



CARIM EAST – CONSORTIUM FOR APPLIED RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Co-financed by the European Union

Statistical data collection on migration in the Republic of Belarus

**Liudmila Shakhotska
Anastacia Bobrova**

CARIM-East Explanatory Note 11/16

Demographic and Economic Module

January, 2012
(last update: October 2013)



© 2013. All rights reserved.
No part of this paper may be distributed, quoted
or reproduced in any form without permission from
the CARIM East Project.



Introduction

Information on migration in Belarus is mainly gathered via 2 kinds of official sources, namely those produced by the National Statistical Institute (section 1) and those produced by the Ministry of Interior (section 2). Both apply to emigration and immigration.

1. Sources produced by the National Statistical Institute

- **Residence registration system**

The residence registration system collects data on inward and outward flow migration data. Both *de iure* and *de facto* populations are covered.

The current residence registration system was created back in Soviet times and no relevant changes have been made to the system since 1991. This system is based on specific forms of statistical surveillance: coupons or cards for a count of migrants. These forms are completed in militia departments or by other authorities in charge of population registration. They apply to those who register in a given locality (immigrants) and also to those who de-register from a place of residence by going abroad (emigrants). Currently, migration information is structured in accordance with the following attributes: sex, age, self-declared nationality, level of education, civil status, country of origin/destination and reasons for arrival/departure and so forth. Information on the above attributes is provided for all the flows in total and then separately only for external migration.

Since 2008, the flows of migrants have been separated by type of registered population, i.e. *de jure* population and *de facto* population. So there are two categories of migrants: permanent (long-term) migrants, who are registered in a permanent place of residence, and temporary migrants, who are registered in a temporary place of stay. The term of registration in a place of stay is limited to 1 year after which people must register in their place of residence. The most complicated aspect linked to the measurement of temporary migration is that those who register in a given locality, do not typically deregister from their place of residence when they go away.

- **Population census**

The census collects data on the immigration stock and some information on migration flows. Both *de iure* and *de facto* populations are covered.

Over the territory of contemporary Belarus, *population censuses* have been conducted 10 times, the last in 2009. It is one of the most fundamental and significant methods of gaining information on migration. Indeed, it is possible to get data on immigrants (by country of birth and country of citizenship) and on emigrants who had been temporarily working abroad within 1 year, but no more. A census allows migrants not only to update information on the number of labour emigrants and immigrants, but also to collect their socio-economic characteristics. Based on the census results, an adjustment of migrants residing in the territory of the Republic of Belarus and the emigrants who work abroad is carried out using the residual method due to inaccuracies of migration statistics (mostly because of open borders within CIS territory). Population stocks in the intercensus period (2000-2009) and migrants flows in 2005-2009 have thus been adjusted thanks to the 2009 census results.

2. Sources produced by the Ministry of Interior – Department of Citizenship

- **Permits granted to people to go abroad for permanent residence; residence permits issued to migrants in Belarus; the acquisition and renunciation of Belarusian nationality; persons having received a right to employ the foreign labor force.**

With citizenship we come across a number of difficulties. An individual who has been in the country for more than 90 days and for no more than 1 year receives a permit for temporary residence (temporary migration). The result is a relatively precise record for migrants from non-CIS countries. If an immigrant plans to stay in the country for more than a year, s/he may apply for a permit for permanent residence (permanent migration). A foreign national shall receive a residence permit for registration at the place of residence and inclusion for statistical observation. Still, s/he may do it a considerable time after their arrival or may not, even, do it all. It is noteworthy that, in the former republics of the USSR, a specific migration regime has been created whereby thousands of migrants are involved in short-term movements for the purpose of temporary employment. A visa-free system simplifies movements between the countries, and many migrants do not apply for permanent residence status and many do not intend to change citizenship. Families of these migrants stay back at home, in the country of departure. In part this situation is related to certain drawbacks in legislation and difficulties in receiving a residential status. On the one hand, if an individual aims to stay in Belarus, it is advantageous to receive a residence permit, as it means practically equal rights with citizens (with a few exceptions such as voting rights). On the other hand, not all immigrants have the right to apply for a permanent residence permit. It is necessary to have grounds for such a request¹ with no previous convictions and so forth. As a result, many migrants live and work in Belarus for several years, and the imperfection of migration statistics mean that it is impossible to adequately measure these migrants.

