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Improvements in use of administrative data for migration statistics**Improving the use of administrative data on migration statistics for policy development in the Republic of Moldova****Prepared by the Bureau on Migration and Asylum of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova***Abstract*

The document provides information on state migration policy priorities outlined in the strategic programmes of the Government of the Republic of Moldova.

We would like to note that the Republic of Moldova has been an Associate member of the European Union since 2014. Along with that, on June 23, 2022, at the EU summit, a decision was made to grant Moldova the status of an EU candidate, thus taking the cooperation in the field of managing migration flows and migration statistics to a new stage.

The main areas for improving statistics were reflected in the Strategy for the Development of the National Statistical System for 2015-2020.

In 2022, the Strategy for the Development of the National Statistical System for 2022-2030 was developed (at the stage of approval), which recognizes the central role of official statistics for public control, including providing high-quality and timely statistical data necessary for the development, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of economic, social and environmental policies, decisions of public authorities and business community, for scientific research, and informing the society in general.

The document also provides information on the Extended Migration Profile of the Republic of Moldova - one of the main tools for collecting and using data from various sources for measuring international migration and policy development policies.

NOTE: The designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

I. Introduction

1. The data of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the results of national surveys confirm the actual state of things and the severity of the problem of the mass migration outflow, as well as other migration issues (legal and illegal migration, readmission, reintegration, regulation of recruitment procedures, residence).
2. This motivates the Government of the Republic of Moldova to seek various measures aimed at minimizing the negative consequences of this phenomenon and turning migration into a positive factor in the economic and social development of the country.
3. The migration policy pursued by the Republic of Moldova is reflected in various national strategies, plans and programs that cover the areas of importance for the state. These include: National Strategy on Labour Force Employment Policies for 2017-2021, National Strategy for Migration and Asylum (2011-2020), Child Protection Strategy for 2014-2020, National Strategic Programme for the Demographic Security of the Republic of Moldova (2011-2025), Expatriate Community 2025 National Strategy, Integrating Migration into National Development Strategies programme, etc.

II. Public policy priorities regarding migration

4. The priorities of the public migration policy include the following: stimulating return migration, ensuring the rights of Moldovan migrants abroad (primarily representatives of labour migration) and improving their social status, creating a system of social protection of migrants in the Republic of Moldova; strengthening ties with the Moldovan expatriate community, assessing demographic risks and establishing criteria for their identification with due regard for migration processes, improving the efficiency of managing migration processes at the level of state structures, including improving the monitoring of migration flows, etc.
5. A comprehensive solution to these problems will make it possible to create an effective migration policy, which should become an integral part of the country's domestic and foreign policy, one of the priority areas for the activities of public authorities.
6. In 2022, the Strategy for the Development of the National Statistical System for 2022-2030 was developed (at the stage of approval), which recognizes the central role of official statistics for public control, including providing high-quality and timely statistical data necessary for the development, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of economic, social and environmental policies, decisions of public authorities and business community, for scientific research, and informing the society in general.
7. Besides, in 2022, the development of the National Migration and Asylum Plan 2023-2025 started. The plan is a national document designed to ensure the regulation of the movement and mobility of citizens in order to contribute to the growth of the welfare of the country's citizens, socio-economic development, ensuring the rights and social protection of migrants.

The Plan is also a unified tool for integrating the existing strategic framework and the harmonization of policies for the management of migration and asylum processes with the planning processes of various strategic activities in the Republic of Moldova.

8. For all priority areas the Plan aims to ensure the effective management of migration processes for the sustainable development of the country, reduce the undesirable consequences of migration,

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- reduce the level of irregular migration, and bring national policies in line with the European standards.
9. The decision of the European Union to grant Moldova the status of an EU candidate takes the cooperation between the countries to a new stage. In the field of migration, granting asylum and border management, the importance of regulating migration flows between territories, strengthening the existing comprehensive dialogue on all issues related to migration are emphasized.
 10. Besides, the need to develop cooperation on statistical issues, thus contributing to the achievement of the goal of providing timely, reliable and comparable statistical data was mentioned. A robust, efficient and professionally independent national statistical system is expected to provide useful information to the civil society, business community, and policy makers in the Republic of Moldova, enabling them to make informed decisions.
 11. The main objectives of the Plan are to provide a comprehensive regulation of the management of migration and asylum processes, bring the national legal framework in line with the provisions of international law and European Union legislation, regulate the movement of citizens, which will contribute to the socio-economic development of the country, its security and the achievement of goals for joining the European Union.
 12. The European Union migration policy is comprehensive and consists of three important components: combating illegal/irregular migration, labour migration and migration and development, which should be taken into account when developing long-term migration and asylum strategies.

