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**OFFICIAL EUROPEAN STATISTICS  
ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION FLOWS:  
AVAILABILITY, SOURCES AND COVERAGE**

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Migration and Environment



Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation,  
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**Abstract:** The paper provides a comparative overview of the official international migration flow statistics currently produced in all European Union member states, concentrating on the data to be requested by the forthcoming *Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection*. After presenting availability and reliability of the required statistics and data sources from which they are derived, the comparability issues are discussed. A detailed discussion of the discrepancies in the duration of stay criteria used for statistical purposes in the definition of migrant in various countries is offered. These discrepancies constitute one of the major causes of the poor comparability of international migration statistics in the EU.

**Keywords:** international migration, statistics, data sources, European Union

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## **1. Introduction**

International migration is increasingly seen as an important factor of demographic and economic growth in a number of countries. Comprehensive and reliable statistics on international migration are therefore required to prepare population estimates and projections, which are essential for the development of public policy and planning. The demand for international migration statistics coincides with an unsatisfactory availability and quality of data, in particular on international migration flows. Current administrative and statistical practices hinder international comparability of international migration data. Harmonization of these statistics, even within the European Union, seems beyond achievement. The comparability problems occur at different stages of 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 is limited by the scope of the information gathered by the data collection systems available in the country. Registration of migration events and recorded characteristics depend in turn on national migration policy and at the same time on incentives and disincentives prompting compliance with recording 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 factors that make flow statistics internationally incomparable. The aim of this paper has been to review availability, reliability and comparability of data on international migration flows to be required under the forthcoming *Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection* (hereafter referred to as the *Regulation*) and already collected in all 25 EU countries.

## **2. Statistics on international migration flows requested by the EU Regulation**

Obligations of the EU member countries as concerns the provision of statistics on international migration flows are specified in Article 3.1.(a), 3.1.(b) and 3.2 of the EU *Regulation* (European Commission 2005), as follows:

- “1. Member States shall supply to the Commission (Eurostat) statistics on the numbers of:*
- (a) immigrants moving to the territory of the Member State, disaggregated as follows:*
    - (i) citizenship by age and sex;*
    - (ii) country of birth by age and sex*
    - (iii) country of previous usual residence by age and sex*
  - (b) emigrants moving from the territory of the member State disaggregated as follows:*
    - (i) citizenship by age and sex*

- (ii) country of birth by age and sex*
- (iii) country of next usual residence by age and sex”*

*”2. The statistics referred to in paragraph 1 shall relate to reference periods of one calendar year and shall be supplied to the Commission (Eurostat) within ten months of the end of the reference year. The first reference year shall be 2006.”*

The above articles must be read together with the definitions of the terms used therein. They are based on the definition of long-term migrant given in the United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1 (United Nations, 1998), and are formulated in Article 2.1 of the Regulation in the following way:

- “1. For the purpose of this Regulation, the following definitions shall apply: (...)*
- (b) “immigration” means the action by which a natural person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a 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 a third country*
  - (c) “emigration” means the action by which a natural person, having previously been usually resident in the territory of a Member State, ceases to have his usual residence in that Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least twelve months*
  - (d) “immigrant” means a natural person undertaking an immigration*
  - (e) “emigrant” means a natural person undertaking an emigration”*

The concept of usual residence, which forms the basis for the definitions of international migration, is specified in the same article of the Regulation and is also based on the UN Recommendations:

- “(a) “usual residence” means the place in which a person normally spends the daily period of rest, regardless of temporary absences for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage”*

It is worth to note that while the UN Recommendations distinguish two categories of migrants: short-term (staying or intending to stay in the destination country between 3 and 12 months) and long-term (staying or intending to stay at least 12 months), the definitions adopted in the EU Regulation refer only to the long-term migrant concept.

### **3. 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 are as follows:

- Population registers (central population registers, local population registers);
- Administrative registers covering foreigners only: registers of foreigners, residence permits databases and asylum seekers registers;
- Statistical forms filled in when changing place of residence;
- Sample surveys (passenger surveys, household surveys);
- Population censuses;
- Other sources.

Data sources used in the EU countries are very diverse. The countries try to make the best possible use of national administrative data sources, since alternative statistical tools such as sample surveys have evident drawbacks due above all to sampling error. A centralized and computerised, comprehensive and complete population register providing for the continuous recording of information pertaining to each member of the target population seems to be the best source of reliable statistics, provided the people obey the rules related to registration. However, leaving out additional work input, the same statistics may be usually derived from population registers run locally or based on forms (administrative or statistical) filled in when registering changes of residence. If there is no administrative data source covering the whole population, or available data on some population categories are considered unreliable, other registers are used that contain only subsets of the population, e.g. register of foreigners or register of residence permits. Besides, some countries decide to rely on statistical surveys carried out during border controls or among households inside the country. Some information on international migration flows can be derived also from population censuses, but this source has a number of well-known limitations. For instance, it is carried out at long intervals, accommodates only a limited number of questions and is not able to capture all migration events that occurred between subsequent enumerations. Therefore, it cannot constitute a source of annual statistics on international migration. Moreover, only international immigrants may be easily identified, as international emigrants are no more part of the enumerated population.

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 attach different importance to particular categories of flows. They are more interested in controlling migration of foreigners, in particular immigration, which is reflected in the 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.