- **Data on migrants arriving in the Republic of Belarus and applying for refugee status or protection.**

Data on asylum seekers and refugees is structured in accordance with the following characteristics: country of origin (mostly citizenship, but not necessary), age groups, regions of residence and nationality.

3. Additional sources

Additional sources are then found in a number of **specific research projects** developed in recent years aimed at collecting specific data on a country's population and migration flows. These include:

- Research on youth labour migration 2005-2006 financed by the Belarusian National Fund of Fundamental Research;
- In order to study the specific nature of non-return youth migration under the international project 'Migration: Theory, Methods and Practice of Regulating Migration Processes', a joint team of

¹ A permanent residence permit is, indeed, issued to foreign nationals who are: close relatives of citizens of the Republic of Belarus permanently residing in the Republic of Belarus; individuals granted a refugee status or asylum in the Republic of Belarus; individuals who have the right for family reunification; have lawfully resided in the Republic of Belarus for the last seven or more years; individuals who have grounds for receiving citizenship of the Republic of Belarus as a registration procedure; those who were earlier citizens of the Republic of Belarus; those who have been employees and specialists sought by organisations of the Republic of Belarus; those who have exceptional skills and talent or extraordinary accomplishments in the Republic of Belarus, those with major achievements in the area of science, technology, culture or sports; foreign investors offering investments of at least a hundred and fifty thousand Euros for investments in the territory of the Republic of Belarus; ethnic Belarusians or their natural relatives down a direct descending line – children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren born outside the territory of the contemporary Republic of Belarus.

experts carried out a survey among young people from Belarus who left for work in the US during the summer holidays and who did not return to Belarus after the expiry of their visas;

- The research by the Scientific and Research Institute of the Ministry of Labour carried out in 1998 enabled the assessment of prospects of external labour migration, directions of potential migration flows as well as 'push' and 'pull' factors and conditions, not to mention typical qualitative and quantitative parameters;
- The development of cross-border cooperation and problems of frontier migration between Belarusian regions adjacent to the border and respective regions of Russia, Ukraine and other countries were studied by Shakhotska Liudmila under the Independent Research Council on Migration project within the CIS countries and the Baltic states on cross-border migration.
- The Balance Sheet of Labor Resources provides new regular sources of information about emigration. It contains information about citizens of the Republic of Belarus who are working abroad. Information is based on the results of a sample survey on employment issues. The first results have been received for 2012. However, they are not widely disseminated and remain in the possession and at the disposal of Belstat, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, and the National Bank. Data collection is conducted once per quarter. The sample population is 7000 households per quarter, and 28,000 per year. The method uses a sample without repetition.

Inward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
Belarusian Population Census	National Statistics Committee.	It is possible to find two migrant groups: 1. Long-term migrants , i.e. de iure population (permanent residence) 2. Short-term migrants , i.e. de facto population (temporary stay).	Sex, age, level of education, occupation.	Development of key methodological approaches to organising and conducting population censuses was based on the national and international experience of conducting population censuses as well as United Nations recommendations in this field.	(+) In the absence of a Population Register, a census is the basic source of data on the number of migrants living in the country; (+) Key demographic characteristics of migrants become available; (+) Is the basis for sampling observations; (-) Expensive; (-) Information becomes outdated. (-) It covers only the migrants who were residents at the moment of a census, and does not cover immigrants who had left earlier; (-) A census programme focuses more on migrants' characteristics than on migration events.
Main info: universal data collection; stock data.		The time criterion used to separate long- and short-term migrants is 1 year.			
Periodicity: roughly every 10 years. In total 10 censuses were conducted (1897, 1920, 1926, 1939, 1959, 1969, 1979, 1989, 1999, 2009).		In order to identify migrants three types of criteria are available: 1. Country of birth; 2. Country of citizenship; 3. Nationality.			

