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**Key issues for European countries regarding the implementation of the UN**  
**recommendations on international migration statistics \***

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## **Key issues for European countries regarding the implementation of the UN recommendations on international migration statistics**

### **1. Important facts for EUROPE**

- Europe is a continent where national borders are progressively disappearing with no more border control and accordingly no more border crossing accounts and associated statistics. An exception remains for external borders of the EU and for some non-EU countries.
- Europe faces an increasing number of immigrations and is considered as a favourite place for asylum seekers. This creates a large number of under-documented migrants living today on a usual base in Europe.
- Europe is a continent where the censuses are to be replaced progressively by an intensive use of administrative registers because of high costs, lower reliability and higher susceptibility linked to privacy aspects. France, facing difficulties to use appropriate administrative data sources, introduced the new concept of rolling census in order to cope with these problems.

### **2. Intense use of administrative data sources**

In Europe, international migration statistics are mostly dependent on administrative data sources. A population registration system is operative in 19 out of the 27 EU countries and in most of the non-EU countries. The major exceptions are France, the UK, Ireland, Portugal, Greece, Malta and Cyprus although some population registration exists in the three last countries. The population registration system is centralised at national level in all countries except in Germany, Italy and Switzerland where only local population registers are kept. The use of a centralised system ensures a higher reliability. Within the population registration systems international immigration and emigration are respectively captured through registrations and deregistrations in the system and these are currently done through self-declaration following national administrative rules. This means that the data collection based on the data extracted from the population registration system is fully dependent on administrative rules: the data collection is clearly a by-product of current administrative work activities that often do not consider statistical recommendations.

### **3. Consequences of the intense use of administrative sources**

Accordingly, the definition used to identify international migration is mostly fixed by administrative rules and here are some consequences of that:

- The definition of usual residence is not strictly applied and some legal rules are usually followed in order to decide who is or is not officially resident in the concerned country and therefore registered in the population registration system.
- The time criterion in order to identify an international migration is based on intended duration of stay, but the considered period is variable depending the country (from 3 days to 1 year), while in a lot of countries no specific duration of stay is necessary to proceed to registration or deregistration.
- Even if administrative rules apply, the registration system is essentially based on self-reporting for both immigration and emigration. As a consequence, the existence of advantages and

disadvantages to be registered of deregistered, most of which are financial, may have a large impact on the level of coverage (including concrete advantages for municipalities in charge of population registration to not register emigration in order to keep the population figure as high as possible).

- At EU level, when the emigration is not recorded in the sending country is not recorded (no deregistration) but the immigration is recorded in the receiving country (registration), the person concerned will be double-counted and the corresponding population stock may be overestimated.
- In practice emigrations are clearly less covered compared to immigrations and a level of less than 50% coverage of international emigration may be found in a significant number of countries. These missing emigrations are related to both citizens leaving for abroad and foreigners that immigrated in the past and are returning to their home country or are immigrating to a third country.
- Among all advantages linked to the population registration system we have to emphasize the fact that flows and stocks are managed by the system in a fully consistent way, even if for statistical purpose some so-called “statistical adjustments” have to be introduced. These statistical adjustments deal with late declaration of discovery of emigrations that were not considered in the corresponding annual figure on migration flows and cannot be included in the year of effective (late) registration.
- Moreover, the population registration system, when centralised, gives the unique possibility to assess the de facto duration of stay or duration of absence for each immigrant or emigrant. Nevertheless these data are not used for official statistics as they are available only one year after the statistics based on intention are available.

#### **4. Other data sources used in European countries to provide data or estimation on international migration flows**

- Residence permit database or foreigner registers, when not integrated in the global population registration system, are potential additional data sources for estimating international migration flows. These administrative registers allow a precise registration of all residence permit requests and all foreigners having been granted a residence permit in order to live in the country concerned. Unfortunately only non-citizens needing a residence permit are included except if a foreigner register exists that includes all foreigners, which is not the case in some EU MS where EU-citizens are often not included. Is it possible to produce international migration statistics using these administrative data sources? Even if the coverage of these data sources may be considered highly satisfactory, some problems may appear when identification of international migrants is concerned. As examples, this a residence permit database may include not only residence permit holders that did not enter the country, but also those who stay less than 12 months and should not be considered as long-term migrants. Moreover persons doing several requests may be counted more than once while others are not included because they did not request a permit as they are linked to another residence permit holder. Another difficulty consists in the poor coverage of emigration for residence permit holders that is often observed in these data sources. For most countries, in the case of lacking information on emigration, it is often considered that the duration of stay in the country ended with the expiry of the residence permit when no renewal procedure has been initiated.
- Specific registers are also devoted to record and follow all citizens living abroad (e.g. AIRE in Italy). In other countries these citizens are kept in the centralised population registration system

and information about changes are recorded through all consulates and embassies abroad. Enhancing the advantages to be registered as citizen living abroad in the consular registers may be an effective solution to improve the level of registration (or deregistration) of citizens leaving for abroad for a period of at least one year. The question whether these citizens living abroad should be considered or not in the official population of a given country, is a very sensitive one. Clearly the emigrants should be excluded from the usual resident population after one year of absence, but in some European countries experiencing large emigration flows these emigrants are still considered in the population stock.

- Census data may also be very useful for estimating international migration flows even if they describe stock data and not flow data and therefore are less appropriate. Stock data with characteristics on country of citizenship, citizenship at birth, country of birth or self-reporting ethnic nationality may help to characterise the so-called “population with immigration background”. Specific questions on year of first or last immigration, country of previous residence or country of residence five or one year(s) ago will allow identifying the stock of “recent” immigrants, those who immigrated in the country in the recent years and are still living in the country, the reason why they were enumerated in the census. Some countries may also include appropriate questions to capture potential emigrants by asking questions to members of their family still living in the country at the time of the census. Another possible use of the census data for measuring international migration flows is through the comparison of two successive censuses. The net inter-census international migration flow may be estimated by considering additionally births and deaths by citizenship and the changes of citizenship between the two censuses. But considering that censuses are not annual and will be less numerous in Europe in the future we may conclude that census data are not appropriate for producing annual flows of international migration in Europe.
- Surveys are also used to provide statistics on international migration flows. This is the case with the International Passenger Survey in the UK and the Labour Force Survey in order countries like Ireland. However in order to produce reliable and significant figures the sample should be strictly representative of all migrants, an objective which is difficult to achieve.

##### **5. Additional topics to be considered from a European point of view**

- Only a limited number of European countries are able to provide data on reasons for international migration.
- The identification of the country of usual residence in stock data when specific sub-populations are concerned: diplomats, civil servants working abroad, asylum seekers and refugees. In most European countries, national administrative rules apply for inclusion or exclusion of these sub-populations.

**In conclusion, the key issues for implementing in a proper way the UN recommendations in Europe are:**

- 1. The definition of the usual country of residence.**
- 2. The duration of stay criterion.**
- 3. The reason for migration.**
- 4. The correct registration of emigration for both citizens leaving for abroad and immigrants returning to their home country.**

5. **The overall reliability of the data collection due to the fact that self-reporting is the common rule for registration and deregistration in the registers and the incentives to do so are not always prominent compared to other concrete financial advantages.**
6. **The need for concrete practical recommendation for implementation of the UN recommendations when using administrative registers and mostly population registers.**

## **ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN RECOMMENDATIONS IN EUROPE FOR POPULATION REGISTER COUNTRIES <sup>1</sup>**

In all EU Member States administrative tools exist for the registration of the population. In most of them population registers and the procedures used for registration allow information to be gathered on the resident population of the country. In the eight countries where population registers do not exist, civil registers and ID card databases may, in theory, be useful for estimating the stock of population (although these data sources have coverage problems and cannot be used for describing migration flows). The population registers represent the most appropriate administrative data source to meet the requirements of the EU Regulation on statistics on population stock and international migration flows. However, the place of residence recorded in population registers is effectively the place of administrative registration. Accordingly, the use of population registers may distort the real situation, due to the administrative rules for registration and the existence of advantages from not following these rules. In this situation, correct registration of international migrants is essential to ensure an exact identification of the population usually resident in the country.