Table 1. Data sources of official statistics on international migration flows

Country code	Country name	Immigration or emigration	Central Population Register		Local Population Registers		Statistical forms		Register of foreigners or residence permits register		Sample survey		Other type of source	
			NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR
<b>BE</b>	Belgium	IMMI	x	x										
		EMI	x	x										
<b>CZ</b>	Czech Republic	IMMI	x							x				
		EMI	x							x				
<b>DK</b>	Denmark	IMMI	x	x										
		EMI	x	x										
<b>DE</b>	Germany	IMMI			x	x								
		EMI			x	x								
<b>EE</b>	Estonia	IMMI	[x]	[x]										
		EMI	[x]	[x]										
<b>EL</b>	Greece	IMMI								[x]				
		EMI												
<b>ES</b>	Spain	IMMI	x	x										
		EMI	x	x										
<b>FR</b>	France	IMMI								x		[x]		
		EMI												
<b>IE</b>	Ireland	IMMI									x	x		
		EMI									x	x		
<b>IT</b>	Italy	IMMI			x	x								
		EMI			x	x								
<b>CY</b>	Cyprus	IMMI									x	x		
		EMI									x	x		
<b>LV</b>	Latvia	IMMI	x	x										
		EMI	x	x										
<b>LT</b>	Lithuania	IMMI	x	x										
		EMI	x	x										
<b>LU</b>	Luxembourg	IMMI	x	x										
		EMI	x	x										
<b>HU</b>	Hungary	IMMI	x								x			
		EMI	x								x			
<b>MT</b>	Malta	IMMI					x	x						
		EMI												x
<b>NL</b>	Netherlands	IMMI			x	x								
		EMI			x	x								
<b>AT</b>	Austria	IMMI	x	x										
		EMI	x	x										
<b>PL</b>	Poland	IMMI					x	x						
		EMI						x	x					
<b>PT</b>	Portugal	IMMI								x	[x]			
		EMI									x	x		
<b>SI</b>	Slovenia	IMMI	x							x				
		EMI	x							x				
<b>SK</b>	Slovakia	IMMI					x	x		x				
		EMI						x	x		x			
<b>FI</b>	Finland	IMMI	x	x										
		EMI	x	x										
<b>SE</b>	Sweden	IMMI	x	x										
		EMI	x	x										
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom	IMMI									x	x		
		EMI									x	x		

[ ] Information referring to data that, according to the responsible authority or data supplier, may be available at some point in the future

Source: THESIM project reports



### 3.1. Population Registers

Population register is the most widely used source of statistical information on international migration among the Member States. The majority of those registers are run on the national level. Central population registers are used to produce statistics on international migration flows for both nationals and non-nationals in the following eight countries: Belgium, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Austria, Finland and Sweden. In Spain, the national institute of statistics (INE) keeps a central statistical database that includes information on change of residence, received monthly from municipal registers. Apart from the statistical purposes, the INE's register is used to coordinate the operation of the local population registers. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia derive the statistics from the central population registers, but only on nationals. In Hungary the population register does not cover the whole foreign population, since only those with permanent residence permits are included. In the Czech Republic and Slovenia theoretically the population registers have full coverage. However, in the Czech Republic data on foreigners are of inferior quality than in the aliens register from which they were transferred, because the transfers have not been complete. In Slovenia, not all data on migration related events that are necessary to produce flow statistics are available in the population register. In the Czech Republic and Slovenia the current state of affairs is treated as transitional and the population registers are to be used for both nationals and non-nationals in the future. In Estonia, where statistics on international migration flows are not available now, the central population register will be used for statistics production purposes after the improvement of data reliability.

Population registers that operate at the local level are used to derive statistics on international migration flows in three EU countries: Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. Details regarding preparation of statistics vary from country to country. In Germany statistics are produced based on the administrative forms for registration of arrivals and departures used at the local level. 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 changes of residence and administrative corrections by electronic mail to the mailbox of Statistics Netherlands on a daily basis. In Italy preparation of migration flow statistics is based on two different data collection questionnaires sent by the national institute of statistics (ISTAT) to all municipalities. In the first questionnaire each of them is obliged to deliver aggregated data on resident population and components of population change. In the second one, individual data on changes of residence are requested. Statistics based on the two sources differ.

In some countries, centralized population registers are in operation, but they are not used for statistical purposes, as it is the case in Poland and the Slovak Republic. It results from the lack or poor quality of some crucial characteristics. For instance, in the Polish central population

register there is no historical information on places of residence. In Slovak population register there are a number of persons whose former Czechoslovak citizenship has not been replaced by the new one (Czech or Slovak), so statistics on flows by citizenship cannot be produced. However, the population register in the Slovak Republic is currently being reorganised and will be used for statistical purposes in the future.

### 3.2. Statistical forms

In Poland and the Slovak Republic data on international migration for nationals and non-nationals are collected through statistical or administrative forms when a person registers or deregisters his or her place of residence. 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 times when Czechoslovakia existed, were used in the Czech Republic to produce statistics on international migration of nationals until the reference year 2004.

In Malta data on international immigration come from the Customs Department. People who intend to settle in Malta are recorded at the Customs since they have to declare goods that are taken into Malta, unless these items are deemed to be personal effects. Migration information is captured through statistical forms that are filled in when declarations are made to the Comptroller of Customs.

### 3.3. Aliens Registers or Residence Permits Registers

Special registers dedicated to all or some categories of foreigners constitute a valuable source of data on international migration in the countries where the population register does not cover the whole foreign population (Hungary), the development of the population register has not been completed yet (the Czech Republic, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic) or there is no population register in the country (France, Greece and Portugal). In the Central European countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic) the alien's registers are centralised and both immigration and emigration statistics are derived from them. In the Slovak Republic the alien's register was used for the first time to produce data on international migration of foreigners disaggregated by citizenship for the reference year 2003.

In Slovenia the emigration figures are estimated on the basis of changes in the foreigners stock, vital statistics and immigration data. In Portugal and France the alien's registers are used only to produce immigration figures. Portugal has a centralized information system, although it does not include all residence permits. In France situation is more complex than in

all other countries. The statistics on international immigration of non-nationals are produced using several sources: (i) data from the *Office des Migrations Internationales* (OMI) covering non-EEA citizens who received medical certificates; (ii) data from the Ministry of the Interior (AGDREF register) for EEA-nationals and certain categories of third-country nationals who are not counted by the OMI; (iii) data from the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA). As currently EFTA citizens are not required to hold residence permits, the annual census is to become a new source of data on their immigration. In Greece no statistics on international migration are currently produced, but some statistics on immigration are to be compiled from two sources managed by two different ministries: the alien's register kept by the Ministry of the Interior, that covers third country nationals, and the file for residence permits issued to EU citizens run by the Ministry of Public Order. It is worth to note that even if statistics produced in some countries in question refer to residence permits issued during a reference period, foreigners have to be present in those countries to apply for them.

