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#### **Better utilization of administrative data sources to measure migration**

### **Use of administrative data sources to measure migration in Russia\***

The use of administrative data for the production of statistics on migration in many countries is a tradition with a long history. However, due to objective reasons other states started to accumulate such an experience not so long ago. Among them is the Russian Federation, where in recent years the flows of long-term internal migration approximated to four million per year, immigration for long-term stay - to five hundred thousand, and the flow of temporary labour migration - to three million persons. In other words, the scale of migration makes the issue of correct migrant counts to be of special importance. Inevitably, Russia must address the problems of collection, storage and processing of data, as well as the production and use of adequate statistics.

As noted, automation of population registration and counts in our country has begun relatively recently. But we can now observe growth in understanding that these systems not only facilitate the storage of information about individuals and the search for personal information, but also significantly enhance the consolidation of data and conducting of statistical research. Currently in Russia there are several systems of this kind – at both the national or regional level. These include databases of the tax service, the pension insurance system, civil records data bases etc.. However, only one of them - the Central Data Bank for registration of foreign citizens (CDB) run by the Federal migration service, can be considered a real source of statistical data. The potential of other systems, with rare exception, most often is unknown, and access to them is almost impossible. Still there is no experience of systematic use of civil registration data, reflecting contribution of migrants - both international and internal - into demographic

\*Prepared by Olga Chudinovskikh, Moscow State Lomonosov University/National Research University-Higher School of Economics.

processes on the territory of migrants' stay or residence. Registries of social insurance system, tax service, pension funds are not used as sources of data on migration.

Today the Federal migration service of Russia (FMS) is the main agency responsible for registration of events related to international and internal migration (table 1). FMS maintains records of entry and exit of foreign citizens ( FMS counts persons, not trips, like the Border Control does), monitors their stay, access to the labour market, and issuance of residence permits; FMS makes decisions on acquisition of Russian citizenship and asylum. In contrast to the situation in many other countries, the Federal migration service of the Russian Federation is responsible not only for control over foreigners' entry and stay in the country, but also for registration of the entire population (both nationals and foreigners) at the place of stay and place of residence and issuance of IDs (passports) for Russian citizens.

**Table 1. The main types of statistics on migration in Russia**

Type of movement	«Flows»	Stocks	Variables	Producer / source
<b>Entries and exits (through the borders)</b>	Number of trips (foreigners and nationals)	not applicable	For foreigners – by country of citizenship, for nationals – country of destination/or previous stay; purposes of the trip and type of transport	Border Service
	Number of persons (foreigners)	It is possible to count stock of foreigners that are still in the country after entry	Citizenship, duration of stay, purpose of entry	FMS of Russia , Central Data Bank
<b>Permits and visas</b>	Issued residence permits – temporary (issued for 3 years, not extendable) and permanent (5 years, extendable)	Stocks of permit holders	Citizenship, sex, age, regions if Russia	FMS of Russia , Central Data Bank , report 1-RD, 2-RD
	Number of foreigners registered at a place of residence or stay	Stock of foreigners registered at a place of residence / stay	Citizenship, purpose of entry, age and sex, regions of Russia, type of permit	FMS of Russia , Central Data Bank , report 1-RD, 2-RD
<b>Labour migration</b>	Number of foreigners issued work permits and patents (work in private households),	Stock of foreigners with valid permits	Citizenship, age, sex, regions, professions, partly – sectors of economy	FMS of Russia , Central Data Bank , report 1-RD
<b>Citizenship acquisition</b>	Number of applications and decisions	not applicable <sup>1</sup>	Grounds for naturalization (reference to specific chapters and paragraphs of the Law) , countries of previous citizenship, regions of Russia, age and sex, educational attainment, employment status.	FMS of Russia , Central Data Bank , report 1-RD, 2-RD
<b>Educational migration</b>	Enrollment and graduation of international students and partly – students coming from other regions of Russia	Stock of international and internal students	International students: citizenship, specialties, types of universities (private, state, ) etc. ; internal educational migrants - same (except citizenship)	Ministry of education and science Partly information on foreigners could be obtained from FMS Central Data Bank
<b>Long-term (permanent-type) migration, both international and internal</b>	Flows of in-,migration (migrants registered at a place of residence or – since 2011 - place of stay (the latest – for 9 months and longer) Flows of out-migration (migrants de-registered from a place of residence or, since 2011 - place of stay for 9 months and longer in case of registration expiration)	Stocks of resident population, born in another country or region of Russia, stocks of foreigners, or population with different ethno-cultural characteristics	A broad variety of variables available in regular publications or at a request	Rosstat: Flows – primary data comes from FMS on paper carriers; Stocks – foreign, foreign born etc. – all-Russia population census;
<b>Employment and economic activity of population , including foreigners and internal labour migrants</b>	Not applicable	Stocks of resident population aged 15-72: foreigners and RF citizens (stock of internal labour migrants working in a region different from their place of ‘de-jure’ registration).	A broad variety of variables available in regular publications or at a request	Rosstat, Labour force survey

