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**DEFINITIONS AND MEASUREMENT OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE  
2000 CENSUS ROUND AND ISSUES FOR THE 2010 ROUND**

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**INTRODUCTION**

1. International migration is playing an important and increasing role in shaping the demographics but also the social and economic structure of many industrialised countries. Depending on the perspective used to analyse it, different statistical sources and definitions are utilized and a comprehensive and consistent framework is still lacking at the international level, especially for the identification of stock measures.
2. In many countries the Population Census is not only a primary statistical source, but it also has a pivotal function for the wealth of definitions and classifications it produces. In this respect, the Recommendations for the 2010 Census Round have the possibility to provide useful indications to build a more consistent and shared set of definitions.

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the respective organizations.

3. This paper presents an overview of practices and definitions used in the ECE region in the 2000 Round. It also outlines the main issues to address in view of the 2010 Recommendations. A separate assessment has been done for stock and flow measurement of international migration.

4. On stock measurement, two different aspects have been considered:

- the features of some population groups which are relevant to international migration and whose treatment can have important implications on both the resident and immigrant population;
- the different criteria used by countries to identify the stock of immigrants and the feasibility of a shared definition.

5. On the measurement of flows, the main issue to address for a Population Census is to identify the most appropriate and informative question(s) to capture the migration moves and their timing and geographical features. Two different questions can be asked:

- the place of residence x years before
- the year of arrival in the current place of residence

Advantages and drawbacks of both approaches have been identified and discussed.

6. The reason for migration, a topic not included in the 2000 Recommendations but used by a significant number of countries in the 2000 Round, has also been discussed and different ways to deal with it have been identified.

## **1. STOCK OF IMMIGRANTS: DEFINITIONS AND PRACTICES**

7. Two different aspects are relevant when addressing the issue of defining and measuring the stock of migrants at a Population Census:

- a. Implications of Census definitions and practices on the enumeration of migrants. The definition of resident population and therefore the choice about who has to be counted in it is very relevant in the case of migrants: there is quite a number of categories with border-line characteristics. The decision whether to include or not these categories in the resident population can have important implications on both the total and the migrant population.
- b. Definition of immigrant stock: once the resident population is defined who has to be considered as an immigrant? At the international level, there is still no agreement on what has to be considered as the stock of immigrants living in a country at a specified moment.

### **1.1 Identification and counting of population groups relevant to immigration**

8. The choice on the inclusion in the resident population of some specific sub-groups may have important implications on the stock of migrants, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. From the Table 1 it appears that countries have followed quite diverse approaches in the treatment of 5 population sub-groups that are directly linked to the migrant stock<sup>1</sup>. For some of these groups, namely 'Foreigners with no legal status' and 'Temporary absent persons', countries

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<sup>1</sup> Most of these groups refer to the immigrant population while the 'Temporarily absent persons' group pertains to emigrants

have also flagged operational problems in enumerating them, which resulted in an undercounting of these categories<sup>2</sup>.

Table 1: Treatment of population sub-groups relevant to migration in the 2000 Round Census, UNECE region

POPULATION GROUPS	Included in resident population	Included in present and not resident population	Included in other population counts	Not included in any population count	No answer	Total
Temporary foreign workers with legal status	15	18	2	8	1	44
Resident foreigners without legal status	17	8	1	15	3	44
Asylum seekers	22	13	0	7	2	44
Refugees	28	8	1	5	2	44
Temporarily absent persons	39	0	0	4	1	44

### *Temporary foreign workers with legal status*

9. There is no precise definition for this category but two important features are inherent to it: legal status and temporary residence. The 2000 Census Recommendations gave a general indication not to include this category in the total resident population (§ 41) but, as the table shows, a certain number of countries (fifteen) considered persons belonging to this typology as residents.

10. Two thirds (six out of nine) of the countries relying on administrative registers included foreign workers with legal temporary status in the count of the total resident population, while most of the countries (almost 75%) carrying out a traditional census excluded them from the resident population. In almost half the cases (17 out of 35) these countries preferred to include this group in the count of the present population.

### *Implications for the 2010 Recommendations*

11. Similarly to temporary foreign workers there are other categories of foreigners temporarily but legally living in the country (for example, students). The general category of foreigners legally living in the country but not qualifying as usual residents could probably be better identified. This category may be included in the present but not resident population. Of course, the treatment of this category will have to be consistent with the criteria on the usual residence.