### 3.4. Sample surveys

Sample surveys are used to produce statistics on international immigration and emigration flows in three countries: Cyprus, Ireland and the United Kingdom. In Portugal, although this statistical tool is applied to emigration of nationals and non-nationals and immigration of nationals, estimation of the latter flow is prepared only for internal purposes. In Portugal and Ireland the sample households surveys are carried out within the country. Cyprus and the United Kingdom rely on sample surveys of border crossers. Besides, the United Kingdom uses supplementary data sources to adjust statistics derived from surveys, namely data on asylum seekers, removals and long-term visitors switchers (visitors who became migrants) from the Home Office, and data on migration flows from Ireland provided by the Irish Central Statistical Office. In France, as already mentioned, the annual censuses are to be used to produce statistics on international immigration of EFTA citizens (including French citizens). This new type of census is based on the principle of rolling surveys.

### 3.5. Other sources

A specific data source is used in Malta. The only available information to produce statistics on international outflows is that on Maltese emigrants requesting permission for permanent settlement in the United Kingdom, received from the British High Commission.

#### **4. Availability of international migration flow statistics requested by the EU Regulation**

Based on the data sources described above the National Statistical Institutes (hereafter referred to as NSI) of the Member States produce statistics on international migration flows. However, the scope of those statistics varies considerably. The delivery of some statistical tables is constrained by various factors, such as the lack of appropriate variables in a data collection system, the low reliability of individual variables or legal restrictions to disseminate some personal information. Table 2 presents the details about availability of data requested by the EU Regulation.

Generally, the figures on total immigration and emigration flows are available, with only a few exceptions, where there is no source for data or the quality of the data has been considered very low. There are no statistics on immigrants and emigrants in Greece and Estonia. Due to the poor quality of the available data, the NSI of Estonia decided not to produce international migration statistics. Besides, France does not have any statistics on emigration. Emigration statistics in Malta refer only to emigration of nationals to the United Kingdom. Immigration statistics in France and Portugal do not cover nationals. It will also refer to immigration statistics that will be produced in Greece. As regards statistics derived from surveys (in Ireland and the United Kingdom), they are presented only for the most numerous disaggregation categories due to high estimation errors for small samples. This refers to disaggregations by citizenship, country of birth and country of previous/next residence, and in the case of the United Kingdom additionally by age.

The most widely available tabulation of international migration statistics is that of *immigrants by citizenship*. The large majority of countries in the EU deliver these data. The exceptions are Estonia and Poland. Because of the low quality of the available data they have decided not to produce such statistics. In Estonia the problem of the very bad quality of data refers to all data on international migration, in Poland only to data on migration by citizenship. Although, statistics on immigrants by citizenship are not available in Greece now, they are to be produced in the near future based on residence permit database. Therefore, as in France and Portugal, statistics will cover only non-nationals. In the case of Malta, immigrants of Maltese origin, that could be Maltese or non-Maltese nationals, are not disaggregated by citizenship. Only foreigners without Maltese origin are disaggregated.

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 to be produced in 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 encounter difficulties. In Poland, only information on place of birth is collected and

derivation of country of birth is not straightforward. In Germany, information on country of birth is available in the population register, but the data are of insufficient quality and the ways of coding vary between local population registers. In compliance with the regulation on population statistics, they are not transmitted to the NSI. In Portugal statistics on immigration

Table 2. Availability of statistics on international migration flows

Country code	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	Age	Sex	
BE	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	-[+]	-[+]	-[+]	<sup>L,Q</sup>	<sup>L,Q</sup>	<sup>L,Q</sup>
CZ	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	-[+]	-[+]	-[+]	+	+	+
DK	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
DE	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+
EE	IMMI&EMI	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]
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	+	+	+	+	-[+]	-[+]	-[+]	<sup>Q</sup>	<sup>Q</sup>	<sup>Q</sup>
HU	IMMI EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	n:- f:- <sup>Q</sup> -	n:- f:- <sup>Q</sup> -	n:- f:- <sup>Q</sup> -
MT	IMMI EMI	± n: ± f:-	± -	± -	± -	± -	± -	± -	n: ± f:- n: ± f:-	n: ± f:- n: ± f:-	n: ± f:- n: ± f:-
NL	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
AT	IMMI&EMI	+	+	+	+	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	<sup>Q</sup> [ + ]	+	+	+
PL	IMMI&EMI	+	<sup>Q</sup>	<sup>Q</sup>	<sup>Q</sup>	-	-	-	+	+	+
PT	IMMI EMI	n:- f: + +	n:- f: + -	n:- f: + -	n:- f: + -	n:- f: + -	n:- f: + -	n:- f: + -	n:- f: + +	n:- f: + <sup>Q</sup>	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	+	±	±	+	±	±	+	±	±	+

+ Available

- Not available

n: Information referring to nationals

f: Information referring to non-nationals

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

<sup>Q</sup> Statistics are not produced due to the low quality of data

<sup>L</sup> There are legal constraints on the publication of data

± Only some data are available:

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.

Source: THESIM project reports

by country of birth are produced for foreigners only. In the Slovak Republic the data for foreigners are available, but the statistics are not compiled. Although statistics on immigrants by country of birth are currently not available in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic, they are to be produced in the near future. In Austria, where the Central Population Register has recently been created, the country of birth variable need to be retrieved from local population registers, as when the system was centralised the information on country of birth was not available in an electronic format for all municipalities. In Belgium, statistics on immigration by country of birth are currently not produced although data are available and considered to be of good quality.

Information on *country of previous residence* is not collected at all or is not complete 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 (in Hungary, information is gathered for non-nationals, but is not complete). Luxembourg does not publish these statistics due to poor registration of information concerning country of previous residence. In Belgium, country of previous residence is not included in the so-called “legal variables” that are the only characteristics allowed to be published. As a result it might be not recorded for all immigrants and its quality is considered very low. Maltese statistics on immigration by country of previous residence cover people with Maltese origin only.

Availability of statistics on international *emigration by citizenship, country of birth or country of next residence* in the EU countries is similar to that on international immigration. However, some countries that produce immigration data based on residence permits, namely Greece, France and Portugal, do not have emigration statistics, unless they conduct a special survey as Portugal does. Besides, Malta has information only on those Maltese nationals who emigrated to the United Kingdom.

