



Eurofound

Analysis of the socioeconomic situation of migrants – Gathering comparable data on their living conditions

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Brussels, 17 November 2010

Introduction and background to workshop

The aim of this workshop was to contribute towards improving data on the living conditions of migrants by bringing together experts to discuss the quality of data and methods, as well as the results from research in this area. The workshop also aimed to identify areas where there is a potential need for further comparable data about the living conditions of migrants. During the two morning sessions, representatives of a number of organisations that carry out surveys explained the challenges in collecting data on the social situation of migrants. Eurofound also invited delegates from several organisations promoting the integration of migrants to explain their data needs. This information will be used by Eurofound when it comes to consider its role in contributing to improving data about migrants.

Eurofound Research Officer Daniel Molinuevo briefly described the different research projects that Eurofound has undertaken in the field of migration. These projects have enabled Eurofound to identify gaps in knowledge, which have implications for making evidence-based policy choices. For example, the European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policies for Migrants (CLIP) found that cities with recent immigration inflows don't have comprehensive systems for monitoring either the housing standards of migrants or their presence as employees in the public and private sectors. Moreover, there is little information concerning return and circular migration or on the impact that mobility trends have in the countries of origin. In the case of the working conditions of migrants, some comparable data are available, but these do not provide information on issues such as the affiliation of migrant workers to trade unions, or the number of accidents or health problems at the workplace.

Presentations

Gathering data about the social situation of migrants

The role of Eurostat

David Thorogood, from Eurostat, explained that Eurostat is currently mainstreaming migration statistics by adding migration aspects to the existing social statistics. Until recently, Eurostat has focused mainly on gathering information about the stock of foreign population and on migration flows. In order to improve the existing information and respond to the increasing policy needs for better data, the organisation developed in 2009 a conceptual framework with a view to determining what kind of statistics may be required in the near future and the ways in which these could be produced. The work programme that will develop this framework includes such measures as ensuring that the core social variables related to migration (that is, country of birth and citizenship) are included and implemented in the same way in all surveys. There is also a proposal to include a variable asking about the country of birth of parents.

It is also planned to look at ways to adapt survey methodologies and sampling procedures in order to make them better suited for looking at the situation of migrants. This may include the possibility of carrying out modules with questions specifically for migrants. Eurostat also plans to work with the owners of registers and records of residence permits issued to third-country nationals to see what information is present within their databases; in some countries, this includes information on occupation or previous education. Lastly, Eurostat will produce a study concerning the creation of a system of common indicators to evaluate integration policies and another publication on the social situation of immigrants in the EU and EFTA.

Johan van der Valk described the data available in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) about the situation of migrants. Migrants are identified in the LFS through three different variables: nationality, country of birth and years of residence. In 2008 the annual ad hoc module of the LFS focused on the labour market situation of migrants and their descendants.

This module included 11 variables (see below); its objective was to improve data comparing labour market outcomes, integration and adaptation to the labour market.

AHM 2008: List of variables

| | | |
|----------|--|---|
| YEARCITI | Year of acquisition of citizenship | S |
| COBFATH | Country of birth of father (For Germany: nationality/former nationality of father) | S |
| COBMOTH | Country of birth of mother (For Germany: nationality/former nationality of mother) | S |
| TOTRESID | Total number of years of residence in the host country | S |
| MIGREAS | Main reason the person had for migrating (last migration) | L |
| DURLIM | Whether the duration of the current residence permit/visa/certificate is limited (optional for France) | L |
| RESTRACC | Whether current legal access to the labour market is restricted | L |
| ESTQUALI | Use of facilities for establishing what highest qualification equates to in the host country system | L |
| IMPLANG | Need to improve host country language skills to get an appropriate job | L |
| HELPFIND | Main help received in the host country in finding the current job or setting up own business | L |
| SERVINT | Use of services for labour market integration in the two years following the last arrival | L |

