RTN Concluding Workshop
31 January 2006, MPIDR, Rostock

Comparability of official statistics on international migration flows in the European Union

based on information from two projects:
- THESIM -Towards Harmonised European Statistics on International Migration (FP6),
- Annual International Migration Statistics (Eurostat)

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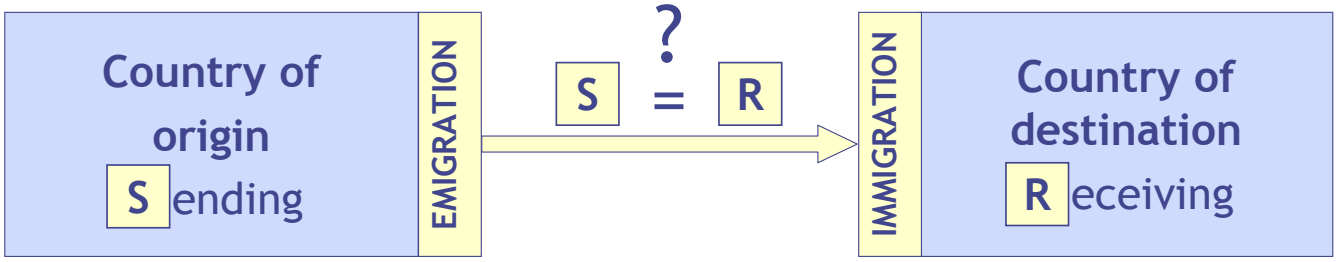
OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Incomparability problems - empirical observations
- Explanation of the empirical observations
  - Data sources
  - Definitions
- Conclusions

INTRODUCTION

- International migration flows are measured simultaneously by two countries:

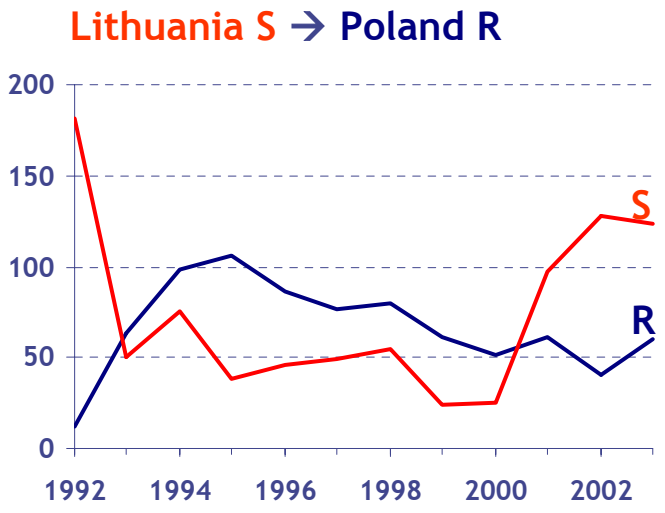


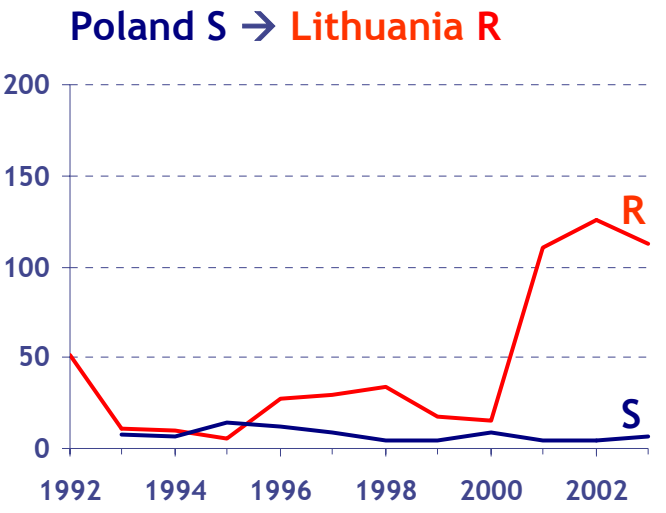
- Availability of statistics on international migration flows by country of origin/destination:

