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SELECTED METHODS TO IMPROVE EMIGRATION ESTIMATES

MEASURING UNDECLARED MIGRATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS BY STATISTICS LITHUANIA*

Submitted by Statistics Lithuania

ABSTRACT

1. The paper reviews the efforts and work undertaken by Statistics Lithuania on improving and developing international migration statistics, particularly the use of a household survey for the evaluation of migration flows.
2. Despite the fact that Statistics Lithuania used the data of the Population Register for demographic and, particularly, for migration statistics, the official register-based statistics did not reflect the real situation. Combination of household surveys and various administrative sources, use of statistical methods enable to improve the quality of Lithuanian international migration statistics.
3. Statistics Lithuania carried out an Undeclared Emigration Survey, which enabled to assess the number of residents of the country who unofficially departed from the country during

* This paper has been prepared by Dalia Ambrozaitienė at the invitation of the secretariat.

the period of 2001–2006. The survey results show that only every second/third resident of Lithuania declares his/her departure when emigrating.

4. In the year 2008, Statistics Lithuania will carry out a pilot Immigration Survey, based on the Labour Force Survey. The survey will enable to assess undeclared immigration, in particular, focussing on the assessment of undeclared return migration since emigrants (citizens of Lithuania) who have not declared their departure come back to the country.

5. Complexity of the issue and a variety of solutions to be addressed stimulate Statistics Lithuania to proceed with the improvement actions of international migration statistics and its integration into demographic statistics and consider it as one of the priorities for the coming years.

I. NEW DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS IN LITHUANIA

6. Free movement of persons of the enlarged EU and mobility of the population (in particular, the abolition of the border control in the Schengen area) is a growing phenomenon and fundamental characteristic of modern, globalising society. Statisticians in Europe and all over the world are looking for solutions to develop comprehensive tools to measure migration processes and assess the impact of the international migration on the world and every country specifically.

7. One of the important tasks for every National Statistical Institute is to reflect the international migrants' stocks and flows, their demographic and socio-economic characteristics, to estimate the number of the resident population at the regional and local level, the changing structure and composition of the population, situation in the labour market due to such migration processes as the integration of migrants, etc. The newly passed Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on migration and international protection provides for a framework for the further development of migration statistics. The legal basis is a good tool to harmonise the definitions of international migration statistics across EU countries, to define the data sources and quality standards.

8. Migration is considered to be one of the key challenges to Lithuania's demographic development, growth of the economy and preservation of the national cultural identity. Since the borders opened in the 1990s, about 447 thous. persons emigrated from Lithuania (Statistics Lithuania's estimation for 1990–2006), while immigration made 87 thous. Over the said period, negative net migration made 360 thous. persons. This is one of the highest emigration rates in the EU Member States, which represents about 15 per cent of the total population of Lithuania.

9. Despite the fact that Statistics Lithuania used the data of the Population Register for demographic and, particularly, for migration statistics (every person must declare the place of his/her usual residence), the official register-based (according to the declaration of the place of residence) statistics did not reflect the real situation. A significant share of emigrants does not declare their emigration, and this undeclared emigration is much more difficult to estimate if compared with the flows of immigrants.

10. Therefore, the improvement of the availability and quality of statistics on emigration in order to reflect the real situation, impact of migration on the demographic structure of the population, changes due to migration in the country's social and economic situation is one of the main priorities of Statistics Lithuania.

11. Previously, up to the year 2006, international migration statistics produced by Statistics Lithuania were based on the data of the central database of the Population Register, which includes personal data on the Lithuanian residents, their departures and arrivals as indicated in the declarations, i.e. data on migrants who declare their departure/arrival. Official statistics covers persons who leave Lithuania or arrive to Lithuania with the intention to take up permanent residence or for a period longer than 6 months (according to the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Place of Residence) and foreigners who have temporary residence permits for 1 year and longer) and declare the place of the residence.

