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CHALLENGES IN DEFINING AND MEASURING DIFFICULT-TO-COUNT
MIGRANTS

**THE USE OF TIME STAMPS FOR MEASURING SHORT-TERM MIGRANTS IN
AUSTRIAN MIGRATION STATISTICS***

Submitted by Statistics Austria (Directorate of Population)¹

I. INTRODUCTION

1. National Statistical Offices in the EU produce statistics on migration, which are closely linked to concepts and definitions used in corresponding national administrative systems. As a result, the lack of standardization in measuring demographic events is a key source of inconsistency in migration statistics between most countries worldwide. Thus, the harmonization of flow and stock data for all territorial units remains a major task of National Statistical Institutes.

2. The European Commission conformingly has introduced legislation to improve the availability and harmonisation of migration statistics within the EU. Given existent differences in

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data sources and administrative systems for migration between the Member States, the regulation on migration statistics in a first step accordingly focuses on the adoption of harmonised definitions rather than on defining specific methods and data sources.

3. In principle, population statistics refer to the concept of residential population ("permanent residents") which identifies the number of inhabitants at a certain time-point (e.g. 1st January of each year) vicariously for a time-period (annual average). However, this poses problems for the adequate recording of population groups who don't have a principal domicile in the country (or in the municipality) during the complete reference period.

4. This has statistical implications on the population stock at a specific time-point as well as on the classification of migration within the reference period, which require additional conditions in the definitions. For example, in some countries the intended length of stay is used to determine, whether a person be a long-term migrant or not. Other countries refer to the expiry date of a residence/work permit issued when entering the country. However, these criteria may not record the actual length of stay, as one's intentions might change in due course or people might stay shorter or longer in the country of destination than they are legally entitled to.

5. A possibility for approximating the actual length of stay lies in using the records from a registration system. Though not completely avoiding delays in deregistration (especially when a person leaves without de-registration and is only de-registered by means of an ex post administrative intervention), this at least depicts an "administrative reality" of registered residences of a person and thus represents an "official" figure, that is in line with administrative systems.

II. DEFINITIONS OF DURATION FOR RESIDENTS AND MIGRATION

6. Starting in 2002, Austria has introduced a register of residences. Population stock and migration flows are derived under identical criteria from registrations and de-registrations of main residences, which are mandatory by Austrian law. Thus Austria is now able to display consistently the population size and all migratory flows for all territorial units at any given moment.

7. Austria has decided to use the information from the population register on the residence duration to classify population stocks ("Permanent Residents") and migration flows. This classification is based on the "1998 UN Recommendations on Statistics of International

Migration”², which offer a distinction of migration depending on the (intended or registered) duration of stay:

- a) Temporary stayers: 0 to 90 days;
- b) Short term migration: 91 to 365 days and
- c) Long term migration: 366 days and longer.

8. Pursuant to these recommendations, a threshold of 90 days of a registered usual place of residence in Austria has been set as minimum for the inclusion of a person in population and migration statistics. In principle, the register would allow for the application of any time span for the length of registration to define the usually resident population as well as migration flows.

9. This allows Austria to fulfil the requirements of the EU regulation on migration statistics, which so far puts the focus on long-term migration. However, using the recorded length of stay to determine the number of long-term migrants requires the publication of data to wait for at least another year. This is necessary to ensure that all de-registrations within twelve months after the end of the reference period/date are included in the calculation of migration flows and population stocks. Yet, the current schedule for data delivery of twelve months does not allow time to process the data, thus rendering estimations necessary.

III. THE IMPACT OF SHORT- AND LONG-TERM MIGRATION IN AUSTRIA

10. As to date, information on short and long term migrations in Austria are available for the reporting years 2003-2005. Data for 2006 will be available by the end of May 2008, once final data for 2007 has been processed.

11. In terms of all immigrations occurring during 2003-2005, about three fifths were still registered in Austria after one year and could thus be considered long-term migrants. About 20% de-registered their main residence in Austria within a period of three months and had thus only a temporary stay in Austria. The rest of a further fifth could be classified as short-term migrants, because they de-registered between three and twelve months after they first had established a main residence in Austria.

12. For emigrations the share of long-term migrants was even lower: just only half of all persons that (were) de-registered had been registered for more than one year in Austria. The share of temporary stayers was at 27%, while 23% could be considered as short-term migrants.

² United Nations (1998b): Recommendations on Statistics of international Migration, Revision 1, Statistical Series M, No. 58, Rev.1, New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division.

13. As far as the impact of migration flows is concerned, more than 90% of the migration balance is made up of long-term migrants, while the rest are short-term migrants. Not surprisingly, in- and out-flows of temporary stayers largely cancel each other out, so that their migration balance is negligible.

Austria 2003/2005	immigration		emigration		net-migration	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Registered Migrations	146.475	100,0	101.864	100,0	44.611	100,0
of which:						
Temporary Stayers (≤ 90 days)	26.883	18,4	27.622	27,1	-739	-1,6
Short-Term Migration (91-365 days)	28.737	19,6	23.866	23,4	4.871	10,9
Long-Term Migration (>365 days)	90.855	62,0	50.376	49,5	40.479	90,7
Migration statistics (STM + LTM)	119.592	81,6	74.242	72,9	45.350	101,6

14. These figures show, that as far as the migration impact is concerned, short-term migrations are not very significant. When it comes to migration flows, however, focusing on long-term migration would leave out a very significant component of the total picture.

15. Yet, it has to be admitted that excluding temporary stayers at first sight also reduces greatly the number of migration flows. However, one has to bear in mind, that any EU citizen or permanent resident might stay in any Member State without registration for three months at the longest. Thus registration data on temporary stayers will only partially cover the number of persons migrating for less than three months. Their exclusion from migration statistics seem thus necessary, as there are no checks on the reliability of the data.