### **1. How the place of residence is defined in Europe**

The place of a person's administrative registration is not necessarily the **place of usual residence**. The latter is requested in the EU Regulation and defined by the UN census recommendations as *the place where the person spends most of his/her daily night-rest* (UNECE 1998, §30).

The **place of administrative registration** is a broader concept in which a person is linked to a given local administrative unit for all duties and rights managed at the local level<sup>2</sup>. For this purpose every person has to be registered in a specific place or administrative unit (which can be changed). When a change of place of registration is declared it is not always necessary to prove that the concrete dwelling and the precise address given by the person is really his or her usual place of residence. Accordingly the place of registration often differs from the place of usual residence, for reasons that may be financial, practical or simply sentimental. An administrative register using only this broad concept of place of administrative registration is not a population register in the strict sense, as a population register should include the place of usual residence and record all changes of address.

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<sup>1</sup> (Based on the findings of the THESIM research project and more specifically Chapter 8, written with Dorota Kupiszewska and Beata Nowok) POULAIN Michel, PERRIN Nicolas and SINGLETON Ann (eds.) (2006), *Towards Harmonised European Statistics on International Migration*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Presses universitaires de Louvain, 744 pages.

<sup>2</sup> Note that a concept of place of legal residence or domicile is used in judicial matters and is related to the civil code. This place may be different from the place of administrative registration as well as from the place of usual residence. This concept is not used for population registration in EU Member States, although the term 'domicile' is sometimes used to refer to the place of residence in official documents in Finland, Belgium and Luxembourg.

However no EU country using a population register follows this strictest rule; they all employ a concept of place of administrative residence which is more or less close to the place of usual residence. In Cyprus, Greece and Malta the civil registers may be considered as population registers for citizens because everyone is registered in a local administrative unit and is allowed to change this place of administrative registration. Nevertheless, these administrative registers will never be useful for producing statistics on population stocks and flows as some categories of persons living in the country are not included, while others living permanently abroad are. More significantly for the purposes of this chapter, the system in these three countries does not allow a reliable measurement of migration flows, both internal and international. The basic characteristics of a population register, whether held at local level or centralised, are the coverage of the whole resident population and the continuous updating of the administrative place of residence and address.

Depending on national rules and legislation, the administrative place of residence used in the population register may be just an address of administrative convenience or a concept much closer to the EU and UN definition of the place of usual residence (where the person effectively spends most of his/her daily night-rest). Three main types of concept are used in the eighteen EU countries effectively using population registers:

- *Place of (unique) residence*: where only a unique place of residence is registered, this place is called the place of residence and, depending on the country, different types of investigations and rules have to be followed in order to ensure and prove that this unique place of residence is the usual place of residence of the person concerned.
- *Place of principal residence and place of secondary residence*: when multiple places of residence are allowed in the population registration system, the person concerned has to specify which is his or her principal place of residence (according to rules about the duration of stay in each place of residence and in some cases the size of the population in the different local administrations concerned). However the choice is often based on self-declaration without any checking, and in this context the differences in taxation and other concrete local advantages are often the deciding factor.
- *Place of permanent residence and place of temporary residence*: if somebody changes his or her place of residence for a short period of time and retains the possibility of returning to live in the previous place of residence, the latter is named the permanent place of residence while the new one is considered a temporary place of residence. Both places of residence are included in the population registration system and links exist in the person's record with both local administrations. All changes of residence, both permanent and temporary, have to be declared. These concepts of permanent and temporary residences exist in most of the newer EU Member States and the situation is inherited from the past, when the place of permanent residence was considered as the place where the person had the right to live and to work and an internal passport attested to this fact.

Population registers may be organised and updated either at the local level in independent databases with electronic transfer of data between local administrations or in a unique centralised database, often named the Central Population Register or the Central Population Registration System. At the international level an electronic exchange of information on inter-Nordic migrants has recently been organised between the central population registration systems of the Nordic countries. Other countries, such as the Baltic countries and Slovenia, have shown some interest in joining this initiative.

## **2. Persons included in the population register**

In order to assess the reliability and comparability of statistics produced by using population registers it is important to know their coverage. In all EU countries having population registers all nationals living permanently in their own country are included. Two other groups also have to be considered: nationals living abroad and foreigners living in the country.

- **Nationals living abroad**

Nationals living abroad may be distinguished in the following way:

- those who have never lived in the country (at least since the population register has been in operation); and
- those who have left the country to live abroad for a variable length of time and for various reasons.

The only way the first group could be included in the population register is through registration at a consulate abroad and the systematic transfer of this information to a population register in the home country. In this way the home country could develop a register of all its citizens living abroad. This system is operational in Italy (*Anagrafe degli Italiani Residenti all'Estero, AIRE*) and in Spain (*Padrón Español Residente Extranjeros, PERE*). In both cases some links exist with the national population registers (the *Anagrafe* and the *Padrón* respectively) and citizens living abroad are not included as part of the resident population of the country. In the Baltic countries, citizens who have never lived in their home country may be entered in the population register through the issuance or renewal of their citizenship passport, but only on request. These citizens are counted as living abroad and the information on the country of residence enables the identification of people who should not be included in the usual resident population.

For people in the second group it is necessary to take into account whether they were already entered in the population register before leaving their home country. Therefore it is important to know if these people were removed from the population register or their records were simply deactivated when they left the country, or if their records were kept active in the database. The decision to remove a person may have an important administrative impact for both the person and the municipality concerned, as deregistered people are no longer considered as part of the legal or *de jure* population of the locality or the country. This may have considerable practical implications for the individual. The decision on whether or not to deregister depends mainly on the reasons and intentions for moving abroad and the expected or *de facto* length of stay. In all EU countries diplomats and international officers working abroad will be kept as active in the population registers whatever their duration of stay abroad. For other citizens, irrespective of the rules, the deregistration is essentially based on self-declaration and therefore it is important to bear in mind the personal interest of the individual concerned. Everyone leaving their country will consider the potential advantages and disadvantages of registering their emigration, such as the complexity of the procedure for declaring emigration, the loss of financial and other advantages linked to residence in the country, the possibility of returning easily, and the level of fines for non-declaration. All these elements explain why citizens may decide not to declare their emigration, and what the resultant level of over-counting in the population registers may be. It is important to understand that these are the factors which lie behind the consequent level of under-registration of international emigration flows.

In some countries, such as Finland, a citizen leaving to live abroad may legitimately remain on the population register if it can be shown that he or she retains strong links with the home country. In Sweden the rule of one-seventh is applied: anyone who leaves the country but returns for one seventh of the year

may remain on the population register. As a consequence, in Sweden but also in other EU countries, a significant (but unquantified) proportion of citizens who have emigrated are still included on an active basis in the population registers and are therefore considered as part of the legal and *de jure* population of the country.

In general, the precondition to register as an international emigrant and for deregistration in the population register is based on self-declaration. The rules for considering a person as an international emigrant are presented and discussed in detail later in this chapter. In some countries the local administrations are required to deregister everybody who leaves a country unless it can be proved that the absence will be a temporary one. Clearly this requires some investigation; however this procedure is definitively not applied in a similar way in all countries. Many local administrations are concerned not to lose inhabitants, and this provides an incentive not to deregister emigrants.

- **Foreigners living in the country**

Six main categories can be distinguished among foreigners living in the country according to their right to stay:

- (1) foreign diplomats and other international civil servants who are working and living in the country;
- (2) foreigners with a full right to stay and live in the country: this applies only to Nordic citizens living in another Nordic country;
- (3) foreigners with the right to stay and live in the country if a limited number of conditions are fulfilled, and when a document proving the right to live there has been provided: this applies to all EU countries, and more broadly to all EEA citizens living in other EEA countries;
- (4) third-country nationals who have requested and been granted a residence permit on a temporary or permanent basis (refugees under the Geneva Convention and persons temporarily protected for humanitarian reasons are included in this group);
- (5) foreigners without residence permits who have been accepted as asylum seekers until a final decision on their request has been taken;
- (6) foreigners who are living illegally in the country (including those who entered as temporary residence permit holder but overstayed the period of their permit, and those who entered the country seeking asylum but whose request has been definitively rejected and who have not been given permission to stay for humanitarian reasons but are still living in the country).

