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Data integration and good practices in communication between national statistical offices and producers of administrative data

Cross-border exchange of administrative registers to improve register-based population and migration statistics.

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Abstract

How many foreign people are living in Spain? Are those 705,000 Romanians included today in the Spanish Population Register actually living here? And what can we say of the 300,000 UK Nationals (93,000 of them aged 65 and over) registered as residents in Spain? How many of them come and go? But also, how many Spaniards are living in UK or Germany? How many people are double-counted (or not counted at all) in Europe?

A deep analysis to the population Register in Spain may bring some light, but a national source never seems to be enough. This paper aims to encourage the exchange of information between statistical offices in order to improve migration and population statistics. In particular, it is proposed the exchange of individual data, not only aggregate figures.

I. Introduction

1. Migration statistics are becoming a subject of enormous importance for the society and also a topic of public debate. The situation has a different impact in each country. In some places the object of concern is immigration and in others it is emigration. But in all cases the

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statistical offices face the difficulty of providing reliable and timely data, which is not an easy task. And sometimes the absence of official figures gives room to the emergence of unofficial data of all kinds that hinder the discussion based on solid information.

2. The case of Spain is a good example of the existence of an important debate around international migrations. Both immigration and emigration have been in the public debate in recent years, for different reasons. If we look at the data published by the INE during the past years, they show that Spain has experienced a dramatic increase in immigration during the last decade. Only in 2007 there was an immigration flow of nearly 1 million people. And again in 2013 Spain stands first in the European rankings but for the opposite effect, emigration, which exceeded 500,000 people in 2013 (See Figure 1). Also the figures of acquisition of Spanish citizenship have become very high recently with more than 500,000 in two years (2012-2013). Some figures for foreign population in Spain to July 1, 2015 are also presented in table 1.

Figure 1. Population pyramid for UK Nationals registered in Spain. January, 1st 2015

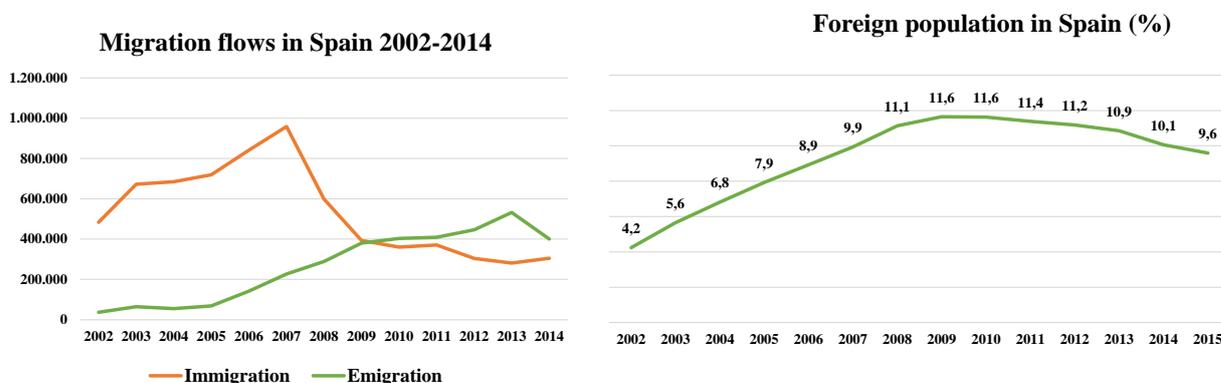


Table 1. Foreign Population in Spain. July 1st, 2015. Provisional Data. (Selected countries).

Foreign Population (July 1st, 2015)	
Total	4,426,811
EU Citizens	1,949,885
non-EU Citizens	2,476,926
Romania	705,333
Morocco	680,120
UK	300,438
Italy	187,329
China	169,444
Ecuador	164,803
Germany	143,875
Colombia	139,336
Bulgaria	133,114
Portugal	103,422
France	100,229
Bolivia	94,081
Ukraine	87,279
Argentina	72,356
Poland	67,785
Russia	67,764
Dominican Republic	63,397
Peru	63,137
Brazil	57,347
Argelia	54,527
Paraguay	50,925
Pakistan	50,008

Source: INE. Population Figures

3. Sections two and three in this paper explain briefly how the population register and migration statistics work in Spain. In section four some of the problems in population and migration figures are presented, using the example of movements between Spain and the United Kingdom. Section five describes how statistics could be improved by exchanging information between countries. In addition, some specific actions are proposed and a reflection is made about the future of migration statistics in the global context.