Special attention must be paid to the statistics on flows of foreigners (and therefore total flows as well) by country of previous/next residence. Some general assumptions are made by NSIs in two cases: (i) when emigration statistics are derived from data on dates of expiry of residence permits; (ii) when information on country of origin or destination of foreign migrants is missing. In the Czech Republic, where emigration data for foreigners are based on the expiry of residence permits and self-declared cancellation of permanent residence in the country, it is assumed that all foreigners emigrate to the countries of their citizenship. Similarly in Germany, when the registration forms collected by the regional statistical offices do not contain information on a place of next or previous residence, it is assumed that foreign persons come from/move to their countries of citizenship. In Lithuania the determination of country of next residence in the case of expiry of residence permits is based on the country where foreigners came from.

Some countries, e.g. Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands, distinguish a special category called “administrative correction” that covers not-declared emigration of nationals and non-

nationals. Administrative correction by its very nature cannot be disaggregated by country of next residence. Therefore, the practice of the above three countries is that the information on country of destination is left unknown.

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

The very availability of statistics is not an end in itself. Even if statistics are available, their poor quality may render them useless. In this section one key aspect of data quality is addressed, namely their reliability. The concept of reliability is understood here as the compliance of statistics with the national definition, that may substantially differ from the internationally recommended one. Therefore, even if a different definition is applied, but data collection is meticulous, data are classified as reliable. In such a situation data users can trust in the available statistics – there is an exact correspondence between concepts underlying the data and the produced statistics.

There are two main factors that make international migration statistics unreliable. The first one is the underregistration of migrants, which refers in particular to countries where data collection systems rely on self-declarations of international movements. The second factor relates to data coverage. A data collection system used in a country may not cover the whole migrant population and in result some groups are excluded from the statistics. Here we do not refer to a situation where for example data are collected for foreigners only, but to the one when some of the persons included in the definition are excluded from the data collection procedure (see below).

In addition to the above two factors, data might be unreliable if a lot of errors arise during data processing.

As presented in the availability section, a vast majority of international migration statistics in the EU countries are derived from population registers. No doubt the deficiencies in registration have the most significant influence on data reliability. People do not register or deregister because there is no such obligation or even if this is required by law. Willingness to report changes of place of residence varies from one country to another. People take into account advantages and disadvantages resulting from being registered or not. In general, they have more interest in reporting their arrival than departure. Therefore, immigration statistics are considered as more reliable.

Data based on sample surveys cannot be considered as reliable due to estimation errors and generally high volatility.

Statistics on migration flows referring to issued or expired residence permits generally should be reliable, because each fact of issuing a permit is documented in the registers kept by the ministries of interior and there is no problem of persons who do not register.

As regards data coverage, first of all it should be noted that illegal flows of migrants, which are difficult to measure, are generally not included. Spain is the only EU country where illegal migrants are included in the official statistics on international migration. Theoretically, some illegal migrants may be also covered by the passenger surveys carried out in Cyprus and the United Kingdom. As regards legal migrants, the most problematic group are asylum seekers. In general, they are included in the statistics only when they have been granted a refugee status and received a temporary or permanent residence permit. In Germany, Spain, Austria and the Netherlands they are recorded in the population register and at the same time included in immigration statistics at the earlier stage of the asylum procedure (in the Netherlands after six months of legal stay and in other countries immediately). In Cyprus and Ireland they are covered by statistics based on surveys, while in the United Kingdom they are not covered by the survey that is the main source for international flow statistics, but the estimates are provided by the Home Office. By contrast, asylum-seekers are never included in migration statistics in Hungary and Portugal, even when they are granted refugee status.

Students and seasonal workers are another examples of persons that are in the grey area. For example, students are not covered by international migration statistics in Cyprus, France, Finland and Portugal. In Germany in four Länder not all seasonal workers are included, as additional time constraint regarding registration requirements has been introduced.

On the other hand in some cases overcoverage rather than undercoverage is observed. For instance, foreigners born in Portugal are included in immigration statistics. More general example is that of including short-term migrations when long-term migration statistics is requested. It refers to international migration statistics produced in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Spain.

The consistency of international migration statistics available in different databases and publications is a distinct matter. Errors might be generated during data processing. However, when different figures are published for a country in different electronic databases or printed publications, it raises doubts about the quality of the database. In order to evaluate the quality of data on international migration flows figures on total immigration and total emigration in 1999-2002 were compared for each country in the following sources: 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 NewCronos". A group of countries for which total flow statistics are highly consistent across all inspected sources and time includes Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Slovenia and



Sweden. The countries for which significant problems have been noticed include Latvia, Portugal, Ireland and Italy. For other countries less or more frequent inconsistencies have been detected. The most frequent sources of inconsistencies are: differences between provisional and final data, differences in the coverage, and the wrong reference time of the data.

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

The lack of uniformity in the definitions of international migrants used in various countries has been recognized for a long time but up to now most efforts towards achieving international comparability of international migration statistics have not been successful. Furthermore, concepts underlying statistics of international migration flows vary significantly not only between countries, but also within countries over time and between different sources of statistical information. It should be also emphasized that very often immigration and emigration definitions applied in a particular country do not correspond precisely. This section provides an overview of the definitions and concepts currently used in the statistical systems of all 25 EU countries. Some brief remarks concerning recent improvements are also made.

The main sources of variations in the definitions used in the EU countries 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.

Residence is a vaguely defined term that is widely used in defining international migration. 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, which makes this concept even more crucial. A variety of possible interpretations and nuances of the term “place of residence” can lead to the lack of clarity of the statistics. First of all, it can be interpreted from a legal (*de jure*) or actual (*de facto*) point of view. In the former approach 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 among non-nationals there are two distinct groups namely foreigners with the right to free movement and the others. Nationals have an unconditional right of residence in their country of citizenship, whereas the rights of foreigners are limited by conditions. Nationals may still make up a part of the population of their country of citizenship even if they have been living abroad for a number of years. It may also refer to foreign settlers with respect to a country, other than their own, where they have the right to stay indefinitely. Thus, having a place of residence in a country does not necessarily mean a presence in its territory. As a result nationals cannot be counted as migrants unless actual presence and absence are

considered. From the *de facto* perspective residence is directly connected with presence in the country in question. Usually, presence must be for a specified minimum period of time.

