

# Technical Papers

Number 24  
July 1983

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF POPULATION REGISTRATION IN FINLAND

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## CONTENTS

Foreword . . . . .	i
The development of population registration in Finland . . . . .	1
The structure of population registration . . . . .	1
Organisation of administration . . . . .	3
The data which must be recorded in population schedules and how up to date these data must be . . . . .	4
Data flow . . . . .	7
Long-term plans to develop population registration . . . . .	9

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## FOREWORD

This account of the development and operation of the population registration system was received early in 1981 and represents the status of the system at that time. However, the subject of population registers is a timely one in view of the seemingly increasing interest in population registration in various parts of the world.

The program of the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics, including the publication and distribution of this Technical Paper, is supported by a grant from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF POPULATION REGISTRATION IN FINLAND

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### THE DEVELOPMENT OF POPULATION REGISTRATION IN FINLAND

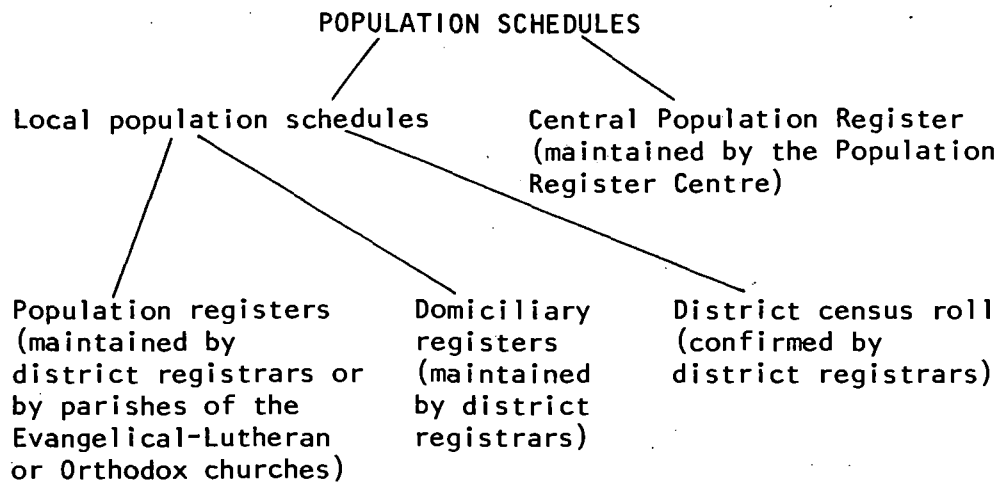
Population registers as they presently exist in Finland are the results of a development of the past four hundred years or so when two different authorities, ecclesiastical and secular, began drawing up lists about the same time. The parish lists originally served the church's purposes only, but later served the needs of the temporal rulers as well. Both systems have been preserved, have been developed, and are still in existence. The degree of co-operation between them has fluctuated to some extent in various periods, but since 1971, co-operation has been very close.

It is known that baptisms, marriages and deaths were recorded in some parishes as early as the latter half of the 16th century. Finland was then an integral part of the Swedish realm. The earliest legislative regulations dealing with the maintenance of parochial records, i.e., church records, were promulgated in the Ecclesiastical Act of 1686, in which the clergy were admonished to compile population registers "from cabin to cabin and from house to house." That act created the basis for actual population registers continuously maintained by the parochial authorities. Regulations providing for the maintenance of equivalent registers for persons not on the parochial registers were promulgated in 1917. At the moment (1980), population registers maintained by Evangelical-Lutheran parishes contain 90.5 percent of the population, while those maintained by Orthodox parishes contain 1.2 percent. The remaining 8.3 percent of the population is enrolled in registers maintained by the local civil authorities. However, a small part of the latter group belong to religious communities which maintained their own population registers until 1971.

As early as the 1520s, the state organisation compiled land registers showing the number of households. After the system was developed, these land registers contained data on holdings subject to land tax and on their masters. The district census roll has been compiled annually since 1634. It originally contained data on men capable of bearing arms and persons liable for capitation (per capita tax), but since 1765 all inhabitants have had to be entered in it. The district census roll has always been drawn up in the same manner as the land register, i.e., on a property-by-property basis. A district census roll of persons resident in Finland is still compiled every year. In its present form, it is an adjusted extract from the domiciliary registers (which are maintained on a continuous basis) and shows the position as of the 1st of January.