Diplomats and other international civil servants are usually not included in population registers; neither are their dependants and domestic employees. However in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain they may ask to be registered and in the Swedish population registration system they are given a *coordination number* for identification purposes. In Belgium, all EU and NATO officers are included in a specific part of the population register; they do not have to self-declare their place of residence, but information on them is transferred to the national register and the relevant local population registers by their employers' personnel services.

The second category of foreigners covers only Nordic citizens in Nordic countries. These people are included in the population registers as soon as their international immigration is self-declared and registered. There is no need to declare their emigration, as systematic exchange of data between Nordic

countries enables deregistration to occur in the sending country once the person is registered in the receiving country according to the specific rules of the receiving country.

EEA citizens living in another EEA country are included in the population registers of all EU countries. However their *de facto* situation is strongly dependent on the rate of self-declaration by the people concerned. As with emigration, the self-declaration of immigration by EEA citizens is linked to the existence of concrete advantages or disadvantages in declaring this immigration and being registered in the receiving country. When the advantages are evident and the registration procedure is simple then the rate of registration is high. At the opposite extreme, the level of registration may be very low if the advantages attached are limited and the procedure is time-consuming. As there is no transfer of information between EU countries (similar to that between Nordic countries) different situations may be observed:

- The EEA citizen declares both emigration in the sending country and immigration in the receiving country and accordingly the changes are effected in the population registers of both countries and both population registers reflect the *de facto* situation.
- The EEA citizen declares neither the emigration in the sending country nor the immigration in the receiving country: in this case there is no double counting, but neither population register reflects the *de facto* situation.
- The EEA citizen declares the emigration but not the immigration. In this case the person is no longer registered in the sending country but is also not recorded in the population register of the receiving country: in this exceptional situation he or she is no longer counted in the EU *de jure* population.
- The individual declares and registers the immigration, but does not declare the emigration in the sending country. Accordingly this person is included in the population registers of both sending and receiving countries, resulting in a double count in the population stock at EU level.

As far as third-country nationals with valid temporary or permanent residence permits are concerned, we can distinguish three different situations:

- In some EU countries the people concerned are registered when they get their first residence permit (which is often a temporary permit or a long-term visa) and the information needed for registration is transferred from the residence permit database to the population register.
- In a second group of EU countries, registration is done at the request of the person concerned, who has to present a valid residence permit in order to be included in the population register (whatever the duration of validity of this permit). In this case there is no transfer of data between the residence permit database and the population register and the registration is based on self-declaration and presentation of a valid residence permit.
- In a third group of countries, only foreigners with permanent residence permits are registered in the population registers (Hungary), or more often only foreigners with temporary residence permits for more than a fixed period of time.

For the last two categories of foreigners without valid residence permits, the situation is more diverse. Asylum seekers are generally not included in the population register until they are granted asylum and thereafter receive a permanent or temporary residence permit (depending on the country), or until they receive a temporary residence permit for humanitarian reasons. In all cases they have to follow the

registration procedure indicated above for a foreigner having a permanent or temporary residence permit. Nevertheless asylum seekers are included in the local population registers in Austria, Germany, Luxembourg and Spain based on self-declaration, irrespective of the status of their request and the period of time for which they are living in the country. The Netherlands includes in the population register all asylum seekers with requests pending who have lived in the country for six months.

Third-country nationals who have not renewed their temporary residence permits (overstayers) have to be deregistered because they are supposed to live outside the country or because they are still living there on an illegal basis and are therefore no longer considered as part of the *de jure* population. However the situation varies among countries as the date of validity of the permit is not systematically transferred to be recorded in the population registers. These people may be systematically deregistered at the end of validity of the permit or after some delay to allow for late renewal of the permit. In other countries the local administration will proceed to deregistration only after an investigation to prove that the person concerned has left the country. In a third group of countries, if no declaration of emigration is made, overstayers are retained as resident on the population register until additional information confirms that they have really left the country.

Undocumented foreigners living in the country are never included in the population registers except in Spain, where it is possible for people in an illegal situation to be registered in the *Padrón*<sup>3</sup>.

### **3. Registration of international migrants**

In EU countries there is no specific administrative tool for registering all international migrants when entering or leaving the country. But the population registers allow the collection of information about international migrants, with some limitations as detailed above. However only foreigners who are authorised to be registered in the population register will be included as international immigrants. Similarly only those who are registered in the population register may be considered as international emigrants when leaving the country. Residence permit holders may be automatically considered as international immigrants when the first permit is issued, while temporary residence permit holders may be automatically considered as international emigrants at the end of the validity of the permit (if it is not renewed). In most EU countries using population registers, asylum seekers are not included and therefore these international immigrants will not be registered as such. If the person concerned is granted a residence permit he or she will be registered and generally considered as an international immigrant from the time of receiving this residence permit. If an asylum seeker receives a definitive negative answer and has to leave the country, this person will never be included in the population register and so is not considered as an international immigrant, whatever his or her effective duration of stay in the country<sup>4</sup>.

Basically there are three conditions to be registered as an international immigrant in the population register:

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<sup>3</sup> In Spain a specific positive incentive for registration of undocumented migrants may be that the date of registration can be helpful in proving that the individual has been in the country for the requested minimum period for regularisation.

<sup>4</sup> However some rejected asylum seekers may be granted temporary residence permits for humanitarian reasons and thereafter be included in the population register and considered as international immigrants.

having the right to be registered by or being part of the included population and holding the appropriate official documents to prove this<sup>5</sup>;

- having declared the immigration and the intention to live in the country and therefore being willing to be registered in the population register (this condition may include the need to prove that the immigrant has a place to live in the country);
- in some countries an additional condition about the expected duration of stay in the country is introduced and the requested minimum duration may be three, six or twelve months.

In all cases the timing of the international immigration is the date of registration in the population register. This may be much later than the actual date of arrival, particularly for asylum seekers who have to wait until they are granted a residence permit.

There are also three conditions to be registered as an international emigrant in the population registers:

- having been registered in the population register as part of the *de jure* population of the country;
- declaring the emigration and the intention to live abroad and therefore being willing to be deregistered from the population register;
- in some countries an additional condition about the expected duration of stay abroad is introduced with a requested minimum duration of three, six or twelve months.

Here too the official date of international emigration is the date of effective deregistration from the population register. This date may be a bit earlier than the actual date of emigration unless the emigration is declared through the consulate abroad after it has occurred.

National diplomats and international civil servants working abroad will never be considered as international emigrants. However foreign diplomats and international civil servants are partly counted as international immigrants in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain.

As explained earlier, depending on the country, a large proportion of emigrants, both citizens and foreigners, may never deregister. Reasons for not declaring the departure are usually linked to the length of the procedure and the existence of concrete financial advantages to stay registered as part of the population of the country. In some countries (e.g. Sweden) a citizen may spend most of his or her time abroad for long periods and still be registered in the country on an official base. In other countries, the administrative rules may require emigrants to deregister, but these rules are not applied and there are no investigations to enforce deregistration. Low levels of coverage for the emigration of citizens are observed when:

- some family members stay in the place from which the person left the country and therefore the emigrant still has the possibility of having contact with the local administration if needed;
- the rules do not require people to deregister if they can prove that they have stronger links with the home country than with the destination country;

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<sup>5</sup> Except in the case of Spain, where people in an illegal situation may be included and therefore be counted as immigrants.

- the population register allows temporary addresses abroad to be registered for a fixed period of time and at the end of this period no investigation is made to determine whether the person is back in the country.