### *Resident foreigners without legal status*

12. In the 2000 Census Recommendations no specific provision was made for this group and countries had three main approaches in dealing with this category. About 40% of the countries included foreigners with no legal status in the resident population, provided that they were permanently living in the country. Among these countries only two had a register-based census

<sup>2</sup> In this chapter the focus will only be on choices countries made as to whether include these typologies in the population count or not, while operational problems of undercounting have been dealt with in the Working Paper n°8 'Definition of place of usual residence and other geographic characteristics'

(Slovenia and Spain) while all the others carried out a traditional census. Of the 15 countries that did not consider foreigners without legal status as relevant for any population count, 7 had a register-based census. The third main option was to include this category in the present population and this was adopted by another group of countries (8), generally located in Eastern Europe with the exception of Italy.

13. Under another perspective it's worth noting that many traditional and emerging immigration countries opted to include this typology in the resident population (consider for example Australia, France, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States).

#### *Implications for the 2010 Recommendations*

14. For this category a very difficult decision has to be made whether to give priority to the legal or the 'de facto' principle: illegal migration is a very sensitive issue and, apart from the Census capacity to enumerate this group, the inclusion of this group in the Census resident population can be very difficult for political reasons.

#### *Asylum seekers*

15. This category includes those persons who have applied for refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention and who are waiting for the final decision. In practice, this group is also likely to include persons who have applied for other types of international protection under national or international laws and conventions. The 2000 Census Recommendations suggested that asylum seekers should not be included in the resident population (§ 41).

16. In the 2000 Census Round half of the countries included this category in the resident population, while quite a large number of countries (13) considered them as belonging to the present but not resident population. This latter group mainly included countries from Eastern Europe and the CIS. Of the 7 countries that followed the 2000 Recommendations, 3 had a register-based census (Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium).

#### *Implications for the 2010 Recommendations*

17. A possible solution to this divisive situation should take into account of the following:

- the duration of asylum procedure can easily be one year or longer;
- the persons involved have a legal status.

Therefore the decision on whether to count these persons in the resident population should be taken on a case-by-case basis, verifying if the respondent qualifies as resident against the standard requirements rather than giving a general rule for the whole category.

#### *Refugees*

18. According to the broad definition used by UNHCR but also by many governmental agencies, refugees are all those persons that have been recognized as such under the 1951 Geneva Convention but also those persons granted a refugee-like status on the ground of humanitarian reasons. In both of these cases the refugee status is granted on an individual basis, while there are situations of mass displacement where individual screening is not feasible and temporary

protection is granted: in a broad definition these cases are also to be considered as refugees who are likely to remain in the destination country for a long period, often for more than 12 months.

19. The 2000 Census Recommendations suggested that refugees should be included in the resident population and many countries (28) actually followed this indication. A remarkable number (13) of countries, mainly from Eastern Europe and the CIS, considered them as present but not resident, while a small group (5) did not include them in any population count (three of these countries had a register-based census).

#### *Implications for the 2010 Recommendations*

20. Different approaches in dealing with this population group may also derive from definitional issues: different understanding of the term refugee, including all or some of the groups described above, can bring to different decisions about the inclusion of this group in the population universe. The 2000 Census Recommendations only referred to refugees under the Geneva Convention (§ 41), while a more comprehensive approach is probably needed, taking into account the three main groups described above.

#### *Temporarily absent persons*

21. The way this group (people temporarily absent from their country) is treated can have important implications on the count of the total usually resident population, especially in countries experiencing migration outflows.

22. Almost all countries include people expected to return in the count of total resident population. There are no particular differences between countries that have done traditional censuses and those with register-based censuses even though, from an operational point of view, the latter potentially face more problems in ascertaining the actual absence of respondents.

23. However the most controversial part of this issue is not the inclusion of temporary absent in the resident population but rather the definition of who has to be considered as temporarily absent. The 2000 Census Recommendations said that people absent for one year or more should not be considered as temporarily absent (§ 35): 30 countries have adhered to this definition, while 14 adopted different approaches. Some had stricter definitions (as for example Ireland and Switzerland, that respectively used the time limits of 3 and 6 months). Most of them, on the contrary, did not consider the duration of the absence as an element to decide about the nature of the absence. Among these countries there are some from Eastern Europe (Belarus, Czech Republic and Poland), but also others from Western Europe and North America (Netherlands, Norway, Canada and the United States).

