

**UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION and
UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (EUROSTAT)**

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)

The use of information from the Danish Immigration Service in migration statistics.

Submitted by Statistics Denmark¹

The existing system

The source of the migration statistics in Denmark is primarily the Central Population Register (CPR). In CPR the total population of Denmark is registered and identified by a unique 10-diget number. All persons arriving to the country, with the intension of making Denmark to their usual country of residence and *with the legal right to do so*, are registered as immigrants. All persons giving up their usual place of residence in Denmark are registered as emigrants.

In the CPR we have information on age, sex, citizenship, place of birth (country of birth for persons born outside Denmark), family-relations (mother, father, children) and for migrants, information on country of origin /destination and date for migration. This information is used for the annual statistics.

Shortcoming in relation to UN recommendations

In relation to UN's recommendations for migration statistics there are some shortcomings. It is not possible to distinguish between short time and long time migration, because there is no information on intention of stay. There is no information on reason for migration.

Long term/short term migrants

Even if it is not possible to distinguish between long-term and short-term migration in the registration of migrants, it is possible, by delaying the statistics with 1 year, to identify immigrants, who actually stayed for one year or more, or emigrants, who did not return within 1 year. This kind of long term migration statistics have been used for several years in the tables delivered to ECE.

Reason for migration

Information on reason for migration has been of growing interest as the migration has been growing. Especially the fact, that it is not possible to give statistics on refugees living in the country - their number, their social, educational and labour marked situation - has become a problem. A general interest for this kind of information from politicians, researchers and the press made Statistics Denmark start the work on getting access to this kind of information, in the middle of the 90's. The fact, that reason for migration was a part of the new UN recommendations on migration, underlined the importance of the information.

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No data on emigrants

It was clear from the beginning, that there was no source with information on reasons for migration, for all migrants. Nowhere would it be possible to get information from people leaving the country. As there are no restrictions for people leaving the country, there are few administrative processes around the emigration. The emigrant shall notify the local population register about his emigration and they will register his new address, (usually only the name of the new country). The population register has no legal authority to ask for or to register reason for emigration.

... or immigrating Danish citizens

Danish citizens have automatically the right to enter the country. They only have to report their arrival to the local population register in the municipality, where they are going to settle down. For this group it is not possible to find information on reason for immigration in any administrative register.

... or citizens from other Nordic countries

Since the 60's there has been an agreement between the Nordic countries that allows citizens from these countries to take up residence and to work in all Nordic countries without special permits. For this group it is also impossible to find information on reasons for immigration.

Citizens from other EU countries

For citizens from other EU countries, there are special rules, making it easier to settle down inside a EU-country. EU-citizens who fulfil the rules are therefore only registered as entering the country under the EU-rules.

The Danish immigration service

Citizens from other countries than Nordic countries and EU-countries, have to ask for a residence permit. The authority responsible for decisions on residence permits is The Danish Immigration Service. This is a body under the Ministry of Interior.

In the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) all applicants and all information on them are registered under a special 16 digit number (figures, dots and -), unique for each person, but in no way connected to the number used in the CPR for every resident person.

If a residence permit is granted, the period of validity of the permit is registered, and so is the paragraph in the law, to which the permit refers.

The register in the Danish Immigration Service is an administrative register, used to follow decisions on single persons in the system. It is not a register designed for statistical purposes, but it is clear that this register contains data, that could add information on reason for immigration to the existing migration data.

Problems

The population in Danish immigration service

To combine data from DIS's register with data from CPR is not a process without problems. As earlier mentioned, the register in Danish Immigration Service includes all applications for residence permits. This means, that the file of granted permits is not a register over immigrants; there is no one to one relation. Because, on one side people can ask for and get a residence permit without ever entering the country, on the other side, people already living in the country can apply for a residence permit as refugee, when they already have one as familyreunited partner.

Time aspect

The residence permits are registered with information of the date, from which they are valid. This date can't be used as a date for immigration, because the person can already be in the country, or perhaps he will never arrive or he can arrive with many months delay.

Reason for migration

There is no direct information on reason for immigration in the register, but the references to different paragraphs in the law make it possible to distinguish some groups of immigrants like refugees, familiunions, people coming to work etc. (Appendix 1).

To fully use the information from the Danish Immigration Service as a supplement to the ordinary migration statistics, it is necessary to be able to connect the two sets of information on an individual basis. Different possibilities to do so were examined.

Combining information from two registers

One possibility was to enlarge the information in the Central Population Register with the data from the Danish Immigration Service. This was discussed for a period, but was turned down by the politicians. Because of the very intense use of the information in the Central Population Register, there has always been a policy to include as little sensitive information as possible in this register. Some people meant, that the fact that a person was a refugee was sensitive information and therefore, it should not be registered in the CPR. Moreover, no efficient way of connecting the information, from the two registers with different identification keys, was presented.