A third-country national with a temporary residence permit who leaves a country usually gains no advantages from declaring the emigration unless he or she expects to return in the near future. In the event of non-declaration of emigration, the person may be deregistered by the administrative authorities when the temporary residence permit expires and no renewal has been requested. Such systematic deregistration usually takes place at the end of the period of validity of the residence permit or a short time later to allow people to request a renewal. In practice most foreigners leave the country at the end of the period of validity of the permit or before. It is also possible to use the data collected at the external borders of the EU and to deregister people at the time of crossing the border, but this requires the exchange of information between EU countries. In general when no systematic deregistration is done when a residence permit expires, foreigners are not deregistered and they stay on the population register as part of the *de jure* population of the country irrespective of whether they have emigrated or are still living in the country on a illegal basis.

#### **4. The forthcoming EU regulation on community statistics on international migration and social protection**

The provision of statistics on international migration flows is specified in Article 4.1. of the EU regulation, as follows:

4.1. Member States shall supply to the Commission (Eurostat) statistics on the numbers of:

(a) international immigrants and international emigrants moving to and from the territory of the

Member State, disaggregated as follows:

- citizenship by age and sex
- country of birth by age and sex
- country of previous and next usual residence by age and sex.

The above articles must be read in conjunction with the definitions of the terms they use. These are formulated in Article 2.1 of the EU regulation in the following way:

(b) ‘International immigration’ shall refer to the action by which a natural person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of the Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least twelve months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or third country;

*(c) ‘International emigration’ shall refer to the action by which a natural person, having previously been usually resident in the territory of the Member State, ceases to be usually resident in that Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least twelve months;*

(d) ‘International immigrant’ shall refer to a natural person undertaking an international immigration;

(e) ‘International emigrant’ shall refer to a natural person undertaking an international emigration.’

A clarification is necessary before more detailed analysis of the situation is undertaken. The EU regulation requests the numbers of immigrants and emigrants, not the numbers of immigrations and emigrations. During a given year a person may be involved in multiple international migrations, as defined in national practice, and therefore the number of international migrants may be slightly smaller than the number of international migrations. If the twelve-month rule is strictly applied, there will of course be no difference in counting migrations or migrants during a given year. But as most countries data-collection systems consider the number of international migrations and not international migrants, and do not follow the twelve-month rule, the numbers of international migrations in these countries will be higher than the number of international migrants as requested by a strict interpretation of the EU regulation.

## **5. Comparison with the UN recommendations**

The first point to be assessed is whether the definitions in the EU Regulation are in agreement with the UN recommendations on statistics of international migration (UN, 1998). As already mentioned in Chapter 7 the EU definition corresponds to the UN definition of long-term migrant. Both are based on the condition of establishing the usual place of residence in the destination country for 12 months or more. Such a definition should ensure that statistics collected on international migration flows for the purposes of the EU Regulation are consistent with the statistics on total usually resident population, which should also cover people staying or intending to stay for 12 months or more (see Chapter 7).

Short-term migrants (i.e. people changing their usual place of residence for a period of between 3 and 12 months) do not fall within the scope of the EU Regulation (except for statistics on residence permits, as discussed in Chapter 9). The Member States’ main interest is in long-term migrants, but short-term migrants cannot be ignored in policy considerations. As stated in the UN recommendations: *because one of the new features of international population mobility is the increase of short-term international movements of people for purposes other than tourism, it is important to gather information on some of the persons who spend less than a year in a country other than that of their usual residence* (UN 1998, par.37). If countries are interested in collecting statistics on short-term migrants as well (outside the EU Regulation) it is important for international harmonisation that statistics on the two types of migrants should be reported separately. Further the term ‘international migrant’ here carries the meaning specified in the EU Regulation, i.e. a long-term migrant.

The duration of stay is an important variable in data collection on international migrants. According to the EU Regulation, the criterion is *a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least twelve months*. This definition, formulated in accordance with the UN recommendations, provides three options:

- to determine the actual duration of stay on an *ex post* basis by waiting a minimum of twelve months after the date of immigration;
- to rely on self-reported information on the intended duration of stay, provided by the migrant at the time of immigration;
- to assume that the duration of stay will be the same as the duration of validity of the residence permit for immigrants who need a residence permit.

The first option provides the most accurate reflection of the actual situation. However it has the disadvantage that complete statistics on people who moved in year  $t$  and stayed for 12 months or longer would not be produced until year  $t+2$ . It does not allow data suppliers to meet the requirements of the EU

Regulation, that statistics be produced within ten months of the end of the reference year. A viable alternative is offered by statistics based on intended duration of stay, which may be delivered in due time. These statistics include, in particular, nationals and foreigners with long-term resident status. For other foreigners who need a residence permit to live in the country, the intended duration of stay in combination with the duration of validity of the residence permit is the most appropriate criteria. Asylum seekers whose applications are pending are a special category of foreigners who should only be included in the international migration statistics after their stay in the country has lasted at least one year.

## **6. Sources of data on international migration flows**

The availability of statistics on international migration flows is conditioned by the existence of a data collection system that has the potential of yielding meaningful statistical information on changes of place of usual residence. The major types of data sources used to produce statistics on international migration flows may be summarised as follows:

- population registration systems, including local and centralised population registers;
- statistical forms completed for all changes of residence;
- other administrative registers related to foreigners (e.g. aliens' registers, residence-permit databases and asylum seekers' databases);
- data collection on border crossings and other sample surveys;
- population censuses.

Detailed information on sources used to produce international migration statistics across the EU are presented in Table 1. To be comprehensive, statistics should cover immigrants and emigrants, irrespective of their citizenship. However, governments are usually more interested in controlling the migration, particularly immigration, of foreigners than of their own citizens. This priority is reflected in their administrative procedures and data collection systems. Therefore, data sources for statistics on immigration of nationals, immigration of foreigners, emigration of nationals and emigration of foreigners are presented separately below. In practice in all the countries (except the Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic) which produce statistics on both nationals and non-nationals, the data is derived from the same source, usually population registers (13 countries) and statistical surveys (4 countries). As a consequence of the recent EU Directive on the right of residence for all EU citizens in other EU Member States<sup>6</sup> an additional distinction between foreigners who are EU citizens and third-country nationals will be needed in future (as proposed in Table 3).

**Centralised population registers** are used to produce statistics on international migration flows for both nationals and non-nationals in eight countries (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Austria and Finland). In all these countries the National Statistical Institute (NSI) receives from the centralised population register, on a periodic basis, a copy of all registrations and deregistrations. Registrations of migrants coming from abroad are considered as international immigrations while deregistrations of migrants moving abroad are counted as international emigrations. In Spain and Sweden the NSI keeps, for statistical purposes, a centralised population register that includes information on changes of residence received monthly (in Spain) or daily (in Sweden) from local population registers

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<sup>6</sup> Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States.

(Spain<sup>7</sup>) or the Tax Authority (Sweden). The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia also derive their statistics on international migration from their centralised population registers, but only for nationals<sup>8</sup>.

**Local population registers** are used to derive statistics on international migration flows in three EU countries: Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. The details of the preparation of migration statistics in these three countries vary<sup>9</sup>. In some countries (Poland and the Slovak Republic), centralised population registers are in operation, but are not yet systematically used for statistical purposes because of the lack, or poor quality, of some crucial information<sup>10</sup>. In these two countries data on international migration for nationals and non-nationals is still collected through statistical forms filled in when a person is registered or deregistered<sup>11</sup>.

**Aliens' registers and residence permit databases** constitute a valuable source of data on international migration in countries where the population register does not cover the whole target foreign population (Hungary), the development of the population register is not yet complete (the Czech Republic, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic), or where there is no population register (France, Greece and Portugal). It is worth noting that in countries where no statistics on international migration can be produced using population registers, the residence permit databases could be an alternative data source as far as immigration of third country nationals is concerned.

