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**Analysis of international migration estimates using different length of stay definitions****Final report of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Task Force on analysis of international migration estimates using different length of stay definitions****Note by the Task Force on analysis of international migration estimates using different length of stay definitions***Summary*

This document presents the final report of the Task Force on analysis of international migration estimates using different length of stay definitions. The report provides further context to the definition of migration and analyses how the alternative definitions are applied using different types of data sources. The Task Force undertook a comparative analysis to explore how different migration definitions affect the estimates of the relative level of migration flows. The report assesses the impact of the different approaches and the possible consequences for international comparability and the calculation on the estimates of net international migration at country level. The last section summarises the main findings of the Task Force.

The report was written by the Task Force set up by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians for this purpose in October 2008. The Task Force was led by the United Kingdom. The aim of the work was to assess the impact on international migration estimates of the different duration thresholds when defining usual residence. The Bureau of the Conference discussed and approved the report at its 7-8 February 2012 meeting. It is submitted to the Conference of European Statisticians 2012 plenary session for information.

## I. Background

1. The Task Force on analysis of international migration estimates using different length of stay definitions was set up in October 2008 to explore the impact of different definitions on estimates of migration flows and the availability of data on short-term migration. The impetus for the work came from the 2008 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)/Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics where experts from Austria and the United Kingdom presented the results of work undertaken to produce statistics on short-term migration using records from a registration system for Austria and a passenger survey for the United Kingdom. The work session recognised the interest in short-term migration and the impact of different length of stay definitions on international migration estimates across the UNECE region.

2. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) approved the terms of reference for the Task Force at its October 2008 meeting. In its first phase, the Task Force included Austria, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland and the Netherlands, and was led by the United Kingdom. An intermediate report was discussed at the 2010 UNECE/Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics (WP 8). The meeting recommended continuation of the work and Michel Poulain (Belgium) accepted to chair the group. Additional members joined the Task Force and provided requested data (Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Germany and Russia).

3. The initial proposal of the Task Force was to assess the impact on international migration estimates derived from the use of different duration thresholds to define usual residence. Under this goal, the following sub-goals were identified:

- (a) How estimates of migration differ when different length of stay criteria are used;
- (b) Whether using different definitions of migration has implications for the balance between immigration and emigration;
- (c) How well different data sources/systems can be used to measure migration using a range of definitions.

4. The final report has the following structure. Section II provides further context on the definition of migration. Section III discusses how these definitions, and in particular the time criterion, are applied using different types of data sources. Section IV describes the data provided for this study by the participating countries. Section V presents a summary of the results of the comparative analysis undertaken to explore the central question of how different migration definitions affect the relative level of the migration flows. Section VI aims to assess the consequences of using different duration thresholds on the estimates of inflows and outflows, their composition by group of citizenship, the possible consequences for international comparability and the calculation of the net international migration at country level. Section VII summarises the main findings of the Task Force, including the implications for collecting and interpreting statistics on international migration as far as their dependence on the time criterion is concerned, and presents recommendations for further work.

## II. The time criterion in the definition of international migration

5. How migration is defined as far as the time criterion is concerned directly affects the size of the estimate produced. Concretely, a broader definition of migration based on a shorter minimal duration of stay will include more moves and estimates will be larger.<sup>1</sup>

6. Long-term international migration should be defined using the United Nations recommended definition of someone who changes his or her country of usual residence for a period of at least one year. In practice, the duration threshold used to determine who is considered a migrant can vary from country to country, making international comparability more challenging. The reasons why the time criterion varies between countries are linked to the use of different data sources and the existence of some specific national rules in data collection.

7. The United Nations recommendations on international migration statistics (Revision 1, United Nations 1998) include the following definitions:

"32. Thus, an international migrant is defined as any person who changes his or her country of usual residence. A person's country of usual residence is stated that in which the person lives, that is to say, the country in which the person has a place to live where he or she normally spends the daily rest. Temporary travel abroad for purposes of recreation, holiday, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage does not entail a change in the country of usual residence."

"34. The concept of country of usual residence is also used to determine who is a "visitor" for purposes of international tourism statistics. According to the Recommendations on Tourism Statistics (United Nations and World Tourism Organization, 1994), "a person is considered to be a resident in a country if the person: (a) has lived for most of the past year (12 months) in that country or (b) has lived in that country for a shorter period and intends to return within 12 to live in that country" (para. 24). An international visitor is defined as "any person who travels to a country other than that in which he/she has usual residence but outside his/her usual environment for a period not exceeding 12 months and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country visited" (para. 29). The category of international visitors includes tourists (overnight visitors) and same-day visitors (also known as "excursionists") (para. 30)."

"36. With regard to the time element, when the definition of international migrant presented in paragraph 32 is compared with the definition of international visitor presented in paragraph 34, it is clear that if a distinction is to be made between the two, the change of country of usual residence necessary to become an international migrant must involve a period of stay in the country of destination of (12 months). Therefore, a long-term migrant should be defined as a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence."

"37. In addition, because one of the new features of international population mobility is the increase of short-term international movements of people for

<sup>1</sup> For earlier work on this topic, see Grundström (1993), Report on Nordic immigrants and migration, Statistical reports on the Nordic Countries, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2003), Another Look at the International Comparability of Migration Statistics, Working Party on Migration.

purposes other than tourism, it is important to gather information on some of the persons who spend less than a year in a country other than that of their usual residence. Short-term migrants are therefore defined as persons who move to a country other than that of their usual residence for a period of at least 3 months but less than a year (12 months) except in cases where the movement to that country is for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage. For purposes of international migration statistics, the country of usual residence short-term migrants is considered to be the country of destination during the period they spend in it."

"Long-term migrant A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence. From the perspective of the country of departure, the person will be a long-term emigrant and from that of the country of arrival the person will be a long-term immigrant."

"Short-term migrant A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least 3 months but less than a year (12 months) except in cases where the movement to that country is for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage. For purposes of international migration statistics, the country of usual residence of short-term migrants is considered to be the country of destination during the period they spend in it."

8. The "Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations for the 2010 Censuses of Population and Housing" (United Nations, 2006) provided definitions that are consistent with those of the 1998 United Nations recommendations on international migration statistics, taking into account also the intention of staying for those who changed residence in the year before the census:

"159. Only those persons:

- a) who have lived in their place of usual residence for a continuous period of at least twelve months before Census Day; or
- b) who have arrived in their place of usual residence during the twelve months before Census Day with the intention of staying there for at least one year

should be considered as usual residents of the relevant geographic or administrative subdivision.

