

United Nations Expert Group Meeting on
The Scope and Content of Social Statistics
9-12 September 2008
United Nations, New York

Migration processes in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Countries

Prepared by

Ilya Kuznetsov
Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS

* This document is being reproduced without formal editing.

Migration processes in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Countries

At present in the CIS countries, like in other countries of the world, the problems of international migration are examined with great attention. All CIS countries are simultaneously countries of arrival and departure of international migrants. As a result, it is difficult to single out the countries of in-migration and out-migration in their pure form. At the same time positive balance of migration is formed in Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. These countries are attractive to foreign migrants who want to live, work and study there. Moreover, there are large transit migration flows through the territory of the Russian Federation by people from other CIS countries who want to go abroad. The variety of migration flows makes it necessary to improve the accounting of migration flows in the region

The data from population censuses and current accounting of migration are the main sources of information on the size, structure and direction of migration flows. The lists of statistical accounting of migrants (registration cards of arrival and departure) are the primary sources of information for statistical accounting of migration. They are filled up in the corresponding subdivisions of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs bodies of the countries and present information by urban and rural localities, by sex and age of migrants, education and marital status as well as aim of arrival (departure). As a rule, this information is supplemented by the data available in the corresponding subdivisions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where data on the number of permissions for arrival and departure are compiled.

One cannot say that the data on in-migrants and out-migrants for residents are collected completely, but nevertheless the collection of this information is considerably more complete than for that related to persons arrived (or departed) from (to) other countries with the aim of working and studying or other aims. In the Russian Federation, a major receiving country, the sources of information are: the Federal Migration Service for the number of foreign workers involved in work in the country (on the basis of work permits issued); the Ministry of Education and Science for the number of foreign students and post-graduates studying in Russian education establishments; the Ministry of Home Affairs for data on registration of foreign citizens and

citizenship. Despite the involvement of several departments in carrying out the accounting of migration, the size of the non-accounted illegal migration cannot be determined completely. The difference in the various estimates of illegal migrants is computed in million persons. The Federal Migration Service collects statistics on the number of foreign citizens who departed from Russia, but not all illegal migrants are included in this statistics for clear reasons.

There is some hope that the accounting of foreign persons temporally present in the territory of any state will be included in the forthcoming 2010 round of population censuses where a considerable number of questions on the characteristics of the migrant population – including gender aspects and the reasons of migration – are envisaged.

Legal labour migration has positive impact on the development of industries and economies, as in the case of the construction industry in Kazakhstan and Russia in recent years. This has also been observed in other industries, growing the interest for organizing the collection of information on labour migration by industry. The inflow of money transfers from destination countries to origin countries of migrant labour has grown large, improving considerably the living standard of the families of migrants. At the same time, money transfers through informal and personal channels has led to large sums not being accounted, decreasing considerably the amount of tax revenues. Illegal labour migration results in the growth of a shadow economy, corruption and the strengthening of tension in international relations.

The challenges of migration policy in many countries of the Commonwealth have gained priority importance, highlighting the necessity of improving the accounting of migration events and widening of information sources, including through the use of population registers and the conducting of special sample surveys. The ability to produce data – without difficulties and from all information sources – with the aim of determining reliably the size and structure of the population of a country remains a very important goal for statistical bodies of all countries of the Commonwealth.