

# How to get better data on emigrants? Lessons learned from the SEEMIG Pilot Emigrant Survey in Hungary and Serbia

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Shortages of migration statistics and in particular shortages of emigration data are well-known from the literature. The proposed paper documents a pilot emigrant survey carried out in the frame of the SEEMIG project in Hungary and Serbia in the year 2013. It aimed at fulfilling some of the data-gaps in the field and also to develop an efficient research tool for surveying out-migrants. The study applied a two-phase research design. At first sample-members of a representative national survey (LFS) were contacted, their migrant acquaintances identified and then (in the second phase) these emigrants have been contacted directly and asked to complete an emigrant survey. The study aimed at producing a representative sample of out-migrants from Hungary and Serbia that would serve as a basis for a reliable estimate on the number and composition of emigrants and also for in-depth analyses on their migration-histories, employment situation etc. Although hindered by the low level of cooperation of the respondents and therefore it could not fully achieve its aims, the SEEMIG study has provided us with extremely valuable experiences. The paper will focus on the methodological lessons learnt, building mainly on the Hungarian experiences. At first we will introduce the research design and explain its innovative elements. As the estimate of emigrant stock from Hungary calculated on the basis of the SEEMIG study seems to underestimate the number of emigrants, we will systematically explore the potential reasons for this bias. Attrition rates in the various phases of the study will be shown, the process of selection analysed and also further lessons learnt from an external test discussed. In discussing the reasons for respondents' non-cooperation, we will also rely on the survey carried out among the interviewers. The paper will conclude by formulating key lessons and recommendations for future emigrant surveys.