

DELIBERATION NO 3 OF THE AD-HOC SECTION FOR MONITORING THE 2021 CENSUS

ON THE INCLUSION OF A QUESTION ON RACIAL ORIGIN/ETHNICITY IN THE 2021 CENSUS

Whereas under the Law governing the National Statistical System (NSS) – Law No 22/2008 of 13 May 2008 the Statistical Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) has approved the General Guidelines of Official Statistical Activity for the 2018-22 period, having considered, among the Lines of Action (LA), the need to:

- LA 1.4. Adopt a model for the Population and Housing Census that maximises the utilisation of administrative data and response to the respective questionnaires over the internet, allowing for the provision of census information on a ten-year basis.
- LA 2.1. Ensure the quality of official statistics in their different dimensions (relevance, accuracy and reliability, timeliness and punctuality, coherence and comparability, accessibility and clarity) and (...).

Whereas in the pursuit of its activity Statistics Portugal enjoys, under the law, of technical independence, i.e. "(...) sole responsibility for defining statistical methods, standards and procedures, as well as the content, type and timing of data releases" (Article 5(2) of the above Decree-Law).

Whereas Order No 7363/2018 published in the Official Gazette on 3 August 2018 set up the 2021 Census Working Group – Ethnic and Racial Questions, with the purpose of drafting recommendations contributing to incorporate into the 2021 Census a question that characterises the ethnic and racial composition of the population in Portugal, the Group having submitted its final Report to the Council.

Pursuant to its powers, in its meeting on 17 June 2019, **the Ad-Hoc Section for Monitoring the 2021 Census:**

- recognised the quality of the Report prepared by the Working Group, which presented in a clear and well-founded manner arguments for and against the inclusion of such a question in the 2021 Census;
- attributed great importance to the need for updated and high-quality information on ethnic diversity in the Portuguese society as a fundamental basis for knowing discriminatory practices and social inequalities built on the people's origin or ethnicity;
- concluded that the Census is not the most suitable statistical instrument to obtain that information, with the quality, depth and frequency needed for such knowledge;

Conselho Superior de Estatística

- considered that the optional nature of the response to the question on racial and ethnic origin, as proposed by the Working Group, does not meet the obtained information's representativeness requirements.

Taking into account the previously mentioned factors, among other equally relevant factors, chiefly associated with the quality and operationalisation of the census operation, the Section concluded that the 2021 Census is not the appropriate statistical operation for observing the issue in question. However, it recognises its obvious social relevance and that it should thus be specifically characterised.

Hence, **the Section has decided to recommend that Statistics Portugal does not include a question on racial origin/ethnicity in the 2021 Census.** However, in the shortest possible time it should consider an alternative solution that makes it possible to characterise the Portuguese population's ethnic composition.

Lisbon, 18 June 2019

The Chairman of the Section, *José António Pereirinha*

The Executive Secretary of the Statistical Council, *Maria da Graça Fernandes Caeiro Bento*