12. However, even though required by the Lithuania's legislation, not all Lithuanian residents declare their departure when they leave the country. Therefore, it is not enough to rely on the Population Register as the only data source. Other administrative data sources (such as the State Social Insurance Fund's database, tax records, etc.) have to be used in order to improve quality of migration flows and stocks assessments. Statistics Lithuania has the right to use different administrative data sources for statistical purposes and actively uses them. However, even the combination of administrative data sources does not allow achieving sufficient quality of emigration statistics due to deficiencies in them. Other ways and tools have to be introduced.

II. MEASURING UNDECLARED EMIGRATION

13. Statistics Lithuania decided to launch a Survey on Undeclared Emigration in 2005. A methodology for the estimation of undeclared emigration flows was elaborated. The methodology was aimed at determining the method of data collection and assessing the undeclared international migration flows and socio-economic characteristics of emigrants. It was based on a simple assumption that personal records of the emigrants who have not declared their departure are available in the database of the Population Register with any changes. Therefore, such persons could be sampled for household surveys.

14. It has been decided to use a framework of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) by supplementing it with a module on undeclared emigration including questions about persons who emigrated, their main demographic and social characteristics (new country of residence, how many years/months ago s/he left Lithuania; age, sex, educational attainment and occupation before leaving, current status (worker, student, other)).

15. As for the LFS, the number of employed persons, the unemployed, inactive persons and, additionally, emigrants who have not declared their departure had to be estimated using auxiliary information from the Statistics Lithuania's demographic statistics database (population number by municipalities, breakdown of the population by sex, age group and urban/rural areas) according to the following assumption:

Residents of Lithuania = employed population + unemployed population + inactive population + emigrants who have not declared their departure.

The Undeclared Emigration Survey was for the first time carried out in the first quarter of 2006. The questions were formulated in such a way that allowed the estimation of undeclared emigration in the period of 2001–2005 (undeclared emigration before 2001 was assessed earlier based on the results of the Population and Housing Census 2001).

16. The questionnaires were filled in by a face-to-face interview method. Data on the household members who left Lithuania without declaring were collected from the interviewed persons. If no one lived at the sampled address, an interviewer (if there were possibilities) asked the neighbours to indicate the reason for non-response to the questionnaire. One of the non-response reasons was “Left Lithuania (to work, live abroad)”. In case of such an answer, the appended module questionnaire was filled in by interviewing the neighbour of a sampled person.

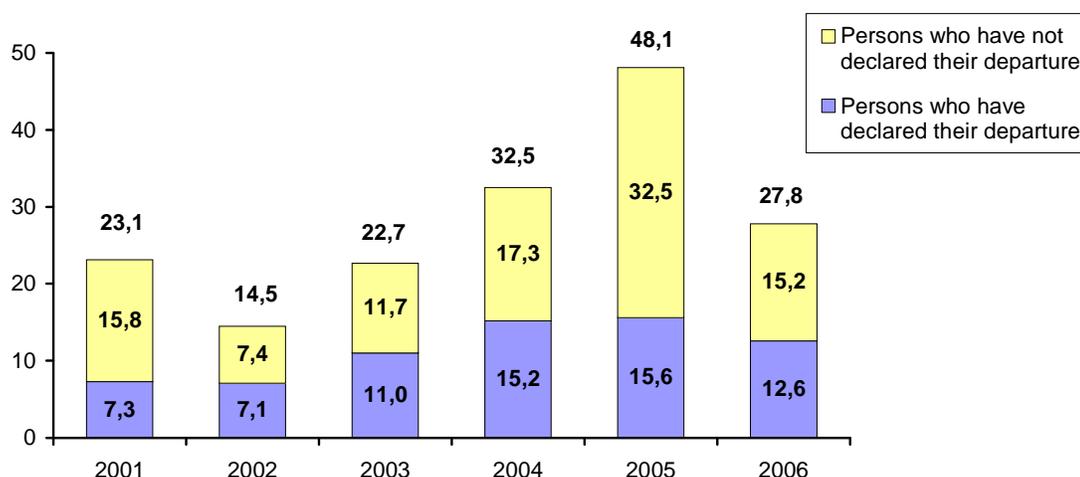
17. After the fieldwork, a database of the Undeclared Emigration Survey was prepared and coded; a sampling method (calibration) was used for the evaluation of those who left Lithuania in the period of 2001–2005 (the estimated time of departure was 12 months and longer). In order to ensure better quality of the survey, the data obtained were compared (at the personal level preserving confidentiality rules) with the administrative data sources: Population Register and the State Social Insurance Fund’s database.

