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**The use of censuses and consular statistics to measure migrations in Maghreb countries**

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Among statistics dealing with population movements across Maghreb, the only data that are actually used / published are the ones resulting from the exploitation of border cards (although at present they could not provide indications on migrations<sup>1</sup>) and those coming from consular registers. Other data sources such as, in particular, population censuses, are only rarely used for this purpose<sup>2</sup>.

This presentation will firstly analyse this apparently paradoxical situation insofar as the most reliable data (namely those coming from censuses) are ignored, whereas those whose reliability appears uncertain (consular statistics) are the most valued

Then, a special stress will be put on the relevance of censuses as a key data source on migrations in Maghreb countries. In particular, the latest developments in this field in each country will be analysed, thanks mainly to the contribution of the MED-MIGR project; moreover, we shall examine the perspectives concerning the compliance by these countries to new international recommendations for censuses.

As for the less reliable data (consular statistics), which are widely used in Maghreb countries, it would be useful to show their limitations and make some suggestions to improve their quality as much as possible.

### ***I. The differentiated use of data sources on migrations in Maghreb countries: fund transfers and tourism as key factors***

It may seem that, in the statistical practice of the Maghreb region, the concept of migration is often mixed up with «Maghreb community abroad». This confusion translates the great interest of Maghreb's authorities in this sizeable community, whose fund transfers not only constitute a fundamental item of their Balance of payments, but are also an important support for the most indigent families<sup>3</sup>. A better understanding of this population would lead to the setting up of the mechanisms necessary for its preservation and indeed encourage its relations with its country of origin. Consequently, studies and research on the evolution of its demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics are regularly carried out. In this framework, consular statistics in particular, which are free and easy to access, are highly valued and widely used in spite of their notorious limitations.

In the same way, border statistics, which are very useful in countries with high tourist inflows like Tunisia and Morocco, are regularly collected, processed and published in the statistical yearbooks of those countries. It is not surprising that these statistics do not carry much interest in Algeria.

Conversely, statistics on work and residence permits, the former less well kept than the latter, are almost exclusively used for internal purposes in the Ministries of Employment and of Interior. They remain mostly unknown and their potential users are rare<sup>4</sup>, including the NSI's who request them. Yet, Maghreb Ministries of Interior assure they provide these data upon simple request.

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<sup>1</sup> However, in Morocco, some old cards, which are not used anymore, included a question on the duration of the stay and some information on the reason of the stay (business, tourism, etc.) were also available.

<sup>2</sup> J. Bouchachen :

. Statistics on international migration in Maghreb countries: mission report for Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Eurostat, Luxembourg. Population and social conditions 3/1999/E/n° 11, 1999.

. Statistics on travellers: distinguishing migrants from tourists. Presentation given at the Workshop on border statistics, Rome 2000.

<sup>3</sup> J. Bouchachen, «contributions of transfers of Moroccans residing abroad to the reduction of poverty: the Moroccan case», Montreux, September 2000.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that these data are regularly required by the embassies of foreign countries located in Maghreb.

While fund transfers and tourism may explain the differentiated interest of Maghreb countries vis-à-vis different data sources on international migrations, it should be noted that the administrative statistics used (consular and border statistics) are not only far from reaching the required degree of quality and reliability, but efforts to improve their quality are still insufficient. This can be surely ascribed to a lack of means, but also and especially to the little involvement of demographers and statisticians of the NSI's in the monitoring, the quality control and the publication of these data<sup>5</sup>

It is also important to stress that population censuses, which are regularly carried out in Maghreb countries approximately every ten years, include the required questions on migrations, but they are rarely exploited and they are disseminated to an even lower degree.

## **II. The Census: a fundamental yet little exploited source**

All three Maghreb countries regularly carry out population censuses approximately every ten years. They include questions on international migrations and namely those concerning the place of birth, citizenship and the place of residence at a given time in the past. However, some differences at the level of the questionnaires deserve a particular mention:

**Place of birth or of residence:** While Algeria and Morocco can provide data divided by country of birth and of residence, Tunisia cannot provide similar data, due to the fact that the coding of the country of birth and of residence is only inscribed under the item «foreign».

