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Dissemination and use of migration statistics for policymaking

Distribution and application of migration statistical data for policymaking in the Republic of Moldova

Note by the National Statistics Office of the Republic of Moldova *

Abstract

The paper presents information characterizing the national policy priorities in the field of migration as underlined in the strategic programs of the Government of the Republic of Moldova. It is noted that the Moldova-EU Association Agreement brings to a new level the collaboration in the field of migration flow management and migration statistics issues. The main trends in statistics improvement are presented in the development strategy of the national statistics system for 2015-2020.

I. Introduction

1. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data and national survey results confirm the real situation and acuity of the problem of mass emigration drain of the country population and presence of other problems referring to migration (legal and illegal migration, readmission, reintegration, regulation of recruitment procedures, permanent residence).

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2. All this encourages the Government of the Republic of Moldova to search for various measures aimed at minimization of negative consequences of that trend, turning migration into a positive factor of the country economic and social development.

3. The migration policy promoted by the Government of the Republic of Moldova is reflected in various national strategies, plans and programs that cover significant state spheres. Among them: National strategy on employment policies for 2007-2015, National strategy in the field of migration and asylum (2011-2020), National strategic program on demographic security of the Republic of Moldova (2011-2025), Child Protection Strategy 2014-2020, Program on Mainstreaming migration into national development strategies and others.

II. National policy priorities in the field of migration

4. The following state policy priorities in the field of migration stand out: stimulation of return migration, ensuring rights of Moldovan migrants abroad (first of all labor migrants) and improvement of their social status, creation of social protection systems of migrants in the Republic of Moldova; strengthening links with Moldovan expatriate community, evaluation of demographic risks and establishing criteria for their definition taking into account migration processes, improving efficiency of migration flow management at the level of state structures, including perfection of migration flow monitoring etc.

5. The complex solution of the mentioned problems will allow for the elaboration of an effective migration policy that should become a constituent part of the country internal and external policy, one of the priority directions of state authorities.

6. The Moldova-EU Association Agreement brings to a new level the collaboration between the countries. In the sphere of migration, providing asylum and border management, it underlines importance of regulating migration flows between territories, strengthening existing multilateral dialogue on all issues related to migration.

7. It was noted how important is the need to develop cooperation on statistics issues, promote achievement of the objective to provide timely, reliable and comparative statistical data. It is expected that consistent, effective and professionally independent national statistics system will provide information useful for the civil community, business circles, officials responsible for policy development in the Republic of Moldova, and will allow them to make informed decisions on that basis.

III. Data collection on migration processes

A. Extended migration profile

8. In the Republic of Moldova the existing methods of data collection on migration flows are steadily improving. At the initiative of the International Organization for Migration the “Extended migration profile” was developed, which is the source of comprehensive information for political level, and contains a list of key variables for the thorough study of migration processes and their impact on demographic and socio-economic development of the country.

9. For the annual renewal of the profile and dynamic presentation of migration processes the data from the national statistics service, administrative sources and international institutions are used.

B. Administrative sources

10. The main administrative information source for estimation of international migration volume is the Population register – the unified integrated system of automated registration of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, foreign citizens and persons without citizenship, who are permanently residing or temporarily staying on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, as well as the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, who left the country for permanent residence or temporary stay abroad.

11. The NBS obtains information on international migration from the Population register in the form of aggregated data, tables in the agreed format. The data from the register present officially registered flows of citizens, who change their place of residence. According to the Population register, intensity of the population outflow has been decreasing (by two times in 5 years).

C. Household surveys

12. The NBS in accordance with the international treaties on cooperation and partnership exerts efforts to compensate existing limitations in administrative data and bring migration statistics to the level of international recommendations. Within the frames of the Labor Force Survey Questionnaire, the NBS prepares sufficiently serious evaluations of the questions referring to migrants and migration based on the module surveys “Labor migration”.

13. At present migration from Moldova is at large a response to the opportunities offered by foreign labor markets. Labor migration significantly surpasses the number of emigrants who left the country for permanent residence. For this reason registration of this segment of migration is a key question for estimation of migration consequences and for elaboration of migration policies in the country.