The war in Ukraine led to large-scale socio-economic consequences for the entire region and the world in general. Moldova stepped in.

13. Moldova is not just a country that opened its doors to forced migrants like many of its neighbours - in relation to its population, Moldova received the largest number of refugees from Ukraine. Refugees now make up nearly 4 percent of the population of 2.6 million in Moldova - “the poorest country in Europe.”
14. According to the data of the General Inspectorate of Border Police (GIBP), between February 24, 2022 and October 1, 2022 about 600 thousand Ukrainians entered the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Out of them, about 80 thousand were staying in Moldova as of October 1, 2022. Only 8.6 thousand Ukrainians filed applications for asylum in the Republic of Moldova, which makes 10% of the Ukrainians in the country.
15. Taking into account all of the above, the military activities in Ukraine and the huge number of migrants from Ukraine, Moldova is revising its legislation in a fast-track manner. Temporary protection can become a useful tool to improve the framework for collecting data and registering foreign citizens who arrived from Ukraine since the beginning of military activities and have temporarily stayed in the Republic of Moldova.
16. Since temporary protection had never been applied during the entire the country’s history, many questions arose. In view of the above, the Bureau for Migration and Asylum had long consultations with experts from the EU countries. Following the consultations, a draft law was signed in early September.

17. Therefore, Article 3 of Law no. 270/2008 On asylum in the Republic of Moldova, was amended to include provisions on temporary protection granted to the following categories of persons displaced from Ukraine on February 24, 2022 or later as a result of the military invasion of the Russian armed forces that began that day:
 - a) citizens of Ukraine who resided in Ukraine until February 24, 2022;
 - b) citizens of Ukraine staying in the Republic of Moldova until February 24, 2022;
 - c) stateless persons and citizens of third countries other than Ukraine who enjoyed international protection or equivalent national protection in Ukraine until February 24, 2022;
 - d) family members of the persons referred to in para. a), b) and c).
18. Besides, for the entire period of protection, each beneficiary of temporary protection will be issued an identification document of the beneficiary of temporary protection. Naturally, along with the issuance of these documents, statistical data will be collected, which will help significantly in the production of migration statistics, including in determining the exact number of applicants for temporary protection in the Republic of Moldova. So far, the statistics were based only on the data from the GIBP on the entries and departures of Ukrainians.

III. Collection of statistical data on migration processes

A. Administrative sources

19. Many public authorities measure international migration in the Republic of Moldova:
 - i. BMA/MIA: keep record of foreign nationals staying legally and illegally in the Republic of Moldova and supervises the process;
 - ii. National Statistical Bureau: data on the number of Moldovan citizens working abroad or in search of employment ;
 - iii. Public Services Agency (State population register): keeps record of the emigration of Moldovan citizens to a place of permanent residence;
 - iv. Ministry of Education and Research: keeps record of the emigration of Moldovan citizens, and the immigration of foreigners who come to study according to international treaties in the field of education;
 - v. Ministry of Labour and Social Protection: registration of Moldovan citizens working under employment contracts abroad;
 - vi. General Inspectorate of the Border Police: data on the number of exits and entries of Moldovan citizens and foreigners;
 - vii. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration: data on the number of Moldovan citizens staying abroad received from diplomatic missions and consulates located abroad.
20. To produce comparable statistics on international migration, and to separate the flows of short-term and long-term migrants, the concept of the place of permanent (usual) residence is used.
21. The holders of administrative migration statistics still refer to the national legal framework for regulating migration and the rules for registering the population at the place of residence.
22. Reaching agreement on common terms and definitions is a priority in the work of the Bureau for Migration and Asylum and the National Bureau of Statistics, which aim to revise the data and methodology for calculating the indicators collected as part of the Extended Migration Profile.

