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# Doomed to failure
# – with some chance to success:
# Migration statistics in the 21st century

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# The outline of the presentation

The repeated attempts to solve the problems of migration statistics keep on failing.

The ultimate reason of these failures is the increasing incompatibility of the path dependency of nationalism and the challenges of globalisation.

The only (and rather limited) chance to improve the reliability and validity of migration statistics is to apply a mix of innovative methods.

# (Very) early attempts

## International Migration 1929

### A Historical Study of Migration Statistics

by

Dr. Imre FERENCZI

*Research Division, International Labour Office*

*In 1924 the Social Science Research Council of the United States set up a Committee on the scientific aspects of human migration. This Committee decided to carry out an extensive statistical enquiry into the question and to entrust this task to the National Bureau of Economic Research, which in turn asked Professor Walter F. Willcox (Ithaca, New York) to organise the enquiry. To this end Professor Willcox got in touch with the International Labour Office and proposed that it should collect migration statistics for every country in the world since the beginning of such figures, and more especially since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and that all the data as far as possible should be summarised in international tables. The enquiry was intended to cover all migration movements, both continental and intercontinental, irrespective of the nationality, class, or race of the migrants. The proposal, accompanied by an undertaking to cover the cost of the enquiry, was accepted by the Governing Body ; the Director entrusted the author of the present article with the task, the results of which have recently been published in a substantial volume of over 1,100 pages, containing 641 national tables and 36 international tables.[1] It is obviously impossible to summarise in one article all the information collected in the book, which deals not only with the volume of the movements, but also with the distribution of the migrants by age, sex, occupation, nationality, and country of origin or destination. In the interests of readers of the* Review, *however, the author, Dr. Imre Ferenczi, has been asked to give a short account, based on the data he has collected, of migration movements and the development of the statistics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.*

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[1] *International Migrations.* Vol. I : Statistics. Compiled on behalf of the International Labour Office, Geneva, with Introduction and Notes by Imre FERENCZI, and edited on behalf of the National Bureau of Economic Research by Walter F. WILLCOX. New York, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1929. 1,121 pp.

## International Migration Review 1987

### Efforts to Improve International Migration Statistics: A Historical Perspective[1]

Ellen Percy Kraly
*Colgate University*

K.S. Gnanasekaran
*Statistical Office, United Nations*

During the past decade the international statistical community has made several efforts to develop standards for the definition, collection and publication of statistics on international migration. This article surveys the history of official initiatives to standardize international migration statistics by reviewing the recommendations of the ISI, International Labor Organization and the United Nations and reports a recently proposed agenda for moving toward comparability among national statistical systems.

During the past decade the international statistical community has made several efforts to develop standards for the definition, collection and publication of statistics on international migration and mobility. In 1976 the Statistical Commission of the United Nations ( UN) adopted *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration* ( United Nations, 1980). In the same year, both the World Tourism Organization and the UN Conference on Trade and Development recognized the need for international comparability in tourism statistics. The UN Statistical Commission adopted *Provisional Guidelines on Statistics of International Tourism* (United Nations, 1978). In 1978 the International Union for Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) developed a proposal for improved utilization of national population census data to support comparative analysis of international migration. In 1981 the UN Statistical Commission convened an Expert Group on Improvement of International Migration Statistics to consider, *inter alia*, the development of a consolidated system of statistics pertaining to international migration, tourism and all other categories of international arrivals and departures.

These recent efforts have historical precedents beginning with the activities of the International Statistical Institute in the 1890s. This article surveys

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[1] The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions with which they are affiliated.

# Old debates - reloaded

**COMPSTAT**

**Comparing National Data Sources in the Field of Migration and Integration**
- 5th Framework Programme (2001-2002)
- 10 European countries
-to collect and analyse essential technical information on various sorts of micro-datasets and statistics produced regularly by public authorities,
-to contribute to establishing comparability of these data in Europe, and to provide useful instruments for a comparative monitoring of integration processes in Europe. (http://research.icmpd.org/1243.html)


**PROMINSTAT**

**PROMOTING COMPARATIVE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION IN EUROPE**
- 6th Framework Programme (2007-2010)
- meta-information on statistical datasets on migration, integration and discrimination in 29 European Countries
- to enhance the knowledge base on statistical data collection in this field and thus to contribute to the improvement of statistics on migration, integration and discrimination. (http://www.prominstat.eu/drupal/?q=node/64 and http://research.icmpd.org/1241.html)

**The beautiful aim:**
comparability = all countries systematically collect data which refer to the same category of migration events and to the same characteristics of migrants and migration events. …

**The terrible conclusion**:
comparative research on migration flows in Europe is not possible … because of the differences in definitions and sources used in various countries and in the coverage of the statistics. These differences imply that comparing migration flows in various countries would be often like comparing pears and apples.

http://www.carim-east.eu/media/Kupiszewska%20-%20Kupiszewski.pdf

# THESIM
# TOWARDS HARMONISED EUROPEAN STATISTICS ON
# INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION  (6th Framework) 2004-2005.