### THE STRUCTURE OF POPULATION REGISTRATION

The Finnish population registration system consists of local-level population schedules and the Central Population Register. There are three kinds of local population schedules: population registers, domiciliary registers and district registers.



Local population schedules are maintained separately for all of the municipalities into which Finland is divided for local government purposes. In accordance with the Population Schedules Act, every person is required to be entered in the population register and domiciliary register for that municipality in which he is domiciled.

Those persons not members of either the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland or Finnish Orthodox Church are entered in population registers maintained by district registrars. Insofar as members of the Evangelical-Lutheran and Orthodox churches are concerned, their population registers are maintained by the ecclesiastical authorities in the parishes to which they belong.

Population registers make a distinction between resident and non-resident persons. Persons who have permanently emigrated are entered as absent in the registers. Thus, a person who has temporarily gone abroad, e.g., to study, is entered as present. A person who has permanently emigrated continues to be recorded as non-resident in the register until he returns to Finland or until the population register authorities receive notification that he has relinquished his Finnish citizenship, or has died abroad.

Every person who is living permanently in the country is recorded in the domiciliary register.

There is a certain amount of overlapping between local-level population registers. This is because data on every person living in the country are recorded in both the population register and the domiciliary register, although these registers do not contain the same amount of data.

District census rolls are drawn up in the annual registrations. Each person is registered in a district census roll in that municipality in which he is domiciled on 1st January within the meaning of the Population Schedules Act. Thus, the data in the domiciliary registers are revised to match the situation on 1st January of the year in question. The data contained in the local population schedules are recorded in the Central Population Register, which is maintained by the Population Register Centre.

## ORGANISATION OF ADMINISTRATION

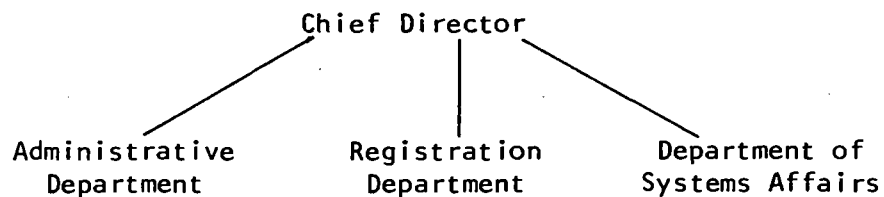
### National-level administration

The national-level administration of population registration is directed by the Population Register Centre in the Ministry of the Interior. The tasks of the Population Register Centre are:

- to direct and supervise the maintenance of local population schedules, except where this has been, by statute, assigned to other authorities,
- to develop and standardise population registration methods and to make proposals in this connexion,
- to maintain the Central Population Register and to issue certificates, extracts, copies and other data from this register to authorities and private persons,
- to carry out any other duties assigned to it in the acts of Parliament, decrees and other regulations.

A diagram of the organisational structure of the Population Register Centre is shown below:

### BASIC ORGANISATION OF POPULATION REGISTER CENTRE



### Local-level administration

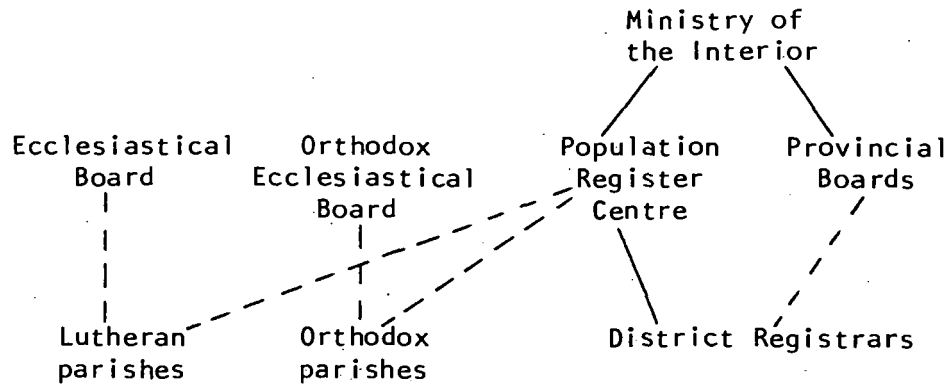
The local-level administration of the population register is carried out by the district registrars who are government officials and by the parishes of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church.

