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Measurement of “hard-to-count” migrant groups

Developments of Return Migration Statistics in Lithuania

Note by the Statistics Lithuania

Abstract

Current economic, social and political developments crucially impact on migration processes in Lithuania. Despite large emigration flows from Lithuania in the last decade, the return of emigrants has become an important positive phenomenon in the last three years. Starting from 2001, more than 500 thousand persons have emigrated from the country. However, recently, an increase has been observed in return migration: in 2013, 19 thousand Lithuanian nationals (86 per cent of the total number of immigrants) returned to Lithuania. During 2011–2013, annual return migration increased and totalled around 16.8 thousand Lithuanian nationals.

As a result, Statistics Lithuania has faced new challenges related to developing population and, in particular, international migration statistics – in order to produce high quality, detailed statistics on return migrants.

Potential problems and challenges have been identified. Particular attention is given to the exhaustive analysis of administrative data sources with the aim to use those data for producing comprehensive return migration statistics. Population Register data and 2011 Population and Housing Census results are also used as a data source for the further development of return migration statistics.

I. Introduction

1. Many countries are facing demographic challenges manifested not only by declining fertility rate and rapidly ageing population, but also by migration processes. Dynamics and complexity of migration processes influence the formation of migration policy; therefore, over the recent years

statisticians have drawn considerable attention to estimate migration process. In recent years, the international statistical community has intensified its efforts to improve availability, quality and comparability of available data on international migration. These efforts often include collection, estimation as well as dissemination of international migration statistics by relevant demographic and socio-economic characteristics of migrants.

2. As in most European Union countries, Lithuania's ongoing social and economic development is substantially affected by international migration process. Over the last 10 years (in 2004–2013), about 440 thousand residents emigrated from Lithuania and 107 thousand persons immigrated to the country, 79.6 per cent of them were citizens of the Republic of Lithuania who returned back home (Figure 1). Due to the high emigration flows of the Lithuanian inhabitants, the structural changes take place among Lithuanian population and within labour force: decline of the population number, population ageing become more and more pronounced. Politicians think about bringing labour force from third countries, encourage the return migration.

Figure 1. International migration in Lithuania
Thousand

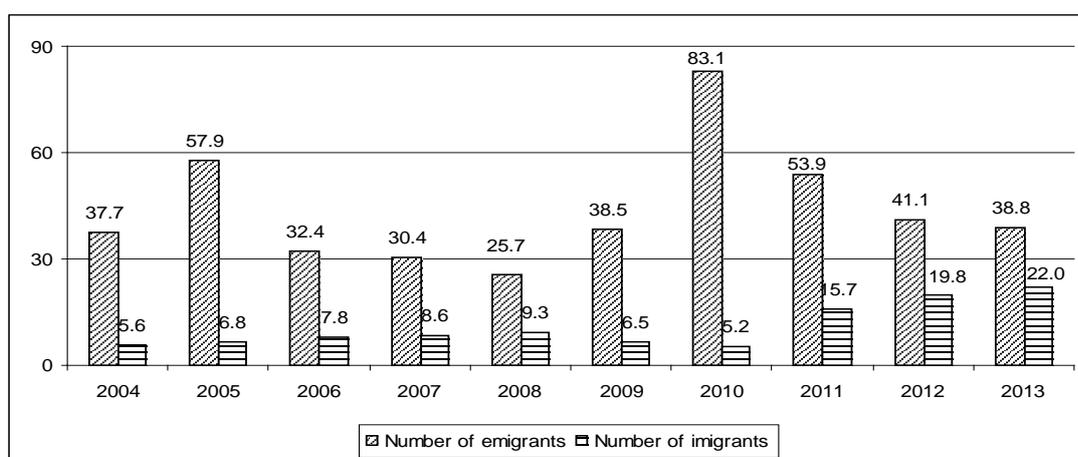
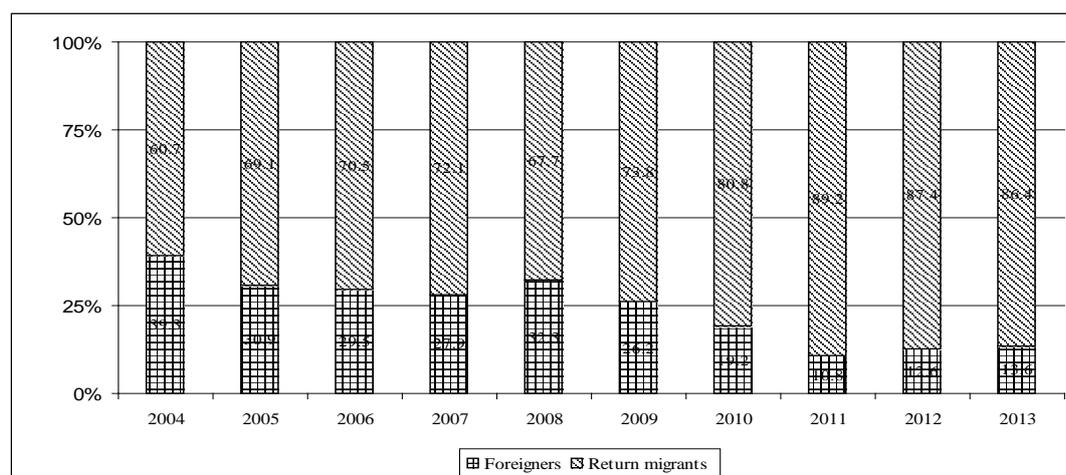


