

Action Plan to improve and enhance the migratory data production system and data sources in Slovakia

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Slovakia as in most of other European countries there is a problem with the registration of the population by different types of residence as well as with the registration of migration (mainly of emigrants). As statistical recordings in Slovakia have been operating only on the basis of permanent residence, number of persons registered for permanent residence in Slovakia and its regions are not always identical to the actual population in relevant regional units.

Action plan describes main issues concerning the registration of migration and different types of residence and suggests possible procedures and measures which could improve the actual situation. Meanwhile we do realize that the issue we deal with has the transnational character and it crosses the borders of particular countries. Due to its transnational dimension, related competences and a need of coordination, it is the international community – Eurostat in the first place - who has to contribute towards the solution.

Regarding the registration of the population by particular types of residences and the registration of migration in Slovakia within the context of the present condition and necessary changes, the key domains are related to implementation of a term „usual residence“, transformation of population census, creation of a special survey focused on reproduction and migration and to increase the quality when estimating migration.

These are the highest priority issues which are described in action plan in more details. Other issues and suggested measures of summary report WP4 are less actual for Slovakia or they are not supported by crucial institutions which are responsible for solving them (Statistical Office of the SR and Ministry of Interior of the SR).

Efforts to improve statistical registration in field of residence and migration are among the priorities of the European Union. Registration in the Member States and across the European Union must be closer to reality. In this context in the significant materials of the European Union we can find topics like decreasing willingness of the population to cooperate with statistical offices, increasing importance of personal data protection, more frequent use of administrative data for statistical purposes, importance of sample surveys for improvement information on migration and cooperation between NSI and research.

These topics are also included in Wiesbaden memorandum focused on new conceptual design for household and social statistics and adopted by the DGINS Conference in September 2011.

During the preparation of the action plan particular issues were continuously discussed with specialists from Statistical Office of Slovak Republic, Ministry of Interior of Slovak Republic (Migration Office and the Bureau of Border and Alien Police) as well as with local authorities.

2. POSSIBILITIES OF SETTING UP DEVELOPMENTAL DATABASES ON NATIONAL, LOCAL AND TRANSNATIONAL LEVEL

Database of migration data on national and local level would be useful for different users in Slovakia – to begin with representatives of state and local authorities, people working in science, research and education, companies and NGOs to end with. However there are several obstacles and complications which stand in a way of creation and operation of such a database in Slovakia.

First of all there are disputes over competences between Ministry of Interior and Statistical Office of the SR going on for several years, which involve the use of administrative data managed by the Ministry of Interior, for statistical purposes. Inaccuracies in the registration of migration and methodological issues involved, and the lack of data on the usual residence of the persons are additional problems. Methodological problems are the main obstacle when creating international databases. Neither can we avoid mentioning financial, technical and personnel issues which emerge mostly on local level. Therefore, creation of a database, focused on migration, it is not likely in the next few years in Slovakia.

However INFOSTAT allows for administration of the transnational database created within the frame of WP4 even after the project SEEMIG is finished. INFOSTAT will provide the database with data for Slovakia in scope allowed by the actual condition of demographic and migration statistics in Slovakia. Until the registration of population of Slovakia is not implemented, the database will only contain data based on permanent residence. Many of the data in the database are missing as they are not in any of statistical surveys or in administrative data sources.

3. NATIONAL LEVEL ACTIVITIES FOR MIGRATION RELATED DATA SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

3.1. Possibilities how to use administrative data for needs of demographic and migration statistics

Usage of administrative data for statistical purposes corresponds to present trends in statistics and it is also included in recommendations of European Union. It has indisputable advantages, mainly when it comes to decrease of costs for data survey, increase of their quality and reducing the administrative burden of reporting units.

Demographic statistics in the Slovak Republic registers data on number¹ and changes² of population on several levels of NUTs. Data on population number are obtained in census every 10 years and in the inter-censal period they are balanced according to the information on population change in corresponding breakdown and according to the external data on actual changes (for example degree of education). Data on natural change are obtained via statistical reports.