18. The accuracy of the survey results was sufficient for the estimation of the number of the population who have not declared their departure over five years; however, coefficients of variation of indicator’s estimates for each year 2001, 2002, and 2003 were quite high. The reason for that might be related with difficulties for the interviewed person to remember the exact year of departure of the household member or a neighbour.

19. The Survey on Undeclared Emigration was repeated in the year 2007. The methodology of the survey (including the questionnaire) was further developed reflecting user needs and statisticians’ experiences on the previous survey. More attention was paid to the causes and consequences of emigration as well as questions on emigrants. Their socio-economic characteristics were included in the survey questionnaire, and these kinds of evaluations were more exhaustive for different needs of social statistics (new questions concerning the reason of emigration: to study, to work, for business, for family reunion, and other reasons). New questions concerning family behaviour (whether the whole family left or whether children went abroad with one of the parents; if both parents emigrated, who takes care of the children (grandparents, other relatives, etc.)) were added. The sample of the survey was increased as well (the survey was carried out in the first quarter; about 5.5 thous. persons were interviewed, and about 500 filled in the questionnaires obtained). The results of the 2007 Undeclared Emigration Survey were of better quality if compared with the previous one; however, there is still room for improvement.

20. The results of both surveys revealed that only each second/-third resident of Lithuania declares his/her departure when emigrating.

Emigration flows from Lithuania, 2001–2006 ¹
Population, thousand



¹ Evaluation based on the Undeclared Emigration Survey and the data of the declaration of the place of residence (Population Register's database).

21. Linking different administrative data sources with the micro records of the Survey allowed estimating the total (declared and undeclared) emigration flows for the years 2001–2006 and main socio-economic characteristics of emigrants (employment status, educational attainment, occupation before the emigration, etc.). The results of the survey questionnaire (questions concerning the reason of emigration, family behaviour (transnational families)), and these kinds of evaluations were more exhaustive for different needs of social statistics.

22. The results of the surveys were published: a press release was prepared, a detailed survey report and estimation of the errors of results were placed on the website of Statistics Lithuania. Society at large, especially politicians and the academic society (demographers, researchers), were active users of the Undeclared Emigration Survey results.

23. The estimated total number of emigration flows is used very broadly in the Lithuanian society and by international experts of migration processes. Despite various expert opinions that this estimated figure is used additionally to register-based demographic and international migration statistics, there is a great need to develop specific studies how to integrate those statistical estimates.

III. IMPROVING OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS IN THE YEAR 2008

24. Statistics Lithuania continues household surveys (based on LFS with special modules on undeclared migration). The methodology for the Undeclared Emigration Survey for the 2008 survey (including the questionnaire) was further developed reflecting user needs and statisticians' experiences. For the year 2008, the sample will be increased to 7 thousand

households (0.7 per cent of the total population) per quarter. This will allow achieving better quality of results of the estimation of undeclared emigration flows for the year 2007 particularly, and variables related with socio-economic characteristics of those persons who left the country more than 12 months ago. There should be the first general pilot study on how to estimate the number of “transnational families”. A questionnaire was developed: additional questions (did the spouse, partner, and child (children) emigrate as well; who (one of the parents, grandparents, relatives, and friends) takes care of the child (children) who was left in Lithuania)).

25. The additional Immigration Survey focusing on the assessment of undeclared return migration flows (since more and more emigrants who have not declared their departure come back to Lithuania) is developed. A pilot survey will be conducted in the first half of 2008, in connection with the Labour Force Survey, as this is a usual practise.

26. The survey results will enable to estimate re-immigrants who have not declared their arrival (and those who have not declared their departure previously), their demographic, socio-economic characteristics as well as the main reasons for returning back to Lithuania (homesick; earned enough money; hard to adapt to (integrate into) a foreign society; lost a job/did not find the desired job; better opportunities to find a job and earn good wage in Lithuania; finished studies; family reasons; health problems).