23. In accordance with the decision of the National Commission on Population and Development under the Government of the Republic of Moldova, in order to improve the mechanism for collecting data on population migration, by order of the National Bureau of Statistics, an interdepartmental working group was established in July 2017, chaired by the Director General of the NBS. In addition to statisticians, the group consists of the representatives of agencies responsible for the collection and development of administrative migration statistics: Ministry of Internal Affairs (Bureau for Migration and Asylum, General Inspectorate of the Border Police), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, Public Services Agency (Population register), and UNFPA and ILO representatives.

24. The main task is to analyse the mechanism for recording migration flows and identify opportunities for improving migration statistics by expanding the use of administrative data sources.

Since 2017, consultations have been conducted to identify data needs, migration, existing gaps, and shortcomings in data access. Consultations were also held with the representatives of the relevant ministries on the issues of changing the methodology for calculating the size of the population and organizing the measurement of international migration flows.

25. Also, by order of the Government of 2020, the composition of the National Commission on Population and Development and the Regulations on the organization and functioning of the National Commission on Population and Development were approved.

The main objectives of the Commission are as follows:

- i. analysis of the evolution of demographic phenomena, population development trends and their impact on social and economic processes in the mid- and long term;
- ii. identification of priority problems, determining objectives in the field of demography in order to develop national strategies and programmes;
- iii. defining mechanisms for collecting and exchanging disaggregated data on key demographic indicators;
- iv. assessment of demographic risks and establishment of criteria for their identification;
- v. determining institutional responsibility for aligning demographic processes with development processes;
- vi. recommendation of methodologies for establishing demographic processes within certain population groups, studying the results of their implementation at the national and territorial levels.

26. In addition, the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova conducts activities to improve the methodology for the development of administrative statistics, keeping in mind the main objective of improving international migration statistics through:

- Aligning definitions with the UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration (1998);
- Developing technologies for collecting, transferring and processing information;
- Using additional administrative data sources.

27. In order to produce comparable statistics on international migration, and to separate the flows of short-term and long-term migrants, a transition was made to using the concept of the place of usual residence. The data provided by the General Inspectorate of the Border Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the crossing of the state border by individuals was used as a new source of

information. Based on these data, a re-estimate of migration flows and, accordingly, the country's population for 2014-2021 was performed.

28. The process of revising migration flows and population size based on the place of usual residence by age and sex at the national level was the first stage of the joint UN project “Strengthening the National Statistical System” with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).
29. In turn, the second stage consists of a re-estimate of population size in accordance with the concept of usual residence by district of residence and at the level of region, city / community, which was to be completed in the third quarter of 2020. But unfortunately due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the activities were postponed.
30. Besides, as part of the UNFPA Moldova project “Improving the availability of administrative data for compiling statistics”, it is planned to create the “Population and Migration Statistics” Information System (PMS IS) maintained by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), which will use administrative data available from information system holders in the Republic of Moldova. The aim of the Project is to enable the NBS to produce and provide/disseminate reliable and accurate data. On top of that, due to the project, the national statistical system will be upgraded through the increased use of administrative data in official statistical production.
31. The PMS IS will become a comprehensive information and technological source for the preparation of future population censuses, and in the future it will support the National Bureau of Statistics in the transition from traditional to register-based census (project period 2019-2022). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the dates were also postponed.
32. For the sake of clarity, the main administrative source of information for estimating international migration is the State Population Register – a unified integrated system for the automated registration of citizens of the Republic of Moldova, foreign citizens and stateless persons permanently or temporarily residing in the territory of the Republic of Moldova, as well as citizens of the Republic of Moldova who left the country to reside abroad permanently or temporarily. The NBS receives information on international migration from the register in the form of aggregated data and tables in an agreed format. The data from the Register show the officially registered flows of citizens changing their place of permanent residence. At the same time, the intensity of the outflow of the population according to the Population Register is decreasing.
33. In addition to the State Population Register, the administrative sources of information for estimating international migration are: Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova (Bureau for Migration and Asylum, General Inspectorate of the Border Police) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration.