Therefore, time is considered as a supplementary concept to that of residence. However, the level of preciseness of the time component of definitions is diverse across the countries. On the one hand, definitions currently in use often say that migration takes place in the case of a change of country of residence for a minimum period of time. Then the period is precisely defined. On the other hand, some countries take into account only permanent change of place of residence, but permanent does not necessarily mean the same in different countries. Its meaning can be understood literally or as equivalent to long term.

When an exact period is used, another problem arises related to the distinction between intended and actual duration. The use of the actual duration concept causes that the production of the statistics would be systematically delayed by the period used as the time criterion in the migration definition. Currently, the intended duration concept is applied everywhere (in the Czech Republic the actual duration of stay was taken into account in the immigration statistics for 2001 and 2002). Therefore, a hidden assumption is made that an intended duration will become the actual one. However, in the case of non-nationals the expressed intention is usually limited by the time specified in the authorization to stay. Very often, the legally permitted length of stay is used instead of the intended one. This approach has a few evident advantages. The duration of validity of permit is objective and easy to record accurately by the receiving country. However, the actual presence of foreigners in the country may often differ from that determined initially by the residence permit. On the one hand aliens may leave the country long before permit expiry. On the other hand their permits may be renewed and allow them to extend their stay.

The threshold durations of stay used by countries are radically different. On the one hand, there are countries where duration of residence is of no relevance and any move in or out of dwelling should be registered and deregistered and it is directly reflected in statistics. However, if there is no duration of stay criterion, the registration deadline may be taken as a minimum time threshold for identifying migration events. On the other hand, there are countries where only movements for infinite duration (settlement migration) are counted. Leaving aside the extreme situations the duration of stay criterion applied in migration statistics across the EU is usually set to a period from three months to one year.

Details of the minimum duration of stay (in or outside the country) of migrants included in international migration statistics in the 25 countries of the EU are presented in Table 3 separately for nationals and non-nationals (other EEA citizens and non EEA citizens). The duration of stay criterion results either from the registration rules and/or from the selection rules applied when producing statistics. Additionally, the table includes information on the possibility of providing statistics according to the 12 months rule. It refers to migration flow statistics produced on an ex-ante basis. If a country is able to provide statistics according to

Table 3. Time criteria and compatibility of international migration statistics with the EU regulation

Country code	Immigration or emigration	Nationals	Other EEA citizens	Non EEA citizens	Possibility to provide statistics according to the 12 months rule		
					Nationals	Other EEA citizens	Non EEA citizens
BE	IMMI	3 months	3 months	3 months	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
	EMI	3 months	3 months	3 months, permit expiry	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
CZ	IMMI	permanent	3 months	one year	N	N	Y
	EMI	permanent	permanent/permit expiry	permanent/permit expiry	N	N	N
DK	IMMI	none	6 months	3 months	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
	EMI	6 months	6 months	6 months	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
DE	IMMI	none	none	none	N	Y	Y
	EMI	none	none	none	N	Y	Y
EE	IMMI	[none]	[3 months]	[3 months]	[Y <sup>ex-post</sup> ]	[Y <sup>ex-post</sup> ]	[Y <sup>ex-post</sup> ]
	EMI	[none]	[none]	[none]	[Y <sup>ex-post</sup> ]	[Y <sup>ex-post</sup> ]	[Y <sup>ex-post</sup> ]
EL	IMMI	—	—	[one year]	N	N	[Y]
	EMI	—	—	—	N	N	N
ES	IMMI	none	None	none	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
	EMI	none	None	none	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
FR	IMMI	—	—	right of long term settlement (p)	N	Y	Y
	EMI	—	—	—	N	N	N
IE	IMMI	none	None	none	N	N	N
	EMI	none	None	none	N	N	N
IT	IMMI	none	None	6 months	N	N	N
	EMI	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
CY	IMMI	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
	EMI	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
LV	IMMI	none	None/one year	none/one year	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
	EMI	6 months	6 months/permit expiry	6 months/permit expiry	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
LT	IMMI	6 months	6 months/one year	6 months/one year	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
	EMI	6 months	6 months/permit expiry	6 months/permit expiry	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
LU	IMMI	none	None	none	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
	EMI	none	None	none	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
HU	IMMI	3 months	3 months	one year	N	N	Y
	EMI	3 months	permanent/permit expiry	permanent/permit expiry	N	N	N
MT	IMMI	permanent	permanent	permanent	N	N	Y
	EMI	permanent	—	—	N	N	N
NL	IMMI	4 out of the forthcoming 6 months	4 out of the forthcoming 6 months	4 months of the forthcoming 6 months	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
	EMI	8 out of the forthcoming 12 months	8 out of the forthcoming 12 months	8 months of the forthcoming 12 months	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
AT	IMMI	3 months [one year]	3 months [one year]	3 months [one year]	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
	EMI	3 months [one year]	3 months [one year]	3 months [one year]	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
PL	IMMI	permanent	permanent	permanent	N	N	N
	EMI	permanent	permanent	permanent	N	N	N
PT	IMMI	—	one year (p)	one year (p)	N	Y	Y
	EMI	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
SI	IMMI	3 months	3 months	3 months	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
	EMI	3 months	permanent/permit expiry	permanent/permit expiry	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
SK	IMMI	permanent	permanent	permanent/3 months (p)	N	N	N
	EMI	permanent	permanent	permanent/permit expiry	N	N	N
FI	IMMI	none	one year	one year	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y	Y
	EMI	one year	one year	one year	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
SE	IMMI	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
	EMI	one year	one year	one year	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>	Y <sup>ex-post</sup>
UK	IMMI	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y
	EMI	one year	one year	one year	Y	Y	Y

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

— Statistics are not available

(p) Migration statistics are based on issued residence permits

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

Y<sup>ex-post</sup> Migration statistics may be produced according to the 12 months rule, but only on an ex-post basis

FR: Right of long-term settlement refers to foreigners 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.

