



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

CES/2005/34
30 May 2005

ENGLISH ONLY

STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Fifty-third plenary session
(Geneva, 13-15 June 2005)

**INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND RELATED PROBLEMS IN THE
STATISTICAL SYSTEM OF BULGARIA**

Supporting paper submitted by the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria

INTRODUCTION

1. In comparison with other demographic events, the migration process is not an inevitable part of people's life cycle. Unlike other economic categories such as production, marketing, employment, income, expenditure, etc., migration is not a fundamental part of the economy of a given country. These two facts are the basis for its recent absence in the demographic and economic analyses. The process of territorial mobility of population in these analyses was focused, in most cases, on the migration within the country, and not among the countries.
2. The extent of international migration is the result of the worldwide changes during the last 10-15 years. The changes in the number of migrants and the worrying consequences, as well as the changes in the main directions of migration, meant that the problems related to international migration be discussed with increasing frequency at international and national forums. The Amsterdam Treaty (1997) launched the beginning of harmonization of the immigration policy in the EU member states. As a result of the summit in Tampere (1999), a political programme and work plan on the gradual elaboration of a common harmonized immigration policy have been elaborated.
3. There is one more important reason why the problems related to international migration have been neglected until recently. This is the lack of data. It is difficult to find information on the exact number of migrants and international migration flows. Often international migration data are not comparable between the country of emigration and country of immigration. Non-comparable data on international migration is common, even within a

country, when different sources are used. Bulgaria is no exception to this practice.

DYNAMICS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN BULGARIA

4. The migration of population in different forms has always been a part of the historical development of Bulgaria. The establishment of the Third Bulgarian State in 1878 was related to large migration movements. The participation of Bulgaria in wars at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries and the related reshaping of its territory, as well as the socio-economic and political conditions, were among the main reasons for the existence both of internal and international migration of the population.

5. One of the main sources for satisfying the information needs of the state on migration of persons and its consequences was the periodical Population Censuses in which migration had always been included as a survey topic. The only exception was the Population Census conducted in 1956.

6. On the basis of the census information on development of international migration, three periods could be provisionally defined:

- 1887-1950;
- 1950-1990;
- 1990 onwards.

7. During the first period, 1887-1946, migration had been studied by comparing the place of birth and the permanent residence of the person as of the census date. According to data from conducted censuses, migration from this period was of a prevailing international character – immigration of population of non-Bulgarian origin and immigration of Bulgarians from territories annexed to neighbouring countries.

8. With the increase of the total number of population, the number of persons born abroad also increased. For 34 years only, 1892-1926, their number had increased more than three times – from 98 thousand to 304 thousand. The relative share was respectively 5.6% at the end of 1926 to 2.7% in 1887. The stated data are conditional as they have not been obtained through a direct survey on migration processes at a certain period of time, but are rather the result of a snapshot of the population distributed by place of birth and place of residence as of the census date. The aim was to cover international migration, therefore the place of birth in the first censuses had two options: born in the country and born abroad.

9. The territorial changes as a result of the wars in the second decade of the 20th century were related to inclusion or exclusion of persons living on these territories in/from the total population. In wartime the migration movements are intensive and also play a significant role relevant to change in the population. Based on different sources, one can obtain an idea of the extent of international migration of the population during the first decades of the 20th century.

Table 1**International Migration in Bulgaria during the 1880 – 1930 period**

Period	Immigrants	Emigrants	Balance
1880 – 1910	715388	677516	37872
1911 – 1926	197995
1927 - 1930	8452	55509	-47057

10. These data were based only on officially published sources. It should be noted that the available data on immigrants in Bulgaria was not complete because the huge spontaneous population movements without any registration over the course of the years had not been included.

11. Data publishing on international migration dates back to the beginning of the 1930s. The information is enlarged by including characteristics of age, occupation and month of migration. The directions cover all continents.

12. The second period in the development of the migration processes in Bulgaria began in the 1950s and continued to the end of the 1980s. First and foremost, the migration population during this period was of an internal character.

13. It could be assumed that the third period in the development of the migration processes in Bulgaria began at the beginning of the nineteen-nineties and continued into the beginning of the 21st century. The most typical feature relevant to this period is that the internal population migration, according to data from the last two censuses, has decreased significantly in size and intensity and there are important changes in its basic direction.

14. For the eight years between the 1992 population census and the last census conducted in 2001, the total number of population has decreased approximately by 560 000 persons. As a result of the negative natural increase in population, Bulgaria has lost approximately 337 000 persons. The remaining decrease by 223 000 persons is due to intensive international migration, which is significantly larger than immigration into the country. As of 1 March 2001, 18 000 persons have moved into the country from abroad. In other words, the negative migration increase is about 241 000 persons, which means that an annual average number of about 30 000 persons emigrates from Bulgaria. For the period from 4 December 1985 to 1 March 2002, as a result of the emigration, the country lost about 680 000 persons.

POTENTIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SOURCES OF STATISTICAL DATA ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

15. During recent years, the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria was not able to provide trustworthy and reliable data on international migration in Bulgaria. This was due to the fact that there was no information system available to the different institutions at the time to aggregate those data. It was necessary to create a relevant mechanism to receive these data

from all possible sources and to improve the primary information on the statistical coverage of international migration according to the international requirements and recommendations.

16. A project for a system covering international migration has been elaborated within the framework of the bilateral cooperation between the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria and the Federal Statistical Office of Germany. This project aims at receiving and disseminating statistical information on international migration in compliance with the recommendations of international organizations and data quality requirements,

17. Only one of the components of the system is presented in this paper - the information sources. The remaining two - relations and dependency between different sources and quality and quantity of primary data - are not a subject of this paper.

Population Register

18. The Population Register is a centralized and computerized information system, built up on regional and national level. According to the Law on Civil Population Registration, the following persons are registered in the Population Register:

- i) all Bulgarian citizens;
- ii) foreigners:
 - who have obtained a residence permit to stay permanently in the Republic of Bulgaria;
 - without citizenship, who have settled down permanently and predominantly in the Republic of Bulgaria;
 - have obtained refugee or humanitarian status, or to whom asylum was granted in the Republic of Bulgaria.

19. In the Population Register the change in permanent and actual address, as well as a person's civil status, is recorded. In the case of emigration abroad, the country taken as a target of residence is reported only if the person states officially that he is going to live for a long-term period (over one year) or permanently in the respective country. In this way, it is possible to obtain statistical data from the Population Register on emigrants and Bulgarian citizens returning from emigration, but only those who have officially reported to the Bulgarian authorities about the change in their actual or permanent address (deleted and/or entered again in the respective municipal registers).

20. The categories of persons who could be identified are as follows:

- emigrants and returning emigrants;
- migrants;
- asylum seekers and refugees;
- persons financially dependent on those in the above-mentioned categories.

21. An essential problem in using the register for obtaining statistical data on international migration is that not all Bulgarian citizens who leave the country (to settle in another country or to stay for a long-term period there) inform the respective civil administration authorities. This is also the case with foreign citizens who leave Bulgaria, having obtained permission for long-term or permanent residence in the country.

22. Therefore, the Population Register does not record the actual residence in or absence

from the country. This deficiency could be corrected by developing special mechanisms for stimulating and 'obliging' people to submit the necessary information when leaving the country for a long period.

23. The Population Register can provide information about the number of foreigners legally residing in the country at any given moment. The main disadvantage of using this information is that it cannot full coverage of persons leaving the country for a long-term period or forever, since the majority of these people do not state their intentions, for fear of losing their right to return.

24. According to Article 28 of the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria, every foreigner on the territory of the country is obliged to register within 48 hours after entry. In this way, the foreigner is entered into the system for internal migration and each migration movement is registered until he leaves the Bulgarian boundaries. The problem here is the mechanism for address registration, which is carried out by the municipal services for civil registration. Here again, the foreign citizens should be motivated to register themselves at a certain address. However, most of them do not do this for a variety of different reasons, although they are legally obliged to register.

Residence permits for foreigners living in the country

25. Information on the number of foreign citizens residing in Bulgaria with different status, defined by the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria, is provided by the specialized services of the Ministry of Interior, which are responsible for the administrative control of foreigners on the territory of the country.

26. The stay of foreign citizens in the Republic of Bulgaria according to the Law on Foreigners is based on:

- the visa issued;
- international treaties on visa bans or easy visa bans;
- the permit from the services for administrative control on foreigners.

27. In accordance with the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria, foreigners may stay for a short- or long-term period on the territory of the country. A part of the short-term stays are surveyed by Tourism Statistics, since they do not exceed the 90 days period, i.e. according to international recommendations, they are not included in the international migration statistics.

28. A long-term stay may be continuous or permanent, with a period of one year or an unlimited period granted. The aggregation of persons with a permanent residence permit and a part of those with a continuous stay permit are of most interest to statistics of international migration, in accordance with international recommendations and the adopted criteria and categories. The inclusion of the latter in the group of immigrants is needed only when their stay is extended for more than one year, as a year's stay is the time criterion for international

migrants. The problem in defining the number and characteristics of these foreigners is the way in which they are identified by the services for administrative control on foreigners.

State Agency for Refugees (SAR)

29. A special category related to foreigners in the country is the refugees and asylum seekers, whose status is regulated according to the Convention for the Status of Refugees as of 1951, Protocol for the Status of Refugees as of 1967, international regulations on protection of human rights and Law on Asylums and Refugees, in force from 1 December 2002.

30. The statistical information, provided by SAR and prepared and submitted to Eurostat by the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, is in full compliance with the requirements and recommendations of the international organizations in this field. Above all, it refers to the number of applications made by asylum seekers, including children, and the different kinds of positive and negative decision.