Figure 2. Return migrants (citizens of the Republic of Lithuania who returned to Lithuania) and foreigners declared their arrival in Lithuania

Per cent



II. International migration statistics in Lithuania

A. Main data sources for international migration statistics

3. Emigration of the population is the essential component, which exerts influence on the decline in the number of Lithuania's population. However, from 2011 an increase has been observed in return migration. The results of such changes need to be measured and analysed.

4. The underlying framework for production of the international migration statistics is Regulation (EU) No 862/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council on migration and international protection. During the last decade, considerable efforts to produce and improve quality of international migration statistics resorting to harmonized definitions have been undertaken.

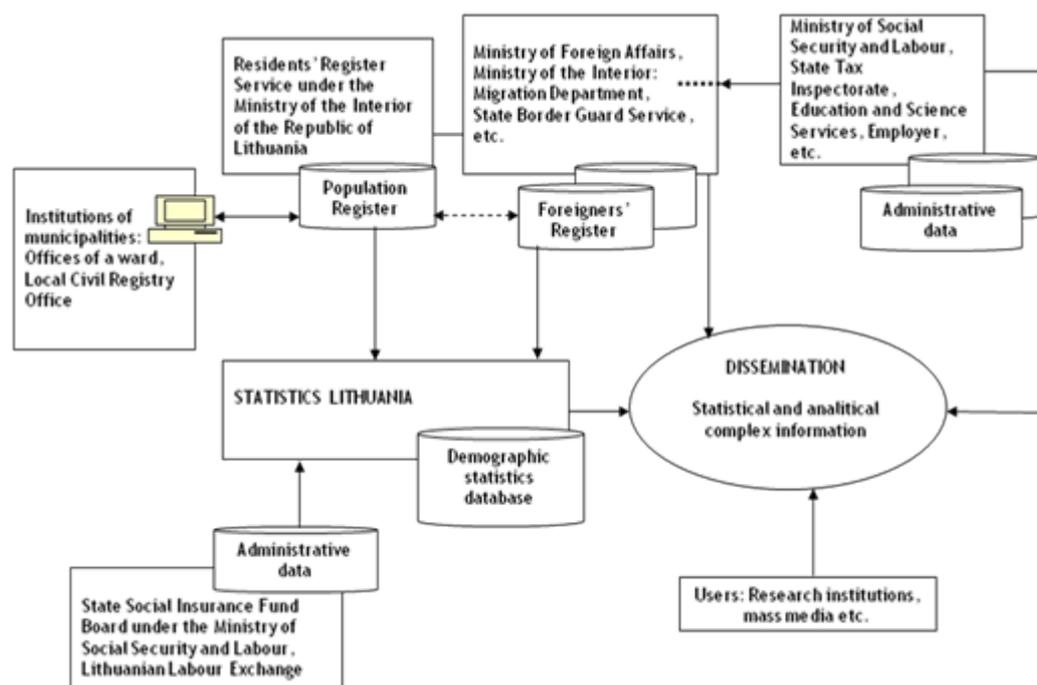
5. To comply with this, Statistics Lithuania annually produces and disseminates comprehensive statistics on international migration processes (flows of emigration, immigration and return migration, countries of destination, and main relevant demographic and socio-economic characteristics of migrants).

6. The following data sources are resorted to for production of international migration statistics: administrative data; household surveys; population and housing censuses.