160. A person's country of usual residence is the country in which the place of usual residence is located..."

9. In conclusion of these international recommendations, the most important time criterion is the 12 month rule to identify a long-term international migrant while the 3 month rule is the base to identify short-term international migrant.

10. As explained by Herm (2006), an important change appeared in these recommendations revised in 1998 compared with the previous ones published in 1980. Following the latter, 'long-term immigrants' were defined as 'persons who enter the country with the intention of remaining for more than one year and who must never have been in the country continuously for more than one year, or must have been away continuously for more than one year' (United Nations, 1980). Long-term emigrants were defined similarly from the perspective of departure. Short-term migrants were identified on the basis of length and purpose of stay and characterised as 'person(s) who enter the country with the intention of remaining for one year or less for the purpose of working at an occupation remunerated from within the country and who must never have been in the

country continuously for more than one year, or having been in the country continuously for more than one year must have been away continuously for more than one year since the last stay of more than one year' (United Nations, 1980). Accordingly in the 1998 revision of the recommendations, the time criterion "more than one year" has been replaced by "at least one year" for the definition of long-term migrant and the 3 months criterion for the minimal stay of short-term migrant has been introduced.

11. The inclusion of the moves with duration of stay or absence of exactly 12 months as long-term migration will be assessed in this report as well as those moves with duration of stay or absence of exactly 3 months for the identification of short-term migrants.

### **III. How the time criterion is applied using different types of data sources**

12. Different types of data sources are used to produce statistics on international migration. These are largely discussed in the two main contributions that are the International Labour Organization (ILO) book on International Migration Statistics (Bilborrow et al. 1997) and the THESIM book (Towards Harmonised European Statistics on International Migration, Poulain et al. 2006). Broadly speaking, there are two main categories of data sources: statistical (censuses and surveys) and administrative (population registration system, residence permit databases...). Although the systems and sources used by countries involved in the Task Force shared a degree of flexibility in terms of migration definition, they differ greatly in approach as far as the time criterion used is concerned and the situation could vary when considering different groups of citizenship, e.g. nationals, European Union (EU) citizens and non-EU citizens. It is obvious that these criteria are more often determined by administrative rules than by statistical methods.

13. Among the twelve countries involved in the Task Force<sup>2</sup>, none is using census or a general survey like the Labour Force Survey (LFS) to produce their annual international migration estimates and only two are using a specific statistical data collection at national border gates: Australia (for both immigrations and emigrations) and the United Kingdom (for both immigrations and emigrations but on sample base only). In both countries, arriving travellers have to report in which country they have lived for the last 12 months and about their intention to stay in the country for less than 12 months or at least 12 months. In the United Kingdom, the same questions are asked of departing travellers. In Australia on the other hand, the duration of stay in the country is calculated at the time of leaving the country at the border crossing. Similarly, for those returning from abroad, the duration of absence is also calculated at the time of return at the border crossing. In all other countries, the figures are produced based on administrative records generally extracted from a population registration system or a migration information system (in Switzerland) that is more specifically devoted to the management of the rights to reside for foreigners.

14. Generally, five types of data collection methods are found:

(a) Self-reported information on duration of stay in the country based on specific questions asked in census, general survey like LFS or other household survey;

(b) Self-reported intended duration of stay or absence after the current border crossing obtained through administrative border control or border survey;

<sup>2</sup> The Netherlands, Norway and United Kingdom participated only in the first phase, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Russia and Sweden in the second while Austria, Slovenia and Switzerland were involved in both.

(c) Registrations of persons coming from abroad and deregistrations of those leaving for abroad in the population registration system based on their intention and following specific administrative rules including or not a time criterion;

(d) Ex-post calculation of the duration of stay or absence based on administrative records of border crossing or administrative registration and deregistration in the population registration system and obtained by linking the current move or (de)registration with the previous one;

(e) Duration of validity of residence permit (cumulated duration for the first and renewed permits) for foreigners needing such a permit in order to reside in a foreign country more than 90 days.

15. The duration of stay information can be based on either intention (how long an individual intends to move for) or on retrospective de facto information (how long an individual has lived in their new country of residence).

16. When exploring alternative migration definitions, we should keep in mind that the need for both timeliness and reliability may be regarded as paramount for policy support. Intentions information is inevitably more timely because the identification of migrants is immediate, while retrospective information is more accurate as intentions are known to change. When the choice of a time criterion is concerned – e.g. between three or twelve months – we have to consider that sudden changes in economic conditions have a more immediate impact on temporary migrants than on permanent migration. Nevertheless, including shorter lengths of stays leads to higher number of migrants but also to more variation in the series. Also, if data are based on intention, we should consider that individuals who intend to stay for shorter periods are more likely to change their plans, which makes the data collected based on intention less reliable. Using retrospective information means there is an inevitable time lag in when estimates can be produced as it is necessary to wait twelve months after the end of the reference period in order to follow the twelve months rule.

17. When using a population registration system, international migrations are identified through registrations and de-registrations following specific administrative rules that often include a self-reported intention that could be linked with a precise time criterion for registration or deregistration. Such an administrative database allows collecting detailed information on immigrants (those who register coming from abroad) and emigrants (those who deregister for abroad). Nevertheless, some problems could result as the time criterion used is fully dependant on national administrative rules and still linked to intention. In several countries, these administrative databases allow computing ex post the duration of stay or absence till the next exit or return, if any. Evidently, such information helps following with precision the ‘at least one year’ criterion but data are only available one year after the end of the period of reference of the data collection. In the international recommendations for international migration statistics, there is a unique recommended definition for international migration but no recommended tool to collect these data, be they statistical or administrative. As explained above, each data collection system presents weaknesses linked to timeliness and/or reliability.

#### **IV. Data provided**

18. International migration statistics can be obtained through two categories of data sources: statistical tools (census and survey) and administrative databases (population registration system and migration registration system). Considering their periodicity, censuses cannot be used to produce annual figures on international migration. General surveys like LFS, Household Budget Survey (HBS) and Statistics on Income and Living

Conditions (SILC) can be used by including specific questions to identify the last international immigration done by the persons involved while emigrants could only be captured through questions asked of relatives living in the country. The border data collection could be either a statistical survey based on a sample like the International Passenger Survey in the United Kingdom, or an administrative data collection at border gates also serving for statistical data collection, as is operational in Australia. In both cases, the questions to identify international migrants are based on intention and therefore a time threshold is often considered (e.g. 3 or 12 months). The duration of stay for departing persons and duration of absence for returning migrants can be obtained by self-report of the persons concerned or by matching their exact date of last exit or entry with the current date.

