire was not used in 1990.

34. The use of population register data (set up in 1975) in the census came up in the preparation of the 1980 census already. The idea was refused since the population register was not suitable for this task. (A lot of people still had no personal identification number at this time.)

35. Data from the population register was used only in the preparation of the 1990 census.

b) Use of population register data in the preparation of the 1990 census¹

36. Current list of streets, street-numbers and dwellings by settlements was prepared by the State Population Register Office (based on its own data) in the development of enumeration areas in September 1989 (during the preparation of the 1990 census). The revised list of streets and street numbers were distributed by enumeration areas among interviewers (according to the 1 November situation). The distributed lists contained the most important data of registered persons. If data on the list differed from declared data, interviewers had to mark it on the address list. A non-representative study was written about these differences, including five counties and 263 enumeration areas (those with the greatest differences). In the following we summarize the results of the study.

37. There were less inhabited dwellings according to the census than in the address base of the State Population Register Office. Accordingly, the population enumerated was smaller than the number of people in the register. The difference was quite important both in the case of dwellings and persons.

38. A relatively significant proportion (15 %) of non-enumerated dwellings belonged to other enumeration area (not to the one included in the address list). This was the case especially when street-numbers were changed (any time after the introduction of the population registration system) (e.g. changing even and odd street numbers). These changes were not automatically carried over by the registration organizations. They modified the registration only if the citizens themselves reported the change of their addresses. The address list reflected the situation preceding the street number change in a lot of cases. Therefore there were whole streets misplaced in the list especially in case of enumeration area borders.

39. Most of the dwellings which were not enumerated but were included in the list (76%) were not found by the interviewer. In these cases interviewers did not sign (or could not find) the reason of the departure between the address list and the real situation. Usually it was not possible during subsequent comparison to find out why a certain address was included in the list. Presumably the dwellings which were not "found", were misplaced in the list (because of the change of street-numbers) or duplicates or unidentifiable addresses. A part of duplicated addresses were probably found in another enumeration area and were enumerated as dwellings not included in the address list.

40. 6 % of the dwellings included in the address list but not enumerated, proved to be empty parcels or public buildings with no dwellings. Because of street number changes on the

¹ The present chapter is based on the article of Kapitány Gabriella: "Comparing the number of dwellings and population surveyed in the census and in the database of State Population Register Office (Demográfia, 1997/1).

one hand and inaccurate registration on the other, there were dwellings included in the list of an enumeration area more than once (e.g. once with door number and once without it, or the same dwelling with old and new street number). In some cases parts of institutional households (a building or a room of them) were included in the address list as individual dwellings. The proportion of addresses not enumerated because they were not used as dwellings or because they were destroyed was slight. The proportion of dwellings which were not enumerated because of enumeration error was even smaller (0.1 %).

41. Enumerated addresses of the address list mounted up to more than 90 % of dwellings registered in the census. So the majority of enumerated dwellings were included in the address list, but only a part of them was found without any address difference. In case of more than half of the dwellings included also in the address list there were wrong or incomplete addresses in the list. In some cases a dwelling with an incomplete address had to be enumerated as two or three different dwellings. (In these cases the interviewer corrected the address and signed address difference at every dwelling instead of signing "dwelling not included in the list".) At the same time almost one tenth of dwellings enumerated in the census were not included in the address list of the enumeration area at all.

42. As far as persons are concerned a significant proportion (45 %) of those not enumerated did not live on that address any more, moved or died. Address changes and deaths after closing the address list could have not been taken into account by the population register of course, but these cases were not considerable. The proportion of those not enumerated because of being unknown on their (permanent/temporary) address in the list was more than one fifth. The proportion of those included in the address list but belonging to other enumeration areas was a bit smaller (18 %).

43. There were quite a lot of people enumerated in examined areas who were not included in the address list. Most of them were enumerated in dwellings which were not included in the list. There were even persons who were not indicated among the inhabitants of the dwelling in the list. This kind of insufficiency was mainly caused by citizens not registering in time (stipulated by law). Population register, however, seem to have been unable to enter changes credibly and within a short time. (Birhts, for instance, are reported automatically by registrars to the local population registration office. In spite of this there were some children not included in the list who were born months before the close of the address list.)

44. The majority of those enumerated (87 %) were included in the address list, but data provided by the population register usually had to be corrected in their case, too. Most of the differences derived from insufficient, incorrect registration. Typically they indicated the street-number only when registering, without other address identifying data (building, floor, number of door, letter used in street number and in number of door). Sometimes even the name of place was not correct, e.g. the address provided by population register included street instead of square. These differences could cause problems especially when there are different types of places with the same name within a settlement (road, street, square, etc.).

45. The 1990 census was the first one in Hungary which used an administrative register covering the whole population. Summarizing the results, we wanted to demonstrate the problems of using a traditional (declaration based) census and an administrative register together. The results of this comparison, however, cannot be generalized, there could have been better situation in smaller settlements and worse in bigger towns, especially in the capital. The data of the population register became more accurate since 1990 - because of parliament and local government elections. The results of the study showed that despite all problems interviewers could use the greatest part of the address list provided by population register. The

updating of the address lists on the basis of the last census and the improved population register's list, constitutes a part of the field preparatory work to the forthcoming Hungarian census.