II. The population register in Spain (*Padrón*)

4. As regards population statistics the main source in Spain is the population register, named *Padrón* in Spanish. For each person, the register contains sex, date of birth, place of birth (country, in the case of foreigners), citizenship, educational attainment and passport or national identity number (ID number). All previous places of residence (within Spain) are also stored in the database, thus allowing longitudinal analysis and a very close and precise monitoring of internal migration.

5. All residents in Spain, regardless their legal situation, have the right to be registered in *Padrón* and they normally are, since being registered brings many advantages and no drawbacks. Residents in legal situation, aged 14 or over, must have an ID number that is stored in this database. For people in illegal situation, as they do not have this ID number, the passport number is normally stored.

6. Unlike other countries, where the Police, the Tax Collection Agency or other bodies are in charge of the population register, in the case of Spain it is INE the national institution that coordinates this database. *Padrón* is still not an online database. It is updated on a monthly basis. INE receives every month all the changes produced in every municipality, performs validations and sends these results back to the municipalities, to avoid duplications, but also to include deaths, births or acquisition of Spanish citizenship.

7. Managing an administrative register like this is not a common situation for NSIs. As statistical office, INE is a (special, but only a) user of this population register for statistical purposes but, as manager of this administrative register, it has full access to it. Actually, the Directorate for Demographic Statistics has only a limited access to the register. Because of this double role, clearly defined by Law (statistical office on the one hand and manager of the population register on the other) there is a different administrative unit within INE coordinating the register, the *Padrón* Unit. Of course it is a privileged situation for INE in comparison to other NSIs.

III. Registration and deregistration processes and migration figures

8. People living, or willing to live for a minimum of 6 months, in a municipality of Spain have the right (this is actually an obligation) to be registered in their municipality of residence. The only thing that they have to do is going to the municipality office, filling a declaration and providing a proof of residence. A water/electricity/telephone receipt where the address is shown and the identity card or a passport is enough. The benefits of doing so are many: free access to public health system, public schools, and other services and rights are granted by the national or regional government; also the municipality provide other services like parking license among many others.

9. As the number of foreign residents was increasing in the last decade and it was clear that only a few of them declared their departure from the country, a new procedure was built to be able to deregister foreign residents. In the case of non-EU foreigners, they have to visit the municipality premises to renew their inscriptions every two years. The city council sends notifications to all of them. If they do not renew their registration, after an administrative process they are deregistered.

10. This is not the case for foreign EU Nationals. Today, non-Spanish EU Nationals living in Spain (and also non-EU citizens but with a permanent residence permit) do not need to renew their registration in the population register. But municipalities must verify at least once every two or five years (depending on some variables) that every foreign EU National is still living in the municipality. So, if this is not done, the person does not lose any right, he/she is still perfectly registered, but they are not counted in population figures provided from the population register. This distinction between being registered and being counted in population figures is crucial for the quality of population and migration statistics in Spain as it gives some room for statistical treatment.

11. In the case of Spaniards migrating to another country they could never be deregistered unless they go to a consulate abroad to be registered there. All consular registers of Spain (around 250 all over the world) are integrated with the *Padrón*. But in most cases people do not change their registration, because it provides little benefits for them while some important drawbacks, so they remain being counted as residents in Spain. Thus, the figures offered by INE on Spaniards migrating abroad can differ from those published by other countries on Spaniards entering.