19. For a limited number of countries within this report, the duration of stay for immigrants or duration of absence for emigrants was computed in number of days so that various cut-off criteria could be chosen for alternative migration definitions. Data provided by countries involved in the Task Force were compared by considering moves made for a duration of longer than three months and twelve months in order to assess the loss of migrations when choosing the second time threshold instead of the first one.

20. A summary of the data provided so far by the countries involved in the second phase of the Task Force is presented in Table 1, showing the period covered and the details provided. All data are extracted from administrative databases that are population registration systems except for Australia and Russia, where border control databases were used. In all countries, the duration of stay for immigrants or duration of absence for emigrants have been computed, but the data provided are not fully comparable between countries for the following reasons:

(a) Sweden and Switzerland provided data by year of the end of the duration when the period of stay or period of absence ended. Such data are presented as duration of absence of (returning) immigrants and duration of presence of emigrants. Accordingly, the distribution of durations of absence should be used to identify emigrants *ex post* while the durations of presence applies to immigrants. Another problem is related to the fact that those who did not end their period of stay or absence are not included, since the information provided includes the number of only those who immigrate but never emigrated before or those who emigrate and never immigrated before. Moreover, the statistical data produced refer to the year when the period of stay or absence ends and not to the year when it starts, as recommended in order to identify the number of international migrants of a given reference year;

(b) The data provided by Belgium, Denmark and Australia are of particular interest. Belgium allows comparing the distribution of computed durations of stay/absence presented by year of the beginning of the duration of stay/absence and by year of the end. In Australia, both are also available but for the beginning of the period it is based on intention while at the end the duration of stay or absence is computed by difference of dates. This represents a unique opportunity to compare the intended and *de facto* durations of stay or absence. For example, Australian data for the financial year 2006-2007 show that 72,100 Australian residents stated they were departing for more than 12 months while only 14,370 of them spent 12 months or more abroad;

(c) As requested, several countries provided detailed data by number of days. Such detailed data were not provided by Germany (by months), Slovenia (only 3, 6 and 12 months) and Russia (only more than 12 months);

(d) Some countries did not provide data for the different groups of citizenship (only nationals in Germany, foreigners in Switzerland and only total in Russia) or for males and females separately (no gender in Austria and Germany).

Table 1  
**Overview of the data provided by countries involved in the Task Force**

	DURATION	Intended or	Intended or	Computed	Computed	Groups of citizenship considered				Gender
		computed duration of presence after immigration	computed duration of absence after emigration	duration of presence before emigration *	duration of absence before immigration *	Nationals	Other EU citizens	Non EU citizens	Together	
	Details	Immigration	Emigration	Immigration	Emigration	Nationals	Other EU citizens	Non EU citizens	Together	
<b>AUSTRALIA</b> 1991-2005	Number of days up to 12 months for short term migrants; 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 years for long term migrants	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>AUSTRIA</b> 2002-2008	Number of days up to the date of extraction (3242) but no data on those who did not end their stay in or outside the country	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>BELGIUM</b> 1991-2005	Number of days up to 1870 (5 years)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>DENMARK</b> 2001-2008	Number of days up to 365 (1 year)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>ESTONIA</b> 2001-2007	Number of days up to 1870 (5 yrs)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>GERMANY</b> ???	Number of months up to 60 (or 120)	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
<b>RUSSIA</b> 2001-2007	Longer than 12 months	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>SLOVENIA</b> 2008	3,6 and 12 months	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>SWEDEN</b> 2001-2007	Number of days up to 1870 (5 yrs)	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>SWITZERLAND</b> 2001-2009	Number of days up to 1870 (5 yrs)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes



## V. Analysis of the distribution of durations of stay or absence

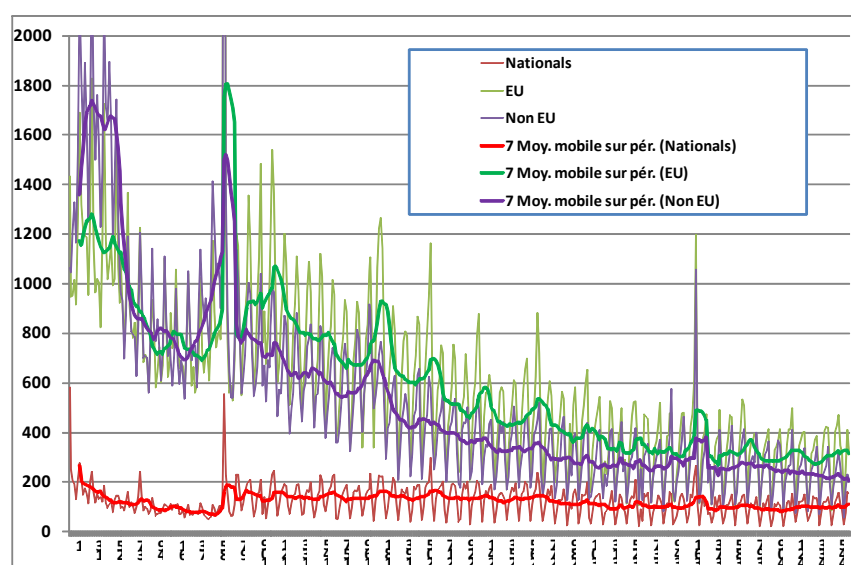
21. The first step of the analysis is devoted to the distribution of the durations of stay and absence day by day. Seven countries provided such data: Austria, Belgium, Sweden and Switzerland up to 5 years while for Australia and Denmark the data cover only the first year. Statistics Austria explained that, due to administrative procedure, the data provided show a weekly effect and accordingly they suggested doing a 7 days moving average (Figure 1). Estonia also delivered such data but the number of migrations is so small that figures for most durations by number of days are zero.

22. Our first observation concerns the large variability of distribution shapes and levels.

23. Australia shows very high figures that are explained by the specificity of the border data collection: all border crossings are included, even tourists visiting the country for a week or two. The comparison of the figures based on intention reported at the beginning of the duration can be compared with the one computed at the end of the duration by difference between dates to show how much actual duration may differ from intended duration of stay or absence.

