

**UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION and
UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
(EUROSTAT)**

**STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES**

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Joint ECE-EUROSTAT Work Session on Migration Statistics
organised in cooperation with the UN Statistics Division
(Geneva, 21-23 May 2001)

**Administrative and Statistical Sources of International Migration
and Future Prospective regarding Improvement of these sources**

Submitted by The Syria Arab Republic¹

The Syria Arab Republic has been among the Mediterranean countries that participated in the Med-Migr project of the European Community in the first in the framework of Barcelona declaration Conference (November 1995. Syria as well is going to participate in the Med-Migr project phase2 that aims at enhancing and improving data of international migration and related statistics such as tourism. This paper aims at presenting an overview of what is prevailing in Syria in that field and on future prospective in the framework of next phase of Med-Migr project. Here below we present the current sources of statistics on international migration in terms of administrative sources and censuses and surveys in the country.

1. Sources of international migration data

1.1 Administrative sources

- (i) Border cards (for the Syrians, Arabs, and foreigners)
- (ii) Residence Permits
- (iii) Work permits

In the Syrian Arab Republic entry / exit cards are used for Foreigners, for non-Syrian Arabs and Syrian Arabs.

Non-Arab Foreigners need a visa to enter Syria, which is operating for 15 days. If one decides to stay longer he/she needs residence permits from the Ministry of Interior/ Department of Immigration and Passports. All foreigners must fill out an entry/exit card on arrival in two copies. One copy is kept with the foreigner and collected at departure. The other copy is left at the Police border. Among data requested to be filled within entry/exit card are the date of entry and the date of exit. All foreigners need a work permit from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs if they intend to work in Syria. Conditions for Non-Arab Foreigners for obtaining work permit requires previous work arrangement with an employer. Work permit is given for one year, which might be renewed if needed. As well the National Syrians need a visa to go abroad. In general these sources included a number of limited data which confined to nationality, date of arrival, date of departure. Still so far there is no computerized processing procedure with respect to arrivals and departures and link it with other statistics such as tourist data. Improvement of sources of data on

¹ Prepared by Dr. Ibrahim Ali, Expert of the Euro- MedMigr Project

international migration will be done within the framework of the Euro Med-migr phase2 during the period 2000-2002. What are available now are specific tables recording movements of arrivals and departures by nationality and travel way at the Ministry of Interior.

1.2 Censuses

Four consecutive censuses were implemented in Syria in 1960, 1970, 1981, and 1994. The 1960 census covered data on place of birth cross-classified by place of enumeration but with no information about international migration.

In 1970, also data on current and previous place of residence beside to covering duration of current residence in an attempt to provide data on internal migration again with no information about international migration. Regarding sample census that was implemented in 1976 few questions were added to obtain movement of arrivals from abroad by age groups and economic activities but this census was not able to provide data for movement of Syrian departures abroad.

In 1981 the census questionnaire included a block of questions provide data on households members that are outside the country at the census date. They cover name of the person, father's name, his surname, sex, age, marital status, educational status, current place of residence/country, usual residence before departure, year of departure and reason, occupation at the country currently residing in, economic activity of the individual before leaving. Nevertheless due to technical issues it was not possible to obtain data on international migration of which mainly was non-coverage particularly for the migration of the whole household.

As for 1994 census a question for the Syrian Arabs only is there to cover household members who are abroad at the census date. The question was on the name of country currently household members are currently residing in and number of person's abroad by nature of residence; permanent or temporary. Based on the above it might be said that current system of data collection regarding international migration is not sufficient and needs development and improvement.

1.3 Surveys

With regard to surveys that were implemented at the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBC), among of which we refer to the labor force surveys. In this survey foreigners are excluded because only Syrian and Palestinians households are included in the sample, with no option for coding answers to questions on previous place of residence "abroad". Beside the survey included a question on reason for leaving.

As for the special migration surveys, the Follow-up Demographic Survey, conducted during the period 1976-1977, covers economic characteristics of migrants such as economic activities, occupation and educational status. These data were used to study movement of migration abroad and economic characteristics of migrants, which was not possible to obtain from the census.

In 1981 CBS developed arrival departure border cards for Syrians. In addition to Sex and age, marital status, educational attainment and occupation were added to the cards to serve the statistical purposes for which we currently look forward. Nevertheless the work was ceased in this new practice because it proved to be difficult to continue with since procedure to fill these cards by the Syrian leaving the country was not obligatory.

As for Household Income and Expenditure Survey that was implemented in 1996-1997, the situation is similar to the labor force survey in the sense that foreigners are excluded. Yet this survey does not include a question on the previous place of residence but it includes another questions regarding remittances from abroad to household's members.

The Integrated Demographic Survey and the Maternal and Child Health Survey in 1993 also excluded foreigners, yet they cover information on husbands who are abroad, reason for leaving abroad, name of the country, and number of years and months the husband been abroad.

In 1995 a special migration survey based on 1994 census was carried out with a sample 1.200 households, it revealed the impact of international migration on households with migrant member.

2. Future Prospective

Within the framework of the Med-stat Programme, the Med-migration sub project for the Mediterranean and European countries has successfully and smoothly passed its first phase. The focus was on identifying sources used to provide statistics on flows and stocks of international migration beside to exploiting potential statistical and administrative sources to fulfill needs of each country in that respect. The second phase of the Med- migration project aimed at moving the project forward in the terms referred to previously and aims at achieving the followings:

- Survey and examine all possible conditions that are required for enhancing capacities of the existing border data collection systems (entry/exit records).
- Improve exploitation of the existing sources to measure various types of migration flows and identify and measure immigration and emigration.
- Exploit existing sources to measure infra-regional flows and examine possible connections to tourist statistics.

In this regard, two workshops were held in Malta and Paris during the first half of year 2001. In Malta Workshop it was agreed to carry out this project for the 12 Mediterranean countries through establishing three working groups:

First Group: consists of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia

Second Group: consists of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Turkey

Third Groups: is expected to include Jordan, Israel, and Egypt

It was agreed to carry out 2 pilot studies, the first in Morocco for the first group and the second in Syria for the second group, by the project experts.

For Paris workshop countries involved in this project presented their experience in this respect beside to possibilities of improving border cards and related statistics such as residence and work permits beside to tourist data. In the second half of year 2001, it is expected finalize and specify methodologies and tools for improving international migration data with regard to all respective sources. It is expected to start with this (pilot study) practice during the first half of 2002 where participating countries start to produce data on international migration and related statistics. Consequently results would become comparable with other concerned Mediterranean, European countries as well as internationally beside to meeting the national needs of each country.

- - - - -