#### *Implications for the 2010 Recommendations*

24. The issue of defining more precisely who has to be considered absent, whether temporarily or not, appears to be an important challenge given its implications on the enumeration of those citizens temporarily living abroad and, consequently, on the count of the resident population. In the definition of this group also the duration of the absence should be probably taken into account.

## 1.2 Definition of the stock of immigrants

25. The 2000 Census Recommendations did not give specific indications as to how to define the stock of immigrants. It was stated that two different variables, namely the country/place of birth and the country of citizenship, were important to identify two distinct sub-populations, respectively the foreign-born and the foreign population, which are relevant for stock measures of international migration. This approach is along the lines of the UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration (1998), which did not propose a specific definition for stocks but rather mentioned the two definitional criteria above.

26. Most of the countries followed this indication and they all collected both these variables, the only exceptions being the United Kingdom and Israel that did not include the question on the country of citizenship. The countries to a great extent also respected the criteria to determine the country of birth and the citizenship. Also the recommendation on the geographical classifications was followed by most countries. A substantive problem has though to be pointed on the definition of place of birth. The 2000 Census Recommendations defined the place of birth as the place of residence of the mother at the time of birth (§ 76). Only 19 countries followed this definition while all the others concentrated on the actual place or country of birth. Generally, reasons for not using the recommended definition were consistency with previous censuses or other statistical surveys, but also acceptability to respondents and users' needs.

27. However, it seems that two additional and interrelated aspects are to be addressed on the definition of immigrant stocks at the international level:

- a. Are the two traditional criteria used to this purpose, either country of birth or citizenship, able to capture the population of interest?
- b. Is it possible to agree on a shared definition of stock of immigrants, to be used at least for international reporting?

28. On the first aspect national definitions and practices co-exist, depending on the specific contexts and data sources. In the literature, but also in the practical experience, the immigrant population is usually associated with either the foreign-born or the foreign segment of the resident population. However, major drawbacks can be found in both of these categories: for example, the place of birth well identifies first-generation immigrants since they can be unequivocally traced (country of birth does not change, except for modifications in the borders). Nonetheless, the immigrant population identified on the basis of such a concept is too broad in one aspect (a portion of foreign-born people is composed of nationals of the country concerned) while it appears to be too restrictive from another point of view, since it excludes children born to immigrants (II generation). The second criterion, i.e. citizenship, is fundamental to determining the right of entry and stay in a country and is well suited to identifying a certain group with similar characteristics and entitlements. On the other hand, it is unstable because citizenship can change and, at the international level, different regulations on citizenship transmission and acquisition make international comparisons weak.

29. The main goal of measuring stocks of immigrants is to monitor their size and composition with a specific and long-term view on their integration in the social and economic fabric of the host country. For this reason, the definition of this group should not mainly rely on criteria that vary across countries and time, such as the citizenship. In addition, it appears that the II generation should also be considered, in some way, given the role it plays in the integration of

immigrant communities. In substance, both criteria of country of birth and citizenship appear to be at the same time relevant but insufficient.

30. From the analysis of the 2000 Census questionnaires, it appears that countries are to a certain extent aware that these two variables alone are no longer sufficient to identify the immigrant segment of the population. In order to overcome the drawbacks described above, different ways were explored to inquire about the origin of the respondents. As shown in table 2, some countries asked about the 'legal' background, asking questions on dual citizenships or on the citizenship at birth. Other countries inquired about parents' place of birth. In both cases the identification of the subpopulation of interest was based on 'hard-facts' such as the place of birth of parents or the citizenship at birth. Overall 29 countries, i.e. two thirds of them, included at least one question on either the citizenship background or the place of birth of parents.

31. Other countries followed a different approach and investigated the ethnic or national membership, a question presenting a higher degree of subjectivity. Certainly the large majority of the 27 countries asking the ethnic affiliation were more interested in the long-standing multiethnic composition of their population. However, there are also countries where this question was asked with the aim of identifying stocks resulting from recent immigration flows.