DK, FI, SE: 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; in the case of Finland and Sweden the 12 month rule cannot be followed on an ex-ante basis for emigration to other Nordic countries

LV, LT: Foreigners with permanent residence permits are obliged to follow the same rules as nationals and statistics on their migration according to the 12 months rule may be produced on an ex-post basis only.

the 12 months rule, but only on an ex-post basis, the footnote “ex-post” has been added ( $Y^{\text{ex-post}}$ ).

## 6.1. Immigration of nationals

The time criterion used to produce statistics on international immigration of nationals is based on the time factors related to the registration of a place of residence after arrival from abroad. This refers to nationals born abroad and nationals who return after a temporary stay abroad. Time criteria usually concern intended duration of stay in the country. It may be supplemented by duration of preceding absence due to a stay abroad. Unless a minimum intended duration of stay that must be registered is specified, a deadline for registering a place of residence may be used instead. In general, no additional selection is made when producing immigration statistics and they reflect facts of registration.

### *No time constraints*

The intended duration of stay of nationals coming to the country of their citizenship is irrelevant to registration procedures in Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg and Finland. However, in some of the countries in which a person may have a few places of residence, only registration of the main place of residence is taken into account.

According to the regulation regarding registration in Germany, any person who comes to Germany and stays in a private dwelling has to register within a week with a competent local registration office. Therefore, any move into a dwelling for 8 days or more is considered as immigration.

In Spain every entry into the municipal register due to change of residence regardless of the period of intended stay are regarded as immigration. However, if the country of previous residence is unknown, the entry into the municipal register is coded as an entry by omission and not considered as immigration. Currently, work on incorporation of these data into flow statistics is in progress.

Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg and Finland differ only slightly as regards nationals included in the immigration statistics. The following persons arriving from abroad are counted irrespective of their intended duration of stay:

- in Denmark: all nationals who register their return;
- in Luxembourg: nationals who want to fix a domicile in the country, which must be done within 3 days;
- in Latvia: all nationals coming to Latvia who reported their new place of residence (which must be done within 30 days of arrival). They are considered to settle permanently in the country;
- in Italy: nationals who reported their residence, which has to be done within four months;

- in Finland: nationals coming from abroad who reported their new municipality of permanent residence in the country, having been usually resident in another country.

In Estonia, where data on international migration are not published due to low quality, all nationals who registered a new place of residence in the country after arrival from abroad are considered as international migrants. According to the recent changes in the population register act it must be reported within 30 days of arrival.

In Ireland, migration flows are estimated based on the Quarterly National Household Survey, in which there is no question on the intended or actual duration of stay. Immigration flows are derived directly from the question on the place of residence on 30 April of the year previous to the year of enumeration. In Portugal immigration of the Portuguese is estimated, for internal purposes only, based on the Labour Force Survey through the question related to the place of residence one year prior to the survey.

#### *From three to six months*

Three months criterion of the intended duration of stay is the basis for registration and compilation of statistics on international immigration of nationals in Belgium, Hungary and Slovenia. In Austria migration statistics are based on changes of main place of residence, that are to be registered within 3 working days. An additional criterion of stay for at least 90 days has been applied starting from the immigration statistics for the reference year 2002. In Lithuania nationals coming from abroad are counted in immigration statistics if they declare their arrival for a stay of at least 6 months. In the Netherlands all nationals who declare their intention to stay in the country for at least two third of the forthcoming six months will be considered as immigrants.

#### *One year*

The internationally recommended definition of immigrants based on establishing residence for at least one year is applied in Sweden and Cyprus. In Sweden information is derived from the Population Registration System and in Cyprus from sample survey of passengers. In the United Kingdom definition of immigration used in the International Passenger Survey complies with the previous version of the UN recommendations. All nationals who intend to reside in the country more than one year after spending the previous one year abroad are counted as immigrants.

#### *Permanent residence*

The concept of permanent migration, understood as a lifetime migration, is characteristic for some former socialist countries. In Poland and in the Slovak Republic one may have a permanent and a temporary place of residence. All temporary changes of residence are not covered by migration statistics, although temporary stays may last for a number of years. So, if a person returns to the country of his or her citizenship after a temporary stay abroad he or

she is not treated as an immigrant. Immigration refers only to self-reported arrivals for permanent residence by persons who are not permanent residents of the country.

Since the first half of the nineties, in the Czech Republic a person may have only one place of residence. In the case of Czech nationals it is always called a permanent place of residence. Nationals arriving from abroad in order to reside in the Czech Republic have to register their permanent residence in the municipal office only if they do not have a permanent residence in the country. Very often there is no need to report when arriving, because if nationals leave the Czech Republic to live abroad and do not want to give up their permanent residence they do not have to report their departure.

Besides the former socialist countries mentioned above, in Malta only returning nationals entering the country for intended permanent settlement are counted as immigrants.

## 6.2. Emigration of nationals

### *No time constraints*

In the case of emigration statistics for nationals, duration of absence due to residence abroad is of no relevance in Germany, Luxembourg and Spain. In Germany all moves out of a dwelling should be registered and they are included in emigration figures. In Spain duration of stay is of no relevance, but similarly as in the case of immigration, unless the prior entry is found in the NSI's database, the current entry is coded "deletion of incorrect entry" and is not included in migration statistics. In Luxembourg nationals must report their departure when they want to fix their domicile abroad and no additional selection is currently performed when producing emigration statistics.

In Estonia, there is no minimum duration of absence due to residence abroad that must be reported by the Estonian citizens. These register-based data are of low quality and therefore are not published.

In the Quarterly National Household Survey carried out in Ireland, the following question is used to estimate the number of emigrants: "Is there anyone who usually lived in this household on 30 April previous year now living abroad?", so the duration of stay is not taken into account.

### *From three to six months*

The Belgian, Hungarian and Slovenian definitions used for statistics on emigration of nationals correspond to that applied for immigration. Statistics on international emigration cover nationals who left the country with an intention to live abroad for more than 3 months. Besides, in Belgium nationals are deregistered and included in statistics also after 6 months of continuous non-declared absence. In Austria nationals should deregister when leaving the

country and there is no minimum time of absence that must be reported. However, since reference year 2002 emigration statistics cover movements for at least 90 days.