7. **Administrative data.** Main state registers and other administrative data sources are used by Statistics Lithuania for production of international migration statistics. Firstly, the main data source is the central database of the Residents' Register of the Residents' Register Service under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as Population Register). The following data from the Population Register is used: declared place of residence in the Republic of Lithuania, date of arrival, country of departure, date of departure and country of destination.

8. Also, statistical information on foreign migrants is produced using data from the central database of the Foreigners' Register under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as Foreigners' Register). Statistical information on employment status of emigrants before emigration is produced using personal data from the database of the State Social Insurance Fund Board under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and from the Statistical Business Register.

Figure 3. Statistical data flows of international migration processes, 2014



9. **Household survey.** Household surveys were used by Statistics Lithuania for production of undeclared migration statistics. Estimation of undeclared emigration, using the Undeclared emigration survey results (based on the Labour Force Survey) had been carried out from the year 2006 to 2010. The results of these surveys showed the numbers of undeclared emigration for the period of 2001-2009. Also, this survey allowed estimating annual numbers of undeclared emigrants as well as their main demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

10. In 2010, the obligation was laid down in the Law on Health Insurance of the Republic of Lithuania for permanent residents to pay compulsory health insurance contributions. This made an impact on further accounting of emigrants, as emigrating persons had interest in declaring their departure; thus, since the year 2010 the Undeclared emigration survey has been terminated as redundant. Although the survey did not carried out, the existence of undeclared migration are planned to estimate using some additional information from interviewers and administrative data.

11. **Population and Housing Census.** The availability of data from the Population and Housing Census (hereinafter referred to as Population Census) is an important opportunity for countries to check and revise the population and migration estimates for previous years, as well as for establishment of a new population count as a base for future annual estimates.

B. Measuring return migration statistics in Statistics Lithuania

12. With ongoing globalisation population gets more and more mobile and their place of usual residence is not easy to define. What can be expected for the future, in terms of return migration? To answer this question, the statistics of return migrants and their main demographic characteristics (e.g. age) should be analysed.

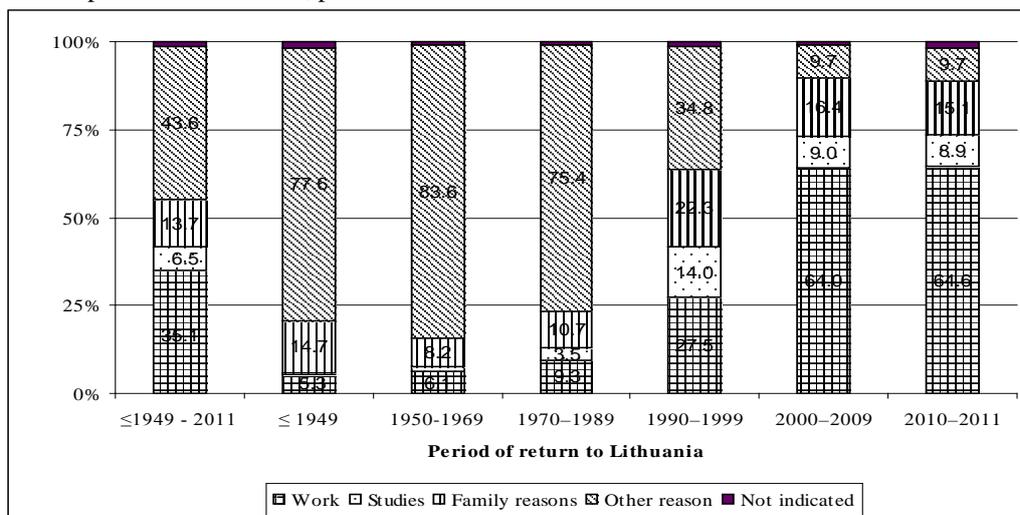
13. Challenges are faced by statisticians associated with defining and measuring the return migration. According to the definition offered by the United Nations Statistics Division for collecting data on international migration, return migrants are “persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year”.

14. Household surveys data (EU Income and living condition survey, EU Labour force survey) provide some information on immigrants and return migrants. Since these surveys cover only a small part of total population, the analysis of immigrants and return migrants from surveys is turning difficult when trying to identify their demographic and socio-economic characteristics by different breakdown (regional level, etc.).