B. Household surveys

34. The NBS, in accordance with international agreements on cooperation and partnership, is making efforts to compensate for the existing limitations in administrative data and bring migration statistics in line with international recommendations. Within the framework of the Labour Force Questionnaire, the NBS conducts fairly in-depth assessments of issues related to migrants and migration based on the Labour Migration module surveys.
35. Currently, migration from Moldova is mainly a reaction to the opportunities provided by the foreign labour market. Labour migration significantly exceeds the number of migrants who go abroad to live in another country. Therefore, accounting for this segment of migration is a key issue for assessing the consequences of migration and developing migration policies in the country.

C. Extended Migration Profile (EMP) of the Republic of Moldova - A tool for collecting and using data from various sources in order to measure international migration

36. The EMP is a statistical report that combines in a structured way existing information on migration and its dynamics from various sources, based on a range of indicators on migration issues and policy information, with a detailed analysis of the impact of migration on the socio-economic development of the country and the well-being of the population, playing an important role in the development of national policies.
37. On August 24, 2012, Government Decree No. 634 was adopted, establishing the list of indicators (about 200, including economic and social) and the EMP RM template and the frequency of its compilation. The application of uniform definitions and calculation of indicators is carried out in accordance with the definitions of the Regulation (CE) no. 862/2007 of 11 July 2007 on EU statistics on migration.
38. The first EMP report prepared by BMA covered the period 2007-2012, and subsequent reports were prepared annually. Starting from 2019, BMA prepares the EMP report every three years. The Statistical Compendium of the Extended Migration Profile is compiled annually.
39. The main objectives of the Extended Migration Profile are:
 - Strengthening the Government's capacity to study problems by developing a mechanism for the regular reporting of data in the field of international migration;
 - Improving the use of statistical information in the field of migration policy development;
 - Stimulation of interagency cooperation in the field of data collection and policy development;
 - Integration of migration data in development strategies;
 - Assessment of the impact of migration on socio-economic processes.
40. Ensuring the periodic data collection (annually) is regulated by the Government Decree. Thus, the annual compilation of the Statistical Compendium of the Extended Migration Profile is carried out; and once every three years, the BMA prepares the report "The Extended Migration Profile of the Republic of Moldova", containing statistical tables and analysis of the main indicators related to emigration, immigration, labour migration, forced migration, naturalization, etc.
41. The EMP provides an opportunity to compare and analyse data over time quantitatively and qualitatively (sex, age, purpose of arrival, category of foreigners, country of residence/origin, etc.).
42. The data sources for the EMP are the administrative and statistical data of the BMA Automated Database on the flows of foreign citizens who immigrate to the Republic of Moldova (short and long term), including data on illegal actions and offenses committed by foreigners; Administrative and statistical data of ministries and departments competent in the field of migration; Data from external sources (EUROSTAT, World Bank, Internet, etc.).
43. The EMP results are integrated into national policies:
 - The National Programme for Encouraging the Return and Facilitating (Re)integration of Moldovan Citizens Involved in the Migration Process for 2022-2026 (information about temporary migration to work, study, by sex, age, and readmission over time);
 - National Migration and Asylum Strategy 2011-2020,
 - National Strategic Programme for the Demographic Security of the Republic of Moldova (2011-2025),

- National strategy on labour force employment policies for 2017-2021,
- Strategy for the Protection of the Child and the Family for 2014-2020 (data on the number of children whose parents work abroad, marriages and divorces over time)
- National Strategy "Expatriate Community 2025", etc.

IV. Need for new policies and new data

44. As noted by experts and users of information, the situation with migration data collection and the relationship between the policy-making process and data collection is insufficient. The use of statistical information for decision-making should shift from "sometimes" to "always".
45. According to some experts, today the labour migration of the Moldovan population mainly has the features of circular migration, despite the fact that this is not manifested quite clearly. The national statistics has no experience in measuring this type of migration. And the Moldovan authorities lack the practical experience of developing and implementing the relevant policies.
46. Training of personnel responsible for the development of labour migration policies and improving their professionalism are planned within the framework of international projects. In the future, when developing policies, it seems appropriate to take into account such factors as engaging foreign investors and the private sector in the implementation of national-level projects aimed at developing the economy, and using the potential of immigrants (including women) in the country.
47. To address migration regulation issues in a consistent and effective manner, a significant improvement in information support and support of migration policy is necessary. Together with the NBS, it is planned to determine the indicators necessary to monitor the implementation of the programme "Integrating migration into national development strategies", expanding the range of indicators developed regarding attracting and using foreign labour.
48. Emphasis is placed on the development of future policies and indicators for their monitoring not only at the national level, but also regionally, as well as in urban areas and rural areas.