**Place of residence at a given time in the past:** The question concerning residence at a given time in the past refers to periods of time which may vary from one country to the other and in fact, in the same country, from one census to the other. During the last censuses, these periods were set at 15 months (religious celebrations), 7 years (accession of President Ben Ali to power) and 11 years (date of the last census in 1987) in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria respectively.

**Additional questions:** Morocco was the only country who introduced additional questions on the previous residence and the duration of the residence in the present home.

### **2.2. On data exploitation**

Even when figures on stocks and international flows (immigrations) derive automatically from the exploitation of questions on migrations, they are seldom published. This is because, as a general rule, questions on migrations introduced in Maghreb census questionnaires are almost exclusively exploited for internal migration purposes. Also, it needs to be stressed that, until recently, and more specifically until the start of the MED-Migr project, users of international migration data were rare. So far, Morocco has been the only country that has published studies on migrant stocks and returning migrations. Some interesting clarifications have therefore been provided, thanks to the combination of data on migrations (stocks and flows) with other issues dealt with in the census (demographic, social, professional, cultural, etc.).

#### **Questions on migrations in the questionnaires of the last censuses in Maghreb countries**

	<b>Algeria</b>	<b>Morocco</b>	<b>Tunisia</b>
<b>Year of the last census</b>	1998	1994	1994
<b>Present place of residence</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Country of birth</b>	Yes	Yes	Foreign

<sup>5</sup> J. Bouchachen, «Data sources on international migrations in Maghreb countries », limitations and potential, United Nations –Economic Commission for Europe, Eurostat, ESCWA, Geneva, Mai 2000.

<b>Nationality</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Country of residence at a given moment in the past</b>	Yes, 1987 (10 years before census)	Yes, 1993 (15 months before census)	Foreign, 1987 (7 years before census)
<b>Previous country of residence</b>	No	Yes	No
<b>Duration of residence</b>	No	Yes	No
<b>Year of the next census</b>	2008	2004	2002

### **III. Recent developments and perspectives for the use of censuses to register international migrations**

Morocco, thanks to its participation in the Task force on international migrations that conceived the global development programme of migration statistics in MED countries, became very soon aware of the delays that has built up at this level. Consequently, the Direction de la Statistique created a work group on international migrations within its institute with the following aims:

- To exploit data on migrations using population censuses and other sources (family surveys, living standards surveys, etc.). in this respect, publications on foreign residents in Morocco and on returning immigrations have been produced on the basis of the data of the 1994 census.
- To study the possibilities of regular data collection on migrations. The aim was namely to push for the strengthening of the labour survey sample with a view to including questions on migrations, Currently, the sample has been set at 50,000 households to allow for the regionalisation of survey data, although it also needed to enable the collection of very useful information on international migrations.
- To prepare research on different aspects of the migratory phenomenon and to develop methodological approaches so as to register illegal migrations in particular. Several studies have therefore been realised or started: the profile of the international emigrant and the migratory potential, the contribution of fund transfers to the reduction of poverty, the combined use of several data sources to evaluate migrations, etc.

The next census, which will take place in 2002, should be the occasion to deepen our knowledge on this subject insofar as, for the first time, the concern for the collection of data on international migrations precedes the preparation of the different questionnaires of the census. This should lead to the introduction of the tabulation on international migrations in the global tabulation plan of the census. This observation is also true for all the other Maghreb countries and namely Tunisia, who will carry out its next census in three years.

In Tunisia too, some important developments have been noticed on this issue. They will be especially important in the future, if we consider that this country is the only one who carries out a census or a mini-census every five years.

We can therefore notice that, while the 1989 mini-census (120,000 households) contained only one question on migrations (place of residence 5 years before), the one that was carried out in 1999 devoted a special place to this subject. In addition to questions on nationality, place of birth and of residence at a given time in the past (5 years before), a form on departures abroad since 1994 was

introduced. The first results of this work were presented by the Tunisian NCO during a meeting held within the framework of the MED-MIGR project.