12. This system based on the population register produces several problems in building population figures. On the one hand it is clear that the procedure for registration and deregistration tends to overestimate the resident population. In the case of foreigners, it seems clear that some of them may be still registered but do not reside in the country any more. On the contrary, there are evidences on the unlikelihood of finding people living in the country but not registered. For instance, in some INEs household surveys the identification details (ID or passport number and full name) are collected in order to link with administrative registers. This is the case of Spanish SILC, where the information from the questionnaire is combined with taxes and Social Security data. The first step is trying to find surveyed people in *Padrón*. Only less than 3% of foreign Nationals in the survey and less than 0.1% of Spaniards are not found in it (and it may be for other reasons apart from not being registered).

13. In short, this system appears to provide good immigration figures but it is more imperfect when it comes to measure emigration. And the system is especially weak to measure the migration flows of Spaniards, since there is no mechanism for administrative deregistration.

14. It also goes for foreign people that acquired Spanish citizenship, 300,000 in two years in the case of South Americans (mainly Ecuadorians and Colombians). If they decide to migrate back to Ecuador or Colombia this movement may not be properly detected if they had acquired Spanish nationality. The emigration of Spaniards, born in Spain or not, is thus more difficult to measure.

IV. An example of migration flows in both directions: UK and Spain

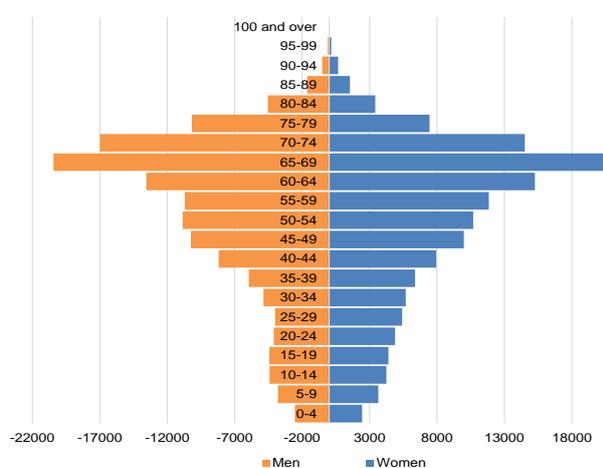
15. Let's take the case of flows between Spain and the UK as an example of the potential problems as regards migration statistics. This case is notable because there is a significant flow

in both directions and also because both the number of Spanish residing in the UK and the UK Nationals in Spain are relatively high.

A. UK Nationals in Spain

16. Migration of UK Nationals to Spain has been very important in the last 20 years. Actually there are around 300,000 of them living in Spain. This kind of immigration, as it also happens with Germans or Nationals from other EU countries is mainly not connected to the labour market. An important part of these emigrants, sometimes known as “sun-seekers” are normally retired people living in the cost of Spain enjoying the good weather during the winter but maybe not living in Spain throughout the whole year (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Population pyramid for UK Nationals registered in Spain. January, 1st 2015



Source: INE. Population Figures.

17. As said before, UK Citizens, like other non-Spanish EU Nationals living in Spain, do not need to renew their registration in *Padrón*. But municipalities must verify at least once every five years that every foreign EU National is still living in the municipality. The total number of UK Nationals included in the database with a valid registration is 377,636 as of Nov 1st 2015 but this figure is never made public. The number of UK nationals counted in official figures as residents (normally people with a less-than-five-year-old valid registration) is 300,438 people to July 1st 2015. So there is some uncertainty on almost 80,000 UK Nationals that were registered more than 5 (even more than 18) years ago. It means that 20% of UK nationals in the database are not counted as residents. This percentage is the highest among all foreign nationals in the population register in Spain.

18. The number of residents counted in official figures is not far from the one obtained during the census 2011 using a different approach (312,098 residents as of November 1st 2011).

19. The uncertainty on foreign people is smaller today than 5 years ago because of a procedure of massive checking and renovating registrations in force since 2009 but there is still today some logical uncertainty, mainly as regards people with very old registrations. There are still today (as of January 2016) 32,754 more-than-10-year-old registrations of UK Nationals in Spain.

B. Spaniards in UK

20. Emigration from Spain to UK, although smaller in size so far, is relatively recent and more connected to job opportunities. The number of Spaniards in UK has begun to increase only in the last 5-10 years. See table 2.