In Lithuania and Latvia nationals are included in emigration statistics if they report their departure for at least 6 months. Emigration flow data for Denmark cover nationals who go abroad and give up their permanent address in the country. In practice, it means that almost every Danish citizen moving abroad for more than 6 months will be included. If a person stays abroad for up to six months inclusive and his or her dwelling in Denmark is maintained at full availability, he or she has the right to remain registered as resident there. If a Danish citizen moves to another Nordic country, the immigration rules of the country of destination take precedence. Nationals leaving the Netherlands have to deregister (and are included in the emigration statistics) when they go abroad with the intention to stay there for at least eight months in the forthcoming twelve months.

#### *One year*

Finish and Swedish emigration statistics of nationals comply with the UN definitions: nationals leaving Sweden or Finland with the intention to stay abroad for at least one year are counted as emigrants. However, if a person emigrates to one of the other Nordic countries the immigration rules of the receiving countries are applied. Moreover, in Finland if a person has stronger connection to Finland than to the country of destination then he/she is not deregistered and therefore not counted. Besides Sweden and Finland, statistics on long-term emigrants comply with the UN definition in Italy and Cyprus. In the International Passenger Survey used in the United Kingdom an emigrant is defined as a person who intends to reside abroad for more than one year after residing in the country for the previous one year. Therefore, the previous version of the UN recommendations is applied. In Austria, as mentioned earlier, the latest UN definition is currently being implemented.

In Portugal in the Emigration Survey, a special module of the Labour Force Survey, the question regarding emigration is similar to that asked in Ireland: “Is there anyone who normally lives in this dwelling on the 31 of December of year X-1, and who left to live or work abroad during the year X?”. There is also a question about the intended duration of stay abroad, with two possible answers: temporary (less than one year) or permanent (at least one year). The statistics may cover only the latter category of migrants when requested.

#### *Permanent residence*

In Poland and the Slovak Republic emigration of nationals refer to self-reported termination of permanent residence in the country in order to stay abroad forever. When nationals go away to stay abroad temporarily, which also has to be reported, they are not counted as emigrants. It should be noted, that in fact a temporary emigration might mean in practice emigration for infinite duration, as there is no upper limit of temporary absence.

Emigration of Czech citizens also refers only to self-declared changes of permanent residence. However, if nationals do not want to give up their permanent residence in the country they do

not have to report their departure. In Malta emigration statistics of nationals refer to Maltese emigrants requesting permission for permanent settlement in a foreign country at its embassy or high commission located in Malta.

### 6.3. Immigration of non-nationals

#### *No time constraints*

In Germany, Spain and Luxembourg, the same rules are applicable to registration of nationals and non-nationals, i.e. even a short stay in the country should be reported soon after the arrival and all who reported will be counted as immigrants. However, in Luxembourg non-EEA nationals need residence permits to be registered. As regards Spain, it must be noted that even illegal migrants and asylum seekers are counted.

In Ireland data on immigration flows of non-nationals are produced through the Quarterly National Household Survey on the same base as for nationals, i.e. through the question about the place of residence on 31 April of the previous year.

#### *From three to six months*

In Belgium and Slovenia, foreigners are treated in the same way as nationals. They are registered and included in immigration statistics if they intend to stay for more than 3 months. They have to possess valid residence permits (it refers also to EU citizens). In Austria non-nationals are counted as immigrants if duration of their stay amounts to at least 90 days. In Denmark international immigration statistics for non-nationals cover non-Nordic citizens who intend to reside more than 3 months and are granted residence permits for more than 3 months or work permits and Nordic and EEA citizens who register permanent address in Denmark (which is compulsory for those who intend to stay for more than 6 months).

Non-nationals, likewise as nationals, who declared their intention to stay in the Netherlands for at least two third of the forthcoming six months are considered as immigrants. They have to possess residence permits to be registered as new immigrants.

#### *One year*

Similarly as in the case of nationals, foreigners coming to Finland or Sweden are considered immigrants when they intend to stay for more than one year. Besides, they have to possess residence permits valid for at least one year. Foreign border-crossing passengers examined in surveys in Cyprus and the United Kingdom are considered on the same base as nationals. Immigration statistics in Greece, which are to be produced in the near future, will cover aliens entering Greece in a given year who have been granted residence permits for the first time. In general, residence permits in Greece are issued for one year.



### *Permanent residence*

In Poland immigration statistics of non-nationals refer to people who established permanent residence in the country, based on permanent residence permits. In Malta foreigners entering the country for permanent settlement, on the basis of their declaration, are counted.

### *“Mixed” duration of stay criteria*

For some countries the criteria do not fit into one of the groups listed above. In Italy EEA citizens are considered in the same way as nationals and the minimum duration of stay in the country that must be reported is not specified. Non EEA citizens are registered and included in the immigration statistics if they possess a residence permit for at least 6 months. In the Czech Republic the statistics on immigration of EU citizens refer to the number of persons who were issued temporary residence permits (needed for a stay over 3 months). The statistics on immigration of non-EU citizens refer to those who were issued long-term or permanent residence permits. As regards foreigners with long-term residence permits their actual duration of stay is by definition longer than one year. Foreigners granted permanent residence permits not conditional on preceding continuous stay are counted as immigrants on the date of registering their residence. A similar situation is in Hungary: the EEA citizens are included in the immigration statistics if they were granted special residence permits for EEA citizens that is required for a stay exceeding 3 months, while statistics on international immigration of non-EEA citizens cover non-nationals staying in Hungary based on residence visas, who received residence permits, granted usually for one year. In the Slovak Republic the statistics on immigration by country of previous residence refer to foreigners who established permanent residence in the country, based on permanent residence permits. However, data on international immigration of non-citizens disaggregated by citizenship submitted by the Slovak Republic as a reply to the Joint Migration Questionnaire 2003 follow a different definition. Immigration data refer to all residence permits, irrespective of their validity, issued in 2003 to foreigners who arrived to the Slovak Republic (a foreigner may have been granted more than one residence permit during a year). In Lithuania the six months intended duration of stay rule applies for the registration of foreigners with permanent residence permit (the same as for nationals). Foreigners without permanent residence permits are counted in immigration flows when they register their residence and possess residence permits valid for at least one year. In Latvia the situation is similar to that in Lithuania. Foreigners are counted in immigration statistics based on registration of their residence. The rules for non-nationals with permanent residence permits are the same as for nationals and no time constraint is applied. In the case of other non-nationals the intended duration of stay is assumed to be equal to the duration of validity of the residence permit and only foreigners with a residence permit for at least one year are counted.