15. The 2011 Population Census, which provides data on return migrants at the census reference date. 205.9 thousand (7 per cent) residents of Lithuania have ever lived abroad for one year or longer. Most of them were living in Russia (81.6 thousand, or 40 per cent of the total population of Lithuania who were living abroad), Belarus (24.1 thousand, or 12 per cent), United Kingdom (20.2 thousand, or 10 per cent), Ireland (10.6 thousand, or 5 per cent) and Ukraine (10.5 thousand, or 5 per cent).

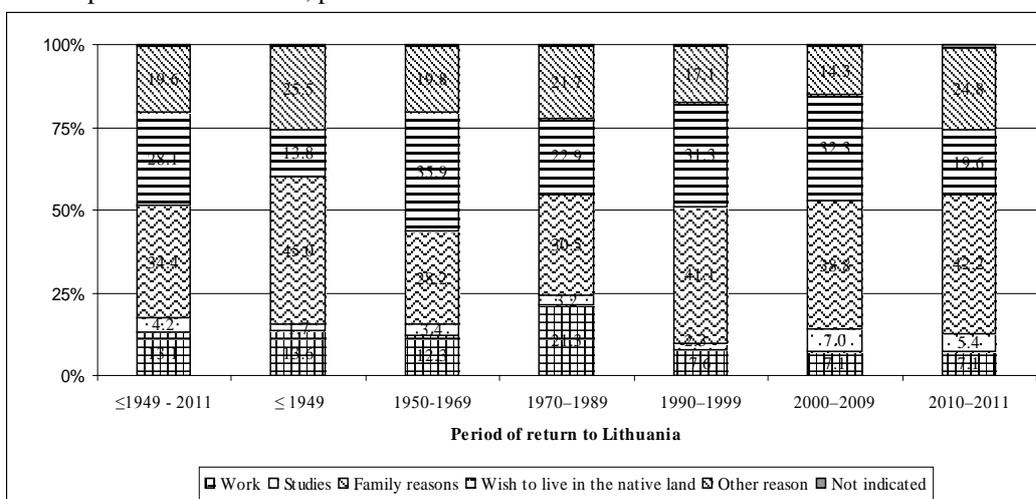
16. 35 per cent of return migrants (persons who lived abroad for one year or longer) indicated that the main reason of their departure was “Work”, 14 per cent – “Family reasons”, 7 per cent – “Studies”, 44 per cent “Other reasons”, 1 per cent did not indicated the reason (Figure 4). The 64-65 per cents of persons who lived abroad for one year or longer and return back to Lithuania in year period 2000-2009, 2010-2011 pointed the “Work” reason for departure.

Figure 4. Return migrants (population who lived abroad for one year or longer) by main reason of departure and period of return to Lithuania
2011 Population census data, per cent



17. The main reason of return to Lithuania for 34 per cent of immigrants and return migrants was “Family reasons”, 28 per cent indicated that they wish to live in the native land, 20 per cent – indicated “Other reasons” (Figure 5). The distribution of main reason of return to Lithuania has been changed during the time period.

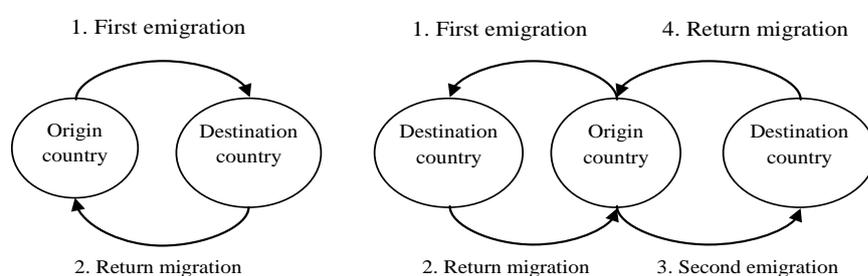
Figure 5. Population who lived abroad for one year or longer by main reason and period of arrival in (return) to Lithuania
2011 Population census data, per cent



18. Demographic statistics database which is based on the Population Register produced statistics on return migrants each year and was used to get deeper statistical view on the return migration in Lithuania.

19. In 2013 Statistics Lithuania had designed a pilot study to explore the historical behaviour pattern of the return migrants. The main goal of this study was to provide statistics about the return migrants (having the Lithuanian citizenship) who immigrated to Lithuania in the year X and to get answers on: How long have the return migrants lived abroad? What country of destination did they select second after the first experience of being the emigrant abroad? Also one of the important objectives was to define the main types of the return migration in Lithuania for the statistical analysis purposes. The first case of migration was the migration which could be defined as a pattern of the first emigration from Lithuania (origin country) to another country and return migration to the origin country during the reference period (Figure 6). The second case of migration was defined as a more difficult pattern of emigration and the return migration (immigration) process which could occur more than twice during the selected period. The 12 months and longer length criterion was taken into account for defining the migrant population.