L = BE, DE, IE, EL, ES, FR, IT, CY, LT, LU, NL, AT, PT, SE, UK, NO, CH

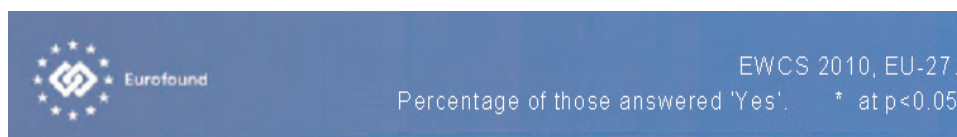
03-12-09 The EU Labour Force Survey

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Despite the large sample size of the LFS, in some countries the sample of migrants was quite small and this will probably lead to oversampling in future modules. Regarding the repetition of this module in 2014, only the variables on the country of birth of parents and the main reason for migrating are evaluated as completely satisfactory and will be repeated as they are now. Five of the eleven variables are felt to provide very limited data and therefore its repetition is either not recommended or is subject to improvement. Pretesting is especially useful when it comes to reaching migrants and therefore it will be used again in future modules.

Work of other research organisations

Eurofound Research Manager Tadas Leoncikas presented the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) and the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS). The EWCS focuses on the working population as it is defined in the LFS and provides information about the background of work and changes in working conditions. It also covers areas related to working conditions, such as work–life balance, health-related issues and education. The EWCS includes information about the proportion of the working population with a migrant background as well as data regarding discrimination. The preliminary results of the fifth EWCS show that migrants are more likely to report bullying, harassment and other forms of abuse than the rest of the population (see overleaf).



| | | <i>Migrant background</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|---|---|---------------------------|--------------|
| <i>q70. Over the last month, during the course of your work have you been subjected to... ?</i> | verbal abuse* | 13.4 | 10.4 |
| | unwanted sexual attention* | 2.5 | 1.6 |
| | threats and humiliating behaviour* | 6.6 | 4.8 |
| <i>q71. Over the past 12 months, during the course of your work have you been subjected to... ?</i> | physical violence | 2.1 | 1.8 |
| | bullying /harassment* | 6.0 | 3.8 |
| | sexual harassment* | 1.5 | 1.0 |

Preliminary data. Official data – on Eurofound website after 17.11.2010

The EQLS focuses on residents of the country who are older than 18 years. It includes data about citizenship and whether the interviewees and their parents were born in their country of residence. It also provides information about tensions between racial and ethnic groups and about the characteristics of ethnic neighbourhoods. Eric Harrison presented a study based on data from the 2007 EQLS, focusing on whether there is a 'contextual effect' when it comes to living in an area with lots of migrants. This includes data about exclusion in the economy, society and housing. It also looked at subjective well-being and ethnic tensions. The study shows that living in ethnically diverse areas entails increased levels of deprivation, housing stress, social isolation, a lower quality of life and ethnic tensions. (It should be noted that an 'ethnic neighbourhood' can mean different things for respondents.)

Mr. Harrison also presented the European Social Survey (ESS), which includes questions about citizenship, country of birth and the number of years that the respondent has resided in a country. Other variables included related to migration are the language most often spoken at home, ethnic group, country of birth of parents and questions about discrimination. In addition to questions to migrants, there is a set of questions about migrants for all interviewees (for example, to what extent they think immigrants should be admitted to their country according to the specific characteristics of migrants and whether they feel that migrants have a positive impact on the economy and cultural life of the country).

One of the problems of gathering data about discrimination is that there no single place to where citizens can go to record incidents of discrimination. In 2007, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) launched the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS) with a view to filling this gap in comparable data. Sami Nevala explained that – due to sampling limitations and in the interest of relevance of results – the survey focuses on up to three minority groups in each country. As the focus of the survey is on discrimination, it was agreed with FRA's national focal points to include either groups that, while large enough for sampling purposes, are particularly visible in each country or groups that are known to suffer discrimination. Questionnaires were translated and respondents were given a description of each group so that they could classify themselves appropriately (or opt out of the survey). In discussing experiences of discrimination, respondents were asked to compare their situation with that of the rest of the population; however, this can be very subjective. For example, the Roma population in Bulgaria and Romania reported low rates of discrimination, which could be due to the fact that they live in closed communities.



