

Distr.  
GENERAL

CES/SEM.42/9 (Summary)  
28 February 2000

ENGLISH  
Original: FRENCH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION  
and ECONOMIC COMMISSION  
FOR EUROPE

STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE  
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES  
(EUROSTAT)

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN  
STATISTICIANS

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

Topic 2

Rates of acquisition of refugee status in cohorts of  
asylum-seekers in France, 1990-1995

Summary

Invited paper by the National Institute for Demographic  
Studies (INED), France\*\*

1. The proportion of asylum-seekers recognized as refugees is often measured, for lack of an appropriate data-handling method, by the ratio between positive decisions in a given year and the total number of decisions in the same year. In periods when the number of requests fluctuates sharply, this transversal indicator presents problems as its variations give rise to selectivity phenomena in the decisions made in a particular year (for example, the administration will tend to rule on the most straightforward cases when demand is at a peak, and process the most difficult cases in subsequent years).

---

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

\*\* Prepared by Xavier THIERRY.

GE.00-30605 (E)

2. The French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA)<sup>1</sup> has provided us with a special programme for use with its database that allows us to make a longitudinal analysis of the path followed by asylum-seekers, while avoiding the pitfalls of the snapshot approach, from the time when the first request is made until the applicants have exhausted the main remedies (the Appeals and Review Board). In this way, one can calculate the proportion of applicants who are eventually recognized as refugees, whether they are recognized immediately or only after an initially negative decision has been overturned later on. These results concern three cohorts of applicants, formed between 1993 and 1995. By adding them to the results obtained by Michèle Tribalat for the 1990-1992 cohorts,<sup>2</sup> one can assess the contribution of longitudinal analysis on this subject, as compared with the more conventional period-based approach.

3. It has been possible to distinguish a new element concerning the children of refugees, who are entitled by law to acquire that status when they reach the age of majority (or 16 if they wish to work). Including them in the statistics of requests granted distorts the comparisons insofar as this family dimension of asylum varies according to the migrant flows. The higher the proportion of refugee children reaching adulthood, the higher the rate of requests granted in a given group of applicants. As the OFPRA database does not allow us to identify them, we have drawn a distinction between asylum-seekers under the age of 20 and those aged 20 or over, making this the dividing line between the children of refugees and first-generation refugees. Individuals aged below 20 today account for a quarter of Asian applicants. This partly explains why the rate of requests granted for all ages is higher in that group than in groups of other nationalities, particularly African groups, in which the great majority of requests are made by adults who left their country when they were already of adult age. Calculating the rate of requests granted in cohorts of foreigners aged over 20 will therefore allow us to gauge the phenomenon more accurately, independently of their legal rights.

4. The third objective of this paper is to present variations in rates of requests granted according to geographic origin. Here too, structural effects should be eliminated: nationals of several countries to which the cessation clause applies (Romania, Bulgaria) should not be confused with nationals whose exile can be justified by real persecution in their countries. Moreover, in order to ensure better international comparability between the asylum policies of the countries of the European Union, it is necessary to have available figures broken down by nationality, since the substantial differences between one host country and another as regards the composition of flows of asylum-seekers mean that the value of overgeneralized comparisons is considerably reduced.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides.

<sup>2</sup> Michèle Tribalat (1995), "Etude concernant les décisions de l'OFPRA", in "Liens culturels et intégration: Rapport au Premier Ministre", La Documentation Française.