  24 x 25 = 600 possible flows between pairs of the EU countries

  2003: complete data (R and S) for 45% of possible flows

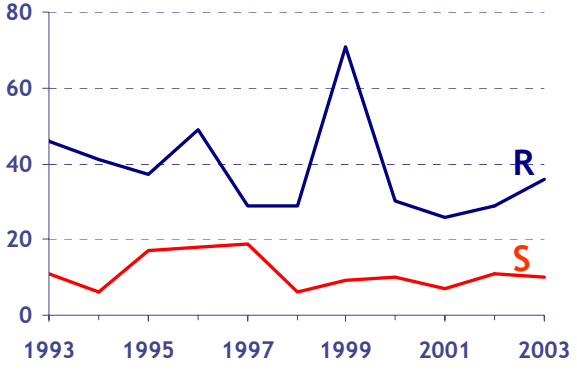
Are the flows increasing or decreasing?



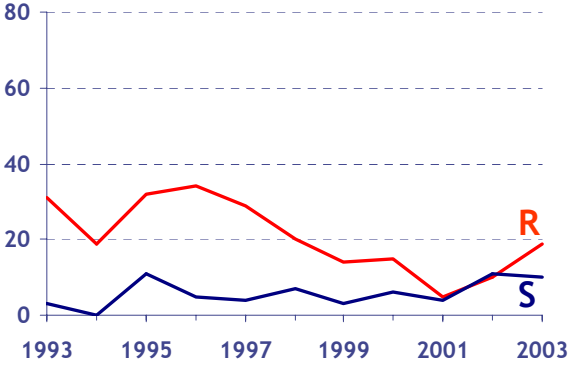


Less frequently: figures from the receiving country larger than those from the sending country

Poland S → Slovakia R

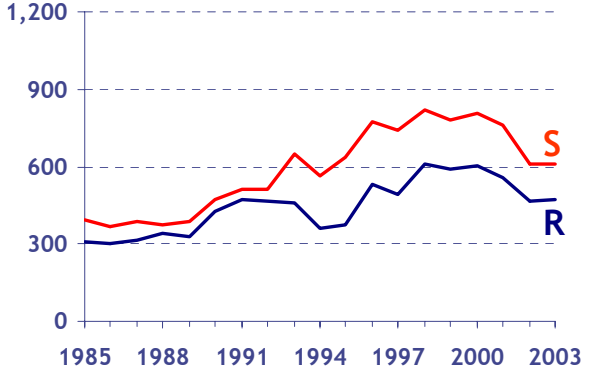


Slovakia S → Poland R

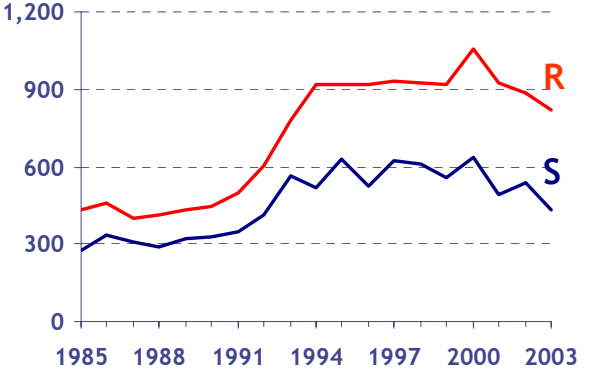


More frequently: the figures from one country larger than those from the other country, in both directions

