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MEASUREMENT OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

Submitted by the Ministry of Statistics and Analysis, Belarus

Measurement of international migration in the Republic of Belarus and possibilities of implementing the revised United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration (1998) in the Republic of Belarus

The main legislative instruments governing matters relating to international migration in the Republic are:

Laws: Refugees Act, Immigration Act, Republic of Belarus Citizenship Act, External Labour Migration Act, Act concerning the departure from and entry into the Republic of Belarus of Belarusian citizens, Act on the legal status of foreign citizens and stateless persons in the Republic of Belarus.

Decisions of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus: Decision on the list of States in which a temporary stay prior to arrival in the Republic of Belarus constitutes a ground for refusing to register a request for the recognition of an alien as a refugee and for refusing to recognize the person as a refugee; decision on the establishment of a quota for receiving refugees for settlement; decision approving the provisions on refugee certification; decision approving the application form for refugee certification, instructions on the procedure for the issuance or exchange of a refugee certificate and instructions on the procedure for recording and keeping forms for refugee certification; decision approving the provisions concerning the sojourn of refugees in the territory of the Republic of Belarus; decision approving the instructions on the procedure for the recognition of refugees in the Republic of Belarus; decision on financing the costs of providing assistance to refugees; decision approving the procedure for the disbursement of monetary assistance to aliens who have applied for recognition as refugees, and to refugees; decision approving the statutes of the Committee on Migration under the Ministry of Labour of the Republic of Belarus; decision approving the provisions on the procedure for the deportation of foreign citizens and stateless persons in the Republic of Belarus; decision approving the rules for the sojourn of foreign citizens and stateless persons in the Republic of Belarus; decision approving the provisions concerning the travel document of the Republic of Belarus to be issued to a foreign citizen or

stateless person residing permanently in the Republic of Belarus; decision approving the provisions on residence permits for foreign citizens and stateless persons in the Republic of Belarus; decision on the procedure for the creation of places for the temporary detention of foreign citizens and stateless persons subject to deportation.

Features of national practice for recording various categories of international migrants in the Republic

Most migrants (over 70 per cent) in the Republic are people changing their places of residence within its boundaries.

Statistical observation of the movement of these people in Belarus is now organized by the national statistical services on the basis of documents of the internal affairs bodies, which routinely follow up changes of place of residence in accordance with the existing national legislation.

Consolidated data on migration are compiled on the basis of the statistical record cards relating to arrivals and departures sent from the internal affairs bodies. These are completed at the same time as the address forms upon registration or deregistration by place of residence or sojourn.

The statistical record card attached to the arrival form contains the following characteristics of the migrant: date and place of birth, sex, nationality, place of registration or deregistration, where he arrived

from and when, as of what year he has been living at the place of departure, purpose of arrival, place of work and occupation at the previous place of residence, educational attainment, family situation (married persons should indicate whether or not they arrived together with their spouses) and information about children under 16 years of age arriving together with adults. Similar data on migrants are contained in the statistical record card relating to the place of departure. This information is supplemented by data on international migration beyond the borders of the former USSR obtained by the official statistical bodies from the passport and visa service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Accounting for migratory movements is made more complicated by the population's increasing opportunities for emigration, change in the migration infrastructure (in Belarus there are now special services organizing all kinds of migratory journeys, including commercial trips, and arranging for the completion of travel documents, and the search for legal or illegal work abroad).

In accordance with the above-mentioned recommendations one of the sources of data on migration is the population census.

Belarus was one of the first States of the former USSR to undertake a population census round beginning in January 1999.

The population census data will contribute to more in-depth analysis of migration processes. Population censuses are of particular importance among the sources of data on population movement. They do not provide information directly on migration, but a range of data can be obtained from processing of the census materials, helping to analyse the main population flows and obtain a fairly complete picture of them. The 1999 population census is yielding data on place of birth, citizenship, first year of uninterrupted residence in a given place, place of previous residence, and whether or not an individual has been living in a particular urban or rural area uninterruptedly since birth.

Questions on migration issues are not included in household surveys. Belarus has no population register or register of foreigners. Data are gathered mainly by administrative methods (residence permits, entry and exit visas, work permits, applications for asylum).