In Slovakia, there are several administrative registers which under certain circumstances could be used for needs of demographic statistics. First of all it is the Population register which contains several census data as well as data from the balance of population. From demographic statistics' point of view, Social Insurance Company, health Insurance companies and local registers (containing data on population, houses and dwellings) are important potential administrative data sources.

¹ Number of population means total number, population increase and its structure.

² Population change means data on nuptiality, divorce, fertility, mortality and migration.

Furthermore, there are several registers which can be labelled as supplementary or supporting. In term of demographic statistics they contain small number of data or they concern small part of population so their main contribution may be checking of the data of the main registers. Those are mainly Land register, Business register, Central register of insured persons, Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and Tax Office.

Three new registers could have a huge importance mainly for the census after they are finished. These are Register of natural persons, Register of households and Register of addresses.

Data from administrative sources which are now available could be used without radical modifications for balances of population according to basic demographic structures. Administrative data can be used as well when processing data on population change and for the needs of census as it is being done in several European countries. In Slovakia up to now there are not administrative data available which would be satisfactory for two purposes mentioned above.

Population register which should be the main administrative data source for the needs of demographic statistics is not suitable for such a purpose in its present form. The reasons are legislative, organizational and professional nature. The main problems are:

Poor communication and cooperation between the administrators of data sources and statistical office. The lack of political will to improve this cooperation (all stakeholders are central governmental bodies controlled by the government)

At the same time the actual legislation does not permit the use of administrative data for statistical purposes in the necessary extent.

Registers are not inter-connected because of the absence of a common ID.

The accuracy of the data in the administrative databases is not sufficient. A revision of some administrative data on the basis of statistical data is necessary.

More data would need to be added to the registers. Legislation and the unwillingness of administrators to make changes in the administrative databases are the main obstacles.

The solution could be the selection of data from the population register and creation of a statistical database administrated and updated by the Statistical Office of the SR in cooperation with administrators of administrative data which are necessary for the up-dating of statistical register. The first step after the database is created would be checking and modification of data done by the Statistical Office of the SR. Afterwards, administrators of administrative data would provide database with needed information and the Statistical Office of the SR would update the database. Certain part of data needed for the up-dating would be provided directly from sources of the Statistical Office of the SR.

Based on experiences in foreign countries as well as on those of administrators it seems that the second possibility – to take data needed for the demographic statistics from the register and create the database managed by the Statistical Office of the SR – is more convenient.

In terms of migration data the Statistical Office does not have all the necessary data on residence of foreigners; therefore Statistical Office of the SR acquires data from the Bureau of Border and Aliens

Police. Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic took over only aggregated data on migration of foreigners. In recent years, the Statistical Office made several attempts for obtaining individual data but was not successful. The situation changed only at the end of 2013. Statistical Office began to receive primary data with selected indicators for all stays of foreigners (for the years 2011 and 2012). In the electronic transfer the data will be updated continuously. This can considerably simplify the work with migratory data on foreigners and allow the creation of a comprehensive migration database.

Migration Office provides information on granting asylum and on refugees with granted asylum to the Statistical Office of the SR. Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic does not assume any data on illegal migration from the Ministry of Interior and data on the granting and loss of citizenship it takes from Section of Public Administration of the Ministry of Interior.

A significant challenge for statistics in Slovakia is to integrate of administrative data sources into statistical information system as much as possible. As the integration of administrative data is a long-term and difficult process, it is necessary to start the preparation phase quickly. Firstly the concept of usage of administrative data for the needs of the demographic statistics should be prepared, followed by needed modifications in legislation, ensured the links between all administrative registers (through unified and unambiguous identifier or otherwise), modification of the Population register in terms of content and quality of data, introduction of new registers into practice (Register of natural persons, Register of dwellings and Register of addresses).

3.2. Labour Force Survey

Labour force survey is the sample survey focused on labour market at first place. In Slovakia, this survey performed by the Statistical Office of the SR, is fully harmonized with legal regulations of European Union. It is coordinated by Eurostat based on recommendations of ILO. Regarding the defined scope of a file and the low number of foreigners in Slovakia, foreigners in the sample are exceptionally. At the present situation (low number of foreigners in Slovakia and at the labour market) Statistical Office of the SR is not interested in use this file for getting information on foreigners. No changes are expected concerning the identification of foreign-born population, supplementary questions regarding migrants or using SEEMIG pilot methods.

