SEEMIG PROJECT OVERVIEW

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After 30 months of intensive work, the SEEMIG project (Managing Migration and its Effects in South-East Europe. Transnational Actions towards Evidence Based Strategies) was closed at the end of 2014. The project relied on a wide network of partners, including 18 research institutes, universities, statistical offices and local government bodies from eight countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia) and observers from an additional three countries (Albania, Georgia, Ukraine). The Lead Partner of the project was the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. The Hungarian Demographic Research Institute was responsible for two important work packages.

The main objective of the project was to better understand and address the longer term migratory, human capital and demographic processes of the South-Eastern European (SEE) area, as well as the effects of these processes on labour markets and economies, in order to enable public administrative institutions to develop and implement policies and strategies by using enhanced datasets and empirical evidence. Despite growing (policy) attention given to international migration, and attempts to standardize and harmonize related data collection in recent decades, there is still a paucity of accurate and reliable migration data. Inconsistencies in data collection and measurement prevail, especially in the SEE region. Against this background, longer term historical analyses, databases, data reform strategies, policy recommendations on the local, national and transnational levels, novel surveys and population projections have been developed within the SEEMIG project.

The key achievements of the project were the following. Utilizing the *knowledge on longer term historical trends* and developmental patterns, the project has developed *new ways of population forecasts*. The project has also invited experts, decision makers and civic groups to conduct *foresight exercises* to identify key factors of future developments. Altogether, the relevant participating institutions could develop a broad picture on future challenges based on a comparative understanding of 60-year-long historical trajectories.

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The project has also carried out an *innovative, national emigrant survey* in two countries, and thus provided brand new, statistically reliable data on the basic composition of migrant groups. Project partners have created a *transnational database* based on longer term national data time series, with the aim of providing regional "good practise", in order to help decision makers and researchers use better evidence in their understanding and managing of major developmental dilemmas related to migration, human capital and labour market processes within the entire region. The SEEMIG project has also created several types of *local databases*, which will be indispensable for underpinning efficient local developmental strategies.

The partners of the project have *monitored and reviewed the international, national and local data systems*, which generate the necessary data for the statistics on migration, labour market and human capital. On this basis, the project partners prepared a set of *strategies and recommendations for reforming relevant data systems*.

Altogether 28 partner institutions, including statistical offices, research institutes and local governments, have participated and thus established a powerful mix of partners who have been able to increase their capacities via cooperation and via the integration of differing views. The partnership has been able to improve the evidence-base for policy making on national, local and transnational levels in a field where data problems are a major obstacle.

The project also did its best to ensure the sustainability of the results; data system analyses and strategies will be updated regularly and are in harmony with the already existing data structures. Results have also been delivered to primary international actors such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The leverage effects of the rich network of partners, as well as the exceptionally intensive stakeholder involvement that have, already, resulted in some stabile local/regional structures and national level key connections, are strong predictors of the project's continuity.

Below you can read the final output of the SEEMIG partnership, the "Transnational policy recommendations", which can be considered the extract of the 30 months of common work and cooperation. Further information on the project can be found at: www.seemig.eu.

TRANSNATIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy Area 1: Harmonization of data collection and exchange

Harmonization of definitions and methods in the European Union and relevant international bodies: Despite the growing attempts to standardise and harmonise migration-related data collection in recent decades, fully comparable mi-

gration data are still scarce. Therefore, there is a need to harmonize definitions of migration in the relevant registries of the European Union Member States; most importantly, in the address registration and also in surveys conducted in these countries. There is also a need to agree on the definition of repeated shorter-term migratory moves in order to cover current changes in the nature of migration. These harmonized definitions should be elaborated in close cooperation with regional and global institutions and major migratory partner countries.

Continued mainstreaming of migration data: Migration issues are increasingly taken into account in a wider range of public policy areas, including health, education, and social policy. To promote these activities, richer information on the socio-economic situation and composition of migrants is still needed, including the level of education, labour force participation and language skills. This could be achieved through the means of broader inclusion of the indicator 'country of birth'. The introduction of this information in registries and large scale surveys would also allow better international comparison and the clarification of the social composition of migrant groups. This would promote quick analyses aimed at identifying problems related to migration and development.

Harmonization of address registration within the European Union: In the European Union, there is a need to take steps towards a more unified system of address registration to be applied in the case of all foreign citizens – including EU citizens. This would prevent their parallel registration in more than one country. While national governments maintain the right to introduce, operate and change such registries, EU level recommendations should help them in establishing a unified system that integrates the transnational needs of migration statistics.

Policy Area 2: Enhancement of data collection methodologies

Improvement and integration of administrative data systems: The introduction of a unique statistical identifier (PIN) in most of the EU member countries is especially urgent, as it would sufficiently link data from different registers. To achieve this, steps need to be taken at the European level as well, in order to systematically follow emigration through deregistration from data systems. This would enable less costly and more frequent analyses and it would provide better data on the demographic and social composition of the registered migrant population. Data protection has to be guaranteed on a sufficient level, so that individual data are not traceable beyond statistical purposes.

Improvement of data collection on the regional level: Demographic and economic polarisations as well as persisting regional specificities are the main factors that will continue to shape the development of SEEMIG regions, also in the future. For this purpose, differentiated data for the regional level – amongst others and particularly as regards (net) migration trends – are important. The availability of such data on the regional level as of yet is still scarce. For this reason, there is a great need to enhance the collection of regional-level data.