The 2004 census will be the occasion to take this work further and, more importantly, to publish the results of data on international migrations following the example of those on internal migrations.

In Algeria, in contrast with the other Maghreb countries, no data have been released from the 1987 census, even though its questionnaire included questions on the place of birth, the nationality and the place of residence ten years before the census. Without dwelling on the reasons for this absence of data (see section 2.1 above), it should however be stressed that important developments have been registered, particularly as concerns the exploitation of the last census in 1998. In fact, it included the same questions as the 1987 census, except for the place of residence where, this time, the duration was set at eleven years, which corresponded to the year of the last census. However, it should be noted that in the next census, whose realisation is still far (2008), it would be more beneficial to replace such a long duration, which risks to be exposed to memory problems, with a shorter duration (recent migrations). Dates of recent events could be used for this purpose, as it is already the case in other Maghreb countries, unless, in conformity with international recommendations on this subject, a question is included on the place/country of residence one year before the census.

#### ***IV. Conformity with international recommendations for censuses***

While the list of requirements to be observed by the census is established on the basis of the country's needs, the research for comparability at an international level is a key point which, as it is agreed, has been given the greatest importance. Before analysing the degree of compliance of Maghreb's approach to migration with international recommendations and making practical propositions in this respect, it would be useful to provide a quick overview of these recommendations. They are essentially concepts of usual residence, of long-term and short-term migrants, of country/place of birth and of the notion of citizenship.

##### ***4.1. Overview of international recommendations for censuses***

###### ***Place of usual residence***

According to the most recent recommendations for censuses<sup>6</sup>, the place of usual residence is the place where the person normally lives. It is the place where the person spends most of his/her nights.

The migrant is the person who changes his/her country of usual residence. In this respect, it is worth noting that temporary journeys abroad for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage do not change a person's country of residence.

In this respect, a distinction is drawn between:

- The long-term international migrant, that is a person who moves to a country other than that of his/her usual residence for a period of at least 12 months, so that the country of destination effectively becomes the new country of usual residence. (he/she is a long-term emigrant from the country of origin's point of view and a long-term immigrant from the country of destination's point of view).

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<sup>6</sup> - United Nations and EUROSTAT: Recommendations for population and household censuses of the year 2000 in the EEC region, 1998.

- Note of the EEC Secretariat: «Implementation of new UN recommendations in the field of international migrations statistics: some experimental applications in some countries », February 2000.

- The short-term international migrant, that is a person who moves to a country other than that of his/her usual residence for a period of at least 3 months but less than 12 months except in cases where the movement is for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage.<sup>7</sup> For the short-term emigrant, the place of usual residence is situated in another country; therefore, he/she is not counted in the total population usually residing in the country. However, if one would like to obtain data on short-term inflows on the basis of the census, one should consider for this purpose that the country of usual residence of short-term migrants is the country of destination during the period they spend in it.

### ***Country/place of birth***

It is the place of birth where the mother of the person concerned by the census resided at the time of the person's birth. In the case of persons born outside the country, it is sufficient to ask the mother's country of residence at the time of the person's birth. Information is collected on all the people born in the country where the census is taking place as well as on all the people born outside the country. It will be necessary to specify the country of birth in consideration of the national borders of the country performing the census at the time of the census.

### ***Country of citizenship***

Citizenship is a special juridical bond between an individual and his/her State, which is acquired by birth or by naturalisation<sup>8</sup>. Those people who hold more than one citizenship shall declare each one of them. Stateless people shall be considered separately. In this way, distinct data will be collected for those people whose citizenship has not been ascertained, due to the dissolution, the scission or the unification of States.

## ***4.2. Towards conformity with international recommendations on international migrations***

When we compare these concepts to those used by Maghreb countries, some differences become apparent. Undoubtedly, the most important one concerns the notion of usual residence. In Maghreb, where the census aims at registering the population by right (*de jure*), a person who is a usual resident in a given place/country is a person who resides or intends to reside there for a period of at least six months (legal duration). A migrant is therefore considered to be any person who moves to a place/country other than that of his/her place/country of usual residence for a period of at least six months.