Table 2: Number of countries that included topics relevant to migration in the 2000 Round Census, UNECE region

TOPICS	Included	Not included	Total
Country of birth	44	0	44
Citizenship	42	2	44
<i>Other questions on citizenship:</i>			
Multiple citizenships	20	24	44
Citizenship at birth	8	36	44
Place of birth of parents	8	36	44
Ethnic group	27	17	44
<i>Related questions:</i>			
Language	33	11	44
Race	2	42	44
Religion	22	22	44
Reason for migration	11	33	44

***Implications for the 2010 Recommendations:***

32. Taking into account advantages and drawbacks of the traditional criteria adopted for migration stocks - place of birth and citizenship – and building on the experiences made by several countries, is it possible to envisage a definition of immigrant stock that could be used across the countries, at least for international reporting?

33. One possible option is to identify a broad category of persons having a foreign background that would include the following groups (see Figure 1):

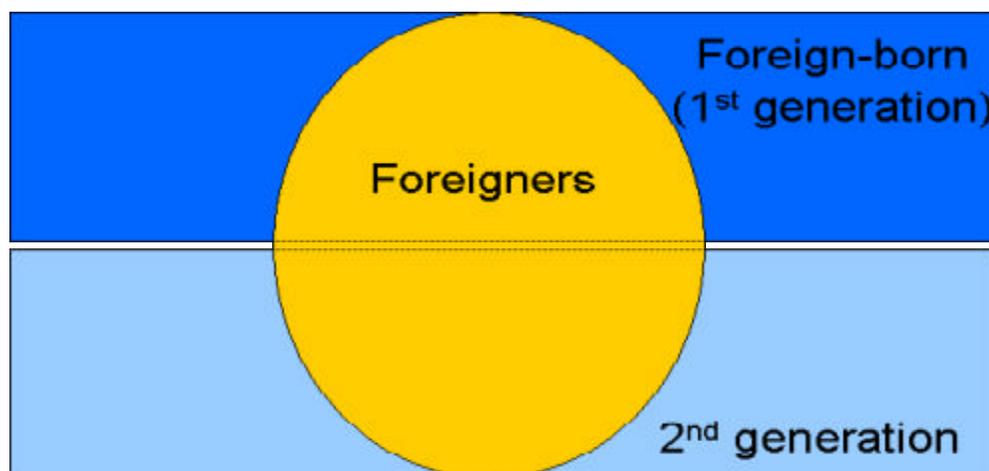
- Foreign-born, with the exception of nationals born abroad but citizens of the country from birth
- Foreigners
- Direct descendants of first-generation immigrants, i.e. the so-called II generation

Such a broad category of persons of foreign background would include the typologies currently used (foreigners and foreign-born) but also explicitly take into account the II generation. It would be broad enough to incorporate national needs and specificities but also able to reflect the complexity of immigration within and across the countries. This category would also better meet the information needs of emigration countries, since it provides a more comprehensive count of persons originating from a certain country (the diaspora).

34. In order to identify the various population sub-groups additional questions should be asked at the Census: in addition to the place of birth and the citizenship, questions should be included to inquire about the parents' origin. Also depending on citizenship regulations this can be done either through the place of birth of parents or the citizenship at birth of the respondent.

35. Another different issue to address is the definition of the place of birth. The results from the 2000 Census Round show that countries had problems in implementing the recommended definition. Problems were in particular reported, with higher non-response rates, for the most mobile segments of the population, for which it was difficult to establish the exact place of residence of the mother at the time of their birth.

Figure 1: Population sub-groups included in the broader group of persons with foreign/immigrant background



## 2. APPROACHES TO IDENTIFY AND MEASURE MIGRATION FLOWS

### 2.1 Different approaches to capture migration flows

36. A possible typology of questions relating to migration flows can be identified:

- Type A - Where was the person previously resident – most commonly (and recommended) at a fixed date in the past?
- Type B – How long has the person been resident here?

37. In some countries, separate questions of type A and type B are used in combination. There will be, for example, questions about place of residence one year ago in addition to date of establishment of residence.