<sup>1</sup> Stock of naturalized persons as well as “naturalization rate” are hard to count since year of arrival of foreign born migrants is unknown. A very big part of foreign born persons moved to Russia before the breakdown of USSR, having same citizenship and they have never faced the problem of naturalization. On average in 2010 (Census data) over 90% of foreign born were the RF citizens, although there were differences by countries of birth.

Actually, FMS combines the functions which in other countries are distributed among several agencies. Concentration of such a large number of activities within one agency, imposes it high responsibility in the field of statistics production.

Nowadays an increasing role of FMS in information support of migration policy and academic research could be explained not only by its leading role in the work related to the movement of population, but also by the policy of free access to statistics for a wide range of users. On a monthly basis FMS updates on its website information about flows and stocks of foreigners staying in the country, by nationality, purpose and duration of stay. Depending on queries coming from different users, specialists of FMS extract specific data sets from the Central data bank or prepare information notes based on aggregated statistical reports.

To register executed procedures and fulfilled work, the FMS has several resources, joined into an Automated system of analytic reporting - ASAR<sup>2</sup>. It includes the Central Data Bank of foreign citizens, the automated information system "Russian passport", "Forced migrants", "Citizenship", "Closed entry" and some other modules. In addition to information coming from the Central Data Bank, FMS prepares statistical reports with detailed indicators of its work – so-called forms '1-RD' (since 2007, monthly) and '2-RD' (since 2010, quarterly). Within quite a few years, these forms have already gained recognition among the expert community in Russia. Monthly report 1-RD contains several thousand indicators grouped into 14 sections, each reflecting activities in a special field of FMS's work (for example permit-visa and registration-passport work, asylum, citizenship, international labour migration and so on). Information is available for all regions of Russia and also includes data for the same period of the previous year. Report "2-RD" contains information on three directions of the FMS's activities - registration and permits issuance, citizenship acquisition and administrative practice. Unlike 1-RD, information on registration of foreigners, issuance of residence permits and acquisition of citizenship, is available by migrants' nationality.

The fundamental difference between data obtained from the Central Data bank and forms 1 and 2 RD is as follows: standardized statistical reports are subject to painstaking checking and to a large extent are prepared manually. In other words, the accuracy of the aggregated indicators is higher than tables generated from the database through a query. Thus, the reports 1 and 2-RD could be used as a standard for comparison and data verification. Detected differences and inaccuracies help to make subsequent adjustments in the Central Data Bank. This, is of course, a temporary problem and over time it will be possible to prepare standardized reports on similar indicators on the basis of the Central Data Bank and figures will be unified.

The opportunities which Russian researchers and practitioners have obtained quite recently, may seem to be an ordinary routine for professionals from the countries where population and aliens registers are an "old" and well-developed resource. However, Russian users (non-spoilt with availability of administrative statistics) can see that the new data has opened a completely different perspective for analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> See (in Russian): <http://oracleday.ru/locationbi/Pres/LocBI6.pdf> and <http://www.oracle.com/oms/oracleday/od11-bi-fms-1366232.pdf>

Under the conditions of growing volumes of migration and increasing variety of its forms in Russia, the use of automated systems of migrants registration as a source of statistics is an essential need. Now we can get statistics with such variables as age, sex, country of citizenship, foreigners' status, availability of work or residence permit, period of stay in Russia (continuous period after the last entry or cumulative period within a calendar year), etc. Data also are available by regions of Russia. A few years ago the Central Data Bank was supplemented with a special module that allows the heads of FMS regional offices to obtain the statistics using an interactive map. I.e. for each region of the Federation it is possible to get an immediate picture of migration situation, to know how many foreigners stay in the region, how many of them are registered at a place of stay or residence, how many offences were committed by foreigners, etc. and the data can be disaggregated to the most detailed level.