D. Demand for new policies and new data

14. As it was noted by experts and data users, the situation with migration data collection and links between policy elaboration process and data collection are not sufficiently good. It is vitally necessary for the use of statistical information during the decision-making process to grow from “sometimes” to “regularly”.

15. In the opinion of some experts, labor migration of Moldovan population has currently is more of a circular character, while it is not very obvious. National statistics does not have the experience to measure this type of migration. Moreover, Moldovan authorities do not have experience in the field of relevant policies drafting and implementation.

16. Within the frames of international projects in the nearest future there will be provided training of the personnel responsible for policy drafting in the field of labor migration, and enhancement of their professional knowledge. In the future, it seems to be reasonable, while elaborating policies, to use such factors as engaging foreign investors and private sector in the realization of national scale projects aimed at economic development, and use of the potential of immigrants (including women) living in the country.

17. For consistent and effective solution of migration management issues it is necessary to improve significantly informational provision and support to the migration policy. Together with NBS, it was foreseen to define indicators necessary for monitoring the implementation of the program “Mainstreaming migration into national development strategies” and to extend a circle of the prepared indicators in the field of foreign labor force attraction and use.

18. The focus is on the development of future policies and indicators for their monitoring not only at the national but also at regional level and also in urban and rural areas.

IV. Access to the data

19. Official statistics as of today has a number of gaps in data distribution; it refers in particular to the results of the Population Census of 2014 and delays in the publication of sampling survey data.

20. The intention was to cover the unsatisfied demand for statistics on migration by means of the Population and Housing Census of 2014. The questionnaire structure allows to make a detailed analysis of the migration process, both internal and external. But that data have not been processed yet. After the processing, the results of the Population Census 2014 will fully correspond to the Recommendations of the Conference of European statisticians on conducting Population and Housing Censuses of 2010 and will allow for the receipt of the so much needed for policy purposes migration data.

21. In the work of Moldovan statisticians other problems are observed, which directly affect interests of the statistics data users:

- lack of methodology for information exchange between the administrative data producers and NBS;
- distribution of statistics data along the parallel channel, which distorts the users' views about statistics;
- limited operation of information technologies for effective distribution of information.

22. In the strategy on the national statistical system development, special attention is paid to solving the problem of user access to statistics information. Due to existing gaps in data distribution, it was planned to cut by 25% the time interval between information collection and its distribution (in all statistics sectors) based on the effective ways of data presentation, which will make them most useful for policy development purposes.

V. Distribution of migration statistics

A. Traditional ways

23. The NBS distributes data mainly by means of placement of information on its website www.statistica.md ('StatBank') in the form of tables with aggregated data. The database is regularly updated.

24. The migration information is included in the statistics annual report and separate publications:

- The Publication “Labor force migration in the Republic of Moldova” contains information on labor force migration and its socio-demographic characteristics.
- The Publication “Territorial statistics” contains information on the socio-economic and demographic situation in the country by territory. The publication includes for the first time information on internal migration.

B. Application of innovative methods

25. In the Republic of Moldova many ministries, central and local public authorities, departments and institutions possess data accessible on-line. However, all these data are scattered on various web pages and kept in various places. At the same time, the National Statistics Office of the Republic of Moldova bears responsibility for publication and distribution of public data.

26. Within the initiative “Open access to the Government data of public interest” in Moldova there was created a portal of the Government open data data.gov.md, launched on April 15, 2011. It is a key element on the e-transformation agenda of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, and it is aimed at facilitating access of people to all data of public interest kept at ministries and central administration offices.

27. Development in the Republic of Moldova of the system of electronic management 'E-Government' and a portal of Government open data presents for the NBS a unique prospect regarding that portal, an opportunity to apply modern technologies for distribution of information. As of April 1 the portal date.gov.md gives room to 887 data sets presented by 48 central state institutions, including NBS.

28. According to the survey conducted by the Open Data Watch agency, Moldova holds the second place in the world and the first place in Europe with regard to the accessibility and openness of official statistics data.

29. Development of cooperation and buildup of joint work between the Ministry of information technologies and communication and the 'E-Government' Center is a key priority

for the NBS in striving to support electronic statistics as one of the components of the e-Transformation strategic program.

VI. Main Conclusions

30. The absence of complete and reliable statistics determines the lack of clear labor migration policy. The country has not yet accumulated experience, the mechanisms of policy drafting on mainstreaming migration in country development is under development.

