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Joint ECE-EUROSTAT work session
on Migration Statistics*
(Geneva, 8-10 May 2000)

Topic 2

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE
IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES AND STATISTICS NORWAY.

Summary

Supporting paper by Statistics Norway^{1/}

1. The first part of this paper describes the way Statistics Norway has tried to utilize data received directly from the Directorate of Immigration (DI) since the beginning of the 1990s. The main focus, however, is on the new developments in the DI the recent years and the current process of establishing a new register of foreigners. The involvement of Statistics Norway in this process will be explained. The new register will not be completed until the autumn of 2001, but the prospects so far are promising.

2. The main reason that Statistics Norway is concerned with the DI is the possibility to get data suitable for producing statistics on 'reason for (the first) immigration'. In addition there is other interesting information of less importance or of less relevance for migration statistics.

1/ Prepared by Kåre Vassenden.

* The documentation for this work session will be processed as for seminars.

Background

3. The DI was established in 1988, and at the same time its two registers came into function: The "foreign control" register (called Fremkon) and the Refugee Register. Fremkon is a register for handling of all affairs related to foreigners (non-Nordic citizens), including e.g. applications for visas or permits of stay. This register is first of all a register of cases. The Refugee register contains all refugees and is used for the integration work. The establishing of these registers took place before the new Act of Statistics came into force in 1989, and that may be one reason that Statistics Norway was not involved. When Statistics Norway got the first contacts with the new Directorate, we soon discovered that the registers and the systems around them could have been more harmonised with the population registration system and the needs of official statistics.

4. One of the drawbacks was that the National Personal Identification Number (PIN) was not included among the variables. Both registers had only the special identification number for foreigners (the Fremkon number) as main identification. In the beginning of the 1990s PINs were linked to a majority of the foreigners in the DI registers.

5. In 1993-1995 Statistics Norway conducted a project where extracts from the two DI registers were linked with population data in Statistics Norway. The work was demanding, because the data from the DI did not have a sufficient quality and suitability for such a project. Nevertheless, the first statistics from Statistics Norway about reason for immigration were published in March 1995. It covered immigrations by non-Nordic citizens 1990-1993 and the stock of refugees as of 1 January 1994.

The variable 'reason for immigration'

6. The developed variable was given these values at the broad level:

1. Flight (refugees)
2. Work
3. Schooling, training
4. Family reasons
5. Other reasons

7. On more detailed levels of the variable the coverage of data was less complete than one could wish. Asylum-seekers for instance were identified in data only from april 1988 and onwards, while refugees who had arrived earlier were selected in a simple way with the help of nationality and year of entry. Concerning family reasons, the reason for immigration of the receiving person in Norway was registered if possible. That way it was possible to distinguish between family reunifications with refugees and other family reunifications.

8. One conclusion from the project was that it was too costly to repeat the total updating on an annual basis. Before that could happen major improvements in the DI registers had to take place. In the meantime it was chosen to just update the file of reason for immigration in a simple way by linking new versions of the Refugee Register. In that way only the distinction between refugees and non-refugees was updated. Luckily, in the following years the demand for data concentrated on exactly this distinction.

The project for a new register of foreigners

9. In 1997 the DI started the work to establish quite a new and modern register. The new register should replace both the Fremkon and Refugee Register. Now Statistics Norway was, according to the Act of Statistics, informed and invited to contribute with know-how and requirements. In august 1999 a working group started to discuss how the variables in the new register should be designed. The group consisted of representatives from the DI, the Police, the responsible IT-firm and Statistics Norway. For Statistics Norway the work was intensive until November. After that the other participants have continued to formulate the detailed specifications.

10. During the spring of 2000 the IT firm will do the programming and the necessary testing. In the autumn the work will concentrate on a module that is not very interesting from a statistical point of view. Then early in 2001 the so-called statistics module will be on the agenda, and Statistics Norway will once again be invited to take part. The aim of this work will be to establish a separate system for extracting data created by the daily work in the DI. Every night the relevant data will be transferred to an Oracle base suitable for storing statistics data. From this data base Statistics Norway in the future will receive selected data from the immigration authorities.

11. So far Statistics Norway has achieved a lot in this project. First of all we have, together with the IT specialists, introduced good principles for structuring variables and handling data. Generally we have represented and explained the needs of statistics, in alliance with similar needs within DI. While the present Fremkon register is constructed to suit only legal needs, the new system gives more weight to statistical needs. Identification numbers, both the special foreigners identification number and the national one, are dealt with in a systematic way.

12. The ideas of the variable 'reason for immigration' developed by Statistics Norway in 1995 were adopted by the working group. It means that in the new system the statistical reason for immigration or for applying for a residence permit will be registered on a broad level together with the legal information. Mostly the reason for immigration will be registered automatically when the executive officer chooses a preclassified legal code, but some detailed statistically interesting information will be registered even if this information has no legal relevance.

13. What kind of processing system Statistics Norway will establish in order to utilize the new data, remains to be seen.

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