Figure 1

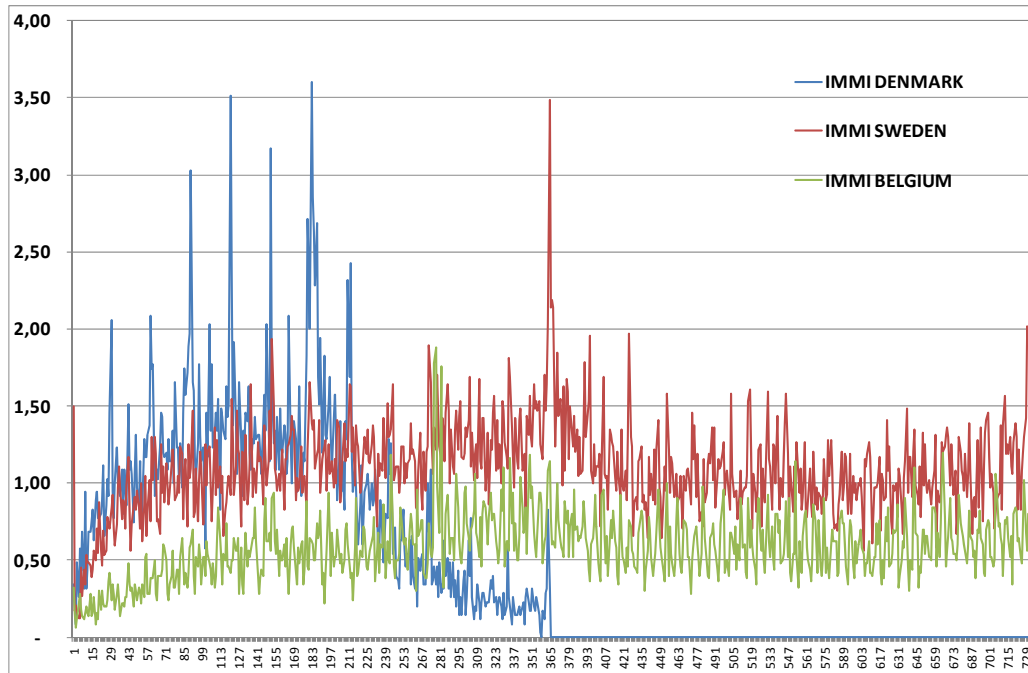
**Number of migrants by duration of presence in Austria after immigration for different groups of citizenship (2002-2008- Statistics Austria)**



24. For all other countries, the data are obtained through similar population registration systems. Nevertheless, even when considering annual figures and controlling these for differences in the total population size, two countries, Austria (Figure 1) and, to a lower extent, Switzerland (for foreigners only), present relatively higher values. Such differences could be explained by a shorter period for compulsory (de)registration in these countries (8 days) and a stricter application of administrative rules, a situation that should also apply in Germany and in Slovenia.

25. Figure 2 shows the daily distribution up to 730 days (2 years) for Belgium, Sweden and Denmark. These are annual averages controlled for the population size.

Figure 2  
**Distribution of the durations of stay (annual average) for Belgium (2001-2004), Denmark (2001-2008) and Sweden (2001-2007) (annual average ratio controlled for the population size)**



26. The analysis of these three data series with daily distribution as well as the one of Austria confirms that the distribution of duration of stay for immigrants in a given country is largely dependent on the specificity of the data source and the national rules that apply. The impact of the maximal duration of stay that is allowed without registration is important but by evidence the level of observance of these administrative rules also plays a role. Moreover some countries like Austria and Sweden show important peaks in the distribution for 91 days (3 months) and 365 days (one year) that are explained by the systematic deregistration of foreign immigrants at the expiry of their residence permit when the latter is not renewed.

27. The following Figures 3a, 3b, 4a and 4b compare the 'survival curves' inside the country for immigrants or outside the country for emigrants. These curves are obtained by cumulating the daily figures of duration of stay or absence up to 2 years for Belgium and Estonia by considering separately the three groups of citizenship and both sexes.

Figure 3a  
 'Survival' in the country up to 2 years of immigrants who arrived in Belgium during the years 2001-2004, by gender and groups of citizenship

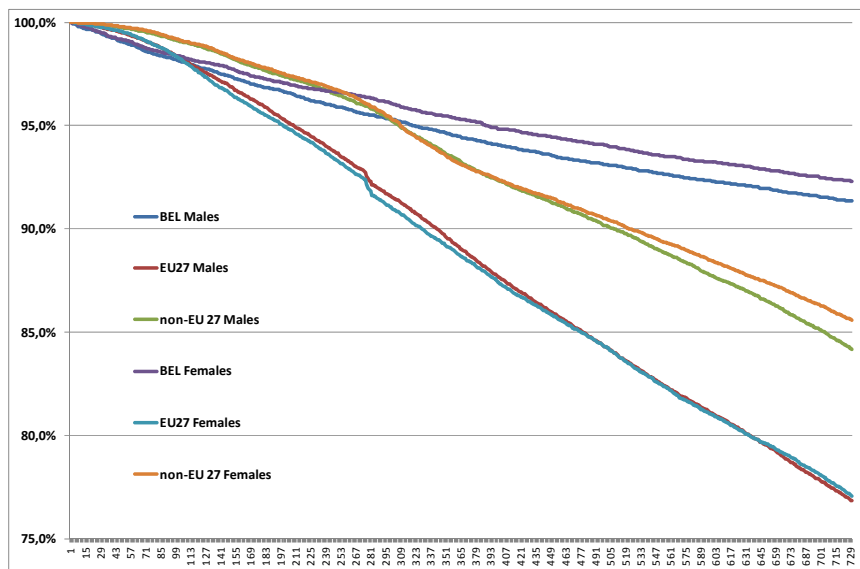


Figure 3b  
 'Survival' abroad up to 2 years of emigrants who left Belgium during the years 2001-2004, by gender and groups of citizenship

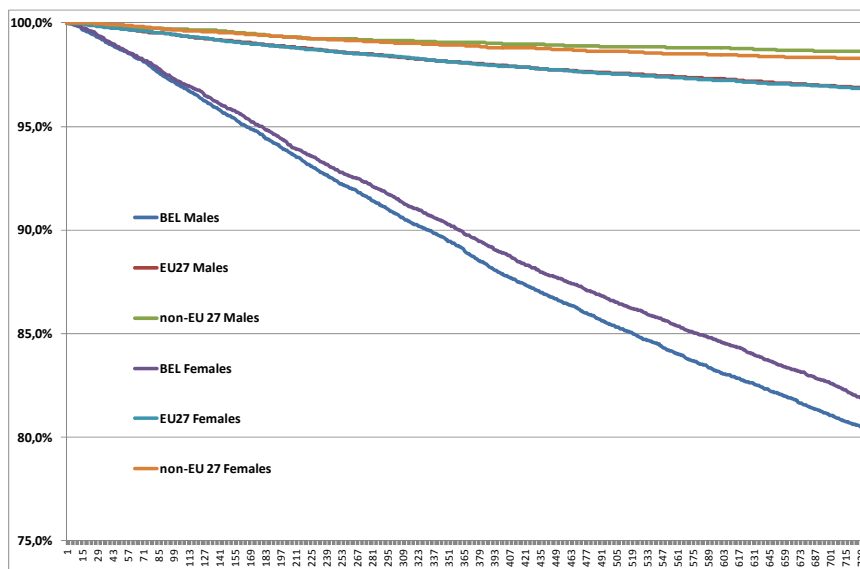


Figure 4a  
 ‘Survival’ in the country up to 2 years of immigrants who arrived in Estonia during the years 2003-2007, by gender and groups of citizenship