38. For both question types there are key criteria that define who is covered:

For type A: Is a particular reference date applied? If so, what is (are) the past reference dates referred to? These are most commonly place of residence one year and/or five years ago. In certain cases, place of residence at the date of the previous census is asked.

For type B: What is the place of residence referred to when asking about the date of establishing residence here? Clearly a very different picture of migration will emerge if the question relates to arrival at a particular dwelling or even municipality rather than to arrival in the country or in that region.

#### Type A questions

##### *Place of residence at a fixed date in the past*

39. In the Census Recommendations for the 2000 round, place of residence one year ago was listed as a core topic (§ 56), with a recommended classification of types of migration ranging from moves within the administrative area to moves from another country.

40. Thirty-three countries responding to the questionnaire reported use of a census question relating to place of residence at one or more fixed dates in the past.

41. Twenty-four of these countries included a question based on place of residence one year previously – either as a single question or in combination with another question relating to previous place of residence or date of arrival. Eight countries (as a subset of the 24 above) additionally asked about place of residence at another date: five referring to place one year previously and at the date of the previous census; and three referring to place of residence one year and five years before the census.

42. Nine countries used a question relating to place of residence at a fixed point in the past but did not follow the recommended one year time period. Five countries asked such questions about place of residence 5 years previously, and another four countries referred to place of residence at the date of the previous census.

43. With regard to the place of residence referred to, 28 of the countries that had this type of question asked about country of previous residence for international migrants. Four recorded only that the person had been previously resident abroad. For internal migrants, eight countries asked about exact address one year previously, whereas 23 referred to the municipality (nine of these also indicating a change of address within the municipality).

#### *Previous place of residence*

44. The Recommendations also included, as a non-core topic, questions on previous place of residence – not linked to a particular reference date (§ 61). The recommended classification for such questions was the same as that recommended for address one year ago.

45. Twenty countries responding to the questionnaire included a census question on previous place of residence; a number of countries using such questions in conjunction with a question on place of residence one year ago.

46. In terms of the place of residence referred to, two countries recorded the exact previous address, whereas 14 referred to the administrative area only. For persons who had a previous place of residence abroad, 20 countries recorded the name of the country, with three only indicating that the previous place of residence was abroad without reference to the country name. In six countries, this question related only to those persons previously resident in another country.

#### Type B questions

47. The Census Recommendations included duration of residence as a non-core topic (§ 59). The suggested classifications for place of usual residence for such questions related to both minor and major administrative areas.

48. Type B questions could take the form of asking the year of establishing residence in the current place of residence or asking the duration of residence. In the responses to the questionnaire, no countries asked specifically about duration of residence, although 29 included a question on year of arrival. Twenty of these 29 countries had also asked a question about place of residence at one or more fixed dates in the past. Eighteen countries had a census question on year of arrival in addition to a question on previous place of residence (not at a fixed date).

49. As discussed below, the classification of current residence in such a question is important. Sixteen countries collected information relating to year of arrival in the country, with seventeen collecting information relating to arrival at that address or in that administrative area. There is some overlap between these groups, with some countries appearing to have collected information both on arrival in the local area and arrival in the country.

## **2.2 Effects of different types of census methods**

50. The different national approaches that are adopted for the collection of census-type data might also be expected to impact on the choice of migration flow questions. The great majority of countries in the ECE area report using traditional censuses methods involving a questionnaire. Procedures differed as to whether the forms were distributed and collected by enumerators or by postal methods. Three countries reported using existing administrative registers exclusively for

the production of census-type data and five others made use of registers combined with a universal questionnaire and/or field studies.

51. Given the large proportion of countries that used traditional census approaches, it is hard to form a clear view of whether, in practice, particular census approaches assist in the application of particular migration questions. It can though be noted that all three of the main census types considered above appear to allow both Type A and Type B information to be generated. In the case of Type A information, both place of residence at a fixed date in the past and place of previous residence (not at a particular fixed date) can be produced by traditional censuses and by those based partially or entirely on registers.

52. There appears to be no evidence that the adoption of a particular type of census necessary restricts the geographical classification of previous or current resident.

### **2.3 Benefits and weaknesses of type A and type B questions**

53. Type A questions potentially offer a simple way to address all levels of migration, either with or without a particular reference period. The previous place of residence can be recorded allowing the data outputs to classify types of migration: for example, local migrants; longer-distance internal migrants; international migrants.