The Central Data Bank has not yet fully revealed its potential. The list of variables which are included is extensive<sup>3</sup>, however, much still leaves to be desired in terms of the completeness of entered information. Better and more fully entered the data that are necessary to perform different administrative procedures or make decisions related to foreigners, and other variables are often skipped. Such a situation is typical for databases of this kind: while under the pressure of lack of time, officers enter information that is the 'minimum necessary'<sup>4</sup>. So far it is not possible to obtain reliable data on composition of foreigners by country of birth, educational attainment, marital status, sources of income etc. The amount of data stored in the Central Data Bank amounts to tens of millions of records, the number of workstations that have direct access to the Data Bank is also extremely large. It needs time to adjust the whole process of data entry and storage. It is also necessary to conduct continuous training of staff to make the officers better understand that there is no 'unnecessary' information.

The main problem of data obtained from the CDB is its kind of 'instability'. There is still no practice of creating a "frozen" copy of the resource and production of statistics on its basis. Therefore, if similar data (related to the same time period or calendar date), are extracted from the Central Data Bank on different days, the results will slightly differ. Thus, different researchers will have at their disposal indicators that are close to each other, but not identical. This problem is definitely a technical one, and can eventually be solved.

Thus, in relation to administrative data on migration of foreign citizens, the situation in the Russian Federation is satisfactory. The Central Data Bank has become an effective resource of statistics; it is constantly evolving, input and verification procedures are improving, each year brings new experiences in data processing and analysis. However, it is not possible to understand migration process only on the basis of information on foreigners. Internal migration

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<sup>3</sup> The full list of variables is available in Russian on the official web-site of FMS: [http://www.fms.gov.ru/upload/iblock/316/file\\_brs.pdf](http://www.fms.gov.ru/upload/iblock/316/file_brs.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Such a problem seems to be typical for administrative data bases: see Hoffmann, Eivind, «Observing and describing international migrants: quality issues when using registrations of a national regulatory agency as basis for statistics.» MSI Congress, Sydney 2006. The text of the paper is also available in Russian: Хоффманн Э., Наблюдение и описание международной миграции: проблемы качества данных при использовании регистрационных записей государственной иммиграционной службы как источника статистической информации. Вопросы статистики 2007, № 2

in Russia involves millions of citizens of the Russian Federation and there are many Russian citizens in flows of international migration as well.

These migrants must also be counted using the possibilities provided by information technologies. However, the situation in this sphere is not so good. For objective (mainly) reasons, in Russia automated registration of foreigners' mobility has been organized much earlier than registration of mobility of RF nationals. Up to recent years regional and local offices of FMS implemented different software to register population and mobility of people. It was not possible to centralize collected data and produce statistics. These problems were well understood by the FMS itself.

Since 2008 FMS started its work on a new applied software (AS) "Territory"<sup>5</sup>, which helps FMS harmonize automated accounting of the population, regardless of whether we are talking about Russian citizens or foreigners. Recently FMS has started running the AS "Territory" in a test mode to define and eliminate its bottlenecks.

The development of administrative systems inevitably raises the question of the nature of the interaction between producers of administrative data and the national statistical agency. Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) remains the main Governmental agency responsible for official statistical observation of migration. In addition to censuses, mainly giving information about migrant stocks (by place of birth, citizenship, ethno-cultural characteristics), Rosstat produces statistics on flows of international and internal migration. These data are used for current population estimates (at the regional and federal levels), in the systems of national accounts, etc. Rosstat has the tools and methodology to produce statistics for users' needs. In addition, without surveys and censuses that are under Rosstat's responsibility, it is impossible to find the answers to more complicated questions dealing with migration motivation and behavior, and a broad range of social and economic characteristics of migrants and their households.