Denmark S → Netherlands R

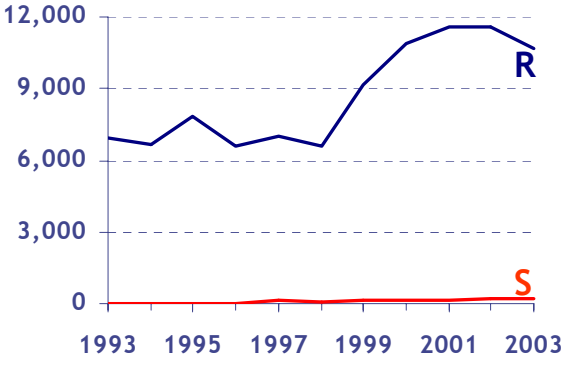


Netherlands S → Denmark R

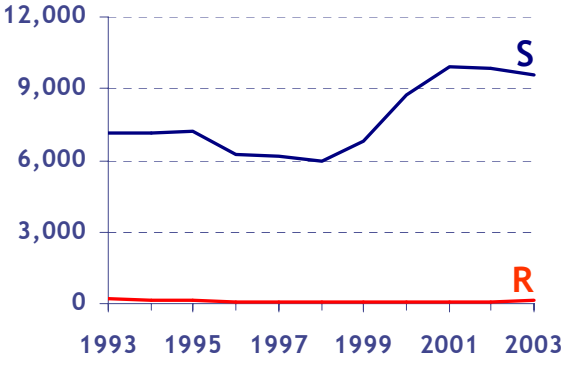


Low levels reported by Slovakia

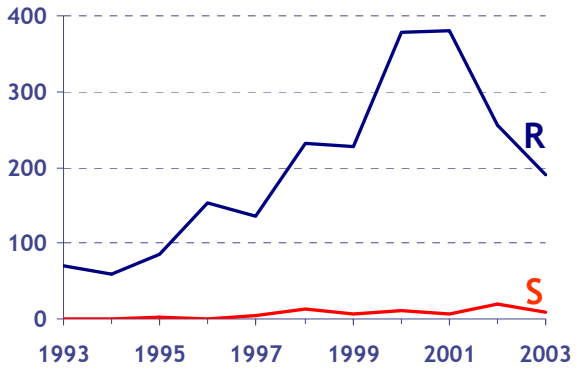
Slovakia S → Germany R



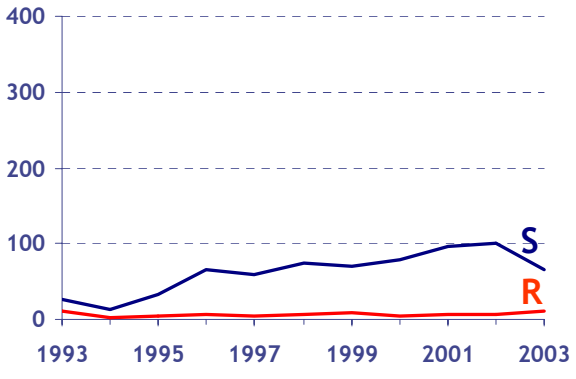
Germany S → Slovakia R



Slovakia S → Netherlands R

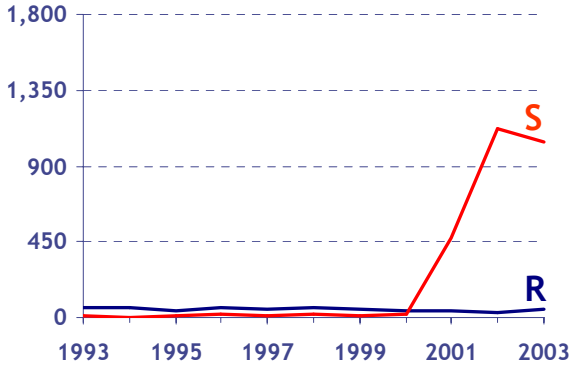


Netherlands S → Slovakia R

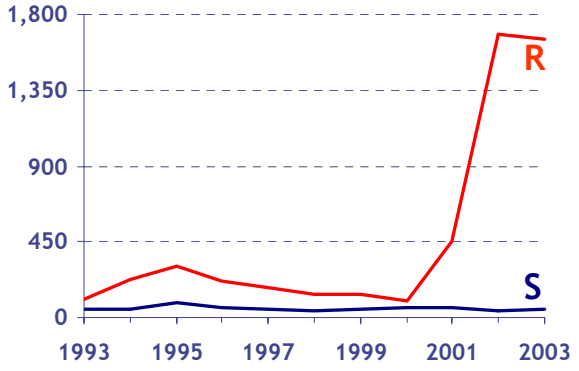


Break in series in the flows reported by the Czech Republic

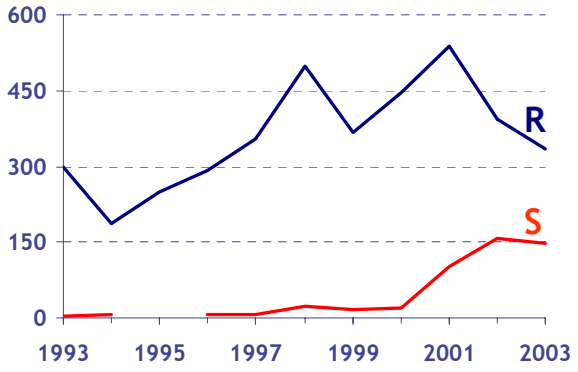
Czech Republic S → Poland R



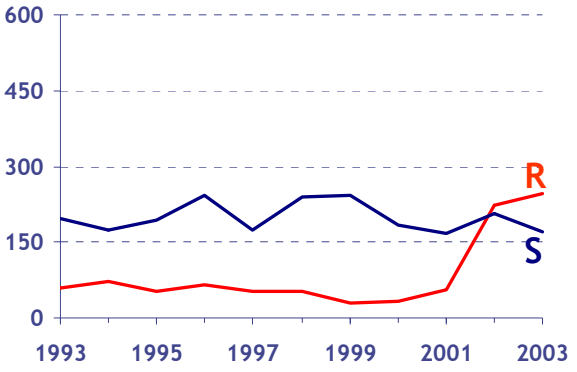