Figure 6. The main cases of the return migration in Lithuania

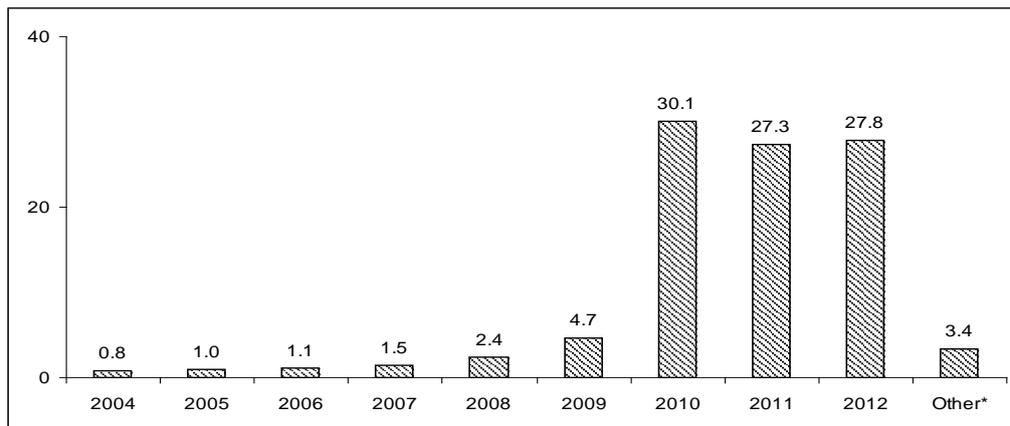


20. In 2014, Statistics Lithuania have continued the longitudinal analysis of historical behaviour pattern of the return migrants. Every resident is attributed a personal identification number. It helped to link and follow groups over time and attain longitudinal data studies. The linking of different databases unlocks numerous possibilities for studies on people's movements over time. The pilot study was based on merging all separate Emigration and Immigration data files (from the Demographic statistics database based on Population Register records) from the year 2004 to 2013 into one Longitudinal migration data. The analysis of the study has brought deeper statistical information on the return migration of citizens of the Republic of Lithuania.

21. The study results showed that 27.8 per cent of return migrants who had return back to Lithuania in the year 2013 stayed abroad during 1 year (emigrated in 2012); 27.3 per cent stayed abroad during the last 2 years (emigrated in 2011); 30.1 per cent stayed abroad during the last 3 years (emigrated in 2010) (Figure 7). Almost 85.2 per cent of return migrants had stayed abroad less than 3 years (Figure 8). 14 per cent of persons participated in the migration process more than 2 times (last time they return back to Lithuania in the year 2013).

22. The study results showed that 25.7 per cent of the return migrants by birth cohort 1978 (35 years old) had been living abroad for 4 years and longer (Figure 8); 36 per cent for 3 years. 67 per cent of the return migrants by birth cohort 1988 (25 years old) had been living abroad less than 2 years, of whom 30 per cent for 1 year. 78 per cent of the return migrants by birth cohort 1993 (20 years old) had been living abroad for 1 year. The return migration rates were higher for return migrants under 35 years old than for older ones.

Figure 7. Return migrants (persons immigrated in the year 2013) by emigration from Lithuania year, per cent



* - Included persons, who emigrated before year 2004, who not declare their emigration

Figure 8. Return migrants (persons immigrated in the year 2013) by duration of stay abroad, cumulated per cent