Inward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
<p>Residence registration system</p>	National Statistics Committee.	<p>The definition 'arrivals' is used. Arrivals include people who register in a place of permanent residence (i.e. de iure population) in the Republic of Belarus in a given period, usually for one year.</p> <p>In order to identify immigrants, the country of previous residence criterion is used (thus also including Belarusian return migrants).</p>	Available characteristics: sex, age, nationality, conjugal status, level of education, reason for arrival.	The Home Affairs bureaus submit migrants count coupons to statistical entities at least once a month. From the coupons, the processing of data on population migration covers coupons that refer to nationals changing their permanent place of residence, as well as citizens arriving to study for more than 1 year.	(+) Data are collected regularly allowing experts to build extended time series of comparable data; (+) Key socio-demographic characteristics are available; (-) Data handling from primary documents is outdated. For example, in Belarus data on the place of birth are gathered but are not entered and thus are unavailable for processing. Some of the columns are not filled in and/or checked; (-) Despite since 2008 the system has used to separate permanent (i.e. population registering in a place of permanent residence or de iure population) from temporary (i.e. population registering in a place of stay or de facto population) population, no info on temporary records is processed for statistical purposes, i.e. data on temporary migrants are not available.
<p>Main info: Primary source; flow data</p>					
<p>Periodicity: Continuous registration; (monthly and annual).</p>					

Inward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
Administrative reporting	Department of Citizenship and Migration of the Ministry of the Interior.	It covers permanent and temporary migrants . Migrants are defined as permanent residents when s/he has received a permanent residence permit issued by a Home Affairs bureau. (de jure population).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of permits to employ foreign labour force (stay/work permits) that were given by employer not by the employee. b. Number of residence permits. c. Number of persons who received Belarusian citizenship. 	Citizenship decisions as regards persons with permanent residence in the Republic of Belarus are carried out by the Home Affairs bureaus and as regards persons living abroad – by diplomatic services. Record-taking follows the number of consents granted to applications for acquiring citizenship in the Republic of Belarus.	(+) Quite an extended time series of data is available; (-) No distribution even by sex or age; (-) The statistics of granted citizenship are to a certain extent affected by the political context. Immigrants receive citizenship first and then register as immigrants-citizens of the Republic of Belarus. Hence the number of immigrants- is much lower than the number of persons receiving citizenship; (-) A considerable number of labour migrants work illegally. Hence the statistics of work permits so far cannot provide information on the number of long-term labour migrants from abroad who stay in the country. (-) Only instances of issuing permits and not the real number of employees are registered. Besides, entitlement to employ the labour force does not guarantee the arrival of workers.
Main info: Primary source; flow data.		Migrants are defined as temporary stayers when s/he has received a temporary stay permit. (de facto population).			
Periodicity: Annual		In order to identify migrants, the country of citizenship criterion is used.			

Inward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
Border card system	State Customs Committee.	Foreign nationals crossing the border	Number of foreign nationals crossing the border by country. Can be by sex and age, reason for arrival.	Passengers fill in a migration card (on a train, plane and sometimes on a bus) and hand it over to a customs officer on entering the territory of Belarus.	(+) It is possible to compare data from the Ministry of the Interior (e.g. the number of migrants from non CIS countries, who have to receive a temporary stay permits) with the number of border crossings; (-) Incomplete records. Not completed by migrants crossing the border by car, rarely completed by those travelling by bus; (-) Information entered on the cards is not checked; (-) Information provided is not fully used.
Main info: Primary data; flow data.					
Periodicity: Annual.					

Inward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+)and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
State Statistical Monitoring of Higher Educational Institutions	State Statistics Service of Ukraine.	Foreign students at higher educational institutions. Foreign students are foreign nationals admitted under special permits or visas allowing them to undertake a course of study in an accredited Ukrainian higher educational institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of foreign students by the level of accreditation of higher educational institutions (I-II vs. III-IV) and regions in Ukraine; b. Number of foreign students by the level of accreditation of higher educational institutions (I-II vs. III-IV), ownership type and the responsible Ministry (State Agency) for state-owned institutions; c. Number of foreign students by the level of accreditation of higher educational institutions (I-II vs. III-IV) and the origin country – total number of students, number of first-year students, number of graduates. 	Data collection based on reporting of all accredited higher educational institutions with two statistical forms on the number and composition of students in the beginning of an academic year.	(+) Universal coverage of target population throughout Ukraine; (+) Reliable and publicly available information; (-) Foreign students form only a small proportion of foreign communities in the country.
Main info: Primary source; stock and flow data.					
Periodicity: Continuous registration; Annually (by academic year, starting in September and ending in June-July).					