Each country organizes annually one-shot complementary survey – so called ad-hoc module – which is thematically focused on a specific part of labour market, education, health or social insurance. Sometimes the additional survey is focused on the issues of migration and foreigners. Such a form of obtaining information about migrants is satisfactory in the framework of LFS.

3.3. Migrant-specific surveys

There is no special survey in Slovakia nowadays managed by Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic or other central authorities of state administration which would be focused on reproduction and migration. Taking into account the existing problems with registration of migration which will not

disappear any time soon, sample survey seems to be a convenient source of information on residence and migration of population.

INFOSTAT will use experiences from preparation of reproductive behaviour survey (which after all did not take place due to lack of finance even though preparation works were in advanced process phase) and will initiate a new sample survey focused on reproduction and migration. The Statistical Office of the SR might be the administrator of such survey in close cooperation to Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family or Ministry of Interior.

The survey should be focused on three areas – reproduction, family and migration. The main objective of migratory block will be to obtain information about the intention and motives of people to migrate from Slovakia and as follows to improve the emigration data, which are influenced by inaccurate registration.

INFOSTAT will prepare a complete proposal of the survey, including the subject, it shall focus on and description of the content, draft questionnaire, definition of target population, creation of sample file, specification of the sample into interviewer network, time schedule and budget. The proposal will be prepared so that in case it is executed, it will be possible to compare the results with surveys conducted abroad.

3.4. Census

A very important general condition in order to obtain data from classical census, including data on migration, is to formulate questions correctly which means they have to have only one clear answer. In Slovakia it means, for example, that it has to be clearly stated if a question concerns permanent or usual residence, or it has to be clear whether there is duration of residence included in a question (one year and more). Detailed explications to questions in census questionnaires may contribute as well to gain correct information. Tasks related to the content of census fall within the competence of the Statistical Office of Slovak Republic.

Population census processed in the traditional way cannot provide sufficient trustful picture of the number and distribution of the population. It is so due to high rate of non-responses which is extremely high just in case of questions on type of residence and migration.

To leave the traditional census in favour of register based census or sample surveys, which does not depend on goodwill and abilities of respondents to answer questions, emerges as a possible solution. Census based on administrative registers should be the aim in the long term. For the next census in the year 2021 the combination of multiple data sources will be necessary. Data from administrative registers will be necessary to supplement by data from the sample survey or a short questionnaire.

For the needs of census administrative data in its current form is not sufficient. To cover the decisive part of surveyed data from administrative sources, it will be necessary to use data from Population register, Register of foreigners (ECU), Municipal register and data from the three planned registers – Register of natural persons, Register of dwellings and Register of addresses.

If registers mentioned above are used as the main data source for population census, it will be needed to take several measures. We have already talked about the need to modify data in population register, respectively to create statistical population register (see article 3.1.). Furthermore, there is a need to harmonize data from Municipal register which are being processed using different means and besides discrepancies in content there can be as well eventual methodological and technological differences. Three new registers need to be operational as soon as possible in order to be able to resolve particular aspects of their usability for census. Interconnection of all main registers is a very important assumption for usage of administrative data in population census.

The crucial part of the information collected in the Census 2011 could be obtained from those of the main administrative data sources. A part of data gathered in last census is not included in administrative data sources and it is highly probable that they will not be available in administrative data sources until the next census. It concerns mainly some information on persons – religion, mother tongue and the most frequently used language, relationships between family members, economic activity, some information on employment and education, commuting, travelling to school, number of live-born children, actual or last marriage duration and IT competences. Therefore in the next population census an additional data source will be necessary – sample survey or questionnaire. The decision on the additional data source will depend mainly on the territorial aspect. For data needed on municipality level (NUTS V) the questionnaire will be required, for data needed on districts level (NUTS IV) the sample survey will be sufficient.

