National Policy Recommendations on the Enhancement of Migration Data for Slovakia

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Jointly for our common future

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introducing SEEMIG

SEEMIG was a strategic project funded by the European Union's South-East Europe Programme. The project aimed at better understanding and addressing longer term migratory, human capital and demographic processes in South-East Europe, as well as migration's effects on labour markets, national and regional economies. The main goal of the project was to empower public administrations to develop and implement policies and strategies by using enhanced datasets and empirical evidence.

These policy recommendations are one of the final outputs of the project. Their aim is to clearly and concisely present the measures, which are focused on enhancing the process of registration of migration and population residence.

1.2. Introducing the policy recommendations

The following policy recommendations follow the national strategy[1], which presents all problematic areas in relation to the evidence of migration and residence of population. All the major problems identified in the strategy have provided the basis where to build in the recommendations, by advancing for each challenge, respective measures for improving the current situation.

All proposed recommendations are aimed at the enhancement of data quality concerning the residence of population and migration. The main problem as well as the main challenge of this objective is the neglect of deregistration – in spite of the fact that this is a legally imposed duty – of the population in case of changing the permanent residence. The introduction of the concept of usual residence, the integration of administrative data sources in the statistical system and the transformation of the population census would enhance the data quality and would make information related to population residence and migration more realistic. Data from special sample survey focused on migration would provide information concerning the intentions, views and opinions of population on the problem of migration. This way we would acquire relevant and useful information for shaping the measures

The material is intended to all stakeholders, who may, at different levels, influence the process of improvement of statistical evidence. There are however mainly the Statistical Office and some other central government bodies such as the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family the principal beneficiaries of these recommendations.

2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Contemporary lifestyle shaped by the dynamic development of information and communication technologies and transport infrastructure, growing differences in living standards, situation on labour market and political events are among principal factors contributing to the process of increasing population mobility.

All this makes the traditional statistical registration of the population based on permanent residency insufficient. This brings up the question on whether it would be sounder to merely improve, or rather totally change the conventional approach to population registration. Finding a viable solution could prove even more difficult since the problem has to be solved at the transnational, rather than merely at the local level.

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[1] SEEMIG National Strategy for enhancing migration data production and utilization for Slovakia

It is not a coincidence therefore, that one of the main objectives of the project SEEMIG was to identify solutions to the problem of population registration. Despite the fact that the focus of the project was on the countries of the South Central region of Europe, it is possible that the proposed solution could have broader regional ramifications.

As a point of departure we propose to use the case of Slovakia, and examine the possibility for the introduction of the concept of the *usual residence,* which could either complement or replace the contemporarily used concept of the *permanent residence*. We will argue below that the replacement - no matter whether gradual or swift - of the existing *permanent residence* concept of population registry by the new *usual residence* concept will affect the projection of data in all major relevant statistical data sources such as: *the population census; the statistical registry of periodical statements*; *administrative data; and data from sample surveys.* In addition, we can take an advantage from the integration of administrative data into the statistical information system when it comes to the population census as well as for the purposes of population registry. Finally, specialized surveys can be used as a supplementary source of information which might help to identify inaccuracies in statistical registries. Nevertheless, such change cannot take place without the implementation of specific measures and these will be mentioned in the policy recommendations below.

2.1 Usual residence

In order to get information on the more *real* residence of persons in Slovakia as well as on more *real* migration flows, at least an administrative reality, it seems inevitable to implement registration based on *usual residence*.

Basic measures to be implemented:

1. To implement registration based on usual residence into demographic and migration statistics, information on usual residence has to be added into all statistical reports and administrative databases.
2. In addition to methodological and organizational measures needed for the introduction of usual residence into practice, it is necessary to enact legislative measures which will ensure that the population actually reports changes of usual residence.

2.2 Administrative data

A full scale integration of administrative data sources into the statistical information system presents a great challenge to the Slovakian central statistical office. The most significant obstacle appears to be a poor communication and cooperation between the administrators of data sources - predominantly consisting of central government bodies - and the statistical office.

Basic measures to be implemented:

1. Enact a legislation, which would make responsible all relevant institutions for the use of administrative data for statistical purposes.
2. Introduction of new registers - Register of natural persons, Register of dwellings and Register of addresses.
3. Interconnection of all basic administrative registers.
4. Modification of the Population register in terms of the content and quality of data, eventual creation of a population register under the jurisdiction of the central statistical office.

2.3 Population census

A population census processed in the traditional approach cannot provide a sufficiently trustworthy data source concerning the numbers, structure and territorial distribution of the population, mainly because of the high rate of non-responses. The rate of non-response is specifically high in the case of questions on residence and migration. We are convinced that a gradual transition from the conventional census towards a census based on administrative registers should be the medium to long term solution leading to the collection of a more accurate data. For the next census in the year 2021, the combination of multiple data sources will be necessary - administrative registers, sample survey and possibly a short questionnaire.
Basic measures to be implemented:

1. Elaboration of a medium to long-term strategy for conducting the population census, which will also include the proposal for the population census in 2021.
2. Develop a detailed proposal for designing and conducting the population census in 2021. The next census should be based on data from multiple sources (in optimal case administrative registers and sample survey, if necessary supplemented by a short questionnaire).

2.4 Migrant specific survey

A survey focusing on reproduction and migration managed by the Central Statistical Office, or other central authorities is still missing in Slovakia. Taking into account the existing problems with the registration of migration mentioned above, a sample survey (which would include also estimations) would provide a sufficiently reliable and convenient source of information on the residence and migration of the population. From the past experiences, we know however, that the main obstacle for such an endeavor is usually the lack of funds. Fundraising, therefore, requires a special attention.
Basic measures to be implemented:

1. Prepare a proposal for a survey focused on reproduction, family and migration, including the subject, description of the content, draft questionnaire, definition of the target population, creation of a sample file, specification of the sample into the interviewer network, time schedule and budget. Compatibility with results of surveys conducted abroad must be taken into account.