**THE TASK**:
… EUROPEAN UNION FACES AN URGENT NEED FOR BETTER STATISTICS ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMON EU MIGRATION POLICY. … TO IMPROVE STATISTICAL DATA COLLECTION IN TERMS OF AVAILABILITY, RELIABILITY AND COMPARABILITY …  THE THESIM PROJECT WAS SELECTED IN ORDER TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS REGULATION …
(http://www.uclouvain.be/en-7823.html )

## The beautiful aim:
A centralised, computerised, comprehensive and complete population registration system providing for the continuous recording of information on each member of the target population seems to be the best source of reliable statistics on migration flows, providing the rules related to registration are followed by migrants.

## The terrible conclusion:
The scope of international migration statistics … varies considerably … is constrained by factors such as the lack of relevant and appropriate characteristics in a data-collection system, the low reliability of the data and the existence of legal restrictions on the dissemination of some personal information.

*Source: THESIM, 2006. Chapter 8*

# MIMOSA:
## Modelling of statistical data on migration and migrant populations
## (2007-2009)

**The beautiful aim:**

- to develop appropriate methodologies to reconcile the differences in international migration statistics in European countries,

- to produce more reliable migration figures,

- to make all available figures more compatible (within each country) and more comparable (at EU-level), and

- to estimate missing data using all available data and expert opinions.

**The mimosa:**

A supersensitive and beautiful plant – its leaves respond to being touched, shaken, heated or rapidly cooled, which can be used as the basis of shamanic or psychedelic drug

**The results of the project – like the mimosa**:
-**Sensitive:** sophisticated modelling techniques and analysis

- But **not very useful**: Country of birth as a proxy of migration? On the basis of the most basic demographyc information? When proper data exists in only four countries of the thirty one?

*Source: http://mimosa.gedap.be/*

# The latest attempt

**Main topics –
a combination of traditional and post-globalisation issues**

Demographic flows and stocks

Integration

Work related migration

Remittances

Policy formulation, implementation and
   evaluation

Diaspora

**All the „good-old" problems**

Scope (coverage)

Definitions

Descriptive variables, classifications

Timeliness

Comparability over time, and between
countries

**The task**:

International migration is an issue of growing interest and concern in many countries … where international migration represents one of the topics that constantly draw the attention of policy makers, the media, the research community, the general public.

However, notwithstanding the efforts of many interested parties, namely national statistical authorities and international organizations active in this field … migration data available at national and international level are not of sufficient quality to monitor migration trends and patterns in a reliable manner.

**Source: On the basis of the discussant's summary at the CES seminar on measuring population movement and integration in a globalized world, Paris, 12 June 2008
http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2008.06.ces.html#migration**

# An ongoing reload
# – a step towards a new approaches?

**2009 - Suitland Working Group**

"Using Household Surveys to Measure Migration and the Size, Distribution, and Characteristics of Migrant Populations".

**Seven projects:**
(a) Literature review of methodologies used to estimate emigration;
(b) Website repository of household survey questionnaires for collecting data on migration and migrant populations;
(c) Linking registers and other sources of administrative data with surveys to provide socioeconomic information on migrants;
(d) Module on migration and remittances to be included in nationally representative household surveys;
(e) Categories, definitions, and the importance of hard-to-count migrant populations;
(f) Data quality issues for migrant estimates in surveys;
(g) Sampling frame and sample design issues for measuring migrant populations.

Source: Suitland Working Group http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/groups/suitland/SWG_TOR.pdf

# The first part of the explanation:
# path dependent influence of nationalism

According to methodological nationalism the World is a set of containers separated by borders

All questions should be framed by these national states and all answers should be given in national context

Production of any official data should be possible only by national statistical officies

# The second part of the explanation:
# the volume of the global migration process is increasing
# and is getting more and more diverse and complex

## Volume

- one of out of every 33 persons in the world today is a migrant (whereas in 2000 only one out of every 35 persons was a migrant).

- migrants would constitute the fifth most populous country in the world.

- remittances have increased exponentially.

## Diversity

- Today the top 10 countries of destination receive a smaller share of all migrants than in 2000.

But it is neither the larger volume nor the increasing diversity
but **the increasing complexity of migration causes migration statistics' failure**

**Some selected examples**:

- Double citizenship and the commodification of citizenship

- International commuters and tourist-traders

- Transnational migrant communities and new forms of Diasporas

**The consequence of  the increasing incompatibility of**

**the path dependent nationalism produced rigidity of statistical bureaucracy
and of the increasing complexity of migration**

**is that migration statistics is doomed to failure.**

This unavoidably caused that national migration statistics is
- hardly comparable internationally,
- focusing only on some selected „parts of the truth",
- putting emphasis on immigration much less on emigration,
- missing any information about illegal migration.

Based on Reger-Sievers, 2009

# The limited chance of increasing the quality of migration statistics

To give up futile efforts to harmonise and standardise existing official datasets.

Develop new sources of information using innovative survey and modelling techniques such as harmonised longitudinal panel surveys, survey based natural experiments, etc.

Mix them with in-depth but non-representative surveys of special migrant groups and processes (using innovative sampling and interview techniques) as well as non-survey based methods (such as non-participant observation) as the basis of estimation .

Develop new methods to aggregate the results of representative and non-representative survey and non-survey techniques.