In term of migration data, answers to questions on legal status of foreigners at the time of their arrival to the country and at the time of census as well as to questions concerning the country where their parents were born, could be obtained from administrative data source – from the database ECU of the Bureau of Alien and Border Police, Ministry of Interior of the SR³ Information on country where the parents were born is not included in the database, but it could be introduced into a questionnaire by legal regulation as well as the question concerning the multiple citizenships of foreigners. It is possible to get the information on acquisition of the citizenship of the Slovak Republic from the Central Register of Acquisition and Loss of the Citizenship of the SR, of the Ministry of Interior of the SR, Section of Public Administration, Department of Citizenship and Civil Registers. The situation is much more complicated when obtaining information on previous citizenship of parents – this is possible only in case that citizens do have permanent residence in the SR (only from Population register actually) or it could be included in census questionnaire. Questions concerning the out migration and return migration are already included. They are very important for Slovakia because they are only to provide information for the moment being on number of population of the Slovak Republic who emigrated abroad temporarily, for one year and over, and how many of them returned. As we do not manage to get these information via compulsory announcing of departure of people abroad and their arrival back to Slovakia, the traditional census remains the only unique source of these data.

It would be necessary to get data which are not available in administrative registers by using an exhaustive questionnaire survey or via sample survey. The questionnaire would have considerably

³ The question where a foreigner was born is included in a questionnaire which is filled in by a foreigner when registering his/her stay in Slovakia. There is also the same question on his/her relatives; however, the question where the parents were born is missing.

smaller scope when compared to previous censuses performed in a traditional way. This would mean fewer burdens for population and cost savings for the state. However, it would be more expensive and less acceptable for respondents as the sample survey. But fewer details of gained results would be a disadvantage mainly from regional point of view. In case of sample survey surveyed indicators could be available in the best case, at the district level, certainly not at municipal level. In both cases it would be necessary to address the issue of non-responses; this problem would be more evident in the case of a questionnaire survey.

A combination of administrative data with questionnaire or sample survey seems to be the most convenient way how to manage census in 2021 in Slovakia. The decisive criteria when deciding between questionnaire and sample survey will be costs, burden of respondents and required details of outputs.

3.5. Usual residence

One of the major problems of migration and demographic statistics is that the Slovak Republic has not established usual residence, on the basis of which would be defined migration flows and also population should be defined in a new way. At the national level, migration and population are defined on the basis of permanent residence and for international purposes usual residence must be composed from the available resources.

The Slovak Republic does not currently have all the necessary data for the construction of usual residence. The biggest problem for doing this by the new regulation on demographic statistics is that in addition to a database of census we have no source of information about citizens with permanent residence in Slovakia, who are living abroad. This reflects the fact that citizens, despite the created legislative conditions, which include the obligation of deregistration from permanent residence when leaving the SR permanently, or the obligation to announce a move abroad for more than 90 days, when leaving the SR temporary, in many cases ignore this obligation. In general, a prevailing view in public is that this duty is unnecessary burdening citizens, restricting their personal freedom, etc. It means that in inter-censal period there is no data on emigrants from Slovakia, who have the intention to live abroad for at least a year or who are living abroad for at least a year.

Follows from the above, many Slovak citizens are living abroad (some even tens of years), but for permanent residence they are formally logged in Slovakia because it brings benefits. This means that they are included in the number of population in the Slovak Republic on the basis of permanent residence and at the same time, for example, in EEA countries where they are actually residing, on the basis of usual residence.

We do not have nearly any information on another type of migration necessary for the construction of usual residence - the so-called of return migration. It is the number of citizens who after having stayed abroad (without change of permanent residence) are returning to Slovakia. Only labour offices have partial data on them, if the returnees logged on as unemployed.

In order to get information on real residence of persons in Slovakia as well as on real migration flows it seems inevitable to implement registration based on usual residence into demographic and

migration statistics. Information on place of usual residence must be added into all statistical reports and administrative databases. Besides methodological and organizational measures for introduction of usual residence into practice, some measures should be done to ensure that population really report their usual residence (motivating measures as well as repressive).

For introduction of usual residence the Statistical Office needs not only data on permanent residence of citizens and of foreigners, but also information on temporary residence of foreigners. As it was mentioned, currently Statistical Office of the SR takes data on foreigners from the Ministry of Interior, the Bureau of Border and Alien Police.