The tasks of district registrars are to maintain local population schedules, to carry out registration for census purposes and to perform certain other defined duties. The local population registers of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church are kept by the parishes concerned and not by the district registrars.

District registrars are subordinate to the provincial boards (which are an administrative level between municipalities and the national government), but in matters connected with population registration they report directly to the Population Register Centre.

The national population registration network is organised as follows:

## ORGANISATION OF POPULATION REGISTRATION



### THE DATA WHICH MUST BE RECORDED IN POPULATION SCHEDULES AND HOW UP TO DATE THESE DATA MUST BE

#### The data to be registered in population schedules

In the population schedules are registered certain essential data concerning every person as stipulated.

#### The population register

The required data concerning every person registered in the population register are:

- surname,
- given names,
- personal number,
- domicile of birth
- nationality,
- mother tongue,
- names and personal numbers of parents,
- name and personal number of spouse, date and mode of marriage, which in sequence is involved, date of granting of legal separation order as well as mode and date of termination of marriage,
- names and personal numbers of children,
- church or religious association to which subject belongs,
- date of death.

In addition to what has been stated above, the population register also includes a file of expunctions of data concerning deceased persons, foreigners

who have left the country and persons whose registration has been transferred to another register.

A person must be recorded in the population register in that municipality in which he or she is domiciled within the meaning of the Population Schedules Act.

#### The domiciliary register

The domiciliary register contains data concerning persons domiciled in the municipality in question and real estates therein. The following data are recorded in the domiciliary register:

- surname,
- given names,
- personal number,
- domicile of birth,
- church or other religious association to which subject belongs,
- municipality and population register from which transfer has been made and date of transfer,
- place of domicile and address,
- municipality and population register to which transfer is being made and date of transfer.

The following data concerning real estate are recorded in the domiciliary register:

- location as specified in land title register and register of lots, name of land holding,
- owner and his place of domicile and address,
- owner's acquirement documents and certificate of title, and
- buildings on the property used for dwelling, commercial or industrial purposes, or for public functions, as well as location and address of property.

#### The district census roll

Those persons domiciled in a municipality on 1st January and the real estate in the municipality are recorded in the district census roll. The following personal data are recorded in the district register:

- surname,
- given names,

- personal number,
- domicile of birth,
- nationality,
- mother tongue,
- year since the subject was recorded in the district census roll and municipality in which he or she was recorded in the previous year,
- real estate, building or premises where he or she resides.

The person's occupation can also be recorded in the district register.

The most important data concerning real estate recorded in the district census roll are as follows:

- location as specified in the land title register and the register of lots, name of land holding,
- owner and his place of domicile and address,
- buildings on the real estate used for dwelling, commercial or industrial purposes, or for public functions, the location and address of the buildings as well as the electoral district in which the building is included for national and local-government elections, according to the most recent revision of electoral-district boundaries.

In addition, business undertakings, communities, associations, companies, foundations and institutions which engage in commerce, industry or public activities in the building are listed.

In practice, the data which must be recorded in the district census roll are used to update the domiciliary register to the status as of the first day of each year.

#### The Central Population Register

The same data concerning persons and properties as well as commercial undertakings, associations, companies, foundations and institutions which are registered in the local Population Registers are also recorded in the Central Population Register.

A separate file of Finnish citizens recorded as non-resident in population registers, i.e., in practice, a list of persons who have permanently emigrated, is maintained in connexion with the Central Population Register.

#### How current are the data in population schedules?

Data are registered in the Central Population Register some 1-1/2 to 3 months after the event. This delay stems from the fact that the data are entered in the local registers manually before they are passed on to the Central Population Register in computer language. In addition to this, the data are checked



and stored at the Population Register Centre before computer runs, which for the moment are carried out only once a month.