Discrimination Experiences

EU-MIDIS asked respondents about discrimination they had experienced, in the past 12 months or in the past 5 years, in nine areas:

1. when looking for work
2. at work
3. when looking for a house or an apartment to rent or buy
4. by healthcare personnel
5. by social service personnel
6. by school personnel
7. at a café, restaurant or bar
8. when entering or in a shop
9. when trying to open a bank account or get a loan

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Another type of migration that is difficult to follow is internal mobility in the EU. This information is however very important, particularly in the case of the flow of workers from new Member States (NMS) to the rest of Europe, which has implications in terms of informing the debate on transitory restrictions to the labour market. Laurent Aujean presented information from the latest Eurobarometer survey on geographical and labour market mobility. This includes information about past mobility experiences and plans to migrate in the near future. The sample is relatively small, which means that the data cannot be disaggregated and it is necessary to combine it with other sources such as population statistics, data from the LFS and administrative data.

A more recent Eurobarometer survey focuses on ‘new Europeans’. Ettore Marchetti explained that this category comprises people who have some kind of connection with another country (whether in the EU or outside it); this connection could include ancestry, life choices (such as living abroad), social/family networks and cultural affinities. Nearly one third of the total EU population falls into the first two of these categories and hence have strong connections with another country.

Knowledge gaps and policy needs

Improving comparable data requires more extensive use of the data available at the national level. In the last decades, Eurostat has focused on harmonising data in cooperation with several directorates of the European Commission. Ann Singleton from the University of Bristol presented the PROMINSTAT project, which is an inventory of the data available in each country, classified according to thematic areas. She pointed out that the role of researchers tends to be limited to gathering the data requested by policymakers. Consequently, data is collected according to the categories set out by policymakers. This can be seen at the European level, where data categories stem from directives regarding immigration control. It is important, however, that researchers present data to policymakers in a more proactive way, albeit having in mind the limitations of data.

One of the initiatives that aims to coordinate research in this field is the European Migration Network (EMN). This network produces an annual report on asylum and migration statistics; it also organised, in 2010, a conference on the long-term follow-up of immigrants' trajectories. Benedikt Vulsteke explained that longitudinal data can give a better understanding of causality and also help monitor the impact of integration measures. Some of the recommendations made at the conference included investing in linking administrative databases, increasing the sub-sample size for migrants in general surveys and including a retrospective section in questionnaires.

Anna Platonova presented the work of the Independent Network of Labour Migration and Integration Experts (LINET). Its research activities have enabled the network to identify a number of gaps in data collection. Overall, data about policy outcomes is not detailed enough for measuring or comparing the effectiveness of policies. Moreover, it is difficult to gather data about unemployed migrants as they may not be able to remain in the receiving country after they lose their job. There is also the question of how to define concepts such as low-skilled work, how to determine which migrants Europe needs and whether the skills of migrants match their job requirements adequately.

Mainstream labour market support measures have a different impact on migrants than on the rest of the population. It is therefore important to determine which groups of migrants are more vulnerable and whether interventions reach them. Having this data would contribute towards an adequate balance between mainstream support and targeted measures.

Cooperation between Member States needs to be improved in order to avoid the duplication of efforts. By way of example, each Member State that wants to set up a labour exchange mechanism with – for instance – Ghana is requesting, on a bilateral basis with that country, its own database.

Thomas Huddleston presented the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), which looks at to what extent the EU framework of integration is implemented at the national level. It also analyses the different national approaches to integration as well as the impact that policies, laws and measures have in practice. MIPEX scores show that there is a correlation between policies on family reunion and long-term residence and that those countries that facilitate citizenship for migrants open greater opportunities to political participation for foreigners.

The third edition of MIPEX focuses on policy changes and analyses to what extent these are a consequence of the evaluation of the objectives and outcomes of these policies. In terms of the data necessary for evaluating the effectiveness of policies, there has been a lot of progress in the area of outcome indicators. Nevertheless, statistical offices need to work more closely with those people who involved in the funding and delivery of policies in order to ensure that the information gathered reflects the outcome of policies. Data gathered through surveys on integration tend to be interpreted as the outcome of policies, even though there are multiple factors affecting how integration works in practice. There needs to be a clarification of whether policies actually meet their objectives. For example, there are age limits attached to family reunification in order to ensure that forced marriages do not take place, but there is little evidence that this is actually working. Furthermore, those who implement measures need to collect evidence more systematically; this also applies to the funders of projects, who don't always carry out evaluations. Also, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should be more systematic in delivering services to users.