54. However, a weakness of type A questions is that they either only allow the identification of cases where the migration has occurred within the reference period, or offer no information about when the migration took place. Although questions on country of birth may indicate that a person has at some point migrated to their current country of residence, the type A questions may not show if the migration occurred 20 months or 20 years previously. Social and economic insertion of a migrant into a new country of residence is a long-term process, and having information only on those who migrated within the last one or five years would generally be insufficient to allow this process to be studied.

55. Whereas type A questions offer flexibility with regard to the type/distance of the migration, type B questions offer flexibility in terms of the time period over which the effects of migration can be studied. Such questions do, for example, allow persons who migrated a number of years previously to be studied, and allow comparisons to be made with more recently migrating groups. As noted above, however, the definition of place of residence is important as this determines whether the person will be counted as a migrant at all. For many data users studying international migration, there is little value in knowing when the person became resident at that address or even in that part of the administrative area.

56. A further consideration is the effect of memory on the quality of responses to the migration flow questions. Although type B questions potentially allow the study of the longer-term effects of migration, people who migrated some years before will be less able to recollect correctly the date of migration. Clearly this effect will vary between different people, and will be different for international migration (generally a major life event) as opposed to shorter distance migration (which may be perceived as having less significance). Overall, this implies that there is a limit beyond which only very broad ranges of dates may be used. Whereas dates of migration within the last ten to fifteen years might be collected as single years, broader time periods (possibly five or ten year periods) might be better for recording dates of migration in the more distant past.

***Implications for the 2010 Recommendations***

57. For a number of reasons type A questions seem to better fit the information needs on internal migration (information at a detailed geographical level), while the type B question can better address a very important feature of the stock of immigrants (duration of residence). To take into account both needs there are various possible options, which also depend on countries' traditions and interests. For the purpose of internal migration analysis, the most important requirement is the possibility to build origin-destination matrices while for international migration is probably the year of arrival in the country.

58. At the price of a heavier burden on the respondent, these information needs can be simultaneously addressed through a certain battery of questions, as for example: 'When did you come to live in this municipality and from where? When did you come to live in this country and from where?'

## **2.4 Reasons for migration**

59. Eleven of the countries responding to the questionnaire report the use of the census to collect information on the legal or subjective reason for migration, a topic not covered by the 2000 Recommendations.

60. There are significant demands for such information from data users. There is for example growing interest in employment-related migration and its likely effects on the labour market. It can be seen that countries have used fairly broad categories to cover the reasons for migration – these categories generally appear to coincide fairly closely with categories of visa or residence permit, or with issues relating to forced migration or asylum. The census is potentially a valuable source of harmonised statistics on reasons for migration – information that is frequently unavailable from other sources of international migration flow statistics.

61. Some complications arise when the reason for migration is asked:

- the primary reason for migration relates directly to only one member of the household, while the other household members will probably give family formation/reunification reasons;
- the person replying to an official questionnaire is likely to state the documented reason for migration which may differ from the real reason. For example, a person holding a student residence permit may be unlikely to admit that they have taken up employment that is forbidden by their immigration status.

62. In principle, migrants move in the quest of better life opportunities. This would probably be the answer many immigrants would give to the question: 'Why did you migrate?' This would apply in all cases, whether they came to work, to look for a job, to study, to seek asylum, or to follow a member of the household. A generic question on the reason of the migration therefore risks to give broad results, sometimes influenced by the official motivation, sometimes by the individual aspiration.

***Implications for the 2010 Recommendations***

63. Some aspects have to be considered and better defined before including the topic on the reason for migration:

- the official reason of migration can be meaningful in view of assessing immigration policies, for example considering the current activity status of the immigrant against the official reason for immigration;
- the primary reason of migration - relating to the one who first moved within the household - is of course interesting, but also reasons such as 'family reunification' are useful to portrait the migration chain;
- a distinction between the cause and the goal of the migration may be tried, namely between what pushed the person to leave his/her country (unemployment, low salary, persecution, etc.) and what the person aimed at in the destination country (start working, look for a job, study, etc.);
- the analysis of migration chains and information networks would probably gain from a question on the reason why the specific country was selected by the migrant as destination of his/her migration.

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