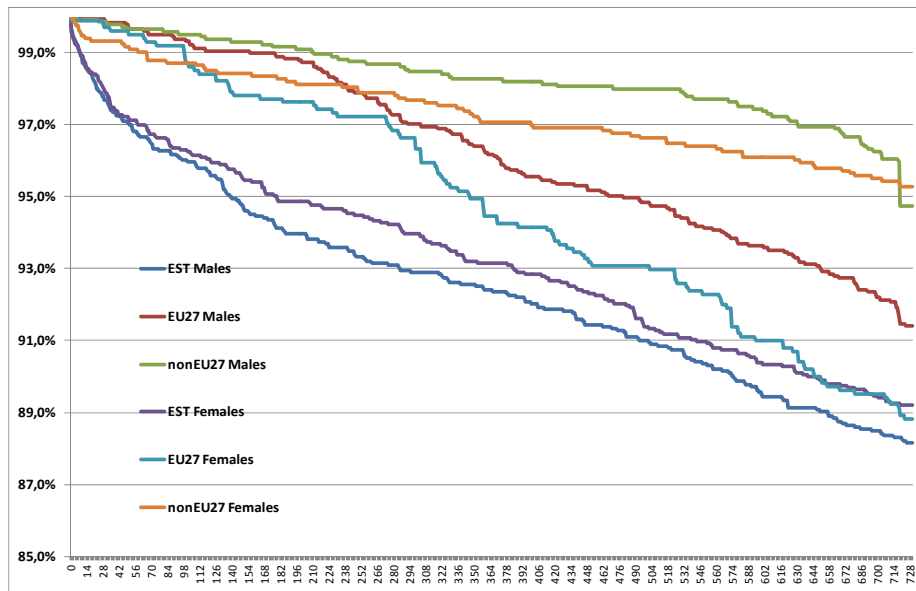
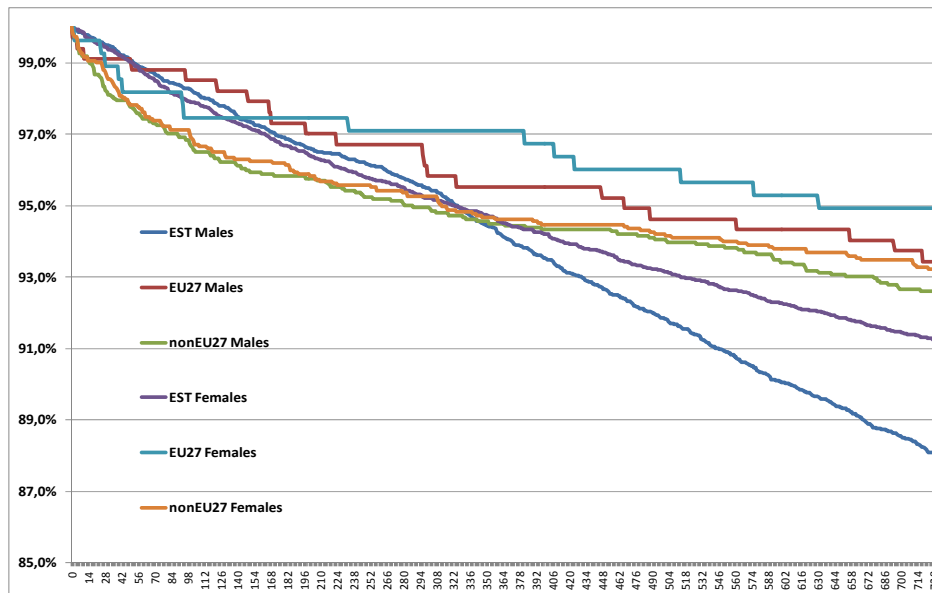


Figure 4b  
 ‘Survival’ abroad up to 2 years of emigrants who left Estonia during the years 2003-2007, by gender and groups of citizenship



28. The different curves displayed in Figures 3 and 4 for Belgium and Estonia based on comparable data providing daily figures lead to three important observations:

(a) The ‘survival’ curves present similar slopes for males and females. Nevertheless, we observe that in most cases (9 out of 12), the decrease of the survival curve is slightly quicker for males compared to females. It means that men experience more short

durations of stay or absence compared to women. Only immigrations of foreigners (EU and non-EU) in Estonia show an inverse situation;

(b) These survival curves present large differences by groups of citizenship in the countries concerned and the situation also differs between immigrations and emigrations. The differences for a given country, between the curves describing the cumulative distribution of durations of stay for immigrants compared to durations of absence for emigrants, show that the decrease is more rapid for emigration compared to immigration for nationals, while for foreigners the situation is inverted. Nevertheless, this profile is not observed for immigration in Estonia. By comparing EU and non-EU citizens, we observe that in Belgium the larger difference is found for EU citizens that present a steady decrease for duration of stay and a reduced one for emigration. This means that a large number of EU citizens arrive in Belgium for a short duration of stay but their duration of absence after their (return) emigration is longer. This confirms the general observation on pairs of successive international migrations, the first one and the return migration whatever the direction taken by the first one: the first migrations (immigration for a foreigner and emigration for a national) present systematically more short durations of stay/absence than the return migrations (return emigrations for a foreigner and return immigrations for a national). In other words, when a migrant moves to a foreign country, he/she will experience a shorter duration than a migrant returning to his/her home country.

## **VI. Comparison of the losses in the number of migrations when switching from a 3 month criterion to a 12 month criterion**

29. Tables 2a and 2b compare the losses for the number of immigrations and emigrations when using the 12 month rule instead of the 3 month rule.