In respect of its own sources (censuses and surveys) Rosstat successfully copes with its responsibilities. As for statistics on migration flows, Rosstat entirely depends on administrative procedures of population registration at the place of permanent residence or long stay. Since the early 1930-ies Rosstat has been receiving from local and regional offices of the Ministry of Interior (and, since 2004 - from FMS), millions of paper forms (so-called "statistical form of arrival"). These forms must be filled in at the time of registration of migrants at their new place of residence. They contain an extended list of questions and allow to collect information on previous and new place of residence, main social and demographic parameters of a person, reasons for move, etc. Until the mid 1990-ies paper forms were completed also for out-migrants at the moment of de-registration from the place of residence (so-called "statistical form of departure"). Currently this procedure is implemented only for emigrants moving abroad. Internal out-migration is counted automatically on the basis of information about the previous place of residence within Russia.

A huge amount of manual labour is needed to prepare the paper forms and enter information into computers, causing unnecessary costs in terms of financial and human resources. Inefficient technology of primary data collection is only one side of the problem of coverage and

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fms.gov.ru/about/infosystems/opiter/>

data quality. Use of paper carriers does not allow to verify the uniqueness of each migrant count. The form can be filled in once again when a migrant receives a new status (i.e. residence permit, citizenship), because all these changes need renewed registration. Double count of the same persons is possible, because there is no information on whether the statistical form has been already filled in for the same person some time ago. These problems were aggravated when Rosstat started to implement a new methodology of primary data collection in accordance with international recommendations, as happened in 2011.

The main changes in methodology were as follows: until 2011 primary statistical forms were filled in only in case of registration at a place of residence (both Russian citizens and foreigners). Time criterion did not matter. Under the Law on freedom for move (1993) Russia introduced one more type of registration: at place of stay. Any person could move to another place, keeping his or her “permanent” registration somewhere, but also having a “temporary” registration at a new place. Although duration of stay is almost unlimited to nationals and extendable for foreigners, these migrants were not included in statistics of flows, thus underestimation of “temporary” migration was considerable.

Since 2011 the statistical forms also must be filled in for those persons who were registered at the place of stay (which de-jure implies a temporary status of a migrant) for 9 months and longer<sup>6</sup>. Information on registration expiry date is recorded among other variables, and entered into the database of Rosstat. When this date comes, a migrant is automatically considered to move back to his or her previous place of residence. I.e. international migrants are supposed to move to their country of previous residence. With a high probability the majority of these migrants soon return to Russia and get a new registration, many of them even do not need to leave Russia, if they have extendable job or students visas. This means that increases in migration turnover in recent years to a very large extent reflect events of registration and its termination but not real migration flows.

Emigration of persons who were registered at the place of residence is counted – as it has always been - on the basis of statistical forms or departure. Therefore, for this category of migrants statistics reflect the real event of migration to another country.

Implementation of the new methodology increased the size of flows dramatically (table 2). From 2010 to 2013 internal migration has doubled, immigration increased three times, and emigration - six (!) times. However, to a big extent these data do not reflect, in our opinion, the real scale of migration, since many of these migrants renew registration, and the event of migration does not occur.

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<sup>6</sup> Russian statisticians, moving to a new accounting methodology, proceeded from the peculiarities of our legislation. Citizens of the Russian Federation are allowed to register in 90 days after arrival to a new place of residence or stay, after three months, they must register and place of residence or place of stay. If the duration of such registration exceeds 9 months, then, in the sum with the first three months the total period will make a year or longer, that meets the criteria of the UN. For the most part of foreigners arriving in Russia for a period exceeding 72 hours, initial registration usually is possible for 90 days. Its renewal for a longer period is possible in case the foreigner has a contract for work, notification from a university study, or visa of a particular type. Therefore, for a foreigner extended registration for 9 months and longer in total with the initial three months of registration will also amount to one year and longer.