**Border crossing forms** are no longer used for producing statistics on international migration in EU member states. Sample migration surveys are used to produce statistics on international immigration and emigration flows in four countries: through household surveys carried out within the country in Portugal and Ireland, and through sample surveys of border crossers in Cyprus and the United Kingdom. In addition, the United Kingdom uses supplementary data sources to adjust statistics derived from surveys, namely data on asylum seekers, removals and long-term visitor switchers (visitors who became migrants)

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<sup>7</sup> Apart from statistical purposes, the INE's central population register is used to coordinate the operation of local population registers.

<sup>8</sup> In Hungary the population register only includes foreigners with permanent residence permits, while in the Czech Republic and Slovenia the population registers theoretically cover both nationals and non-nationals. However the data is considered to be less reliable than that extracted from the aliens' registers.

<sup>9</sup> In Germany statistics are based on data from the administrative forms for local registration of arrivals and departures. They are anonymised and aggregated by the statistical offices of each *Land* on a monthly basis and then transmitted to the Federal Statistical Office. It must be noted that there may be small discrepancies between registration rules in operation in various *Länder*. In the Netherlands all local registers send details of changes of residence and administrative corrections to Statistics Netherlands by electronic mail on a daily basis. In Italy, the preparation of migration flow statistics is based on two different data collection questionnaires sent by ISTAT to all municipalities. In the first questionnaire each municipality is obliged to deliver aggregated data on the demographic balance of the resident population, and in the second one individual data on changes of residence are requested. However statistics based on the two sources are not compatible.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, in the Polish central population register there is no indication of the previous place of residence. In the Slovak population register there are a number of persons whose former Czechoslovak citizenship has not yet been replaced by the new Czech or Slovak citizenship, so statistics on migration flows by citizenship cannot be produced. Fortunately in both countries the centralised population register is currently being improved and will be used for statistical purposes in the future.

<sup>11</sup> In Poland the statistical parts of the registration forms and copies of the administrative deregistration forms are sent to the Ministry of the Interior, where the data are input into a computer text file and then sent to the Central Statistical Office. In the Slovak Republic special statistical forms are filled in and they are sent directly to the statistical office. Identical forms, inherited from the time when Czechoslovakia existed, were used in the Czech Republic to produce statistics on international migration of nationals until the reference year 2004 (inclusive).

from the Home Office, plus data on migration flows from and to Ireland provided by the Irish Central Statistical Office. In France, as already mentioned, the newly introduced rolling census is to be used to produce statistics on international immigration of EEA citizens (including French citizens). Finally a specific data collection is carried out in Malta. People who intend to settle in Malta have to declare at Customs goods that are taken into Malta unless these items are deemed to be their personal effects. An additional form is completed at that time, which is transferred to the Statistical Office for producing statistics on international immigrations.

A centralised, computerised, comprehensive and complete population registration system providing for the continuous recording of information on each member of the target population seems to be the best source of reliable statistics on migration flows, providing that the rules related to registration are followed by migrants. The same statistics can usually be derived from local population registers or based on forms (administrative or statistical) filled in when changes of residence are registered. However the use of local population registers or statistical forms is much more complex and may have a negative impact on the overall reliability of the data collected. If there is no administrative data source covering the whole population, or the available data on some population categories is considered unreliable, other registers may be used that contain only subsets of the population, e.g. aliens' registers or residence-permit databases. Combining different administrative registers is an appropriate alternative method of meeting the EU Regulation's requirements. In the absence of administrative data sources, some countries rely on statistical surveys carried out during border crossings or among households inside the country. Some information on international migration flows can also be derived from population censuses, but this source has a number of well-known limitations. For instance, it is only carried out at long intervals, accommodates only a small number of questions and is not able to capture all migration events that occur between enumerations. Therefore, it cannot constitute a source of annual statistics on international migration. Moreover, only international immigrants can be identified; international emigrants no longer form part of the population being enumerated.

## **7. Availability of statistics requested by the EU Regulation**

The scope of international migration statistics produced by each NSI, based on the data sources described above, varies considerably. The delivery of some statistical tables is constrained by factors such as the lack of relevant and appropriate characteristics in a data collection system, the low reliability of the data and the existence of legal restrictions on the dissemination of some personal information. Table 2 gives details of the availability of the data requested by the EU Regulation.

The figures on total immigration and emigration flows are available, with only a few exceptions where there is no source for the data or its reliability is considered to be very low. For example, there are no statistics on immigrants or emigrants in Greece, while in Estonia the NSI decided not to publish international migration statistics due to the low quality of the data. In addition, France does not have any statistics on emigration. Emigration statistics in Malta refer only to the emigration of nationals to the United Kingdom. Immigration statistics in France and Portugal do not cover nationals. Statistics derived from surveys (in Ireland and the United Kingdom) are affected by high estimation errors due to small samples. This refers more specifically to disaggregations by citizenship, country of birth and country of previous/next residence, and in the United Kingdom, by age.

The most widely available tabulation of international migration statistics is that of **immigrants by citizenship**. The large majority of EU Member States, with the exception of Estonia and Poland produce this table. In Estonia the problem of the very low quality of the data affects all the information on international migration and no tables are produced. In Poland, for the same reason, data on international migration by citizenship is not produced. Statistics on immigrants by citizenship are not currently

available in Greece, although they will be produced from the residence permit database in the near future. As in France and Portugal, these statistics will only cover third-country nationals.

There are more problems related to data on international immigration by **country of birth** and **country of previous residence**. Statistics on immigrants by country of birth are neither currently produced nor planned for the near future in Greece, France, Cyprus, Germany and Poland. In Greece, Cyprus and France this information is not gathered. However in Cyprus the inclusion of an appropriate question in the passenger survey should not present any difficulties. In Poland, only information on the place of birth is collected, but the derivation of the country of birth is not straightforward due to numerous historical changes in the national territory. In Germany, information on the country of birth is available in the population register, but the data are of insufficient quality and the coding scheme varies between different local population registers. In compliance with the national regulation on population statistics, they are not transmitted to the NSI. In Portugal, statistics on immigration by country of birth are only produced for foreigners. Although statistics on immigrants by country of birth are not currently available in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic, these countries intend to produce them in the near future. In Austria, where the Central Population Register has recently been created, the country of birth variable needs to be collected from local population registers because this information was not available in electronic format in all municipalities when the local registers were centralised. In Belgium, statistics on immigration by country of birth are not currently produced although the data is available and is considered to be of good quality.

Information on the **country of previous residence** is not collected at all or is incomplete in several countries. In particular, it is missing in Greece and France for both nationals and non-nationals, in Slovenia for non-nationals and in Hungary for nationals (information is gathered on non-nationals in Hungary, but is incomplete). Luxembourg does not publish these statistics due to incomplete registration of information on the country of previous residence. In Belgium, the country of previous residence is considered a sensitive topic and is not included in the so-called legal variables that are the only characteristics allowed to be disseminated by the NSI.

The availability of statistics on international emigration by citizenship, country of birth and country of next residence in EU Member States is generally similar to that on international immigration. However, some countries that produce immigration data based on residence permits, namely Greece and France, do not have emigration statistics. Portugal overcomes this problem by conducting a special survey.

Statistics on flows of foreigners (and therefore total flows as well) by country of previous/next residence need special attention. Some general assumptions are often made by NSIs: emigration statistics are derived from the dates of expiry of residence permits and when information on country of origin or destination of foreign migrants is missing the country of citizenship is considered. In Lithuania the country of next residence when a residence permit expires is taken to be the country from which the foreigner came.

In addition to registered emigration, some countries (e.g. Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands) include a special category called **administrative corrections** for the emigrations of both nationals and non-nationals that are either declared *ex post* or are discovered not to have been declared (when the individual is administratively deregistered). This category relates to emigrations that often occurred during a previous year, and therefore should not be considered as emigrations for the current year of observation. Most of these administrative corrections, by their very nature, cannot be disaggregated by country of next residence; in practice they are usually included in the emigration statistics and the country of destination is left unknown.