III. Legal environment influencing the use of registers for census purposes

46. The 1992 autumn parliamentary approval of the LXIII Act of 1992 on "*personal data protection and the publicity of data of general interest*" regulating basic constitutional rights was a milestone of Hungarian legislation. In the following we give a summary of the Act:

- a) it neglects physical characteristic of data medium, i.e. it does not differentiate between data processing done with and without computers,
- b) the concept of data handler includes executive power, civil organizations, economic organizations, the media as well as other citizens - against whom citizens having their own data are protected,
- c) its concepts are absolutely "*EU-conform*",
- d) the two human rights i.e. publicity of data of general interest (freedom of information) and protection of personal data (data protection) are regulated within one law,
- e) it is a so-called framework act, detailed orders are determined in so-called sectoral laws.

47. One of them is the act of 1992 on "*the register of personal data and address of citizens*" (the so-called Register Act). This law systematizes the regulation of the population, address and identity card register. There were significant changes in handling personal identification between 1992 and 1996. After the repeated resolutions of the Constitutional Court the question of the old universal identification, the so-called personal identification number became settled. The Parliament approved the law on "*identification ways replacing personal identification number*" (1996). Introduction of new identification ways necessitated the modification of many other laws (e.g. the Register Act and the Statistical Act). So the Parliament approved the act of 1996 on "the modification of the acts on the use of tax identifier, social security identification mark and personal identification" in the same year. The act of 1995 on "research and direct marketing" belongs to this group of acts thematically. This law regulates the ways of using personal data and addresses for research and direct marketing purposes. These are the most important laws regulating the ways of personal identification, the rules of connecting individual databases and direct the use of mainly administrative registers. Our study does not make a detailed introduction of the above laws possible. Thinking about the use of administrative registers for census purposes, however, requires thorough examination of the above laws.

48. The Statistical Act is the most important one in terms of our theme. Modern, civilized countries cannot do without basic information derived from data collected, processed and published with statistical methods. In order to have available information of this kind the activity of state statistical service has to be regulated by law. Data servers has to be provided by legal guarantees that data made available would not be misused and would be used for statistical purposes only.

49. The Hungarian statistical service looks back upon a history of more than 125 years. The first statistical act was written in 1874, and renewed five times since then. Because of the limits of this study we can examine only the most important resolutions of the statistical act approved in the spring of 1993 (XLVI Act of 1993), relevant to our theme. At the same time we refer to the circumstances which could be important in case of future modifications of the legislation.

50. Definition of statistical purpose is an important task of the statistical act. It is necessary because (as it was referred above) the legal status of a data collection with statistical purposes is different from a data collection with other, e.g. administrative purposes in many cases. Furthermore, according to data protection act linkage to a given purpose is a basic principle in terms of handling personal data - so definition of statistical purpose is demanded.

51. The recommendation of the competent section of the European Council says the following: "Use with statistical purposes is processing personal data in order to present the structure, development and common characteristics of the total population exclusively". A further explanation can be that the purpose of handling data is statistical if individual data is of no importance but the value of its combination with other data matters only. The valid text developed after the Parliamentary discussion defines the task and purpose of statistics on the one hand, and defines statistical activity, on the other.

52. The definition of statistical purpose becomes very important if administrative register data are to be used in the census, since other information consisting of personal data can be processed only if this purpose is emphasized. When using census and other statistical or administrative register databases it is very important to consider that developing methods, concepts and classifications for statistical activities is the task of the CSO. General use of data derived from different places is possible, however, only if data are homogeneous, i.e. refer to the same phenomena according to the same categories. Therefore the development of a unified classification of concepts and methods is indispensable. It is important to handle data according to this classification in organizations independent from official statistical service, too. Although it does not apply to their own, internal information system, outside data service must be in harmony with various classifications. (Therefore it is advisable to develop even the internal information system considering the principle of uniformity.)

53. The relevant section of the Statistical Act regulates this problem: "In the case of data collections and of supplies of data involving authorities', supervisory, economic or other activities, serving for the inner management of the organization concerned as well as the keeping of public, authentic and other registers, the concepts and classification systems published by the HCSO must be taken into consideration."

54. Censuses must take full advantage of this title of the CSO. Traditional and internationally accepted census concepts must be harmonized with concepts used by individual registers. The concept of residence, educational attainment, occupation and employer as well as their classifications belong to this group. Data of dwellings are important in terms of censuses although these are not personal data. Therefore dwelling concepts used by censuses should be considered when reforming real-estate register. Regulations of the Statistical Act of 1993 help these respects to prevail. At the same time census experts must have information about census-type information collection (who collects these, when and what kind of information is collected). Communication within CSO has to be improved to achieve this goal, too, since the departments of CSO are in contact with institutions managing registers data of which could be useful for the census.