31. Collection and correct analysis of migration data is a complex task, and its comprehensive solution is possible with extended cooperation of all ministries and agencies collecting information about population.

32. The NBS role as coordinator of methodologic work in organizing data collection, setting standards and implementation of statistical methods while developing administrative statistics on migration and related processes, is not clearly seen. This role is sometimes plaid by various ministries while fulfilling tasks under special projects, but that does not give the desired effect in terms of transition to a unified methodology for data collection. The officials managing the administrative systems do not possess sufficient skills to bring the international migration data in line with the international standards; each of them has a personal view upon the migration issues.

33. The NBS pays insufficient attention to the marketing methods and distribution of statistical data that might help politicians and other users to estimate the complexity of the problems and notions related to the registration of international migration.

V. NBS priorities and tasks in the area of modernization and enhancement of migration statistics

A. Main directions of migration statistics modernization

34. The National Strategy on Development of Statistical System for 2016-2020 defines the priorities and tasks for modernization and improvement of Moldovan statistics. The international standards and recommendations as well as national needs of management bodies have been taken into consideration.

35. For each of the priority directions corresponding actions are formulated, which are necessary to overcome existing gaps and achieve expected results. In the field of demographic statistics, including migration statistics, it is first of all about quality improvement by means of the following actions:

- Implementation of the principles and recommendations for the system of natural population changes statistical registration (3-rd revision);
- Preparation of the legislative and organizational acts for conducting the future Population and Housing Census of 2020/2021 in Moldova;

- Implementation of the concept “the country of usual residence”, in correspondence with the UN Recommendations on international migration statistics (1998);
- Use of additional administrative data sources for obtaining new indicators on population migration.

B. Development of information collection, transfer and processing technologies.

36. Starting with 2015, the NBS cancelled hard copies for primary registration of demographic processes, and currently prepares statistics on the natural movement of population with the use of micro-data received on-line electronically from civil registry offices and the Population register. Considering that the data contain information on citizenship, place of residence, we assume that the information from those sources will supplement traditionally prepared migration statistics.

37. The shift to the electronic format of data transfer was also considered. A respective contract was signed, which has not come into force yet. As it was practically found, the consistency of the record files and information identity in the databases of various ministries and the Population register, which have respective sub-systems is missing. The NBS is fully aware that the quality of personal data transfer from the civil registry offices to the statistical offices will directly affect the performance of the national statistics service. Further coordination of data transfer procedures is needed.

C. Use of additional administrative data sources for production of migration statistics.

38. The NBS intends to study with a view to the possible use in evaluation of migration flows, the information collected at the passport control points (based on passport electronic reading).

39. While the border control statistics is not very informative and complete, from the migration record viewpoint (considering the open border between Moldova and Transnistrian region), this data source needs to be used. The prepared manual on the enhancement of migration statistics allows to see benefits and drawbacks of the data collection system installed at the state border, moreover that in our country there are attempts to ensure the registration of persons crossing the border in the above mentioned points.

40. In the frames of the regional project “Strengthening migration control and collaboration in re-admission in Eastern Europe” joint work with the representatives of the Ukrainian migration service is performed. This activity is aimed at the application of modern methods in the process of population registration and documentation that may ensure general monitoring of migration processes and guaranteed interaction with various databases.

41. The EU liberalization of visa regime for Moldova led to a 16% flow increase through the Moldovan-Romanian sector. The number of people crossing the border by air increased by one third. In these border-crossing segments passport control registration allows to collect statistics on flows and absence duration.

D. Strengthening the cooperation between NBS and producers of administrative statistics

42. The NBS undertakes efforts to review migration variables in order to extend the database from administrative sources. According to the contract between the NBS and the Population register signed in 2015, the migration statistics data will be annually supplemented with population data disaggregated by sex, age, citizenship, marital status, education attainment (alongside with the similar data prepared based on the Censuses). This will be rather useful in view of the emerged information vacuum.

43. The enhancement of migration statistics will be further performed in partnership with the ministries and agencies responsible for the respective sector and performing as holders of statistical information that will be involved in the national statistics system. In view of this, some joint actions of the NBS and other ministries are foreseen in the development of programs, legal and technical procedures for data transfer and exchange.