Outward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
Belarusian Population Census	National Statistics Committee.	<p>It is possible to get 2 group of migrants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - population residing abroad at the moment of the census (group1) - population having resided abroad for more than 1 year within the period 2005-2009 but present in Belarus at the moment of the census 	<p>Available characteristics on the population residing abroad at the moment of the census: type of settlement, country of the actual place of work; age, level of education.</p> <p>Available characteristics on the population residing having resided abroad for more than 1 year within the period 2005-2009 but present in Belarus at the moment of the census: previous country of residence, education level; reason for departure; citizenship.</p>	Development of key methodological approaches to organising and conducting population censuses was based on the national and international experience of conducting population censuses as well as United Nations recommendations in this field.	<p>(+) Key demographic characteristics of migrants become available; (+) Is the basis for sampling observations; (-) Insufficient credibility of information on emigration. It is impossible to fully describe who was absent during the census for a series of reasons, among which household who entirely left cannot be captured; (-) Lack of important variables on the stock of emigrants abroad at the moment of the census, e.g. reason for departure and length of stay abroad. (-) Expensive; (-) Data become outdated.</p>
Main info: Primary source; universal data collection; stock data					
Periodicity: roughly every 10 years. In total 10 censuses were conducted (1897, 1920, 1926, 1939, 1959, 1969, 1979, 1989, 1999, 2009).					

Outward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
Residence registration system	National Statistics Committee.	The definition 'departures' is used. Departures include all people who deregister from a place of permanent residence (i.e. de iure population) in the Republic of Belarus for residing abroad in a given period, usually one year.	Available characteristics: country of destination, sex, age, family status, level of education and reason for departure.	The home affairs bureaus submit migrants count coupons to statistical entities at least once a month. Studies of migration within the country include statistical migrants count coupons of incomers. Emigration per region is estimated based on arrival coupons characterised by the territory of departure.	(+) Data are collected regularly allowing experts to build extended time series of comparable data; (+) Key socio-demographic characteristics are available; (-) Data handling from primary documents is outdated. For example, in Belarus the data on the place of birth are gathered but are not entered and thus are unavailable for processing. Some columns are not filled in and/or checked.
Main info: Primary source; flow data.					
Periodicity: Continuous registration; (monthly and annual).					
Administrative reporting	Department of Citizenship and Migration of the Ministry of the Interior.	It covers persons who renounce Belarusian citizenship	Total number of persons who have renounced Belarusian citizenship.	Citizenship decisions as regards persons with permanent residence in the Republic of Belarus are carried out by the home affairs bureaus, and as regards persons living abroad – by diplomatic services. Record-keeping covers the number of consents granted to applications for renouncing citizenship of the Republic of Belarus	(+) Quite an extended time series of data is available; (-) No distribution even by sex or age;
Main info: Primary source; flow data.					
Periodicity: Annual					

Outward migration: relevant information on sources					
Source	Institutional body in charge of collecting and diffusing data	Population of reference	Migration related variables contained in the source	Data collection methodology	Advantages (+)and drawbacks (-) compared with other sources
Balance Sheet of Labor Resources	Belstat, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, National Bank	Belarusian citizens working abroad	-	Since 2012, a survey is conducted once per quarter. The sample population is 7,000 households per quarter and 28,000 per year. The method uses a sample without repetition.	(+)there are no other analogues of regular surveys that include questions related to migration (-) Results are not disseminated, and remain in the possession of Belstat, the Ministry of Labor, and the National Bank

Data accessibility: Population Census and Residence registration system (www.belstat.gov.by); Administrative reporting (dcm@mia.by): available upon request; Border card system (gtk@customs.gov.by): data are not available; State Statistical Monitoring of Higher Educational Institutions (Basic info is published in the special statistical edition “Main indicators of the activity of higher educational institutions”); Balance Sheet of Labor Resources (Data are not disseminated).