In this view, it is not possible to register long-term migrants appropriately. The six-month threshold is the only criterion allowing to classify anybody as a usual resident in a given place/country or as a migrant.

In the same way, a person who has spent more than three months but less than six months in a given place/country and who, according to international recommendations, should be considered as a short-term immigrant, is considered as a non-migrant by the concept of Maghreb countries. He/she is simply considered as temporarily absent and therefore as having his/her usual residence in the place of the census. In fact, the place of usual residence of a person who is absent from this place for a period under six months remains the same place of residence. His/her absence is temporary and it is not a migration, as long as its duration does not exceed six months.

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<sup>7</sup> D. Pearce, MED-MIGR, training course support, Tunis, November 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Whether it is by declaration, by option, by marriage or by any other means under the national legislation.

Consequently, during the census, this person is registered as a usual resident and he/she is an integral part of the country's total population by right.

It is also worth noticing that, *in practice*, the distinction between migrant and non-migrant in Maghreb's censuses is based exclusively on the six-month criterion (actual or intended residence), regardless of the reasons for the person's movement<sup>9</sup>. Thus, for example, a person who is abroad for a period exceeding six months is considered as a migrant even though he/she is there only for medical treatment, to visit relatives or again for business.

On the basis of these considerations and in keeping with Maghreb's definition of usual residence, Maghreb countries can already use the data on long-term migrants in their next censuses by introducing in the questionnaires a question to enable the comparison between the present place of usual residence and the usual place of residence one year before the census.

In Morocco, where a question on the duration of residence in the place of usual residence (combined with a question on the previous residence) is asked, one may distinguish directly between immigrants who have lived living in the country for more than one year and those who have been living there for less than one year.

As concerns the place/country of birth, Maghreb's definition does not differ from the one illustrated above; it would only be necessary to specify in the instructions that the country of birth must be registered in consideration of the national borders of the country performing the census at the time of the census. This observation - which applies every time a foreign country is involved - is particularly important here, since the data concerning the country of birth comprise some long-term immigrants.

The same goes for citizenship, where some additional indications can be included, such as a declaration of each citizenship held for those people who have more than one and a separate consideration of stateless people and of those whose citizenship has not been ascertained, due to the dissolution, the scission or the unification of States.

## ***V. Overview on consular statistics, parallels with the data of the host countries***

Within the framework of the services provided by the consulates of Maghreb countries abroad (making out of registry office certificates, death certificates, proxy, authorisations, request of protection, etc.), a registration system has been created. The data collected relate to the sex, the age and the social and professional category, which enables the compilation of statistics on the size and the characteristics of Maghreb nationals residing abroad.

While for Morocco these data are processed in a mainly manual fashion, Algeria and particularly Tunisia (Jalia system), consulates have created a system aiming at automating the whole of the services given by the consulates. This system is already operational where there is a high concentration of Tunisians and Algerians.

In addition to the services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of Tunisians abroad (for Tunisia), the Hassan II Foundation (for Morocco), the Office for the protection of nationals abroad and the National Council for Emigration (for Algeria) are the first users of these consular data. These data are also used by financial bodies, researchers, university students as well as ministries (national education in particular) and the almost all NGO's dealing with migrations.

### ***5.1. Consular statistics and statistics of host countries***

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<sup>9</sup> Apart from some considerations linked to what is known as separately counted population of some communities, which is counted in the buildings where they are found at the time of the census, if the person has been absent for less than six months, the census taker must verify whether that movement is temporary or whether it will exceed six months. If the person has been absent (present) for over six months, he/she is automatically considered as an emigrant (immigrant).



However, these data present limitations which are either a source of omission or of double counting. Thus, in addition to illegal migrants<sup>10</sup>, several categories of Maghreb nationals elude the registration system. They are namely:

- People who have not yet needed the consulate's services
- People with dual nationality who prefer to go and see the authorities of the host countries rather than the consulate

It is also important to highlight the following cases:

- Nationals who, following a change of residency, are registered in more than one consulate
- Unregistered departures (definitive returns to countries of origin)

Although these limitations sometimes make the use of these data quite risky, it should however be noted that, according to the officials in Algeria and in Tunisia, parallels between registration data and data of local authorities in the host countries have not shown major differences. The differences that have been signalled are ascribed to people with dual nationality. These comparisons performed on the basis of global figures without a marking off of each national may reveal to be little rigorous, in particular insofar as double counts and omissions can compensate each other.