Table 2a

**Relative losses for the numbers of immigrations, emigrations and net migration when using the 12 month rule instead of the 3 month rule (detailed figures are shown in the Annex)**

Group of citizenship	Relative loss for immigrations	Relative loss for emigrations	Relative loss for net migration
<b>Australia (2003-2005)</b>			
NATIONALS	84,3%	71,4%	71,2%
EU citizens	71,8%	78,7%	71,2%
non-EU	60,4%	80,9%	58,1%
TOTAL all citizenships	63,9%	72,8%	50,9%
<b>Austria (2002-2008)</b>			
NATIONALS	26,0%	15,0%	-17,5%
EU citizens	43,9%	47,3%	39,4%
non-EU	32,5%	43,5%	19,7%
TOTAL all citizenships	36,2%	36,0%	36,7%
<b>Belgium (2001-2004)</b>			
NATIONALS	3,7%	9,0%	24,4%
EU citizens	11,3%	1,4%	58,7%
non-EU	6,8%	0,7%	11,0%
TOTAL all citizenships	8,2%	3,5%	21,5%
<b>Denmark (2001-2008)</b>			
NATIONALS	9,3%	28,4%	155,9%
EU citizens	36,4%	6,3%	93,5%
non-EU	22,7%	6,2%	40,4%
TOTAL all citizenships	21,2%	18,3%	32,4%
<b>Estonia (2003-2007)</b>			
NATIONALS	3,6%	4,1%	4,2%
EU citizens	3,8%	2,6%	4,0%
non-EU (incl unknown)	1,5%	2,8%	-5,8%
TOTAL all citizenships	3,0%	3,9%	4,6%
<b>Slovenia (2008)</b>			
NATIONALS	1,2%	n.a.	n.a.
EU citizens	50,1%	n.a.	n.a.
non-EU	53,4%	n.a.	n.a.
TOTAL all citizenships	50,9%	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Switzerland (2001-2009)</b>			
NATIONALS	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
EU citizens	8,1%	68,3%	-134,4%
non-EU	2,2%	43,8%	-25,8%
TOTAL all citizenships	6,4%	63,7%	-85,5%

Table 2b

**Relative losses for the numbers of immigrations, emigrations and net migration when using the 12 month rule instead of the 3 month rule (detailed figures are shown in the Annex): countries presenting data on duration of stay or absence computed at the end of the duration. These data cannot be compared with the one from countries proposing data on duration considering the start of that duration (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Slovenia and Switzerland).**

<b>Group of citizenship</b>	<b>Relative loss for immigrations</b>	<b>Relative loss for emigrations</b>	<b>Relative loss for net migration</b>
<b>Australia (2003-2005)</b>			
<i>NATIONALS</i>	50,3%	73,7%	75,0%
<i>EU citizens</i>	88,3%	73,1%	90,1%
<i>non-EU</i>	93,5%	75,5%	97,2%
<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	90,4%	73,9%	148,0%
<b>Denmark (2001-2006)</b>			
<i>NATIONALS</i>	4,2%	10,0%	57,9%
<i>EU citizens</i>	16,1%	2,2%	49,9%
<i>non-EU</i>	8,4%	2,6%	13,8%
<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	8,3%	7,0%	13,5%
<b>Sweden (2001-2007)</b>			
<i>NATIONALS</i>	18,3%	3,2%	-31,3%
<i>EU citizens</i>	2,0%	17,8%	-10,1%
<i>non-EU</i>	0,7%	11,6%	-2,0%
<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	4,7%	8,2%	1,0%

30. It is evident from these figures that the lower loss for both immigrations and emigrations is observed in countries having no time criterion for the minimal intended stay or absence that must be declared. This is the case for Belgium and Estonia except for immigration of non-EU citizens that are regulated by visa and residence permit.

## VII. Conclusion

31. The United Nations definition of long-term migration refers to individuals who change their country of usual residence for a period of at least one year, a definition also included in the recent EU Regulation on statistics of international protection and migration n°862/2007. Additionally, the United Nations recommendations introduced the concept of short-term migration for counting migrations for work that last three months and less than one year, while those less than three months are considered as visits.

32. Within this study, the impact of the two United Nations recommended migration definitions has been investigated. As is already well known, using a broader definition of migration, with a shorter time threshold, inevitably results in larger estimated flows. However, the relative losses between the two definitions investigated, following the two normative time criteria of 3 and 12 months recommended by the United Nations, vary largely between the countries under study, as shown in Tables 2a and 2b.

33. This investigation confirms the difficulty to ensure the comparability of international migration statistics at international level. Not only do the data sources differ from country to country, but also the time criterion applied in order to identify international migrants and the way statistical data are processed afterwards are different. The present exercise demonstrated that, even with the support of detailed metadata, the comparability of data

available on international migration is hard to ensure because of the existence of nationally-specific approaches. In fact, the Task Force identified five different ways to obtain the duration of stay for an immigrant or the duration of absence for an emigrant, and they do not give equivalent results. Information based on intention is different from that computed ex-post based on border control. Total duration of validity of residence permits could over-estimate the de facto duration of stay and, in some cases, under-estimate it. When the duration is based on registration and deregistration in administrative databases, applied administrative rules differ between countries. Moreover, the strict application of these rules is far from being achieved in all countries.

34. A limited number of similar patterns have been found for the detailed daily distribution of durations of stay/absence between countries and groups of citizenship. Among others, the Task Force found similarities between distribution of the duration of stay of foreigners and duration of absence of nationals.

35. For normative reasons, the United Nations recommendations have chosen two time thresholds of 3 months and 12 months in order to distinguish short term migrants and long term migrants from visitors and tourists.

36. For countries considering the date of expiry of non-renewed residence permits as end of a period of stay, peaks for exact duration are observed at 3 and 12 months. The same problem emerges for intended durations of stay or absence that are rounded to exactly 12 months. Accordingly an important question emerges that is related to the inclusion or not of these persons in short-term or long-term immigrants. The Task Force recommends that in countries where such peaks emerge a careful evaluation be made of: (i) the relation between duration of validity of permits and actual duration of stay or (ii) the relation between intended duration of stay or absence and actual durations. National expert knowledge or ad hoc scientific investigations may help in allocating these specific groups of international migrants (those with exactly 12 months validity of their residence permit and those who intend to stay abroad or in the country for exactly 12 months) to either of the two categories of short-term and long-term migrants. The recommended international definitions need to be interpreted and applied at national level but the national statistical authorities are best placed to do this, based on the specific national situation, and on the availability and operation of the data sources available in that country. When dealing with intended duration of stay or absence rounded to exactly 12 months the experience of Australia can be usefully examined<sup>3</sup>.

37. Data on long-term migrants are more consistent and real efforts have been made by countries during recent years to improve the availability, reliability and international comparability of these data.

38. There is an increasing need for information on short-term migration to support policy development and monitoring. Accordingly real efforts must be made to collect reliable data in that direction. In the case of migration of non-EU citizens to EU Member States, this need is met to some extent by a collection of residence permit data under the EU Regulation on migration statistics. More generally though, data on short-term migrants may be particularly problematic and seem very difficult to compare in terms of levels; possibly only trends can be identified at national level.