Improvement of methods to estimate migration flow and stock data and use of "big data" on the transnational level: To produce reliable estimates of migration flow data, systematic consideration and possibly a combination of several approaches is needed. These include using stock data to derive country-level flow data and also making some simple census tabulations universal (particularly the tabulation of residents by place of birth and, for the foreign-born, by year of entry). Other new approaches such as using "big data" – for instance the data from social media – are still at an early stage of development. The aim of comparing, improving and checking estimates should be incorporated into various research and policy calls of international and national funding agencies.

Emigrant-surveys based on SEEMIG pilot methodology: To improve emigration statistics, potentials of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) should be further utilised. The SEEMIG pilot studies in Hungary and Serbia have demonstrated how an emigrant-sample, large enough of for meaningful statistical analysis, can be achieved through LFS even in countries with medium level emigration. A harmonised and streamlined version of the method piloted in the SEEMIG project could serve as a basis for producing reliable estimates of the size of emigration as well as of the composition of the emigrant population across Europe in a comparable manner.

Policy Area 3: Increase in transnational partnerships and cooperation

Establishment of transnational dialogue among migrant sending and receiving areas: There is an urgent need to enhance dialogue among the relevant policy makers in both types of communities in order to make migratory linkages an opportunity instead of a challenge. Such transnational dialogues would be helpful in the specification of migration management policies at the local, national and regional level. This dialogue can also lead to better articulation of interests and data problems concerning linkages among migrant-sending and migrant-receiving communities.

Creation of a transnational monitoring committee: A transnational monitoring committee composed of a multi-disciplinary group of experts from all countries in the region representing research institutes and statistical offices, which continuously observes migration processes and provides a transnational framework for better cooperation in the region, should be set up. Such a monitoring committee could become the first step towards a better and more coordinated management of international migration within the region by fostering the improvement of evidence about migration and related processes.

Collection and exchange of data, increased cooperation between National Statistical Offices in the European Union: To capture new realities of migration, a systematic collection of data with regards to (daily, cross-border) labour mobility is needed in the EU Member States as well as in their non-EU neighbouring countries. Reporting on cross-border migration should be made uniform in terms of the applied methodology in order to have comparable data. Increased partnerships for the exchange of data among statistical offices via Memoranda of Understanding are needed.

Improvement of transnational databases and maintenance of the SEEMIG transnational database: Assembled national data, collected and published by international organisations, still often lack comparability or do not allow for the incorporation of regional specificities. Continued efforts for the harmonisation of the collection of national data and for building partnerships among statistical offices and international organisations seem essential. The SEEMIG Transnational Database, as a pilot activity, offers an important information source on migration, labour market and demography in the region regarding the period after 2001. Its maintenance beyond the project's life span is considered to be of significant national and transnational interest for the South-East European region.

Policy area 4: Improvement of data collection and data use on the local level

Enhancement of institutional capacity of local public administration for data management as well as new forms of multi-institutional cooperation: Implications of migration – particularly those concerning migrant integration but also those related to out-migration – are currently dealt with on the local level, primarily. Consequently, local governments need to be able to respond to these specific local situations based on clear and local specific evidence. However, local public administration tends to lack fundamental professional capacities in collecting relevant data about development and migration. It is of public inter-

est that local databases – similar to the ones produced by SEEMIG – are created, preferably under statistical and expert supervision and coordination.

Launch of local surveys on migrant groups, local communities and on vulnerable groups (especially young people) on a transnational level: To understand current migration patterns and to pave the way for policy action, both the quantity and quality of statistical data at the local level need to be improved, along with cross-sectional analysis methods in order to integrate migration, labour force and family aspects. This has to be done both from the migrant sending and receiving country perspectives, in order to support their social policies, labour market policies and local development strategies. For this purpose, surveys on emigration and emigrants are needed as well.

PARTNERSHIP

Lead Partner:
– Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Hungary

Work Package Leaders:
– Hungarian Demographic Research Institute, Hungary
– University of Vienna – Department of Geography and Regional Research, Austria
– Institute of Informatics and Statistics, Slovakia
– University of Trento - Department of Sociology and Social Research - Research Unit on Local Development and Global Governance (LoG), Italy

Partners:
– District Administration of Montana, Bulgaria
– National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria, Bulgaria
– Municipality of Pécs, Hungary
– Harghita County Council, Romania
– Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe, Romania
– The Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Romania
– Institute of Social Sciences, Serbia
– Municipality of Kanjiža, Serbia
– Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Serbia
– Town Council of Turčianske Teplice, Slovakia
– Institute for Economic Research, Slovenia
– Maribor Development Agency, Slovenia
– Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Slovenia

Associated partners:
– INSTAT Albania, Albania
– Hungarian Ministry of Interior, Hungary
– Autonomous Province of Trento, Italy
– Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Slovenia

Observers:
– Federal Ministry of Interior, Austria
– Tbilisi State University, Georgia
– European Migration Network – Hungarian National Contact Point, Hungary
– Visegrad Statistical Societies, Hungary
– Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, Hungary
– Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Serbia
– Centr Strategitsnogo Partnerstva, Ukraine