In Morocco, the comparison of figures provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1995) with those from Eurostat (1993)<sup>11</sup> concerning some countries with a high concentration of Moroccan nationals (see table 2 in annexe) show, on the whole, a certain agreement, except for the case of Spain (see annexe). According to the Anuario Estadístico for 1996, figures from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (100,000) appear overestimated, while those from Eurostat (54,000) seem underestimated. This yearbook provides a figure of about 75,000 for 1995. However, it should also be said that the regularisation process of illegal Moroccans, which started in 1991 and which led to the regularisation of 49,156 Moroccans, might play a role in these discrepancies. Having said that, it should be stressed that the services of the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs do not limit themselves to figures coming from registrations, which are sometimes replaced by the census data of the host countries (see table 1 in annexe). Moreover, when statistics on illegal immigrants and naturalisations exist, consular services include them in the tabulations made.

Furthermore, by analysing the detailed figures by consular post, we have found that the data provided by them are not uniform: some posts only show some global figures, whereas some others provide some details (distribution by sex and by age).

## **5.2. Paths towards the improvement of consular statistics**

It is certainly difficult to provide appropriate solutions to various types of anomaly found in this way. However, knowing the infatuation noted in Maghreb countries for this statistics, it would be opportune that their use be accompanied by the necessary precautions and that efforts be made in order to improve quality. In our opinion, the suggestions below appear to satisfy this double concern:

- The first is automation (Morocco), or the pursuit of automation (Tunisia, Algeria) of registers. The centralisation of information at the level of services of Foreign Affairs would enable to audit these registers, in particular by doing away with double counts.

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<sup>10</sup> We have however noted that Moroccan consular statistics mention figures concerning illegal migrants. For 1997 : 70,000 (Belgium), 11,604 (Spain), 13,000 (Germany), 15,000 (Italy), 12,000 (Netherlands); these figures are clearly underestimated ... even more so since they are provided by only some consular post.

<sup>11</sup> Statistics in brief, population and social conditions, 1996.

- The creation of a permanent system for the updating of registers to take into consideration definitive departures and new arrivals. Compulsory administrative procedures of declaring departures and arrivals may be envisaged in this respect. However, the most important factor is that Maghreb nationals, apart from traditional services, should have their own reasons for going to the consulates. The creation of information and help points for Maghreb nationals abroad within consulates may be considerably useful in this respect.
- From time to time, some consulates of Maghreb countries launch information and awareness campaigns in the Maghreb community. These campaigns will be all the more effective when they are generalised and they affiliate different NGO's dealing with Maghreb natives.
- The permanent co-ordination between local authorities of the host countries and consulates of Maghreb countries should allow them to regularly compare the registers at their disposal with files of the authorities of host countries. The results of the censuses carried out in these countries may also be useful for comparison purposes<sup>12</sup>.
- As far as the publishing of data is concerned, it would be interesting if consulates provided on a yearly basis not only global figures, figures on newly registered people and departures, but also their demographic, social and professional characteristics. The data thus presented would be very useful, all the more so in that they can be compared to those coming from other sources.
- The improvement of consular statistics requires first of all the involvement of the NSI's of Maghreb countries in the monitoring and the analysis of these statistics. This involves in particular the establishment of a permanent co-ordination with the services of the Ministry of foreign affairs in order to have these data regularly at their disposal and to analyse them by comparing them with data coming from other sources.

## **VI. Conclusions**

The interest of Maghreb countries for migration statistics seems to be restricted basically to two types of data which meet some priority economic and social needs. These are namely statistics on travellers, which provide interesting information in the tourist field, and consular statistics, which highlight the potential of Moroccans residing abroad who, through fund transfers, can contribute to the to balance the balance of payments and to improve the living standards of a sizeable section of the population.