**Table 2 Dynamics of migration flows in the Russian Federation, thousands**

		2010	2011	2012	2013
1	In-migration total (1+2)	2102,3	3414,7	4196,2	4496,8
2	Internal migration	1910,6	3058,2	3778,5	4014,6
3	Immigration	191,7	356,5	417,7	482,2
4	<i>of them – foreigners and stateless</i>	24,8	211,3	288,3	348,6
5	Emigration	33,6	36,4	122,8	186,4
6	<i>of them – foreigners and stateless</i>	1,6	6,9	75,0	138,1
7	Net migration	158,1	294,9	294,9	295,9

Source: Rosstat

In 2013 only 27% of immigrants were registered at a place of residence (thus being "real migrants"), and 73% were registered at a place of stay for 9 months and longer. For the flows of internal migration, this ratio amounted to 55% and 31% respectively, another 14% were considered to have returned to the place of residence after a temporary absence. This category of migrants might also be 'virtual', as they had been counted as "return" migrants automatically upon expiration of the temporary registration by place of residence.

The composition of the flows has also changed. Since a considerable part of temporary migrant-workers are now counted as a long-term migrants (if they have contracts for a period of 9 months and longer), the percentage of foreigners in the flows increased dramatically (from 23% in 2010 to 60% in 2011 and 73% in 2013)<sup>7</sup>. Changes have occurred in emigration flow: the proportion of foreigners among emigrants grew from 6% in 2010 up to 75% in 2013.

One can observe a paradoxical situation, when an attempt to improve the coverage of long-term migrants and to bring the methodology in line with international recommendations, led to serious problems with data interpretation. The existing technology of data collection provides information on expected, but not real period of stay in the place of registration. It is not possible to learn if a migrant has moved from the region (district, town) after expiration of registration, or, if out-migration took place long before registration expiry date. To a big extent, new data reflect "virtual" migration. These statistics are difficult to interpret: they always need additional comments and explanations, because the majority of migrants (especially "out-migrants") actually might not have moved anywhere and probably renewed registration at the place of stay in the same region (city, town, etc). Although from the point of view of formal statistics everything is correct – migrants with expired registration are subtracted from the population of the region of stay and "sent" to the place of permanent residence, this is a redistribution of figures, but not movement of people.

<sup>7</sup> A very low percentage of foreigners in immigration flows (2002-2010) could be explained by dependency of registration type on foreigner's status (it was not possible to register at a place of residence if a person did not have residence permit). Up to the recent years Russia implemented widely-spread simplified (quick) procedures of naturalization in Russia. A foreigner could acquire citizenship within a very short period after arrival. Major part of foreigners postponed registration till they acquire citizenship. In fact immigrants were not the Russian citizens at the moment of migration, but statistics could 'see' and count them only after naturalization.

All the above mentioned difficulties could be avoided if information was received in electronic format, but not on paper carriers. When registration procedures are fully computerized it will be possible to have information on actual period of stay, to monitor pre-term out-migration, and re-registration at the place of stay. This should improve the quality and reliability of the collected information, and make it more understandable. In addition, the specialists of the FMS will be able to track "migration" biography of a person, in particular, the history of changes in his or her status and the history of registration at the place of stay and place of residence. If a migrant has already been counted on arrival and information was already sent to statistical office, a special mark could be done in the database to avoid double count of the same person in the future.

Summing up, we can make the following remarks. The Federal migration service of Russia quite successfully copes with the task of producing statistics on such key areas as visa and registration work, legal labour migration, and citizenship acquisition. Moreover, data can be obtained on a wide range of variables in their combinations. This means that statistics are sufficient to describe the main characteristics of foreign citizens that arrive and stay in Russia. Automated systems of the Federal migration service are developing, being filled with information, their "architecture" is modified. Changes in legislation related to migration and population registration requires appropriate and rapid alterations in the software that actually makes the process continuous.

Up to the moment, one of the most acute problems is the debugging of automated registration of the population of Russia and then organization of information transfer from FMS to Rosstat in electronic form. These questions could be solved in co-operation between statisticians and representatives of the FMS of Russia, based on mutual understanding of their tasks and capabilities.

In addition, the case of the Federal migration service should encourage other agencies with automated systems of population registration to produce statistics related to migration, but with specific parameters. For example, the Registry office has to report births, deaths, marriages and divorces among migrants, the Tax service can publish statistics on monetary contribution of foreign citizens or persons who have recently received Russian citizenship to the Russian economy, and so on. The use of new data is necessary, but it depends on understanding the value of such statistics and, of course, the political will of decision-makers in this field.

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