Possibility of implementing the revised Recommendations

Owing to the lack of suitable technical equipment there is no border collection of data on migrants. In accordance with the national legislation, the border troops carry out an immigration control which involves making an initial check on persons entering the Republic of Belarus, and they take part in measures to combat illegal migration. Implementation of the parts of the Recommendations concerning the possibility of gathering data on and categorizing migrants during a border inspection is therefore not feasible.

The definition of "long-term migrant" given in paragraph 21 is complicated and hardly practicable, i.e. it is not possible to take account of an individual's previous length of stay in or absence from the country. A period of one year or more (one year or less) may be a sufficient criterion.

In accordance with the Recommendations foreigners arriving for study should be divided into those arriving for education and those obtaining on-the-job training. No such subdivision is made in practice.

There is no recording of excursionists (same-day visitors). Under the rules governing the sojourn of foreign citizens and stateless persons, foreigners arriving in the Republic of Belarus on holidays and non-working days, or for a period of up to 72 hours on ordinary days, and those leaving the Republic during such days are exempt from registration.

The Recommendations cannot be applied by the Republic of Belarus in the same way as with other States owing to the particularities of the legislation on migration and the situation that has arisen since the break-up of the former USSR. Implementation of the Recommendations is further complicated by the fact that there is virtually no border between Belarus and Russia. Concerning all States of the former USSR, except for Turkmenistan, a non-visa regime of visits is being retained with Belarus.

Some categories of labour migration are not covered because of the insignificant volume of such migration. This is true for commuting or border zone migration.

Implementation of the Recommendations is complicated even more by the particular geographical position of Belarus, which serves as a kind of barrier for western States. In Belarus, as in contiguous States, forced migration is consistently linked to illegal migration. The Republic of Belarus expends considerable resources on carrying out measures to curb the growing flows of illegal migrants into western countries.

It does not seem possible under the Recommendations likewise to apply the general definitions for arrivals and departures of non-migrants and international migrants, since the enumeration of foreigners arriving is in most cases more precise. For departures abroad a citizen reports only his probable actions.

Annex

Arrivals/Departures	Short-term migration			Long-term migration		
	Citizens	Non-citizens	Total	Citizens	Non-citizens	Total
Inflows/outflows:						
1. Entry linked to education and training (fairly full coverage)	<u>Data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs</u>					
	<p>The territorial organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs issue permits for temporary stays to foreigners arriving to study in the Republic's educational institutions covering a period of no more than one year. If the period of study is extended, the student is re-registered. According to the 1999 population census Belarusian citizens moving elsewhere in the Republic for study were counted in the permanent population at the place of study, i.e. not as long-term migrants.</p>					
2. Entry linked to work (the quality of coverage may be described as average on account of illegal labour migration). Because of the lack of a database on migrant workers it is practically impossible to implement the recommendations on distinguishing between newly-arrived migrants and migrants extending their stay.	<u>Data of the Committee on Migration under the Ministry of Labour</u>					
	<p>When authorization is obtained to carry on a labour or business activity legally the internal affairs bodies issue a permit for a temporary stay in the Republic covering a period of no more than one year.</p> <p>Permission for permanent residence in the Republic of Belarus may be granted to certain categories of labour migrants (highly-skilled workers whom the Republic needs, guaranteeing an investment of at least US\$ 150,000 in the Republic's economy or implementation of specific State programmes.</p> <p>In the population census a labour migrant arriving for a period of more than one year was counted in the permanent population.</p>					
3. Entry linked to family reunification or family formation (full coverage)	<u>Data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs</u>					
	<p>The right to family reunification applies to spouses, minors and other children, or to unmarried persons, with an invitation, respectively, from the other spouse or parents whether citizens of the Republic of Belarus or immigrants. In some cases the right to family reunification may be granted to other close relatives of citizens of the Republic of Belarus or to immigrants subject to the inviting person having sufficient accommodation and a legal source of income, ensuring himself and members of his family a minimum livelihood. In all cases of family reunification the foreigner wishing to enter the Republic or the persons inviting him must submit documentary evidence of the right to reunification.</p>					

Arrivals/Departures	Short-term migration			Long-term migration		
	Citizens	Non-citizens	Total	Citizens	Non-citizens	Total
4. Refugees (full coverage)	<u>Data of the Committee on Migration under the Ministry of Labour</u>					
5. Entry of international civil servants (no separate coverage)	The Republic of Belarus expects shortly to accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.					
6. Entry with free establishment (incomplete coverage in the absence of borders with Russia)	Data of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs					
	Data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs					