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<sup>3</sup> Three quarters of foreigners entering Australia with an intended duration of stay of exactly 12 months are considered as short term immigrants and the last fourth only as long term immigrant. For those with usual residence in Australia and leaving the country with an intended duration of absence of exactly 12 months two thirds are counted as short term emigrants and the last third as long term emigrants.



39. The existing definition of short-term migration based on a stay of at least 3 months but less than 12 months corresponds closely with the 90 day threshold used in many countries to define whether a stay can be covered by a visitor visa or whether a residence permit is required.

40. A topic of growing importance is circular migration (EMN 2011). Defined by the European Migration Network (EMN) Glossary as “a repetition of legal migrations by the same person between two or more countries”, circular migration is badly captured by official statistics and often ignored – therefore the scale of circular migration is difficult to estimate. By its nature circular migration is particularly difficult to measure as short-term residence may be subject to little or no administrative recording, particularly if permission to reside has already been granted in the context of a previous stay. Innovative methodologies will need to be examined and applied in order to better capture circular migration in official statistics.

41. It is important that the existing definitions of short-term and long-term migration, as well as any new definitions relating to circular migration, should be implemented in a coherent and consistent way. Therefore, the Task Force recommends preparing a proposal for a common international statistical definition of circular migration. This should take into account the needs expressed by key statistics users for information on circular migration, as well as any available data from ad hoc studies into this phenomenon. Circular migration may need to be defined in terms both of duration of stay and a repetition of the change in place of usual residence. The potential implications on other population statistics concepts of this circular migration definition will need to be considered.

42. More generally, the Task Force recommends preparing guidelines to facilitate the implementation by member countries of the internationally recommended definitions at national level. These guidelines should build upon the national practices and the research summarized in this report, providing examples of how the international definitions of place and change of usual residence are actually applied to available national data sources. It may be proposed, for example, that the criterion of “living continuously for at least the last 12 months” might, in practical application, be replaced by the concept of “living for most of the last 12 months”. However, it will be for the national statistical authorities to apply these guidelines as they think best, taking into account national circumstances, with the overall aim being to ensure that the data correspond as closely as possible to the existing international definitions.

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## Annex

### Detailed data on durations of stay/absence with thresholds of 3 and 12 months

Country	Group of citizenship	Immigration			Loss from 3 to 12 months	Relative loss	Emigration			Loss from 3 to 12 months	Relative loss	Net migration			Loss from 3 to 12 months	Relative loss
		Total	3 months	12 months			Total	3 months	12 months			Total	3 months	12 months		
<b>AUSTRALIA</b>																
Australia (2003-2005)	NATIONALS	616.500	13.400	2.110	11.290	84,3%	10.631.600	820.710	234.960	585.750	71,4%	-10.015.100	-807.310	-232.850	-574.460	71,2%
Australia (2003-2005)	EU citizens	4.194.070	485.510	136.920	348.590	71,8%	508.290	40.820	8.700	32.120	78,7%	3.685.780	444.690	128.220	316.470	71,2%
Australia (2003-2005)	non-EU	11.241.510	1.143.360	453.200	690.160	60,4%	1.638.100	115.260	22.070	93.190	80,9%	9.603.410	1.028.100	431.130	596.970	58,1%
Australia (2003-2005)	<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	<b>16.052.080</b>	<b>1.642.270</b>	<b>592.230</b>	<b>1.050.040</b>	<b>63,9%</b>	<b>12.777.990</b>	<b>976.790</b>	<b>265.730</b>	<b>711.060</b>	<b>72,8%</b>	<b>3.274.090</b>	<b>665.480</b>	<b>326.500</b>	<b>338.980</b>	<b>50,9%</b>
<b>AUSTRIA</b>																
Austria (2002-2008)	NATIONALS	149.220	136.383	100.914	35.469	26,0%	196.391	182.780	155.452	27.328	15,0%	-47.171	-46.397	-54.538	8.141	-17,5%
Austria (2002-2008)	EU citizens	457.073	360.201	201.909	158.292	43,9%	305.170	209.131	110.309	98.822	47,3%	151.903	151.070	91.600	59.470	39,4%
Austria (2002-2008)	non-EU	478.071	373.559	252.070	121.489	32,5%	306.074	201.420	113.902	87.518	43,5%	171.997	172.139	138.168	33.971	19,7%
Austria (2002-2008)	<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	<b>1.084.364</b>	<b>870.143</b>	<b>554.893</b>	<b>315.250</b>	<b>36,2%</b>	<b>807.635</b>	<b>593.331</b>	<b>379.663</b>	<b>213.668</b>	<b>36,0%</b>	<b>276.729</b>	<b>276.812</b>	<b>175.230</b>	<b>101.582</b>	<b>36,7%</b>
<b>BELGIUM</b>																
Belgium (2001-2004)	NATIONALS	36.620	34.854	33.555	1.299	3,7%	52.731	46.950	42.702	4.248	9,0%	-16.111	-12.096	-9.147	-2.949	24,4%
Belgium (2001-2004)	EU citizens	105.037	90.360	80.112	10.248	11,3%	76.255	74.728	73.654	1.074	1,4%	28.782	15.632	6.458	9.174	58,7%
Belgium (2001-2004)	non-EU	98.797	89.160	83.118	6.042	6,8%	37.098	36.762	36.497	265	0,7%	61.699	52.398	46.621	5.777	11,0%
Belgium (2001-2004)	<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	<b>240.454</b>	<b>214.374</b>	<b>196.785</b>	<b>17.589</b>	<b>8,2%</b>	<b>166.084</b>	<b>158.440</b>	<b>152.853</b>	<b>5.587</b>	<b>3,5%</b>	<b>74.370</b>	<b>55.934</b>	<b>43.932</b>	<b>12.002</b>	<b>21,5%</b>
<b>DENMARK</b>																
Denmark (2001-2008)	NATIONALS	138.886	135.000	122.496	12.504	9,3%	160.932	155.252	111.185	44.067	28,4%	-22.046	-20.252	11.311	-31.563	155,9%
Denmark (2001-2008)	EU citizens	98.549	94.693	60.268	34.425	36,4%	63.040	62.065	58.146	3.919	6,3%	35.509	32.628	2.122	30.506	93,5%
Denmark (2001-2008)	non-EU	132.436	129.966	100.468	29.498	22,7%	68.056	67.279	63.130	4.149	6,2%	64.380	62.687	37.338	25.349	40,4%
Denmark (2001-2008)	<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	<b>369.871</b>	<b>359.659</b>	<b>283.232</b>	<b>76.427</b>	<b>21,2%</b>	<b>292.009</b>	<b>284.596</b>	<b>232.461</b>	<b>52.135</b>	<b>18,3%</b>	<b>77.843</b>	<b>75.063</b>	<b>50.771</b>	<b>24.292</b>	<b>32,4%</b>
<b>ESTONIA</b>																
Estonia (2003-2007)	NATIONALS	3.728	3.589	3.459	130	3,6%	17.559	17.252	16.549	703	4,1%	-13.831	-13.663	-13.090	-573	4,2%
Estonia (2003-2007)	EU citizens	2.817	2.798	2.692	106	3,8%	508	500	487	13	2,6%	2.309	2.298	2.205	93	4,0%
Estonia (2003-2007)	non-EU (incl unknown)	2.789	2.766	2.725	41	1,5%	2.429	2.336	2.270	66	2,8%	360	430	455	-25	-5,8%
Estonia (2003-2007)	<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	<b>9.334</b>	<b>9.153</b>	<b>8.876</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>3,0%</b>	<b>20.496</b>	<b>20.088</b>	<b>19.306</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>3,9%</b>	<b>-11.162</b>	<b>-10.935</b>	<b>-10.430</b>	<b>-505</b>	<b>4,6%</b>