## **8. Reliability of data on international migration flows**

The availability of statistics is not an end in itself. Even if data is available, its poor quality may render it useless. In this section one key aspect of data quality is addressed, namely its reliability or the compliance of the statistics with the national definition (which is itself not necessarily in agreement with the internationally recommended definition). If a non-harmonised definition is applied, but the data collection is meticulous, the data is classified as reliable. In such a situation data users can trust the available statistics and there is an exact correspondence between concepts underlying the data and the statistics produced.

There are two main factors that make international migration statistics unreliable. The first is the under-registration of migrations, which applies in particular to countries where data collection systems rely on self-declarations of international movements. The second relates to data coverage: the data collection system used in a country may not cover the whole target population and so some subsets may be excluded from the statistics. This does not refer to a situation in which, for example, data are collected on foreigners only, but to one in which some of the people included in the definition are excluded from the data collection procedure (see below). In addition, data may be unreliable if a lot of errors arise during its processing.

As discussed above when dealing with availability problems, the majority of international migration statistics in EU Member States are derived from population registers. No doubt, deficiencies in registration have the most significant influence on data reliability. People do not register or deregister because there is no such requirement, or even if there is, the administrative rules are not strictly applied. The willingness to report changes of place of residence varies from one country to another, but everywhere people take into account the advantages and disadvantages of being or not being registered. In general, there is more interest in registering arrivals than departures. Therefore, in any given country, immigration statistics are generally more reliable than emigration statistics.

Data based on sample surveys are insufficiently reliable because of estimation errors and the generally high volatility observed in the time series.

Statistics on international migration flows based on the issuance or expiry of residence permits should be reliable, because the fact of issuing a permit is usually well documented in the residence-permit database. However residence-permit data only refers to third-country nationals. Moreover emigration statistics based on the expiry of residence permits only covers people with temporary residence permit, and the timing of their emigration may be earlier than the expiry of the residence permit. Finally it should be noted that everybody who effectively immigrates or emigrates should be taken into consideration (including accompanying children), not only the family members who possess residence permits.

As regards data coverage, flows of undocumented migrants are not included. Only Spain includes some illegal migrants in their official statistics on international immigration when these persons present themselves to be registered in the local *Padron*. Theoretically, some illegal migrants may also be covered by the international passenger surveys carried out in Cyprus and the United Kingdom. In general, asylum seekers are included only when they have been granted refugee status and received a temporary or permanent residence permit. In Germany, Spain, Austria and the Netherlands asylum seekers are recorded in the population register at an earlier stage of the asylum procedure, and at the same time they are included in immigration statistics (after six months of legal stay in the Netherlands, and immediately in the three other countries). In Cyprus and Ireland they are covered by statistics based on surveys but this is not true of the *International Passenger Survey* in the United Kingdom. This problem is solved by using Home Office estimates to correct the survey and produce immigration statistics. By contrast, asylum

seekers are never included in migration statistics in Hungary and Portugal, even after they have been granted refugee status.

Students are another group of people who are in a grey area of the registration of international migrations. Not all EU students are included in the population registers of the receiving country and deregistered from those of the sending country. Those who do not report their emigration or immigration will not appear in the related statistics. For students originating from third countries the information is more reliable, as all these students need to acquire a specific residence permit. Bilateral agreements between EU Member States or a new EU directive may help to clarify this situation by stipulating explicitly when a student does and does not have to be registered in his or her place of study.

In some cases over-coverage, rather than under-coverage, can be observed. For instance, foreigners born in Portugal are included in the immigration statistics. Nevertheless the most important problem remains under-coverage. This may reduce all migration flows by a factor of ten and, in some cases, by a factor of one hundred, as will be shown later in this chapter.

The consistency of international migration statistics available in different databases and publications is a separate concern. When different figures are published in different statistical databases for a given country, doubts are raised about the quality of the data. The THESIM project compared the figures in the Eurostat database, EC DG JFS Annual Reports on Asylum and Migration, Joint Eurostat-UNSD-UNECE-CoE-ILO Questionnaires on International Migration Statistics, CoE publications 'Recent demographic developments in Europe', official websites of national statistical institutes, SOPEMI reports and the EUROSTAT project 'Quality review of MIGRAT in New Cronos' for total immigration and emigration in 1999–2002 for each country. The total flow statistics were highly consistent across time and across all the sources inspected in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Slovenia and Sweden. However significant problems were noted in Latvia, Portugal, Ireland and Italy. More or less frequent inconsistencies were detected in other countries, or the figures were missing. According to this investigation the most frequent sources of inconsistencies were:

- differences between provisional and final data;
- differences in coverage as data were provided by different bodies and some misunderstanding of the content of the request occurred, mainly when the NSI was not involved;
- the occasional use of the wrong reference date for the data. Adequate metadata are clearly essential, including information on the provisional or definitive status of the information, the name of the provider, the data source and the definitions used.

## **9. Comparability of data on international migration flows**

Despite existing recommendations from the UN and the EU, the definitions of international migrants vary significantly between countries, within countries over time, and between different sources of statistical information. Moreover, the definitions of immigration and emigration that are applied in a particular country do not necessarily match in terms of the time criterion (see Table 3). As discussed above, the reliability of the data collection also varies between countries, and within countries between immigration and emigration according to the population concerned. The most important comparability problems are discussed here, with respect to the application of the EU Regulation.

The main sources of variation in definitions used in EU Member States are the differences in the concepts of 'place of residence' and 'duration of stay' that are applied to determine who is an international migrant.

Because the datasets are usually not accompanied by detailed methodological information these concepts remain a relatively uncharted area for most data users.

Most countries base their definitions of international migration on a change of country of residence. In some cases this is the only concept underlying the definition. A variety of possible interpretations and nuances of the term ‘country of residence’ can result in a lack of clarity of the statistics. As explained in Chapter 3, it can be interpreted from a legal (*de jure*) or an actual (*de facto*) point of view. In the former, the laws and regulations binding in the country in question specify requirements that have to be fulfilled in order to become a resident. The conditions differ between nationals and non-nationals, and within non-nationals there are two distinct groups (namely foreigners with the right to free movement, and others). In fact, nationals have an unconditional right of residence in their country of citizenship, whereas the rights of foreigners are hedged in with conditions. Nationals may still be counted as part of the population of their country of citizenship even after they have been living abroad for a number of years, but having a place of residence in a country does not necessarily mean a physical presence on its territory. Thus in some countries nationals cannot be migrants unless their actual presence and absence are considered. From the *de facto* perspective, residence is directly connected to presence in a country. Usually, presence must be for a specified minimum period of time.

Therefore, time should be considered as a supplementary concept to that of residence. However, the level of concreteness differs across countries. On the one hand, the definitions currently in use often specify that international migration takes place when there is a change in the country of residence for a minimum period of time. Such a period is precisely defined. On the other hand, some countries only take permanent changes of residence into account, although permanent does not necessarily mean the same in different countries. Its meaning can be understood literally, or as equivalent to long-term.

When a precise period is used, another problem arises related to the distinction between intended and actual duration. The use of the actual duration concept means that the production of statistics would be systematically delayed by the period used as the time criterion in the definition of migration. Currently, all countries which specify a precise period use the intended duration<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, an assumption is made that the intended duration will become the actual one. However, for non-nationals the intended duration is usually limited to the period specified in the authorisation to stay. Very often, the statutory length of stay is used instead of the immigrant’s real intentions. This approach has some advantages. The legal time is objective and easy to record accurately by the receiving country. However, the actual presence of foreigners in the country often differs from that given by their initial authorisation to stay. Foreigners may leave the country long before their permits expire, or their permits may be renewed and they may stay longer.

Details of the time criterion used in the definitions of international immigrants and emigrants in the 25 countries of the EU and information on the compatibility of the statistics with the Regulation are presented in Table 3. The figures are given separately for nationals and non-nationals, and non-nationals are further subdivided into EU citizens and third-country nationals.