55. Protection of personal data in case of statistical data collection was considered to be especially important during the parliamentary discussion. This question - as well as demographic data collection - is regulated (following the practice of some countries) in order to protect personal data from the contingent indiscretion of those using statistics.

56. A specific section deals with the temporary linkage of personal identification data with the database for the time of the attachment of new data to the database. It is a delicate affair, since the act of data protection pays a great attention to the question of connection. Therefore the law orders the obligation to consider the position of data protection ombudsman when making connection possible. It is a very important order in terms of censuses, since data can be linked with other databases only by means of individual identification and this section - theoretically - makes it possible. (It is beyond dispute that censuses are data sets where the so-called time series can be set up.)

57. The law stipulates that CSO can take over not only data of the National Statistical Data Collection Programme but other data coming from non-statistical activities and collected for non-statistical purposes, too (business register, tax register). Obligation to transfer these data does not cause unnecessary burden for the owner of data, since the obligation concerns databases which are already available.

58. It is important that CSO defines its claim to receive personal data for statistical purposes (and to define which kind of personal data) on the one hand, and this claim to be moulded into legal form on the other. According to the law (considering linkage to a given purpose to the highest degree) the statistical service can connect its own databases for statistical purposes. This latter rule is important in terms of censuses, too, because it means that data collected and handled by CSO (theoretically) can be connected for census purposes.

59. We do not intend to suggest concrete law modifications for the sake of using personal data of administrative registers for census purposes in this paper. We can just give a theoretical draft in the interest of the efficient use of administrative register data for census purposes in the future.

60. First of all we have to state that the most important laws regarding statistical information system are in force. A significant part of these laws meet EU requirements. Therefore there is no more significant law missing from the legal system in terms of our theme.

61. We can also state that the legal environment of statistical information system is mainly "statistics friendly". In the introduction of the statistical act we could see the additional titles given by the Parliament as a token of its confidence for the sake of the better and more efficient functioning of the statistical system. It does not mean, however, that there is no need to initiate further modifications of the law - without essential changes in the system. Modifications are needed for the sake of the more efficient and less expensive fulfilment of duties of the statistical service, meeting the requirements of EU statistical systems, too.

62. The legal background of the EU requirement according to which it is a condition of successful use of administrative registers that the statistical office of a country can have access to relevant registers and can combine its data with other systems is still to be created. For the sake of this the statistical act should give a general authorization for the Statistical Office to receive data from administrative registers *"in a way which is appropriate for identification"* for statistical purposes. Parallel with this, regulations at lower level guaranteeing that this is a "one-way street" - i.e. other data cannot flow back from statistical data processing system to administrative registers - have to be strengthened.

63. As it was mentioned above survey of so-called sensitive data (e.g. religion, nationality) requires a written consent of data supplier. This rule - which was defined even in the act of data protection and which makes data collections extraordinarily difficult - should be eased in case of statistical surveys and processes.

64. Address lists are parts of great value of censuses. They are indispensable means of further statistical sample surveys. The law should make targeted utilization of these address lists possible. Address lists should be used combined with criteria taken out of the original database, so that interviewers could look for the addresses included in the target sample. It would not mean, however, that the data suppliers looked for would be obliged to respond. The point is that voluntary participation in the survey could be offered for data suppliers.

IV. Summary of the present and future use of Hungarian registers

65. The present paper is only a draft of this complicated and difficult theme. Experiences of other - especially Northern-European - countries show that the real possibility of censuses based on administrative registers can come into existence only as a result of a long process. After the partial summary of Hungarian registers we can say that these registers are still in an initial stage in terms of their use for census purposes. There are important registers with a view to census which are not established yet, e.g. building and dwelling registers. There are other registers which have not been harmonized with censuses yet (in terms of their substance) (e.g. health and pension insurance registers). The data content of the register which is most relevant in terms of censuses - the population register - is very narrow. Essentially it covers some demographic variables only and we experienced the problems of its use during the preparation of the 1990 census.

66. We have to deal with the execution of the 2001 census separately. Considering the present legal environment, the technical condition of relevant administrative registers, the lack of their substantial harmonization, the difficulties of personal identification, the mistrust of public opinion in terms of using registers for statistical purposes, we can say that the execution of this census can take place mainly with the use of traditional methods.

67. At the same time even the execution of this census can have elements which take the aspects of a future administrative register-based census into account. An aspect of this kind could be the handling of census address list as part of a uniform address register, the use of it in the development of a standard, authentic address register which makes the geographical identification of addresses possible and which meets European norms. This address register could create controllability of address content of administrative (and statistical) basic registers and the possibility of communication between various basic registers based on address data.

68. The use of some basic statistical registers (e.g. the register of economic organizations) will be possible during the process of the 2001 census data. The efficiency of their use for census purposes, the order of arising problems and the possible solutions can be checked during the use of registers.

69. Census experts will have twofold tasks around the turn of the millennium: they will have to perfect the methods of traditional censuses - considering the proximity of the 2001 census - on the one hand, and to study the possibilities of future register-based censuses, on the other.