### *Other concepts*

In Portugal foreigners submitting their first application for residence permit are considered as long-term immigrants. However, non-EEA citizens without residence visas may stay in Portugal based on renewable work visas for up to three years. After three years they may be

granted residence permits and only then they are included in the statistics on immigration. In France the concept of long-term immigration, referred to as “permanent immigration”, is based on a combination of the reasons for admission to residence and the (official) length of the stay. All holders of residence permits for less than one year are excluded. In general, statistics cover residence permits valid for at least one year issued to EEA citizens, although currently they are not required to possess such permits. Other non-nationals are included if they have right of long-term settlement. Those foreigners are selected to receive long-term resident permit (valid for ten years) 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 one year are included.

#### 6.4. Emigration of non-nationals

##### *No time constraints*

In Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Luxembourg and Spain the rules for producing emigration statistics for foreigners are the same as for nationals. In Estonia, however, the statistics are not published because of the low reliability of the data. In Luxembourg, where a residence permit is needed to be registered at the time of immigration, an expiry of the residence permit does not result in an automatic deregistration but foreigners may be deregistered after checking the social security file.

##### *From three months to eight months*

In Austria foreigners are considered in the same way as nationals. They are counted if they are absent for at least 90 days. In Belgium foreigners have to declare their departure if they want to stay abroad for more than 3 months and all these declared movements are included in the emigration statistics. Besides, foreigners are automatically deregistered 8 days after the end of validity of the residence permits or after 6 months of continuous non-declared absence.

Emigrants from the Netherlands are foreigners who leave the country with the intention to stay abroad for at least eight months in the forthcoming twelve months. In Denmark emigration flow statistics cover foreigners who go abroad and give up their permanent address in Denmark (in general it refers to stay abroad longer than 6 months) and foreigners who disappeared (identified as a result of an investigation). For people going to other Nordic countries, immigration rules of the country of destination are applied. In Latvia and Lithuania, foreigners with permanent residence permits are included in emigration flows if they report departure abroad for at least 6 months. Foreigners whose residence permits issued for at least one year expired are also considered as emigrants (in Lithuania - one month after the end of permit validity).

### *One year*

The criterion of intended stay for at least one year is applied in Finland and Sweden, except for emigration to other Nordic countries, when the rules of destination country must be followed. In Cyprus and the United Kingdom the same definition of emigration is applicable to nationals and non-nationals (an expression of an intention to stay away for more than one year in the passenger survey). Also in Portugal data on emigration flows of non-nationals are produced on the same base as for nationals (through household surveys, in which a question on the intended duration of stay abroad of the emigrant is asked to the family or neighbours).

### *Permanent residence*

In Poland, the statistics on emigration of non-nationals cover people who have given up permanent residence in the country. The same refers to the statistics on emigration by country of next residence in the Slovak Republic. Emigration figures disaggregated by citizenship refer to foreigners whose residence permits expired.

### *Permit expiry*

In a few other countries, emigration statistics are based mainly on expiry of residence permits. In the Czech Republic and Hungary foreigners are treated as emigrants at the date of cancelling residence in the country or at the expiry date of the residence permit, provided they had not been renewed. In Italy foreigners must report their departure (and are then counted as emigrants) if they leave definitely. However, they are also counted as emigrants if they do not renew their registration, which has to be done each year. In the Slovak Republic the statistics on emigration by citizenship refer to foreigners whose residence permits expired irrespective of the duration of permit validity.

### *Other concepts*

In Slovenia, as foreigners normally do not declare their departure, the NSI estimates their emigration on the basis of changes in foreigners stock, vital statistics and immigration data, as well as data on acquisition of citizenship. Since foreigners are excluded from the stock figure after the expiry date of the permit, provided its renewal has not been requested, they are included in emigration statistics.

## **7. Final remarks and conclusions**

Besides discrepancies in the crucial definition concepts described above, there are a number of problems that are not directly connected with definitions but considerably hinder international comparability of flow data. Time related issues are predominant. Firstly, migration events are counted at various dates. For immigration it might be the date of issuing a permit, the date of arrival or the date of reporting for registration, and for emigration - the date of expiry of a permit, the date of reporting the departure or the date of departure. Secondly, in some cases a reference period different than a calendar year might be applied

(e.g. April to April in Ireland). Additionally, data are incomparable if they cover different categories (see Section 5 and Section 6).

When the duration of stay criterion is short or of no importance (Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Spain), several migration movements undertaken by the same person during a year are counted and the resulting migration statistics are inflated in comparison with those that would be obtained if the definition was based on the one-year duration of stay criterion. Moreover, the count of migrations is different from the count of migrants. In turn, when change of permanent place of residence is used as the criterion, migration is underestimated and the registration of immigration of foreigners is delayed by an unspecified number of years.

The above analysis leads to a general conclusion that currently available data on international migration flows are still far from being internationally comparable. It is evident when comparing data on flows between pairs of countries that are reported by countries of origin and countries of destination (see Kupiszewska and Nowok (2005)). However, it is not obvious how the difference in figures should be distributed between discrepancies in definitions of international migrants and inefficiency of data collection systems.

At present, only very few countries produce statistics in compliance with the UN *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration* (United Nations 1998) that were developed with a view to improve the quality and comparability of data. It refers to Cyprus and the United Kingdom, which compiled their statistics on international migration flows based on sample surveys conducted during border controls. In the case of Sweden, where the one year criterion is applied as a general rule, it is not followed for emigration to other members of the Nordic agreement. Some countries would be able to deliver statistics according to 12 months rule, but in the majority of cases only on an *ex-post* basis (see Table 3). Ideally, the existing systems of data collection should be modified and brought to the common denominator. If this proves impossible in some cases, appropriate methodologies for estimating comparative statistics should be developed.

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