As only a certain part of indicators needed for construction of usual residence can be identified from actual data sources, it is necessary to make greater use of estimates. Even in case of enhancement of registration (implementation of usual residence into practice and more intense usage of administrative registers), it is probable that the registration will not be complete and it will be necessary to use estimations as a complementary source of information.

In connection with the introduction of usual residence into practice is necessary to develop estimates of the number of people leaving the SR temporarily (without any change of permanent residence) with the intention to live abroad for at least a year and estimates of people (with permanent residence in Slovakia), living abroad a year and over. To do this, it requires using appropriate statistical methods and mirror statistics. Furthermore, it is necessary to develop estimates of the number of person (with permanent residence in the SR), who after living abroad returned to the SR (return migration).

Some opportunities to obtain these data are in the use of information of health insurance. Statistical Office has examined possibilities for using health insurance data for migration purposes. At the moment the contract is signed between the Healthcare Surveillance Authority and the Statistical Office on downloading data. The SO SR will receive the first set of data on people who deregister themselves in August 2014. A problem is that a lot of those who pay health insurance abroad in the EU are paying also voluntary health insurance in Slovakia.

4. LOCAL LEVEL ACTIVITIES FOR MIGRATION DATA IMPROVEMENTS

Migration at the local level should be seen in two ways - at the level of foreigners and at the level of the citizens of the SR.

In the migration of foreigners (from abroad to the municipality, and vice versa) local government has no competence. Registration of foreign immigrants and emigrants is the responsibility of the Bureau of Border and Alien Police of the Ministry of Interior, which only informs the municipality (local government) that the foreigner has immigrated for permanent residence in its territory. All data on foreigners are simultaneously included in REGOB (population register), to which only part of the municipalities has on - line access yet. Those municipalities which do not have the access yet, communicate with the registry in writing. Municipalities do not receive information on foreigners with temporary residence in their territory.

Local authorities have information on the number of foreigners with permanent residence and their characteristics in their territory, but do not perform deeper analysis. If necessary, however, local governments have been able to create a database of foreigners, but only with selected characteristics (not all indicators of foreigners listed in WP4 are available on local level). Numbers of foreigners in individual municipalities are very low. Foreigners reside mainly in Bratislava and in larger cities, especially in those where foreign investments are located. In the Bratislava, there are approximately one fifth of foreigners with permanent residence in Slovakia.

Local Reporting Offices have in its competence registration of Slovak citizens immigrating for permanent residence, respectively emigrating from permanent residence (in the internal and external migration) and keep records about these migrants and this information is sent to Population register. In addition, they also keep records of the announced departure of Slovak citizens to foreign countries for more than 90 days, but the Slovak citizens ignore this obligation⁴. At the same time citizens do not report their arrival from abroad (after staying there longer than one year), mainly in those cases, if their departure from Slovakia to abroad previously has not been reported. Deregistration of citizens from temporary stay within the SR is also a problem at the local level.

We can conclude that at the local level need to be address the same problems as the national and moreover, there are also issues of temporary residence in internal migration. In the reporting of departure citizens traveling abroad for more than 90 days is therefore necessary once again to submit to the Parliament the Act on that obligation, including sanctions, similarly at arrival of persons from abroad (i.e. in line with the national level). Similar legislative form must also cover weaknesses in the temporary residence of citizens within the SR.

Improvement of population registration is in the interest of municipalities, since the allocation of funds (allocation of shared taxes) takes place on the basis of the registered population. In this connection mayors of municipalities require changes in the legislation that would bind the allocation of public funds to usual residence (currently it is permanent residence) and the population should be an obligation to report each change of usual residence. At the local level the mayors are able to physically check the reality of such registration and subsequently the registration in larger cities would be also more realistic.

The local authorities have also recognized the need for creating a local developmental database on migration, labour market and human capital. There are several sets of data which the local administration needs for evidence based policy making.