Christine Sidenius, Advisor to the Greens/European Free Alliance on the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, noted that there has been a shift towards a security-oriented approach in the Parliament since 11 September 2001. Moreover, the current majority of right-wing parties in the European Parliament puts more emphasis on issues such as restricting and controlling migrants than on their social and economic situation. In terms of the conceptualisation of the debate, the expression 'undocumented migrants' is now being used instead of 'illegal migrants'. Statistical data can play an important role in the political debate, as has been the case with labour shortage forecasts. Another interesting example is the work carried out by the EU agency FRONTEX, which has

provided data showing that the number of illegal migrants coming from overseas is very limited: in most cases migrants enter the EU legally and then they may stay longer than their visa permit allows.

One of the areas that needs to be improved is the communication between data researchers and policymakers. This is necessary to ensure that the existing knowledge feeds into the political debate; however, it is also necessary in order to avoid the misuse of statistics to justify policy choices. Researchers should strive to involve politicians in discussions about data and assist them in the interpretation of statistics.

Another EU institution promoting the integration of migrants is the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which has in place since early 2009 a permanent study group on migration and integration. Barbara Walentynowicz explained that the EESC also actively cooperates with the European Commission in organising the European Integration Forum, which brings together the European institutions and NGOs working with or representing migrants. The Forum can give advice in the form of reports and can also be of assistance in creating organisations at the European level. The EESC is also keen on having more data on the participation of migrants in the receiving society in terms of membership in associations (political parties, trade unions, etc.), their experiences of discrimination and career promotion opportunities in comparison with the rest of the population, and how they are perceived by the rest of society. Other areas where the EESC deems more data to be necessary are access to and quality of education, access to the labour market and housing conditions.

Discussion

One of the points of discussion was the difference between the information available on third-country nationals and EU citizens living in another Member State. Data on the former can be improved to a great extent, whereas in the case of the latter, the free movement of people across Europe has changed the migration patterns of EU citizens. It used to be the case that people migrated just a few times, whereas now it is more frequent. Consequently, the migration of EU nationals is difficult to record and they may be left out of sampling frames because in most Member States they are not required to obtain a residence permit.

The advantages and disadvantages of different survey methods were also discussed. Some Member States carry out specialised surveys that have not yet been harmonised. Their sampling frame and design target specific groups of migrants, which makes it easier to get a representative sample than with general sampling methods. Eurostat is asking Member States to use comparable categories in these surveys.

Legal integration – through obtaining a work permit or a residence permit – is a first step towards integration, which removes some of the obstacles that migrants may face. It is often the case that there is a mismatch between the needs of the market (such as labour shortages) and the actions of the state towards migrants (such as migration caps, restrictions, etc.). The implementation of border policies has social and economic implications – in the delivery of welfare, for example. It is therefore important to have information about the rights to access – to services, for instance – that migrants have when they obtain a residence permit. This may be addressed in the next LFS ad hoc module. It is also important to have data about the organisations that support the integration of migrants. The LFS ad hoc module includes a question about who is the main source of help – in most cases, friends and relatives.

Conclusions

Gathering data on the living conditions of migrants is difficult mainly because it is not easy to reach them. Undocumented migrants are particularly hard to reach because they are reluctant to come into contact with institutions. There are also issues around the sensitivity of data, privacy and confidentiality. Moreover, some types of data may be difficult to categorise, as is the case with informal skills or domestic work. On the other hand, it is also difficult to gain accurate data on the mobility of EU citizens across Europe as this sort of migration is becoming more widespread. Overall, gathering longitudinal data is complex but such data can be obtained by asking about past migration experiences. Furthermore, there is the question of the extent to which the living conditions of migrants are improved by integration policies and whether data can be collected in a way that reflects policy outcomes.

Regarding the strategies for data collection, adding questions related to migration in general surveys often results in having information for just a small number of migrants. On the other hand, surveys specifically targeting migrants can overcome this problem, but they don't permit comparisons of migrants with the rest of the population. Lastly, improving data requires closer cooperation between users and producers of statistics, between Member States and between researchers and policymakers.