V. Access to data

49. Official statistics today has a number of gaps in the dissemination of data, primarily with regard to the results of the 2014 Population Census.
50. There are other problems in the work of Moldovan statisticians that directly affect the interests of the users of statistical data:
 - lack of methodology for the exchange of information between producers of administrative data and NBS;
 - distribution of statistical data through a parallel channel, distorting the opinion of users about statistics;
 - limited utilization of information technologies for the efficient dissemination of information.
51. The national statistical system development strategy focuses on solving the problem of access to statistical information by users. Due to existing gaps in data dissemination, a 25% reduction in time between collection of information and its dissemination (in all sectors of statistics) is planned using effective ways of providing data, which will make them most useful for use in policy development.

VI. Dissemination of statistics on migration

A. Traditional methods

52. The NBS disseminates data mainly by posting information on its website www.statistica.md (**StatBank**) as tables with aggregated data. The database is updated regularly.
53. Includes information on migration, statistical yearbook and selected publications:
 - Publication *Labour Force Migration in the Republic of Moldova* contains information on labour force migration and its socio-demographic characteristics.
 - Publication *Territorial Statistics* includes information on the socio-economic and demographic situation in the country in the territorial context and information on internal migration.
 - Besides, Statistical Yearbook is published annually on the BMA website: immigration of foreigners, asylum seekers and stateless persons in Romanian <http://bma.gov.md/ro/content/anuarul-statistic-imigrarea>
 - The Statistical Compendium of the Extended Migration Profile is published annually on the BMA website, (<http://bma.gov.md/ro/content/biroul-migra%C8%9Bie-%C8%99i-azil-al-ministerului-afacerilor-interne-elaborat-compendiul-statistic-0>)
 - Every three years the BMA prepares and publishes on the BMA website the report “The Extended Migration Profile of the Republic of Moldova” (<http://bma.gov.md/ro/content/raport-analitic-al-profilului-migra%C8%9Bional-extins-al-republicii-moldova>)

B. Using innovative methods

54. In the Republic of Moldova, a large number of ministries, central and local public authorities, departments and institutions have data available online. However, all this data is scattered across web addresses and stored in various locations. At the same time, the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova is responsible for the publication and dissemination of public data.
55. As part of the Open Access to Public Government Data initiative, a portal with government open data was created in Moldova - **date.gov.md** - launched in 2011. It is the key element in the e-Transformation agenda of the Government of the Republic of Moldova and aims to facilitate public access to all public data of ministries and central administration institutions. (BMA also provides statistical data for this portal on a monthly basis.)
56. The development of the e-government system in the Republic of Moldova and the portal of government open data present unique opportunity for the NBS regarding this portal, the possibility of using modern technologies for the dissemination of information.
57. According to the survey carried out by Open Data Watch in 2016, Moldova ranked second in the world and first in Europe in terms of the availability and openness of official statistics.

VII. The main conclusions:

58. The lack of complete and reliable statistical data predetermines the absence of a clear labour migration policy. The country is still accumulating experience, mechanisms are designed to develop policies on integrating migration into the development of the country.
59. The NBS intends to study the data collected at immigration (based on ID reading), with a view of its potential use for estimating migration flows.
60. Following the future amendment of the asylum legislation in the Republic of Moldova, in particular, the fact that temporary protection will be provided to categories of persons displaced from Ukraine on February 24, 2022 or later as a result of the military invasion of the Russian

armed forces, the BMA will be able to accumulate data which will greatly help in the production of migration statistics.

61. The collection and correct analysis of migration data is a complex task, and a comprehensive solution is possible through increased cooperation between all ministries and departments that collect information about the population.
62. The improvement of migration statistics will continue in partnership with the line ministries and departments, which are the holders of statistical information to be integrated in the national statistical system. In this context, joint activities of the NBS and other ministries are planned to develop programmes, legal and technical procedures for the transfer and exchange of data.