#### DATA FLOW

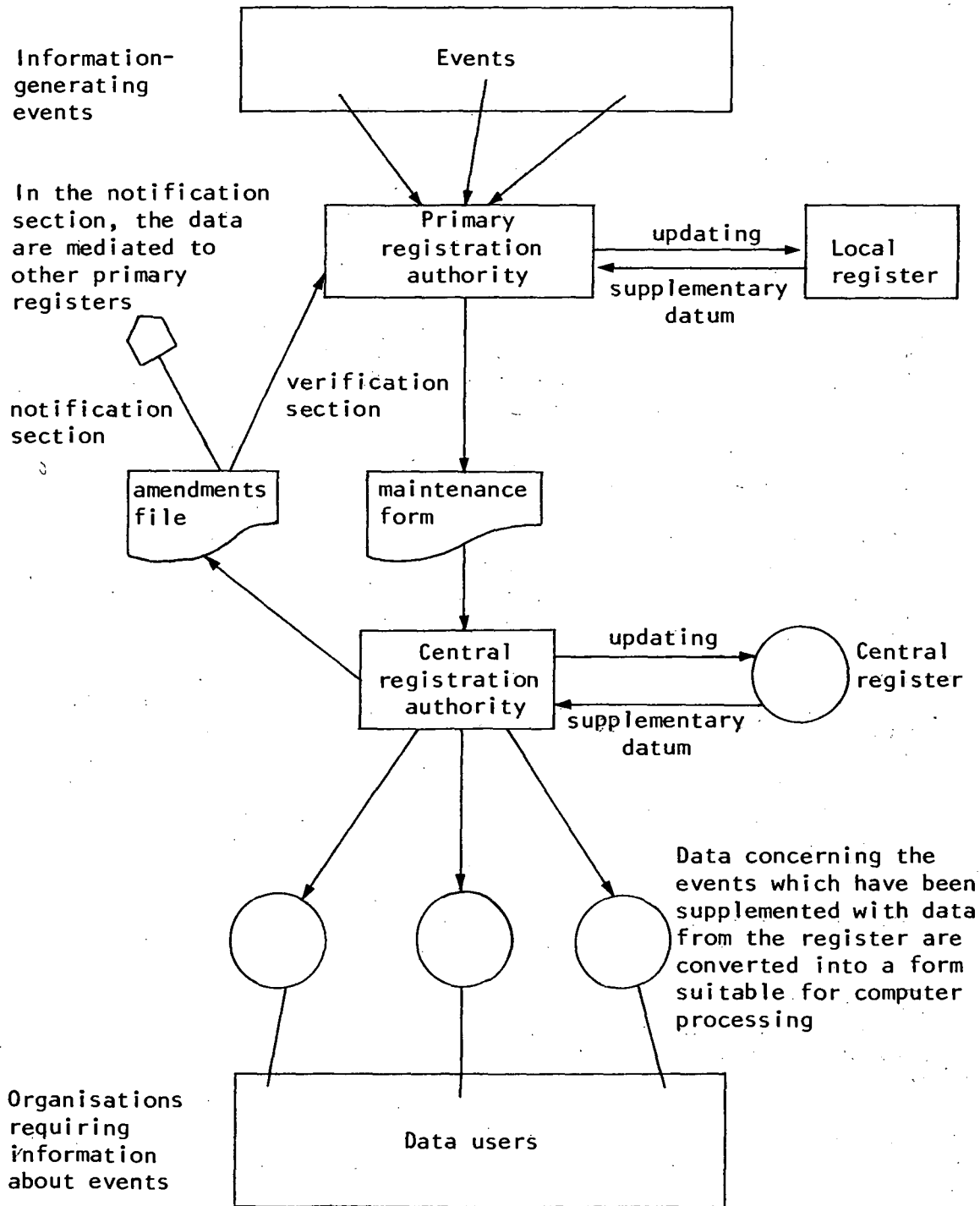
The following principle is generally pursued in the flow of data between the officials who maintain population registers, the district registrars and the Population Register Centre:

- When an event which must be recorded in the Central Population Register has occurred, e.g., when a child has been born, this is notified to the keeper of the local register.
- The keeper of the local register records the datum in his own files, takes the necessary additional data from these files, completes a maintenance form for the Population Register Centre and sends it there. There are different maintenance forms for different kinds of events.
- At the Population Register Centre, the maintenance form is given a preliminary check and given an archive number. The data which the form contains are converted into a data-processable form (stored) and the form placed in the archives.
- The data received concerning events are subjected to several different computer checks.
- If all the data are found to be correct, they are transmitted to the central register. A notification of the data to be transmitted to the central register is recorded in the verification and notification sections of the necessary amendment files.
- The verification section of the amendments file is forwarded to the local registrar who has sent the notification. The notification section, or sections, of the amendments file is forwarded to those keepers of local registers who are, in one way or another, affected by a change in data supplied by some other local registrar. In practice, the amendments files are recorded on a registrar-by-registrar basis. The data belonging to the verification and notification sections are mixed up in the amendments file.
- Whenever necessary, extracts and copies are issued from the central register to various authorities as well as to juridical and physical persons. "Continuous maintenance data" is the term used to describe those amendment data supplemented with data from the central register which are forwarded to data recipients at the same time as the amendments are registered.

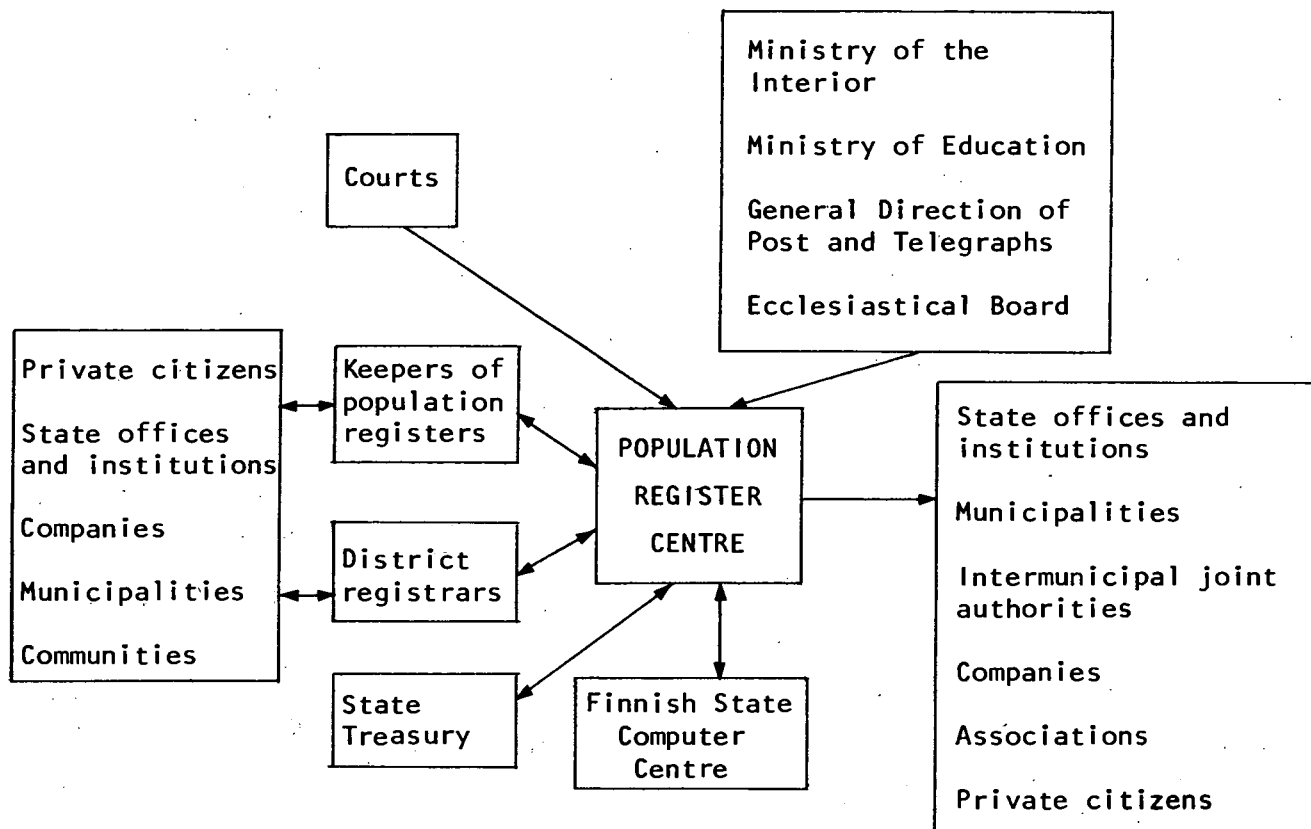
The flow of the data obtained from certain authorities in the Population Register Centre differs from the preceding. Where, for example, court notifications are concerned, the data communications flow is as follows: In each individual case, the court in question fills in the necessary maintenance form and sends it to the Population Register Centre. After the data on the form have