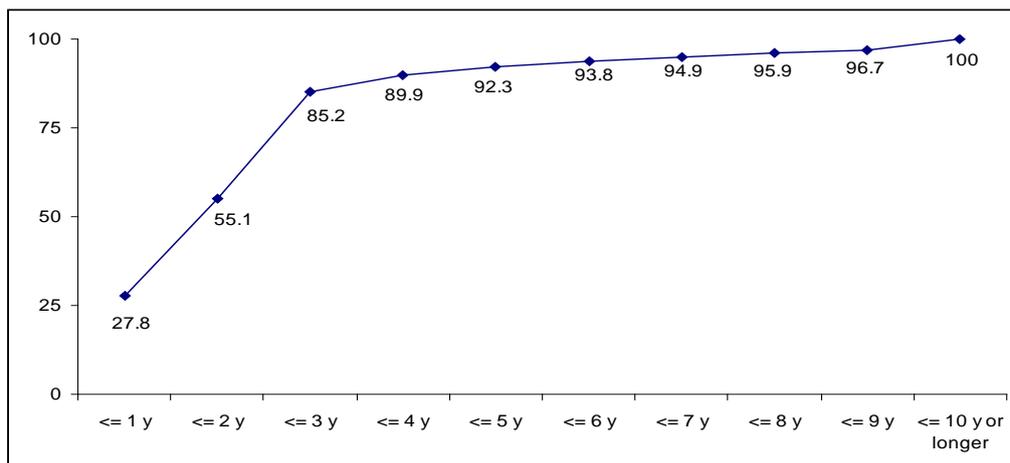
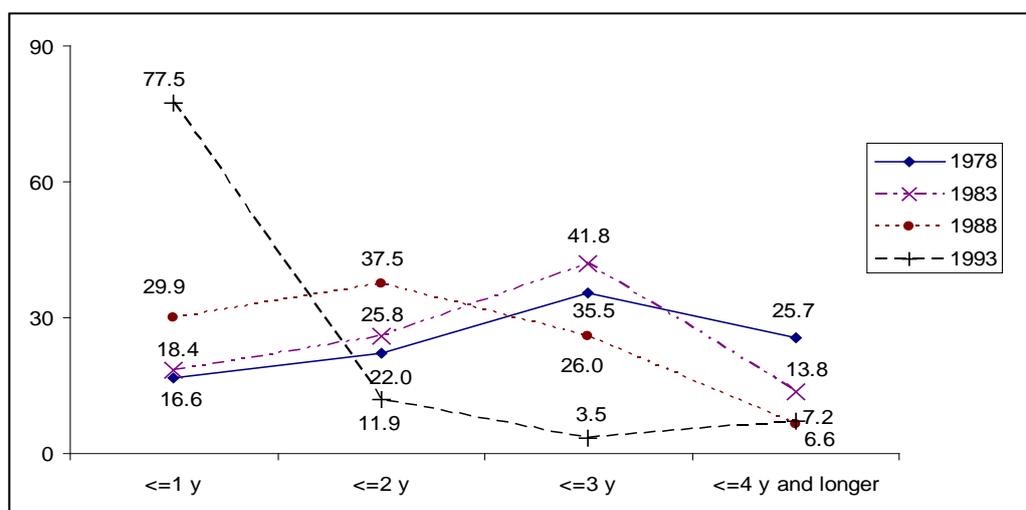


Figure 8. Return migrants (returned in 2013) by length of stay abroad and birth cohort, per cent



23. The study results showed that the majority (79 per cent) of the return migrants for the second and subsequent time emigrated to the same country to which they had emigrated for the first time. It is likely that the knowledge of environment, labour market, culture of the first selected country had encouraged the return migrants to choose the same destination country. Lithuania – the UK – Lithuania was the most common route of the return migrants, the second and the third ones were Ireland and Norway.

III. Future work in developing migration statistics

24. Future work on the improvement of the availability and quality of international migration in Lithuania employs certain precise actions:

- In the years 2014-2016, the full implementation of the Regulation (EU) No 1260/2013 on European demographic statistics remains the top priority for Statistics Lithuania. One of the important tasks is to reflect the international migrants' flows, to estimate the number of the usual resident population at the regional level, the changing structure of the population, to estimate the number of live births, deaths and internal migration.
- Longitudinal migration data analysis will be continued for the estimation of the return migration flows, their behaviour pattern of return migrants and their demographic characteristics. The analysis results will be presented for users.

IV. Conclusions

25. Currently available data sources are insufficient to produce comprehensive migration statistics and satisfaction of users' needs. Therefore, methods developed and applied by Statistics Lithuania enabled to improve quality of international migration, to perform the analyses of the return migrants based on the longitudinal migration data.

26. Longitudinal migration data analysis showed the statistics of the return migration, the duration of their stay abroad. Longitudinal migration data studies will be continued in 2015 and 2016.

27. Statistics Lithuania has recognised that greater use of administrative data will be needed in the nearest future for production of demographic and migration statistics and also for the 2021 Population Census. This brings numerous challenges, both in accessing and using the administrative data.

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