16. On the other hand, the inclusion of short-term migrants in migration statistics does seem reasonable. It offers much insight in circular migration patterns (e.g. seasonal workers in tourism and agriculture) and does not change the migration impact very much.

17. Furthermore, the inclusion of short-term migrants in migration statistics allows much quicker publication of data. Registration data including all persons staying for more than three months is available three months after the end of the reference period. Taking into account some time for data processing, final data on migration flows and population stocks are usually available four months after the end of the reference period.

IV. THE USE OF OTHER SOURCES TO MEASURE SHORT-TERM MIGRATION IN AUSTRIA – POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS

18. Another possibility to determine the number of short-term migrants is through the number of permits issued with limited validity. In Austria, the Ministry of Interior publishes monthly and annual figures on the number of permits issued. These include the number of permits issued for the first time, prolongations of permits already issued and changes of purpose of permits already issued. These statistics are disaggregated by nationality.

19. However, the validity of permits does not offer any information on the actual length of stay in Austria, nor about the place of residence. The only indication for the length of stay is the maximum validity of permits for different purposes as defined by national law. In addition, the permits do not include any PIN to link them with registration register. Thus only the overall figures might be compared between the two sources. A linkage on an individual level, that would for example lead to automatic de-registration of persons whose permit has expired, is not possible.

20. In addition, there is currently no information available on the number of permits issued in a reference year to EU-/EWR- and Swiss citizens. Statistics so far include only figures on the total number of valid permits at a reference date. As a consequence permit statistics may only be compared to the number of immigrating third-country nationals.

Accorded residence permits and asylum applications in 2002-2006

Type of residence permit	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
First-time settlement allowances (unlimited)					
Subject to a quota (a)	4.069	6.258	5.138	8.027	6.596
outside the quota (b)	12.664	25.908	26.697	26.537	20.570
of which: relatives of Austrian nationals	8.595	23.444	23.308	22.701	18.054
Residence permits (limited)					
First-time permits (c)	6.613	21.200	32.209	35.405	38.801
of which: persons in temporary employment / seasonal workers ¹⁾		9.973	15.718	17.384	19.797
Residence visa D+C (d)	10.711
Applications for asylum²⁾ (e)	13.349	22.461	24.634	32.359	39.354
total (Sum of a-e)	47.406	75.827	88.678	102.328	105.321
Immigration according to Migration Statistics³⁾	100.972	117.822	127.399	113.554	113.165
Austrian Nationals	15.588	16.367	18.452	16.390	20.598
Foreigners	85.384	101.455	108.947	97.164	92.567
of which: EU-14	23.387	22.277	19.888	16.913	14.222
EU-10 (Accession 2004)	15.711	16.673	16.310
Third-Country-Nationals	46.286	62.505	72.749	80.251	78.345

Source: Ministry of Interior (Statistics on Asylum und Foreigners); Statistics Austria (Migration Statistics 2000-2006). - ¹⁾ from 2006 replaced with Residence Visa (D+C). - ²⁾ incl. applications made abroad. - ³⁾ from 2004 incl. asylum seekers registered in Austria

21. Further limitations in comparability arise from the fact that a large part of applications for asylum are filed from abroad. Thus many asylum seekers do not actually reside in Austria. On the other hand, asylum seekers are to an unknown share not included in migration statistics due to violations of their mandatory registration by house-keepers.

22. Concerning the number of residence visa (before 2006: seasonal work permits), which allow to work in Austria for up to six months, a large part of these are issued to EU citizens from countries with restrictions on the free movement of workers. Thus up to a certain amount permit statistics do also include people from other EU member states. Seasonal migration is very important for Austria due to its relevance for tourism.

23. For the time being, the comparability of permit statistics and the registration register rests quite limited. Some improvements may be possible once further administrative registers (e.g. the foreigners' information system) become operational in the near future.

V. CONCLUSION

24. This paper attempted to discuss the size and impact of short-term migration flows in Austria. It also offers some insights on what information on short-term migration might actually be available through administrative data.

25. The use of administrative systems offers promising opportunities for migration statistics, albeit some constraints might arise from them not being specifically designed for statistical purposes. In addition, the feasibility of time-limits has to be seen in view of distinct legal frameworks for recording migration in different countries.

26. When thinking about the inclusion of short-term migrants in migration statistics attention should also be paid to keep a concise system of demographic monitoring. This means that common statistical criteria should apply to both migration flows and population stocks. In this context it is important to underline that the inclusion of short-term migrants would have a significant impact on the size of migration flows, while the impact on the population stock (through the migration balance) would be less noticeable.

27. Another important issue is the consistency of migration statistics with other demographic data. This concerns above all the harmonisation of definitions to be used in censuses, which will otherwise lead to the publication of contradicting figures, especially when disaggregated on a regional level.

28. The integration of different data sources to improve the quality of migration statistics needs to overcome obstacles resulting from different statistical designs. This means that data

producers should be linked more intensively in order to better understand the rationale behind administrative procedures preceding the preparation of statistics.

29. Statistical proceeding of short-term migrants should also take into account the legal framework for the sojourns of foreigners. Current legislation of the European Union allows for a stay in a member state without registration of three months at most. It would thus seem reasonable to use this threshold also for statistical purposes, so that no adjustments of administrative procedures would be necessary.

30. Statistics on short-term migration should be provided under harmonised criteria on a European level. This may be done by means of a progressive extension of the statistical coverage under the EU regulation.