Poland S → Czech Republic R



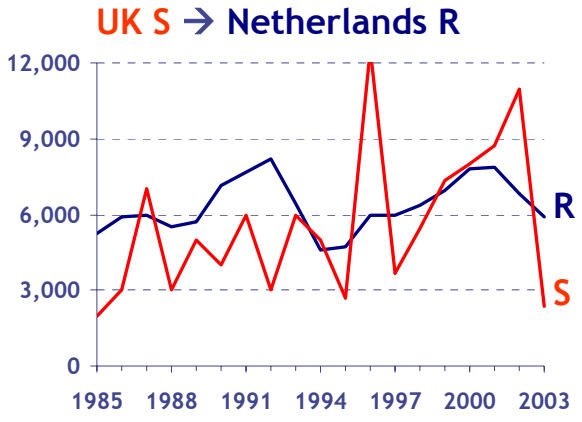
Czech Republic S → Netherlands R

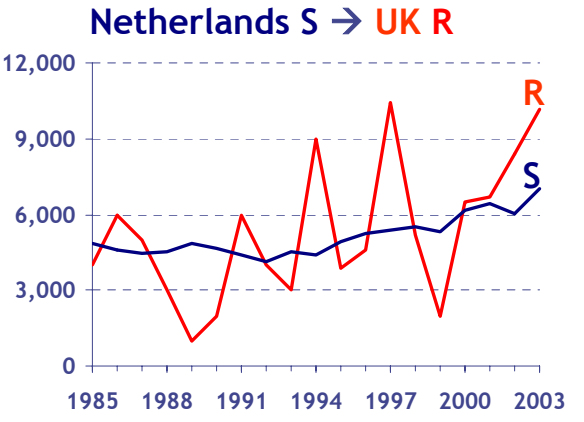


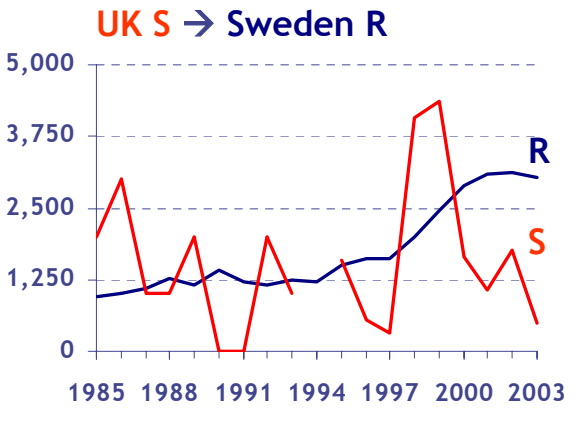
Netherlands S → Czech Republic R

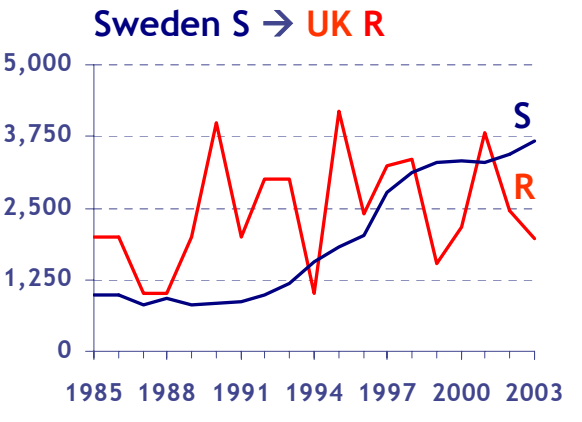


Oscillations of the flows reported by the United Kingdom

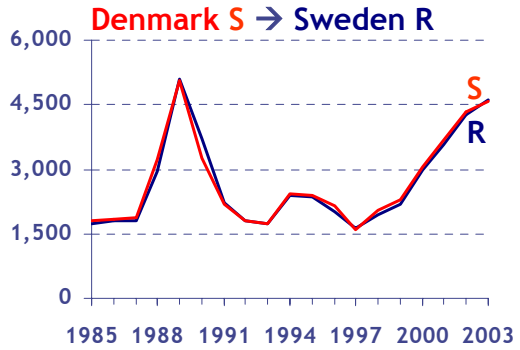


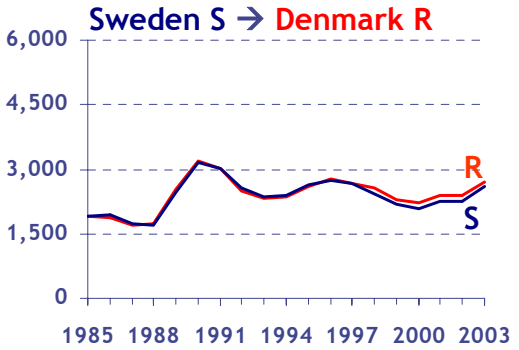


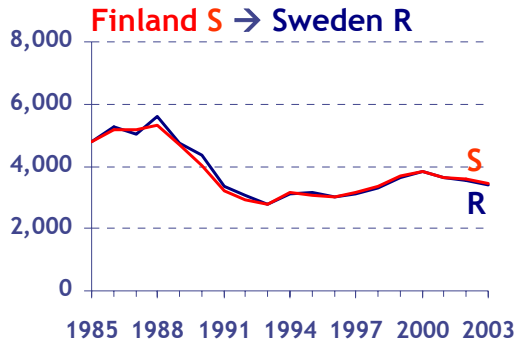


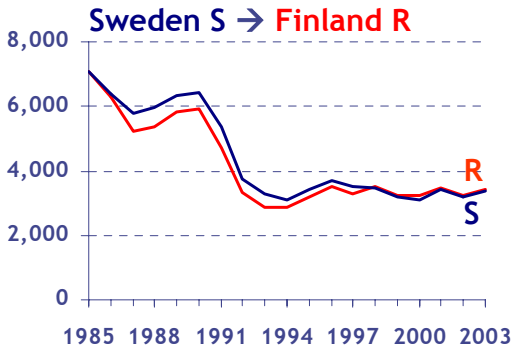


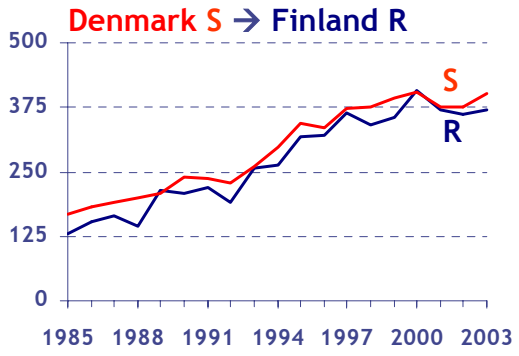
Comparability of data is possible!

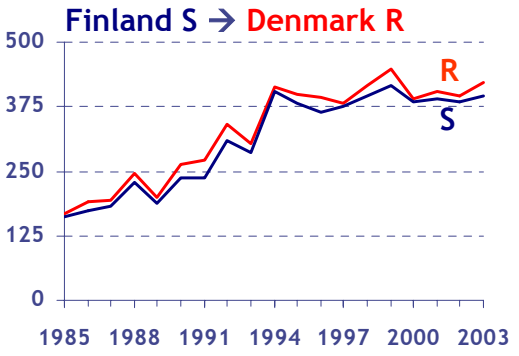












How to explain the empirical observations?

- **Definitions** of the terms **migration** and **migrant**

  Selection rules applied to the raw data when preparing the statistics might help reach the compliance with internationally agreed definitions

- **Data sources**

  collection of data is strongly dependent on the **legislation** (e.g. the administration rules for reporting changes of place of residence in population registers) and the **attitudes of migrants** towards the legal rules

Differences in rules (administration and selection):

- between countries,
- nationals/foreigners,
- immigration/emigration,
- within country over time.