Country	Group of citizenship	Immigration					Relative loss	Emigration			Relative loss	Net migration			Loss from 3 to 12 months	Relative loss
		Total	3 months	12 months	Loss from 3 to 12 months	Relative loss		Total	3 months	12 months		Loss from 3 to 12 months	Relative loss	Total		
<b>SLOVENIA</b>																
Slovenia (2008)	NATIONALS	2.677	2.663	2.631	32	1,2%	4.812		4.766			-2.135		-2.135		
Slovenia (2008)	EU citizens	4.921	4.147	2.070	2.077	50,1%	2.579		1.009			2.342		1.061		
Slovenia (2008)	non-EU	59.865	55.726	25.992	29.734	53,4%	18.762		6.334			41.103		19.658		
Slovenia (2008)	<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	<b>67.463</b>	<b>62.536</b>	<b>30.693</b>	<b>31.843</b>	<b>50,9%</b>	<b>26.153</b>		<b>12.109</b>			<b>41.310</b>		<b>18.584</b>		
<b>SWITZERLAND</b>																
Switzerland (2001-2006)	NATIONALS															
Switzerland (2001-2006)	EU citizens	1.350.860	1.229.033	1.129.359	99.674	8,1%	1.063.209	864.123	273.863	590.260	68,3%	287.651	364.910	855.496	-490.586	-134,4%
Switzerland (2001-2006)	non-EU	508.503	500.929	489.713	11.216	2,2%	280.660	201.979	113.504	88.475	43,8%	227.843	298.950	376.209	-77.259	-25,8%
Switzerland (2001-2006)	<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	<b>1.859.363</b>	<b>1.729.962</b>	<b>1.619.072</b>	<b>110.890</b>	<b>6,4%</b>	<b>1.343.869</b>	<b>1.066.102</b>	<b>387.367</b>	<b>678.735</b>	<b>63,7%</b>	<b>515.494</b>	<b>663.860</b>	<b>1.231.705</b>	<b>-567.845</b>	<b>-85,5%</b>
<b>AUSTRALIA (ex post computed duration of stay or absence)</b>																
Australia (2003-2005)	NATIONALS	588.240	48.930	24.320	24.610	50,3%	10.558.620	942.760	247.830	694.930	73,7%	-9.970.380	893.830	223.510	670.320	75,0%
Australia (2003-2005)	EU citizens	4.176.980	493.390	57.690	435.700	88,3%	495.700	51.220	13.800	37.420	73,1%	3.681.280	-442.170	-43.890	-398.280	90,1%
Australia (2003-2005)	non-EU	10.988.340	941.590	60.920	880.670	93,5%	1.581.050	160.470	39.360	121.110	75,5%	9.407.290	-781.120	-21.560	-759.560	97,2%
Australia (2003-2005)	<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	<b>15.753.560</b>	<b>1.483.910</b>	<b>142.930</b>	<b>1.340.980</b>	<b>90,4%</b>	<b>12.635.370</b>	<b>1.154.450</b>	<b>300.990</b>	<b>853.460</b>	<b>73,9%</b>	<b>3.118.190</b>	<b>-329.460</b>	<b>158.060</b>	<b>-487.520</b>	<b>148,0%</b>
<b>DENMARK (ex post computed duration of stay or absence)</b>																
Denmark (2001-2006)	NATIONALS	133.802	130.178	124.673	5.505	4,2%	151.555	146.027	131.352	14.675	10,0%	-17.753	-15.849	-6.679	-9.170	57,9%
Denmark (2001-2006)	EU citizens	66.947	64.641	54.219	10.422	16,1%	46.378	45.735	44.746	989	2,2%	20.569	18.906	9.473	9.433	49,9%
Denmark (2001-2006)	non-EU	112.847	110.986	101.632	9.354	8,4%	53.659	53.076	51.718	1.358	2,6%	59.188	57.910	49.914	7.996	13,8%
Denmark (2001-2006)	<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	<b>313.596</b>	<b>305.805</b>	<b>280.524</b>	<b>25.281</b>	<b>8,3%</b>	<b>251.592</b>	<b>244.838</b>	<b>227.816</b>	<b>17.022</b>	<b>7,0%</b>	<b>62.004</b>	<b>60.967</b>	<b>52.708</b>	<b>8.259</b>	<b>13,5%</b>
<b>SWEDEN (ex post computed duration of stay or absence)</b>																
Sweden (2001-2007)	NATIONALS	108.650	104.017	84.939	19.078	18,3%	150.837	149.508	144.685	4.823	3,2%	-42.187	-45.491	-59.746	14.255	-31,3%
Sweden (2001-2007)	EU citizens	135.119	133.981	131.288	2.693	2,0%	60.663	58.224	47.884	10.340	17,8%	74.456	75.757	83.404	-7.647	-10,1%
Sweden (2001-2007)	non-EU	267.400	266.674	264.786	1.888	0,7%	53.703	52.717	46.607	6.110	11,6%	213.697	213.957	218.179	-4.222	-2,0%
Sweden (2001-2007)	<b>TOTAL all citizenships</b>	<b>511.169</b>	<b>504.672</b>	<b>481.013</b>	<b>23.659</b>	<b>4,7%</b>	<b>265.203</b>	<b>260.449</b>	<b>239.176</b>	<b>21.273</b>	<b>8,2%</b>	<b>245.966</b>	<b>244.223</b>	<b>241.837</b>	<b>2.386</b>	<b>1,0%</b>