31. Foreigners seeking asylum are observed by SAR from the moment of their application until the acquirement of refugee status, refusal or suspension of the procedure. After receiving refugee status, they are included in the population register and should observe their rights and obligations as Bulgarian citizens. Then the information can be obtained from the register, but the remaining problem is their coverage when they leave the country.

Work permits (Executive Employment Agency to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP))

32. Opening the frontiers of the country for free movement of people encourages immigration into Bulgaria, in particular the labour force. The residence of these foreigners is regulated by the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria and its Ordinance, and the procedure and conditions for issuing work permits are defined by a special Ordinance in force since 1 January 1998. The issue of these permits and relevant registration are assigned to the Executive Employment Agency to the MLSP, which is building up a specialized database.

33. The problem when using the information on labour immigration is related to the small coverage of this category of foreigners, who are obliged to have a work permit in order to carry out their labour activity on the territory of the country, as well as to obtain a long-term residence permit. These data refer to foreigners that come to work on the basis of preliminary concluded contracts or agreements.

34. Regarding the legal basis for residence and practice of labour activity in Bulgaria, most foreigners working on the territory of the country do not need a residence and work permit according to the Law on Foreign Investment or the Trade Law.

Border Statistics

35. The border statistics are the main information source for migration flows. The data on Bulgarian and foreign citizens are based on information collected at the border points. This

information is obtained on the basis of different types of documents – passports, visas, residence and work permits.

36. When entering the Republic of Bulgaria, the foreigner declares the purpose of his visit and gives his address of residence in the country, both of which are included by the border point authorities in the information cards. The information card is stored by the issuing authority until the moment when the foreigner leaves the country. The information card contains data on name, gender, age, purpose of visit and address, as well as the date on which the foreigner enters the country. There are some questions as to whether this card is filled in for all foreigners, or only for special cases or for particular (categories of) foreigners.

37. When leaving the Republic of Bulgaria, the border authorities stamp the foreigner's document for travelling abroad, indicating the border point and date of departure from the country.

38. When Bulgarian citizens leave the country, the border point authorities indicate the departure date, final destination and purpose of travel. This information is obtained by the border point officer through questions of the person travelling. The same information is received upon return/entry of Bulgarian citizens. The advantages when collecting data for Bulgarian citizens is the availability of an identification number for each person, which could be the main key in the future for identifying each Bulgarian citizen upon his leaving/entering the country.

39. At this stage, the information received from the border statistics covers only the border crossing, not the physical persons. The other problem when reflecting the border crossing is the relative limit of the coverage, i.e. it concerns only foreigners entering and Bulgarian citizens leaving the country.

SOURCES CURRENTLY USED AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

40. From the brief description above of different information sources for international migration from the country, the conclusion is that these sources could provide valuable information in this field. Their limitations should be taken into account regarding the coverage provided for different aspects of migration and relevant categories of migrants. It is necessary to combine data from different sources in order to receive more complete and reliable information in compliance with the international recommendations for statistical coverage of international migration.

41. At this stage, the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria has at its disposal the following data related to the international migration processes from the relevant information sources:

- Border Police – border crossing of Bulgarian and foreign citizens, categorized by purpose and country, indicated as a point of departure and destination;
 - State Agency for Refugees – applications for asylum and protection and granted permits, categorized by gender and citizenship/state;
 - National Service “Police” – residence permits issued by type and citizenship/state (upon request).
42. The information received by the NSI from the above-mentioned institutions is not

sufficient for statistical evaluation of international migration.

43. In order to obtain a correct and reliable evaluation of international migration flows (emigrants and immigrants) and their influence on the population of the country, the following data from the relevant sources are needed:

- Border Police – Bulgarian and foreign citizens entering and leaving by date of border crossing and destination, taking into account the Civil Registration Number for Bulgarian citizens and the Personal Identification Number for foreigners;
- National Service “Police” – residence permits issued by type and citizenship/country. The personal identification of foreign citizens is necessary in order to differentiate the long-term residence permit first obtained from the rest obtained later where one and the same person is concerned. Information is also needed about the date of issue and date of expiration of the residence permits in order to identify the relevant foreign citizen as immigrants, and afterwards as emigrants, according to the UN recommendations for international migration statistics;
- General Department “Central Population Register” – contains data on the Bulgarian citizens who have left the country for a period longer than one year or permanently, and data on the final destination of residence. It also contains data on foreigners permanently residing in Bulgaria and those with the status of refugees, as well as foreigners with Bulgarian citizenship;
- Employment Agency – data on foreign citizens with work permits, together with the relevant terms of residence, state of origin (citizenship) and identification number; Bulgarian citizens abroad with a term of residence of over one year, PIN and host country where they will work based on contract or agreement.

* * * * *