Data sources in the European Union countries

Data source	Nationals	Foreigners
Population registers (central or local)	**16** countries	**13** countries
Register of foreigners / residence permits	-	CZ, HU, SI, FR immi, PT immi
Sample survey ▪ passenger ▪ household	▪ CY, UK ▪ IE, PT emi	
Statistical forms filled in: ▪ when registering ▪ at Customs	▪ PL, SK ▪ MT immi	
Foreign embassy (British High Commission)	MT emi	-
No data	GR, FR	GR, FR emi, MT emi

Definitions

The differences concern:

- **The concept of place of residence**
- **Time criteria**

  Minimum duration of stay in the destination country required for the change of residence to be counted as international migration

The UN definition: A long-term migrant is a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence

Very few countries comply with the UN recommendations and use the one year duration of stay criterion

The time criterion in the international migration definition

		None		3 months		6 months		Other below one year		One year		Permanent		Permit expiry	
		NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR	NAT	FOR
BE	IMMI			■	■										
	EMI			■	■										●
CZ	IMMI				■						■	■			
	EMI											■	■		●
DK	IMMI	■			■		■								
	EMI*					■	■								
DE	IMMI	■	■												
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EE	IMMI	□			□										
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LU	IMMI	■	■												
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NL	IMMI							■	■						
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AT	IMMI			■	■					□	□				
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PL	IMMI											■	■		
	EMI											■	■		
PT	IMMI										●				
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SI	IMMI			■	■							■			
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SK	IMMI				●							■	■		
	EMI											■	■		●
FI	IMMI	■									■				
	EMI*									■	■				
SE	IMMI									■	■				
	EMI*									■	■				
UK	IMMI									■	■				
	EMI									■	■				

□ Information referring to the data that might be available in future

● Migration data based on issued or expired residence permits

○ Information referring to the data based on issued residence permits that might be available in future

Definitions - Duration of stay options

Duration of stay not taken into account	A minimum period of stay applies that might be e.g. 3, 6 or 12 months	The concept of „permanent migration”	Residence permit expiry
E.g. any move into and out of a dwelling – deadline for registering a place of residence	The meaning of time limits: ▪ Period of stay related with the obligation to register ▪ Duration of validity of residence permits ▪ Selection rules applied when producing statistics	Temporary changes of residence not counted, only those declared as permanent (lifetime) are included	Used to prevent the underregistration of emigration Problem: no info on country of destination
GERMANY	**DENMARK** **NETHERLANDS** **FINLAND** **SWEDEN** **UNITED KINGDOM**	**SLOVAKIA** **POLAND**	
	LITHUANIA **CZECH REPUBLIC (foreigners)**	**CZECH REPUBLIC (nationals)**	**LITHUANIA** **CZECH REPUBLIC (foreigners)**

How information on definitions and sources explains peculiarities observed in the flow time series?

- Discrepancies between the figures correspond to the differences in the definitions, e.g. **DK** and **NL**
- **DE** – the widest definition, the highest figures
- **SK** - reports lowest flows (only permanent migration)
- Sudden jump in time series of the **CZ** result from changes in the definitions – till 2001: permanent migration for both nationals and foreigners
- Strong oscillations in the **UK** data are due to the use of the sample survey

Specific situation in the Nordic countries

- **Inter-Nordic Migration Agreement (DK, FI, SE, NO, IS):**
  - Registration of emigration follows the rules applied for registration of immigration in the receiving country
  - "Inter-Nordic Emigration Certificate" is required to be registered in the destination country
- **Excellent agreement in the flows between SE, DK, FI**

CONCLUSIONS

- A good comparability of data will be difficult to achieve, if at all possible
- The disseminating bodies should pay more attention to the proper description of the data
- Incomparability of statistics on international migration flows is strictly linked with that of statistics on population stocks

http://www.cefmr.pan.pl/

- 7/2005: D. Kupiszewska, B. Nowok, *Comparability of statistics on international migration flows in the European Union*
- 5/2005: B. Nowok, D. Kupiszewska, *Official European statistics on international migration flows: availability, sources and coverage*
- 8/2005: B. Nowok, *Evolution of international migration statistics in selected Central European countries*

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