been checked, the Centre sends a counterfoil or copy of the form to those authorities concerned. In addition, the population registrars receive a confirmed notification of the data's recording in the amendments file of the Central Population Register.

MAIN OUTLINE OF DATA FLOW WITHIN THE POPULATION SCHEDULE SYSTEM



The following diagram based on linkage-group configuration also shows the pattern of data flow in population registration. Some of the linkage groups are merely providers of data (e.g., the courts), some are users only (e.g., the Social Insurance Institution, research institutes), but others are both suppliers and recipients (e.g., some state offices, municipalities, private citizens and associations):



#### LONG-TERM PLANS TO DEVELOP POPULATION REGISTRATION

The long-term plan for developing population registration encompasses several sub-areas, including the technical overhaul of the Central Population Register, the development of registration for district census roll purposes, the expansion of the data content to include information about buildings and individual premises, the development of data-processing facilities at the local level of population registration, and the associated comprehensive development of the data-processing system, a restructuring of the organisation, the development of registration, etc.

The aim in carrying out a technical overhaul of the Central Population Register is to speed up the entry of data into it. In other words, to reduce as much as possible the time lag between the entry of data in the central register and those in the local registers. This will mean having to reduce the present interval of one month between maintenance runs to a week or less.

It is intended to develop the district census roll-registration system in such a way that it will be possible to bring about an increasingly closer linkage between these computer runs and normal maintenance runs. However, the

abandonment of separate district census roll-registration runs will probably occur only after a random access storage facility has been brought into use.

Buildings and premises data will be combined with population schedules data in the early 1980s. The municipalities, the Central Statistical Office of Finland and the Population Register Centre have co-operated in collecting the basic data in the 1980 population and housing census.

The data concerning buildings and individual premises will yield statistics on such things as the total housing stock and changes in it, the use of dwellings and housing conditions as well as reports on housing units phased out.

It is intended to develop, as much as possible, automatic data processing in local-level population registration. This will make it possible to carry out pre-processing, storage and error checking close to the point where the data are generated, i.e., in the local registers, rather than at the Population Register Centre as at present. The automation of local-level data-processing functions is closely linked with the development of the administrative organisation of the population-registration system. The planning and implementation of this automation scheme should take several years.

Aside from the long-range objective of putting local functions on an automatic basis, it is also intended to develop them in such a way that the data contents of local registers will be brought into line with each other, data compilation will be simplified and duplication in both collection and registration reduced. This will facilitate the future automation of local-level functions.

The aim is to develop the national organisation of population registration, in which several parties are involved, in such a way that the organisation would embrace two central sectors, the Population Register Centre and the local registration authorities. The local registration authorities probably will be the district registrars. This would make it possible to eliminate duplicate registration of certain data at the local level.

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4. *Vital Registration and Marriage in England and Wales*, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, London, October 1979
5. *Civil Registration in the Republic of Argentina*, Jorge P. Seara and Marcelo E. Martin, November 1979
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8. *The Organization of the Civil Registration System of the United States*, Anders S. Lunde, May 1980
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15. *Major Obstacles in Achieving Satisfactory Registration Practices and Vital Events and the Compilation of Reliable Vital Statistics*, IIVRS, May 1981
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