
Taking Stock of the Migration Data in Europe

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Q&A on the QuantMig Data Inventory

Answers by Jarl Mooyaart, Researcher at the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI)

Could you clarify a bit more the rationale for moving away from national statistical offices (as providers of migration data)? Thank you.

In my view, big data providers as Eurostat try to provide the best possible country comparative data. Yet if researchers continue to use a combination of national sources, I feel this undermines this process. Not only that, it also provides more work for the data inventory, as we would have to continuously monitor developments of all these national statistical offices, wait for their responses etc.

Could you elaborate more on how you are planning/going to incorporate survey data?

What I meant is that also smaller scale survey datasets are included in this data inventory. This data inventory does not harmonize different datasets, but rather lists the different datasets that are out there.

Considering of low quality migration data that are available in T+2 means neglecting the fundamental aspect of the definition of migration as in international recommendations, which is based on duration of stay of 12 months. For instance, a person moving in year T can properly be considered a migrant only after one year (thus in T+1). Consequently, the countries report migration data at the end of the year following the reference year (thus at the end of T+1), and data are thus usually publicly available at beginning of T+2 because of time needed for data processing and validation. Do you consider to revise your quality criteria to take into account the migration definition feature?

Good point. Perhaps we should categorize this quality assessment a bit differently, depending on what the data is about. At the same time, I think it would be good if these big data providers would sooner provide an estimation of flows based on the data they have (Eurostat currently provides estimated numbers in some cases).

Sounds reasonable Jarl but some countries do not report migration data to Eurostat. There is no one stop shop for such data in Europe.

To Jarl: Big data providers do not collect all the data. In many cases, data collected with a huge delay, some data are missed. For example, Eurostat publish only the data "submitted" by country. To "move from NSOs" we need a big data provider that will be able to provide data at the best possible quality, with an exhaustive documentation, metadata, etc. There is no such data provider at the moment.

Answering to the two questions: Indeed this is a problem, but I think we should be working towards a solution in which there is more cooperation, in which we aim to move away from having to get information from the national statistical offices. Of course, this will be challenging in the beginning, and it will certainly go with ups and downs, but in the long run this would be very beneficial for migration research.



ALLEA, the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities, released a statement calling for the collection of reliable, validated and comparable data to adequately address the issue of Migration and Health in Europe: <https://allea.org/portfolio-item/statement-on-migration-and-health/>

Thank you for this information!

To what extent is this migration data inventory better than the existing sources of data?

To clarify, this is not a new migration dataset, but rather a data inventory of migration datasets that are out there.

When speaking about "flow data", are all in- and out-flows covered? I have the (perhaps false) impression that out-flow from destination/northern countries (including return flows to origin/southern countries) are not or badly estimated, leading to a bias in analysis.

The data inventory is not really on this type of data quality. However, within the QuantMig project we are working on this. We will release a report on this end of next month with regards to the Eurostat data (deliverable 6.2 QuantMig).

I do not necessarily agree with your preference of moving away from national statistical offices (or national authorities) as providers of migration data. As research from the European Migration Network (EMN) has shown, some more sophisticated or disaggregated data are not publicly available but national authorities might be willing to provide them upon request. I believe that research does benefit from also using such data, allowing for a more detailed analysis of specific questions or phenomena.

In my view it would be great if countries felt less hesitant to share their more detailed migration data. It would be good to make an effort to convince national statistical offices to share their data. Of course, easier said than done!

Are any longitudinal data kept in this set, particularly on asylum seekers?

Possibly the EU LISA dataset. Please check the data inventory at www.quantmig.eu/data_inventory to make sure.

I often find it frustrating that data in the Eurostat database are different from the data of national statistics providers, even when the original source is the same. For example, data on asylum seekers that the Migration Agency here in Sweden publishes nationally are different from the data the same Agency sends to Eurostat. There are reasons for this, of course, differing definitions, but how can we solve this problem? Perhaps Eurostat should follow-up more?

I agree. Hopefully in the future more detailed data will be transferred to Eurostat. I am not sure whether it is an issue of Eurostat not following up, or national statistical offices not sharing, or both, in any case the collaboration needs to improve.





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