The threshold durations used by countries differ widely. On the one hand, there are countries where the duration of residence is of no relevance because any move in or out of a dwelling should be registered and deregistered, and will be directly reflected in the statistics. On the other hand, there are countries where only movements for an ‘infinite’ duration (i.e. settlement migration) are counted. Within these extremes, the duration of stay criterion applied in migration statistics across the EU is usually set to a period between three months and one year. The one-year criterion is requested by the EU Regulation, and only Cyprus and the United Kingdom (which compile their statistics on international migration flows from

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<sup>12</sup> In the Czech Republic the actual duration of stay was used for the immigration statistics for 2001 and 2002.

sample surveys conducted during border controls) currently apply this definition consistently. In Finland and Sweden, where the one-year criterion is applied as a general rule, it is not followed for emigration to other Nordic countries (where the rule of the country of immigration is applied, according to the Nordic Agreement). However these two countries, as well as most other countries using population registers, would be able to deliver statistics using the twelve-month rule on an *ex post* basis.

Related to the different time criteria used by countries, there are different practices concerning the inclusion of short-term migrations in international migration statistics. Practice in this area may differ when statistics on nationals, other EEA citizens, and non-EEA citizens are produced. In fact it is frequently difficult to estimate the level of coverage of short-term migrations, as many countries do not specify the duration of stay of migrants into or out of their territory.

Investigations undertaken as part of the THESIM project show that 14 countries could present statistics on *ex post* actual stays in the country or abroad, and could therefore fully comply with the UN definition on long-term migration. With the addition of two countries that could produce these statistics for all non-nationals, and four that could do so for the immigration of non-EEA citizens', 20 out of 25 countries could at least produce immigration statistics for third-country nationals based on the UN's definition of long-term migration. For a variety of reasons, including the early date of publication and the constraints concerning legal and financial matters, some countries have not as yet been able to implement these existing possibilities.

As well as discrepancies in the definitions of crucial concepts described above, there are a number of other problems that considerably hinder the international comparability of flow data. Time related issues are predominant. Firstly, migration events are counted at various dates. For immigration this might be the date of issuing a permit, the date of arrival or the date of reporting for registration; for emigration, the date of expiry of a permit, the date of reporting the departure or the date of departure are variously used. Secondly, in some cases a reference period other than a calendar year might be applied (e.g. April to April in Ireland). In addition, when a very short (or no) duration of stay criterion is employed, an individual may migrate several times during the reference period. All of these events are counted separately in the international migration statistics. When the one-year time limit is strictly applied and the data are collected on an annual basis, only one migration (immigration or emigration) can be counted for a given migrant and, accordingly, there should be no difference between the number of migrants and the number of migrations.

This analysis leads to the general conclusion that currently available data on international migration flows are still far from being internationally comparable. An investigation of the intra-EU double-entry migration matrix demonstrates the weak comparability of the available data. The same comparability problems probably affect data on the international migration of EU citizens outside the EU, as the same rules and practice are in force. Fortunately, the immigration of third-country nationals is better recorded in most EU Member States as the residence-permit database is used (directly or indirectly) to measure these flows. However this is not true for emigration.

The above conclusions on the comparability of international migration flows by country of origin or country of destination are probably also valid for international migration by citizenship or country of birth. However no direct check is possible.

## **10. Conclusion**

An urgent need for international migration statistics coincides with an unsatisfactory degree of availability, reliability and comparability of data on international migration flows. The comparability problems occur at different stages of the procedures used to produce immigration and emigration

statistics. Firstly, different data sources are used to collect statistical information. Usually, statistics on international migration flows are by-products of information collected for administrative purposes and as such their coverage and possible tabulation are limited by the scope of the information gathered for these administrative purposes. Registered migration events and recorded characteristics depend in turn on national migration policy, while the level of under-registration of international migrations depends on the existence of incentives and disincentives prompting compliance with registration rules.

Doubtless, the problem of defining international migrants and migration is of great importance. The numerous discrepancies in basic concepts applied in identifying migrants and migration are one of the main reasons that international flow statistics are not comparable. But the problems of coverage, and particularly under-registration of migration, are the most important and the situation is worsened when no fixed time criterion is used for the self-declaration of migration. The review of the availability, reliability and comparability of the data on international migration flows which is to be required under the EU Regulation showed very diverse situations in the 25 EU countries. However it also suggested ways in which the data could be improved so as to comply with the EU Regulation or at least to clarify the differences between the data requested and that produced.

In order to improve the overall situation, the need for a fixed time criterion for identifying immigration has been highlighted as of great importance. A twelve-month period should be recommended, alongside the EU Regulation, even if the threshold of three months would probably be more effective in terms of coverage and reliability.

Most efforts should be focused on the registration of emigration, of both nationals and non-nationals, by facilitating the administrative procedure and by introducing incentives for both the people concerned and the local administration to register the move. For migration between EU countries, the EU Directive lays down (see footnote 2) that the registration of immigration is compulsory in the receiving country; the declaration of emigration and deregistration in the sending country should also be made compulsory. Following the experience of the Nordic countries, an exchange of information between EU Member States would be really helpful in improving statistics on migration within the EU. For emigrations outside the EU, the registration of nationals in consulates abroad should be encouraged by providing concrete advantages to the migrant. This information should then be systematically transferred to the central population registration system and used to deregister the migrant from his or her previous place of residence.

For third-country nationals, the residence-permit database is the most reliable source of data for immigration if only the first permit issued is considered. It is more difficult to estimate emigration by using this data source. Generally speaking, the information on the expiry of residence permits should be systematically transferred to the population registration system and used as the starting point for investigating and the possible deregistering emigrations that have not been self-declared. It would also be possible to register the emigration when the external border of the EU is crossed, by checking the residence permit. However this would involve the exchange of information between all EU Member States, as emigrants may be usually resident in one EU country but leave the EU through a border in another EU country.

**Table 1. Sources of data on international migration flows** (Source: THESIM project)

	Immigration or emigration	Central Population Register		Local Population Registers		Statistical forms		Alien's Register or residence permits database		Sample survey		Other type of source	
		NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR
BE	IMMI	X	X										
	EMI	X	X										
CZ	IMMI	X							X				
	EMI	X							X				
DK	IMMI	X	X										
	EMI	X	X										
DE	IMMI			X	X								
	EMI			X	X								
EE	IMMI	[X] <sup>13</sup>	[X]										
	EMI	[X]	[X]										
EL	IMMI								[X]				
	EMI												
ES	IMMI	X	X										
	EMI	X	X										
FR	IMMI								X		[X]		
	EMI												
IE	IMMI									X	X		
	EMI									X	X		
IT	IMMI			X	X								
	EMI			X	X								
CY	IMMI									X	X		
	EMI									X	X		
LV	IMMI	X	X										
	EMI	X	X										
LT	IMMI	X	X										
	EMI	X	X										
LU	IMMI	X	X										
	EMI	X	X										
HU	IMMI	X							X				
	EMI	X							X				
MT	IMMI					X	X						
	EMI											X	
NL	IMMI			X	X								
	EMI			X	X								
AT	IMMI	X	X										
	EMI	X	X										
PL	IMMI					X	X						
	EMI					X	X						
PT	IMMI								X	[X]			
	EMI									X	X		
SI	IMMI	X							X				
	EMI	X							X				
SK	IMMI					X	X		X				
	EMI					X	X		X				
FI	IMMI	X	X										
	EMI	X	X										
SE	IMMI	X	X										
	EMI	X	X										
UK	IMMI									X	X		
	EMI									X	X		

<sup>13</sup> Information referring to data which may be available at some point in the future according to the responsible authority or the data supplier.