Table 2. Spaniards in UK (January 1st)

Source	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1. INE	57,770	60,368	64,317	69,097	74,389	81,519	91,316	102,498
2. ONS(*)	65,994	64,236	67,158	75,561	81,775	93,091	133,323	
(1)/(2)	88%	94%	96%	91%	91%	88%	68%	

(*) As published at Eurostat's website

21. According to INE's data, in absolute figures, UK showed during 2015 the maximum increase of Spaniards abroad among EU countries (+11,182 residents abroad). Figures published by Eurostat and collected annually from Member States (based on the new Regulation No. 1260/2013 Of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 20 November 2013, on European demographic statistics) do not show a very different picture for Spaniards in UK though the distance between the two sources seems to be increasing.

C. What INE's Migration Statistics say

22. It is not possible to assess today how far these figures in table 2 could be from actual migration. According to the nature of the source used we can say that INE is likely to be underestimating Spaniards in UK but it is difficult to know to what extent this is true, since many of them may not declare any movement: they do not declare when they leave but neither when they come back, if they do. The flow of Spaniards moving to UK and spending two or three years there but coming back is not well measured using the population register as the source of information.

As explained, international migration figures are obtained from the registered movements to or from abroad and from the administrative deregistration process. In the case of foreigners, only 20% of emigrations are declared by the people affected. Around 80% of emigration is obtained from deregistration made by the municipalities. It is obvious that the statistics underestimate the emigration of Spaniards as only the movements that have been reflected in *Padrón* are considered.

V. Exchange of data between countries could help

A. Cross-border exchange of administrative registers for statistical purposes. Why not?

23. The example above illustrates that a national source is not enough for estimating migration, notably emigration. So, a question that arises is to what extent the interchange of information may help to improve it. Obviously in the case of Spain if we had to use other countries' sources only for those nationalities with more than 50,000 residents in Spain (see again table 1) it would mean 22 different bilateral contacts with other statistical offices that

could provide different data, with different quality, difficult to assess, and so on. So, what is the point for exchanging information?

24. In an ideal world the community of statistical offices should move towards the interchange of administrative records among countries. It may sound too futuristic, but at least in the EU context, to be more concrete, it should not be, if we compare to other fields outside statistics where the interchange of information between EU Member States is more intense. If we stop and think seriously on migration statistics in the future, when many countries are moving towards population statistics based on administrative registers, knowing that national figures are simply not able to detect emigration properly, while they are normally in better conditions to measure immigration, the conclusion is natural.

25. The exchange of aggregate numbers can help to improve migration statistics. This is currently done in some cases. These are the *mirror statistics* used in the field of migration but also in other statistical domains. But mirror statistics are of little help in countries, like Spain, where migration (and population) statistics are based on population registers, since what we need to get are identified records (we need to identify the individuals to be erased or not counted).

26. In the case of INE, ideally, it would be necessary to know who are emigrating from Spain, regardless of nationality, in order to cross with the *Padrón* and to determine statistical figures on emigration, but the key priority is Spaniards.

27. In the case of countries having a population register like ours, a good first step could be to exchange individual information between NSIs just to have a first numerical approach. Being both sides covered by the same kind of national legislation on statistical confidentiality, why not starting collaborating between INE-Spain and another country's NSI exchanging this information only for statistical purposes? We may discover, for example, how many citizens of both countries are double-counted.

28. The problem is that we need to exchange identified records. It seems to us that in most of the countries having population register, as far as we know, the NSI does not have identification details that could be used for linking. Yes, there is a long way ahead. But it seems to us that this is at least one of the fields for further research in migration statistics (other important one is the use of mobile positioning, out of the scope of this document). And we should have in mind that migration statistics are an important subject of concern today. See, for example, the document issued on November 23, 2015, by the European System Advisory Committee (ESAC) "Opinion on migration statistics".

