Non-national populations in the EU Member States

Proportion of non-nationals and composition by citizenship vary considerably in the EU

According to official national statistics and Eurostat estimates, the total number of non-nationals living in the European Union in 2004 was around 25 million, just below 5.5 percent of the total population. In absolute terms, the largest numbers of foreign citizens reside in Germany, France, Spain, the United Kingdom and Italy.

The data for the period 2000-2004 indicate that the non-national population varied from less than 1 percent of the total population in Slovakia to 39 percent in Luxembourg, but in the majority of countries the figure was between 2 and 8 percent (Table 1). A non-national proportion above 8 percent was also observed in Latvia, Estonia, Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Belgium and Greece and below 2 percent in Lithuania, Hungary and Poland. It should be noted that the figures for Latvia and Estonia included citizens of the former Soviet Union permanently resident in those countries who have not taken the citizenship of the host country since the break-up of the Soviet Union, and that the official figures for some Central and Eastern European countries underestimate the stocks of foreigners by including permanent residents only.

In all EU Member States, except Luxembourg, Belgium, Ireland and Cyprus, the majority of foreigners are citizens of non-EU-25 countries. The number of citizens from the 10 new Member States residing in the EU-15 is very small: around 0.2 percent of the total population of the EU-15, the largest proportion in Germany – around 0.6 percent.

Between 1990 and 2004, in most countries the percentage of foreign citizens either did not change significantly or it increased. Latvia was the only country with a significant decrease (around five percentage points from 1998 to 2004). The most significant growth was observed in Luxembourg, Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Austria. This was due to an increase in population from outside the EU-25, except for Luxembourg, where an increase in the number of EU-15 citizens was dominant. Regularisation programmes had a significant effect on the size of non-national populations in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

The citizenship structures of foreign populations in the EU Member States vary greatly (Tables 1 and 2). As well as geographical proximity, the composition of the non-national population in each country, examined against the proportion of the five largest groups of non-nationals, strongly reflects their history, in particular labour migration, recent political developments and historical links. For example, the largest non-national groups include Turkish citizens in Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands; citizens of former colonies in Portugal (citizens of Cape Verde, Brazil and Angola) and in Spain (Ecuadorians and Moroccans); migrants from Albania in Greece; citizens from other parts of the former Yugoslavia in Slovenia; Czech citizens in Slovakia; and citizens from other former Soviet Union countries in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nationals (1000)</th>
<th>Non-nationals (1000)</th>
<th>Non-nationals %</th>
<th>Largest group of non-nationals (country of citizenship)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>9 536</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>10 016</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>5 126</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>75 190</td>
<td>7 342</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000c</td>
<td>1 096</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004e</td>
<td>10 149</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>39 426</td>
<td>2 772</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990c</td>
<td>55 258</td>
<td>3 263</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002c</td>
<td>3 585</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>55 898</td>
<td>1 990</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>4 985</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>9 067</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: National and non-national population in the European Union Member States, around 2004 and 1990.
Germany, which in absolute numbers hosts the largest foreign population in the European Union, experienced a remarkably stable order of the five largest non-national populations: Turks, (ex-) Yugoslavs, Italians, Greeks and Poles (Table 2).

Luxembourg, which has the largest percentage of non-nationals in the EU (and at the same time the highest proportion of foreigners from other EU-15 countries), also has a stable composition of the largest groups of foreign citizens, which remained almost unchanged between 1991 and 2004. The most significant change in the composition of the recorded non-national population occurred in Greece, following regularisation programmes (see Table 2).

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Non-nationals tend to be younger than nationals

There are considerable differences in the age structures of national and non-national populations in the European Union (Figure 1). According to the data for 2002, the proportions of children and adolescents do not differ significantly: 0-19 year-olds made up 23 percent of nationals and 20 percent of non-nationals, but for older age groups significant differences were observed.

The foreign population was dominated by young adult age groups, with 41 percent of non-nationals between the ages of 20 and 39, compared with 28 percent of nationals. The 25-29 and 30-34 age groups, the two most numerous in the population of non-nationals, accounted together for 22 percent (14 percent in the case of nationals).

The most significant relative differences in the age structure could be observed for the population aged 65 and over, which accounted for 17 percent of the national population – almost twice as much as the corresponding share for foreign citizens (9 percent). The result is that the immigrant population tends in the short term to rejuvenate the total population. However, it should be kept in mind that this rejuvenation is limited; the percentage of non-nationals in the total population is small in most countries and the current relatively numerous young adult immigrants will, in future, contribute to an increase in the older population age groups. Lack of data prevents a complete study of the relative proportions of males and females in the non-national populations. However, available data indicate that the proportion of males in the non-national populations in some countries is significantly higher than in the total population.

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ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Non-national population refers here to persons who are not citizens of the country in which they reside, including persons of unknown citizenship and stateless persons.

Due to various differences as regards concepts, definitions and data sources, as well of varying rules on the acquisition of citizenship, the international comparability of figures on non-nationals is restricted to some extent. Figures concerning population by country of birth offer a more complete picture of the origin of the population. Unfortunately, these are not available for a number of countries.

Statistics on acquisition of citizenship were presented in Statistics in Focus, Theme 3 - 3/2004. Data on the foreign born population in selected EU-15 countries are also included in this issue.

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Figure 1: Nationals and non-nationals by age, EU-25, 2002.
Further information:

Data:
EUROSTAT/Website/Population and social conditions/International Migration and Asylum/Population by citizenship/Population by sex and citizenship

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