**Table 2. Availability of statistics on international migration flows** (Source: THESIM project)

	Immigration or Emigration	Total	By citizenship			By country of birth			By country of previous/ next residence		
			Total	Additional dimension		Total	Additional dimension		Total	Additional dimension	
				Age	Sex		Age	Sex		Age	Sex
BE	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	-[+]	-[+]	-[+]	..Q	..L,Q	..L,Q
CZ	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	-[+]	-[+]	-[+]	+	+	+
DK	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
DE	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+
EE	IMMI&EMI	-Q [+]	-Q [+]	-Q [+]	-Q [+]	-Q [+]	-Q [+]	-Q [+]	-Q [+]	-Q [+]	-Q [+]
EL	IMMI EMI	-[f:+] -	-[f:+] -	-[f:+] -	-[f:+] -	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	±	+
FR	IMMI EMI	n:- f:± -	n:- f:± [+] -	n:- f:± [+] -	n:- f:± [+] -	-	-	-	-	-	-
IE	IMMI&EMI	+	±	+	+	±	+	+	±	+	+
IT	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
CY	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+
LV	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
LT	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
LU	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	-[+]	-[+]	-[+]	..Q	..Q	..Q
HU	IMMI EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	n:- f:-Q -	n:- f:-Q -	n:- f:-Q -
MT	IMMI EMI	± n:± f:-	± -	+	+	± -	+	+	± n:± f:-	+	+
NL	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
AT	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	-Q [+]	-Q [+]	-Q [+]	+	+	+
PL	IMMI&EMI	+	..Q	..Q	..Q	-	-	-	+	+	+
PT	IMMI EMI	n:- f:± +	n:- f:± -	n:- f:± -	n:- f:± -	n:- f:± -	n:- f:± -	n:- f:± -	n:- f:± +	n:- f:± ?	n:- f:± +
SI	IMMI EMI	+	+	+	n:+ f:-[+]	-[+]	-[+]	-[+]	n:+ f:-	n:+ f:-	n:+ f:-
SK	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	n:-[+] f:±	-[+]	-[+]	+	+	+
FI	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
SE	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
UK	IMMI&EMI	+	±	±	±	±	±	±	±	±	±

Legend :

+ Available  
- Not available

? Availability unknown

n: Information referring to nationals

f: Information referring to non-nationals

[ ] Information referring to data that might be produced in the future

Q Statistics are not produced due to low quality of data

L There are legal constraints on the publication of data

± Only some data are available:

ES: Broad age groups;

FR: Immigration statistics do not cover EEA citizens; Disaggregation by age and sex available but not provided;

IE: Selected countries of citizenship/birth/previous or next residence;

MT: Immigration statistics available only for selected countries of citizenship/birth/previous residence; Statistics on immigration by country of previous residence refer to immigration of persons of Maltese origin; Emigration statistics cover only nationals emigrating to the UK;

UK: Selected countries of citizenship/birth/previous or next residence; Disaggregation by age available only for some countries.

**Table 3. Time criteria and compatibility of international migration statistics with the EU Regulation<sup>1</sup>**

	IMmigration or EMigration	Nationals	Other EEA citizens	Non EEA citizens	Possibility of providing statistics according to the 12 months rule <sup>2</sup>		
					Nationals	Other EEA citizens	Non EEA citizens
BE	IM	No time criteria	3 months	3 months	P	P	P
	EM	No time criteria	3 months	3 months, permit expiry	P	P	P
CZ	IM	Permanent, no time criteria	one year	one year	N	Y	Y
	EM	Permanent, no time criteria	permanent/permit expiry	permanent/permit expiry	N	N	N
DK	IM <sup>3</sup>	3 months/6 months	3 months/6 months	3 months/6 months	P	P	P
	EM <sup>4</sup>	6 months	6 months	6 months	P	P	P
DE	IM <sup>5</sup>	no time criteria	no time criteria	no time criteria	N	N	N
	EM	no time criteria	no time criteria	no time criteria	N	N	N
EE	IM	[no time criteria]	[3 months]	[3 months]	[P]	[P]	[P]
	EM	[no time criteria]	[no time criteria]	[no time criteria]	[P]	[P]	[P]
EL	IM	no statistics	no statistics	[one year]	N	N	[Y]
	EM	no statistics	no statistics	no statistics	N	N	N
ES	IM	no time criteria	no time criteria	no time criteria	P	P	P
	EM	no time criteria	no time criteria	no time criteria	P	P	P
FR	IM	no statistics	no statistics	One year <sup>6</sup>	N	N	Y
	EM	no statistics	no statistics	no statistics	N	N	N
IE	IM	no time criteria	no time criteria	no time criteria	N	N	N
	EM	no time criteria	no time criteria	no time criteria	N	N	N
IT	IM	no time criteria	no time criteria	6 months	N	N	N
	EM	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
CY	IM	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
	EM	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
LV	IM	no time criteria	one year validity for residence permit <sup>7</sup>	one year validity for residence permit <sup>7</sup>	P	P	P
	EM	6 months	6 months or end of validity of permit	6 months or end of validity of permit	P	P	P
LT	IM	6 months	one year validity for residence permit <sup>7</sup>	one year validity for residence permit <sup>7</sup>	P	P	P
	EM	6 months	6 months or end of validity of permit	6 months or end of validity of permit	P	P	P
LU	IM	no time criteria	no time criteria	no time criteria	P	P	P
	EM	no time criteria	no time criteria	no time criteria	P	P	P
HU	IM	3 months	3 months	one year	N	N	Y
	EM	3 months	permanent/permit expiry	permanent/permit expiry	N	N	N
MT	IM	permanent	permanent	permanent	N	N	Y
	EM	permanent	no statistics	no statistics	N	N	N

	IMmigration or EMigration	Nationals	Other EEA citizens	Non EEA citizens	Possibility of providing statistics according to the 12 months rule <sup>2</sup>		
					Nationals	Other EEA citizens	Non EEA citizens
NL	IM	4 out of the forthcoming 6 months	4 out of the forthcoming 6 months	4 out of the forthcoming 6 months	P	P	P
	EM	8 out of the forthcoming 12 months	8 out of the forthcoming 12 months	8 out of the forthcoming 12 months	P	P	P
AT	IM	3 months [one year]	3 months [one year]	3 months [one year]	P	P	P
	EM	3 months [one year]	3 months [one year]	3 months [one year]	P	P	P
PL	IM	permanent	permanent	permanent	N	N	N
	EM	permanent	permanent	permanent	N	N	N
PT	IM	no statistics	one year	one year	N	Y	Y
	EM	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
SI	IM	3 months	3 months	3 months	P	P	P
	EM	3 months	permanent/permit expiry	permanent/permit expiry	P	P	P
SK	IM	permanent	permanent	permanent/3 months	N	N	N
	EM	permanent	permanent	permanent/permit expiry	N	N	N
FI	IM	no time criteria	one year	one year	P	Y	Y
	EM <sup>7</sup>	one year	one year	one year	P	P	P
SE	IM	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
	EM <sup>7</sup>	one year	one year	one year	P	P	P
UK	IM	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
	EM	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y

Legend:

[ ] The responsible authority or data supplier has indicated that these data may be available at some point in the future.

.../... Information refers to: foreigners with permanent residence permits/other foreigners.

<sup>1</sup> This table presents minimum duration of stay (in or outside the country) of migrants included in international migration statistics. The duration of stay criterion may result either from the registration rules and/or from the selection rules applied when producing statistics.

<sup>2</sup> Information on the possibility of providing statistics according to the 12 months rule refer to migration flow statistics produced on an ex-ante basis. If a country is able to provide statistics according to the 12 months rule, but only on an ex-post basis, Y is replaced by P.

<sup>3</sup> Six months for all persons (Nationals, EEA citizens or non-EEA citizens) immigrating from another EEA country and three months if immigrating from outside EEA.

<sup>4</sup> Between the Nordic countries, the time criteria for the registration of emigration are related to the time criteria for the registration of immigration in the receiving country.

<sup>5</sup> Registration in the local population registers have to be done within 8 days after entering the country.

<sup>6</sup> Only for foreigners who are selected to receive long-term resident permit in the future, even if they do not receive it at the moment of the entry. Therefore, some of those people with temporary residence permits valid for up to 1 year are included.

<sup>7</sup> For immigrants with permanent residence permit, the criteria are the same as for nationals.