The Potential Use of Population Registers to Generate Socio-Demographic Statistics

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3 traditional pillars of socio-demographic statistics:

- **Population censuses**: broad photographs of the population at different points in time: numbers and main characteristics of individuals and households at detailed geographical levels.
  
  Exhaustive coverage but limited number of variables of interest and long intervals between updates.

- **Household sample surveys**: more detailed information on specific issues (employment, living standards...).
  
  Sample basis resulting in limitations in disaggregation.

- **Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems**: use of administrative data to update on change in population numbers between censuses, using population projections (which are fairly robust in the short to medium term).
  
  Using administrative data to produce statistics is not new.
Several simultaneous trends result in the aspiration to mobilize new data sources, not specifically designed for statistical purposes:

– Concerns on the cost of traditional modes of data collection for population censuses and sample surveys;
– Growing difficulty in reaching respondents as a result of modern lifestyles and lack of cooperation from respondents;
– Increasing need for fresher and more disaggregated data, particularly in the context of SDG implementation and monitoring;
– Availability of new technologies making it possible to manage large amounts of data and to mobilize new data sources.

Population registers are a possible way-forward in this context.
With well-functioning CRVS systems, administrative (registration) information, which primarily aims at giving individuals an identity, is also used to produce vital statistics.

Population registers take this approach further:
- With a system of continuous updates, enabling in particular to follow individuals when they change the location of their residence;
- Possibly, with a richer set of individual characteristics.

As a first stage of developing a register-based data system, registers can be used to produce basic population statistics, which can be complemented by a large scale sample survey or several thematic sample surveys.

Then, a fully register-based approach can be envisaged, by linking numerous administrative registers to produce statistics on individuals and households, without field data collection.
Some Essential Conditions for the Use of Registers for Statistics

– Availability of good-quality administrative data (coverage, accuracy, good updating system).
– Possibility to link information from different sources: unique identification at the level of individuals, households and addresses; common set of concepts and classifications that can be tracked in different sources.
– Proper legal framework in place to use administrative data for statistical purposes (access to registers, privacy issues related to the linking of registers).
– National consensus on the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes, to ensure trust in statistical system and in the statistics produced.
A Few Important Messages

– All potential sources of information for the production of statistics can complement each other, providing there is sound methodology in place.

– There is no short-cut to produce high-quality statistical data.

– All innovations need to be thoroughly tested and quality-assured before they can replace systems which were previously in place and working (reasonably) well: putting in place a register-based statistical system requires careful development and investments, close collaboration between statisticians and owners of registers, and time.
Thank you