5. IMPLEMENTATION POSSIBILITIES

Some of the proposed measures are long-term. This is mainly the case of the key areas essential to improving data on migration in Slovakia - the use of administrative data for statistical purposes (including interconnection of main administrative databases) and the preparation of population

⁴ For example, local government with a population of 21,000 recorded in 2013 only two persons who reported move abroad without any change of permanent residence.

census 2021. Activities in these two areas will be held through the whole period 2015-2019. In the next two years the work on implementation of usual residence into the practice should start, in particular legislation, practical implementation and statistical processing (including demographic balance). Draft of a special survey focused on reproduction and migration is real in 2016. By 2019 the Statistical Office does not plan to use Labour force survey as a data source about migration and foreigners.

INFOSTAT plans to update the data for the Slovak Republic in transnational WP4 database also after the end of project SEEMIG. Specialized databases focused on the area of migration, labour market and human capital could gradually start operating in Slovakia - first at the national level and consequently at the local level.

Implementation plan for the AP proposals

Activity		2015				2016				2017				2018				2019			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4																
Database	SEEMIG																				
	National																				
	Local																				
National	Admin																				
	LFS																				
	Survey																				
	Census																				
	Usual residence																				
Local																					

Consultations with representatives of relevant institutions during the creation of Action plan (the Statistical Office, Ministry of Interior, local authorities) were provided continuously through emails, phone calls and personal meetings. This cooperation did not take the form of official meetings.

6. PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The implementation of measures will depend first of all on two most relevant institutions (Statistical Office of the SR and Ministry of Interior) and their ability to negotiate solutions of particular problems. A significant factor in all cases will be the availability of financial resources.

INFOSTAT can guarantee only those outputs which are completely within its responsibility. It means maintenance of SEEMIG transnational database and proposal of survey focused on the area of reproduction and migration. In other cases INFOSTAT will contribute to solving of problems such a cooperating institution. INFOSTAT will participate on solving of particular issues through its research program.

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Table 1. Overview table of the activities related to the WP4 Transnational Database

Activities	Level of intervention	Relevant stakeholder	Legal basis	Previous attempt for this type of intervention? If yes, why did not happen?	Possible difficulties	Rank of suggestion
Possible construction of a national developmental database on migration, labour market and human capital	National	Statistical office Ministry of Interior	Statistical law		Finance Competences	2
Possible construction of local databases on migration, labour market and human capital	Local	Statistical office Ministry of Interior	Statistical law		Finance Competences	2
Maintenance of SEEMIG transnational databases beyond SEEMIG's lifespan	Transnational National	Statistical office INFOSTAT	Research program			2

Table 2. Overview table of the WP4 Summary report suggestions

Data source type	Activities	Level of intervention	Relevant stakeholder	Legal basis	Previous attempt for this type of intervention? If yes, why did not happen?	Possible difficulties	Rank of suggestion
Administrative data sources	• Legal authorization of the access of the relevant statistical offices/ institution to individual data	National	Statistical Office Ministry of Interior	Law	Finance Conflicts in competencies	Finance Competences	1
	• Steps toward the introduction of PINs (if planned)	National	Statistical Office Ministry of Interior	Law		Finance Competences	1
	• Steps toward improving data collection						

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	<p>procedure, increase coverage and quality of data, updating the databases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps toward making better estimates 	<p>National Local National Local</p>	<p>Statistical Office Ministry of Interior Statistical Office Research institutions</p>	<p>Quality management Research program</p>			<p>2 1</p>
Migrant-specific surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How could systematic, internationally standardized, survey-based migration-related data collection be introduced •How could surveys be designed at transnational, national and on a local level • Steps toward setting up longitudinal migration relevant survey 	<p>Transnational National Transnational National Local National</p>	<p>Statistical Office Statistical Office Statistical Office Research institutions</p>	<p>Statistical Law International recommendations Statistical Law International recommendations Statistical Law Research program</p>	<p>Finance</p>	<p>Finance</p>	<p>1 2 1</p>
Census	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps towards transformation of traditional population census to register based census 	<p>National</p>	<p>Statistical Office</p>	<p>Statistical Law</p>		<p>Finance Competences Methodological difficulties</p>	<p>1</p>