The realisation of the MED-MIGR project has led to the increase the awareness of NSI's and various other bodies concerned not only about the possibilities to improve the quality of these two types of data, but also about the existence of a wide range of potential sources, whose use would require only a few simple adjustments. In this respect, the project already provides the necessary technical support.

The diagnosis made within the framework of this project has led to the identification of several data sources, actual and potential, on international migrations in Maghreb countries. Among administrative sources, border cards and residence permits have shown to be the most promising and, among statistical sources, the census - in spite of rareness - remains the most certain occasion to have exhaustive information on stocks and flows.

As concerns the census, which is carried out every ten years in each country, the required questions to get information on migrations are introduced in the main questionnaire. They are namely questions about the place of birth, the nationality and the place of residence x years before the census. However, their use is still very much partial. Thanks to MED-MIGR, some important

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<sup>12</sup> It has been noted in the case of Moroccan consulates in particular that when the data of censuses exist, they sometimes replace consular data in the tabulation realised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

progress has been made in this respect in the three countries, resulting in the use of previous censuses and in a greater attention towards the issue of international migrations during various large-scale statistical operations (like, for example, the mini-census in Tunisia).

The next censuses (of 2004 in Tunisia, of 2002 in Morocco and of 2008 in Algeria) should represent the occasion to have detailed information available on stocks and immigrations and indeed to introduce a module on departures abroad, which would enable the creation of a survey base for post-census survey on migrations.

Maghreb's NSI's will therefore be able to design a specific tabulation international migrations, which will be included in the global tabulation plan of the census.

The concern with conformity with international recommendations in the field of censuses calls for the ability to register long-term migrations by comparing the present place of residence with the place of residence a year before the census. Similarly, it also requires additional instructions, which would improve the apprehension of the country of birth/of residence and of citizenship.

As concerns consular statistics, which are indeed far from perfect, their advantage is that they exist and that they are widely used in the context of the near shortage of migration data. The role of statisticians and demographers is to get the most out of them, by getting involved in their production and in the popularisation of the necessary precautions, which should always accompany their use.

## Annex

**Table 1. Moroccan community in Europe  
1995 statistics**

Country	Men	Women	Children	Total	Naturalised (*)	Illegal (*)
France	270,000	175,852	229,654	<b>686,177</b>	37.000	6,214
The Netherlands				<b>164,546</b>		
Belgium	47,000	35,000	53,000	<b>135,818</b>	60.000	35,000
Spain				<b>101,818</b>		
Italy	76,204	16,137		<b>92,341</b>		
Germany	45,000	24,000	17,000	<b>86,054</b>		13,000
Great Britain				<b>25,000(**)</b>		
Switzerland				<b>5,517</b>		150
Sweden	3,800	1,500	200	<b>5,500</b>		20
Denmark				<b>4,622</b>		
Finland	570	50	40	<b>660</b>		10
Austria	437	115		<b>552</b>		
Portugal	332	99	7	<b>438</b>		40
Romania	293	118		<b>411</b>		100
Luxembourg	69	103	29	<b>201</b>		
Greece						
Poland	97	76		<b>173</b>		407
Bulgaria	91	21	18	<b>130</b>		
Ireland	69	17	6	<b>92</b>		52
Czech Republic	32	4	20	<b>56</b>		10
Turkey	52	3		<b>55</b>		10
Hungary	14	24		<b>38</b>		40
Cyprus	21	3		<b>24</b>		
Slovakia	15	4		<b>19</b>		
	11	3		<b>14</b>		
<b>Total</b>				<b>1,310,256</b>		

Source : Ministry of foreign affairs

(\*) Partial data

(\*\*) Census

**Table 2. Moroccan residents in some European countries according to the Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs (95) and Eurostat (93)  
(In thousands)**

Country	EUROSTAT (93)	Foreign Affairs (95)
France	572.7 (*)	686.2
The Netherlands	165.1	164.5
Belgium	145.0	135.8
Italy	95.6	92.3
Germany	80.3	86.1
Spain	54.1	101.8

Sources: Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1995, Eurostat 1993.

(\*) 1990 Census