Moreover, respondents will be asked questions to figure out the following:

- a) whether the respondent lived/worked abroad for longer than 12 months; year of the last departure from Lithuania;
- b) year of the last arrival to/departure from Lithuania;
- c) the country from which the respondent arrived;
- d) what the respondent did abroad (worked, studied, other);
- e) what job s/he had abroad (occupation);
- f) migration intention (whether the respondent plans to emigrate or not).

27. The results of the Immigration Survey will be available in September 2008. The specialists of Statistics Lithuania and demographers will analyse the quality of the results obtained. Then it will be possible to estimate whether the household survey served the purpose – to estimate the number and the main characteristics of return migrants. Then, the decision will be made on how the data on unofficial return migration would be integrated into international migration and demographic statistics.

28. In 2008, Lithuania, as other EU countries, in pursuance of Commission Regulation (EC) No. 102/2007, will carry out a survey on the labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants. The population aged 15–74 will be interviewed. In the course of the survey, the situation of immigrants and their offspring on the labour market as well as reasons of immigration will be assessed (employment, study, international protection, family reunification, family formation, etc.). Up to 2008, the number of immigrants in Lithuania was low. Based on the LFS data, the number of persons aged 15 and older who were born in other country in 2007 in Lithuania made 5 per cent. However, in the previous years, due to rather considerable migration and lack of the labour force, more and more foreigners join the Lithuanian labour market.

IV. FUTURE WORK ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS IN LITHUANIA

29. In the Strategy of Statistics Lithuania for 2007–2012 it is mentioned that the improvement of the quality of international migration statistics remains a top priority which will be displayed in a number of concrete improvement actions:

- a) To continue the surveys for the evaluation of undeclared emigration flows in future. This will allow achieving better quality of variables related with socio-economic characteristics of unofficial emigrants (age, sex, educational attainment, occupation, etc.) as well;
- b) To conduct surveys which will enable to assess undeclared immigration, in particular, focusing on the assessment of undeclared return migration flows since more and more emigrants who have not declared their departure come back to Lithuania;
- c) One of the biggest challenges faced by the demographers of Statistics Lithuania is the integration of assessments of undeclared migration flows into the common migration flows (declared and undeclared departures and arrivals) as well as demographic statistics (to recalculate the number of population, composition by age, sex and territorial administrative units). Currently, discussions are undergoing with demographers and researchers whether this task should be implemented before or after the 2011 Population and Housing Census. In any case, the surveys on undeclared migration flows will serve to make the population number between the 2001 and 2011 censuses more accurate;
- d) Statistics Lithuania considers a possibility to create a Statistical Population (Individuals') Register to be maintained by Statistics Lithuania (currently, the Residents' Register is administered by an institution accountable to the Ministry of the Interior);
- e) Statistics Lithuania has already started the preparatory works for the Population and Housing Census 2011. The topic of migration is the high priority in this issue. We expect that the census results will provide a possibility to evaluate the number of the usual resident population of the country during the inter-censal period and to evaluate the number of migrants in the country.

V. CONCLUSIONS

30. Statistics Lithuania looks for the best solutions aimed at further development of international migration statistics in order to reflect the real situation, real flows and stocks of migrant population and to integrate migration statistics into demographics statistics.

31. Due to the increased migration flows, quality of administrative data sources is often insufficient to meet statisticians' needs. In such cases, while estimating migration flows, it is necessary to combine the data obtained from these sources with the data of household surveys. This practise has been already introduced in Lithuania for few recent years.

32. Other important tasks for Statistics Lithuania: to improve the quality of migration statistics, statistical information on migration will be comparable between the EU Members States and will allow a more comprehensive statistical analysis of migration processes, produce impact of emigration on the demographic structure of the population, changes due to emigration in the country's social and economic situation.

33. The closer co-operation between countries and sharing the experiences on international migration statistics issues including data on migrants could contribute to the improvement of the quality of international migration statistics and satisfy increasing user needs.

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