Another possibility was to add information about CPR-numbers to the content of the Danish Immigration Service's register. From a statistical point of view this solution was not ideal, because, as mentioned earlier, this register is not designed for statistical use and it would not be easy to get useful extracts from it. Moreover, the Danish Immigration Service is an institution that has been very much under pressure during the latest years. The work-burden has been heavy and the resources limited. They could have an interest in getting the CPR- numbers in their register, but from their point of view, the extra work with providing extract from the register was not attractive.

It looked like the problem had ended up in a blind alley. However, the discussions about immigrants went on in the parliament and in the press and new laws concerning different groups of immigrants passed the parliament. It was not possible to follow up statistically on those legal acts, as it was not possible to distinguish between different groups of immigrants. There was a growing pressure on the politicians to find a solution, and suddenly they could agree on a registration in CPR of groups of immigrants with reference to the residence permit and a validity period for the permit. The legal act on registration in population registers was changed to allow this. The two institutions, Central Population Register and Danish Immigration Service, were put together to find the technical solutions. Statistics Denmark was not a part in this, but had contact to both institutions during the work.

Practical solutions

It was decided that citizens from outside the Nordic countries, at the registration in the local population register², shall bring documents showing the DIS-identification number, the validity of their residence permit and the paragraph the residence permit refers to. The local population register shall assign a CPR-number to the person and register the information from DIS about residence permit and validity. The DIS-number shall not be stored in CPR, but every night the numbers, registered during the day, are transferred to the Danish Immigration Service, added the assigned CPR-numbers. In this way the CPR-number can be included in the DIS register.

Changes in the residence permits (validity or reference paragraph) for persons who already are registered in CPR are transferred electronically from DIS to CPR once every day, with the CPR-numbers as identification.

A part of the agreement on registration of reason for immigration in CPR was, that Statistics Denmark could have the information from CPR for all resident persons, as a part of the annual status extract. All new registrations, including changes, could be delivered as a part of the weekly extracts.

Results

The agreement was, that the registration system should start to work for persons entering the country 1. January 1999. However, there have been a lot of problems during the first years. There have been problems in getting the registration to work in the 275 local population offices. There have been mistakes in the registration of DIS-number in the population registers, sometimes because not all the 16 digits have been correctly written in the documents, sometimes because of mistakes in the registration. If the DIS number is incorrect, DIS are not able to recognize the number that is returned to them, and the connection between CPR number and DIS number cannot be registered. To report later changes in the

² A registration in the local population register is in the same time a registration in the Central Population Register (CPR)

residence permit this connection is essential, therefore a lot of manual resources have been used to find and correct the mistakes. In periods such resources have not been available, which have implied serious delays in the work.

There have also been technical problems in the transmission of data between CPR and DMS.

The result for 1999 is, that for about 25 percent of the immigrants from outside the Nordic countries the information on reason for immigration is missing. We had to conclude that for 1999, it is not possible to produce statistics of acceptable quality based on this information. We have not yet seen the results for 2000, but as a lot of efforts are put into the work of solving the problems, we hope for much better results.

Conclusion

It is not without problems, to try to include existing administrative data from another organisation in the statistical process.

Necessary changes in existing legislation can be difficult to achieve for a statistical organisation. Political support is necessary in this process. It is necessary to make it visible, how the access to new data can improve the statistics and the use of it. It is often difficult to convince both politicians and organisations about the importance of statistics, but it is a necessity. It is a great help if it is possible to find other arguments beside the statistical.

Often the statistical office's access to data means a lot of extra work in the other organisation, and this can easily be a problem, especially if no compensation is given. A positive result is only possible, if both sides can see the benefit of a solution.

If, as in this case, more than one institution is involved, the problems grow, but on the other hand the benefits of a solution can be greater. For example in this case, the DIS have got CPR-number connected to their cases, which is a good administrative help, CPR have got the information of reasons for immigration, that can be used administratively and Statistics Denmark have got the possibilities for better statistics.

It takes time, and a great deal of patience is necessary.

Annex 1

Reason for immigration as registered in CPR

- 1 Refugee, § 7
- 2 Refugee, § 8
- 3 Human reasons, §9,2,4
- 4 Human reasons, §9,2,2
- 5 Human reasons - no possibility to return
- 6 People from ex. Yugoslavia, § 9,2,5
- 7 People from ex. Yugoslavia, § 9,2,6
- 8 Family reunion to refugee - spouse
- 9 Family reunion to refugee - parents
- 10 Family reunion to others - spouse
- 11 Family reunion to others - parents
- 12 Family connection, § 9,2,1
- 13 Family connection, § 9,2,4
- 14 Family connection, § 9,2,4

- 20 Children under 18 years. Special reasons - unaccompanied children
- 21 Children under 18 years. Family reunion to refugee
- 22 Children under 18 years. Family reunion to others
- 23 Children under 18 years who do not need a residence permit

- 50 EU- permits
- 51 Earlier Danish citizens
- 52 Parents of foreigners with residence permit
- 53 Labour market reasons
- 54 Special reasons (education, au-pair, missionary)