29. In principle our goal is to exchange data for statistical purposes; it means that these data should not be used data for administrative procedures. This is a key issue for the interchange. What we are proposing here is to exchange statistical (though individual) data without any other use. As the population figures in Spain are drawn from the population register but they are not the direct result of counting records in it, we can handle the situation of having valid records for administrative purposes but not counted in population figures as residents. It means that, for example, a Spanish citizen registered in *Padrón* as living in Spain but who has been registered during the same year as resident, for example, in the register of foreign people of Germany, should not be deregistered from the Spanish *Padrón* but should be counted as emigrant in migration statistics and consequently not counted in population stocks.

B. Vital statistics and Population stocks

30. A particular case of collaboration can be found in the exchange of information of vital statistics to improve stocks of foreigners. If we tried to estimate crude mortality rates of residents in Spain by citizenship as in table 3 (these data are obviously not published) they do not make much sense in general, even though the population pyramid differs a lot by nationalities. To illustrate it, let's take again the example of the UK Nationals and Spain.

Table 3. Deaths of foreign population in Spain during 2014. (Selected countries).

	<u>Total Deaths</u>	<u>Hypothetical Crude Mortality Rate (per thousand)</u>
SPANIARDS	384,227	8.27
FOREIGN NATIONALS	11,603	2.57
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES	8,898	4.06
UK	2,764	9.02
Germany	1,555	10.61
Romania	711	0.99
AFRICAN COUNTRIES	1,004	1.05
Morocco	686	0.98
AMERICAN COUNTRIES	1,376	1.32
Argentina	251	3.33
Ecuador	121	0.65
ASIAN COUNTRIES	310	0.94
China	100	0.60

31. The number of deaths of UK Nationals registered as residents in 2014 was 2,764. The crude mortality rate obtained for UK Nationals (9.02 per thousand) is very small compared to the one that could be expected from a very old population like this (see pyramid in figure 2). Taking the age group 90-94, the observed death rate for UK Nationals is 59 ‰, only one third of the death rate for this age group in Spain (199,6 ‰) which is impossible. It means that most of the deaths for this age group must have happened outside Spain.

32. If we could, for example, send a list of UK Nationals living in Spain and link it with death registers in the UK we could then clean up our population register in a more efficient way than through the municipalities, as it is now. Let's imagine that we could link, for example, the 32,754 more-than-10-year-old registrations of UK Nationals in Spain with British death records or any other. We could use this information to improve population figures. We would not use it to change people's status in the population register, but they would not be counted in official figures.

C. Legal issues

33. The information contained in the *Padrón* could be exchanged for statistical purposes with the European statistical offices because the Spanish Data Protection Act expressly authorizes it. The Spanish Data Protection Agency has also been consulted and gave a positive answer.

34. Moreover, in some situations, these data could be exchanged not only for statistical purposes. In its role of owner of the Population Register, INE is already answering individual

data requests from tax authorities or social security institutions from European countries seeking to know the status of residence and address in Spain of citizens of these countries in order to exercise their legal responsibilities, that is, for individual administrative procedures. But INE is not sharing complete administrative files with those countries today.

35. If agreed upon INE could use data coming from another country not only for statistical purposes but for administrative procedures of *Padrón*. For example, death records from other countries could be used for deregistration in Spain, but this exchange for administrative purposes goes beyond the scope of this proposal.

VI. Conclusions and some final remarks

36. In our opinion there is room for exploring, at least in some particular cases, the cross-border exchange of administrative registers for statistical purposes. It is somehow a matter of trust between NSIs that are ruled by similar legal provisions in terms of confidentiality. INE could offer to start a limited research with other countries interested (mainly, but not only, within the EU). This exchange should not be bounded to countries having a population register but to all those having administrative files that could be used for migration or population statistics like death records or Social Security files (for example, how many Romanians registered as residents in Spain today are also detected in Social Security files in Romania?).

37. This document is a first approach to the subject. Many details of the methodology of current demographic statistics in Spain, and about the possible dynamics of exchange have deliberately not been addressed here. It would be enough at this stage to study the interest and real possibility in some countries to start this collaboration. We would then propose bilateral contacts with those countries interested.
