

BASELINE STUDY ON MIGRATION DATA MANAGEMENT IN AZERBAIJAN

2023





International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)
Rothschildplatz 4
A-1020 Vienna
www.icmpd.org

International Centre for Migration Policy Development
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International Centre for Migration Policy Development in Azerbaijan
Baku, Azerbaijan
Samad Vurgun str. 43, World Business Centre
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Authors: Anne Herm, Könül Jafarova, Michel Poulain

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Acronyms

ASAN	State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations
ASIS	Azerbaijan Statistical Information Service
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
EU	European Union
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
IAMAS	Interdepartmental Automated Information Retrieval System
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MLSPP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population
MOBILAZE	“Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan” (EU-funded project implemented by ICMPD, MOBILAZE 2 runs from 2021 to 2024)
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
SBS	State Border Service
SMS	State Migration Service
SSC	State Statistics Committee
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
UMIS	Unified Migration Information System
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division



Introduction

This report on the Baseline Study on Migration Data Management in Azerbaijan was developed within the framework of the Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan (MOBILAZE 2) project implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). The main purpose of the MOBILAZE 2 project is to contribute to the development and implementation of the evidence-based migration and border management policy agenda in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The specific objectives of the project focus on institutional capacities on migration policy development and implementation; institutionalisation of migration data collection, analysis and application; enhancement and standardisation of institutional procedures for capacity building on migration and border management; and development of institutional and public awareness on migration policy agenda and irregular migration threats.

The main objective of this report is to provide comprehensive insight into the current state and practices of migration data management in the Republic of Azerbaijan, with a particular focus on the existing procedures and tools available for data collection, analysis and application. The particular gaps and needs observed in this regard are then laid out and recommendations for improvement are given.

The institutional framework for collecting data on international migration in the Republic of Azerbaijan involves a number of governmental institutions, each of which has been assigned its special migration-related topic. The present analytical review covers the most important institutions involved in data collection on migration in Azerbaijan.

Whereas each of the government institutions has its own responsibilities in the field of collection and recording information on various migration issues, a commonly used information system, the Interdepartmental Automated Information Retrieval System (IAMAS), makes it possible to share collected data between institutions – based on the relevant legislation. The IAMAS provides the possibility to produce statistics on various migration-related topics. These are mainly so-called institutional statistics that present data on activities of the institutions. Some statistical data are prepared and provided to the State Statistical Committee for publishing as national statistics.

The review starts by describing the activities of the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the key national actor in the field of international migration data collection. Thereafter, information is presented on relevant other ministries and government institutions dealing with international migration issues and collecting relevant data that is maintained in the IAMAS for joint use. Details on how the IAMAS is used are also presented. The review ends with a summary of findings and recommendations put forward as a result of this assessment, and by referring to recommendations by the United Nations (UN) and European best practices on production of migration data.

This overview is based on information received from relevant ministries and other government institutions through ad hoc questionnaires, face-to-face and online meetings with the responsible persons of the selected institutions, and from the websites of the relevant government institutions.



1. State Migration Service (SMS)

Among the government institutions, the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan is a leading institution for migration data management. The tasks of the SMS include management of the information collected in the field of migration of foreigners. For this purpose, it maintains a Unified Migration Information System (UMIS), which collects the data on international migration and **foreigners and stateless persons (hereinafter - foreigners)** in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The SMS produces statistics that are reported to the Government and shared with other state authorities upon request.

The SMS was established by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On establishment of the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan” № 560 of 19 March 2007 and was transformed into a law enforcement body by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan №76 of 8 April 2009. It implements the state policy in the field of migration defined by the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which manages and regulates migration processes in the state.

The State Migration Service performs the following tasks:

- Developing the main directions of the state migration policy and ensuring its implementation with the participation of the relevant state bodies.
- Registering foreigners upon the place of stay and resolving issues of extension of temporary stay in the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- Issuing permits for temporary and permanent residence of foreigners in Azerbaijan.
- Issuing work permits to foreigners to carry out paid labour activity.
- Participation in resolution of citizenship issues, including loss of the citizenship of Azerbaijan, naturalisation and establishing a person’s affiliation to Azerbaijani citizenship.
- Refugee status determination and issuing of the document confirming this status.
- Taking appropriate measures to prevent irregular migration.
- Ensuring placement and detention of foreigners or stateless persons in detention centres for irregular migrants, in accordance with the procedure established by the Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- Registration of citizens of Azerbaijan who move abroad temporarily or permanently, cooperation with the competent bodies of foreign states together with the competent state bodies to ensure their rights and interests, participation in the implementation of state policy on supporting Azerbaijani nationals living abroad.
- Carrying out awareness-raising activities related to migration legislation.
- Carrying out other duties provided by the Regulations “On the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan”, as well as legislation in accordance with the activity directions.

1.1 SMS Units Involved in Data Collection

- Analysis of Migration Processes and Information Support Head Department.
- Migration Processes Regulation Head Department.
- Regional Migration Departments.
- Citizenship Issues Head Department.



- Readmission Issues Department.
- Determination of Refugee Status Department.
- Migration Control Head Department.
- Migration Policy and Legal Support Head Department.

1.2 Topics Covered by SMS Data Collection

The SMS is responsible for collecting data on most topics related to international migration:

- Temporary stay, including the intended duration of stay of foreign nationals in Azerbaijan, registration upon place of stay – if the stay exceeds 15 days (according to Article 21 of the Migration Code) and extension of temporary staying period.
- Issuance and extension of temporary and permanent residence permits.
- Issuance and extension of work permits.
- Granting, restoration, determination and loss of Azerbaijani citizenship, registration of dual citizenship based on the information provided by the Azerbaijani citizens who acquired citizenship of another country.
- Granting of refugee status and issuance of the corresponding document.
- Placement of foreigners and stateless persons in detention centres.
- Readmission of citizens abroad found to be irregularly residing in the country of destination
- Irregular migration and violation of the law by foreign nationals. Data include registered foreign nationals expelled from the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan; cases of foreigners and stateless persons banned from entering the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan for a certain period of time; cases of foreigners and stateless persons who violated the requirements of the legislation in the field of migration and legalisation of the residence of irregular migrants who have grounds for legal residence.
- Engaging with foreigners and stateless persons under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Registration of Azerbaijani citizens temporarily residing abroad is listed among the tasks of the SMS (see above), but the SMS does not currently collect detailed data on this group. However, the SMS does collect data on Azerbaijani citizens who apply to be deregistered from their permanent place of residence.

The SMS collects the above mentioned data when processing various applications from foreigners, the templates of which are available through the SMS and ASAN service¹ websites. The SMS processes applications for:

- Registration at the place of stay in Azerbaijan.
- Extension of temporary stay in Azerbaijan.
- Temporary residence in Azerbaijan.
- Permanent residence in Azerbaijan.

¹ The ASAN service centres are the bodies ensure the realisation of the services to be rendered by the state entities in a uniform and coordinated manner. The ASAN service centres were established under the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, by Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 685, dated 13 July 2012.



- Issuance of a work permit for the purpose of paid employment in Azerbaijan.
- Obtaining information on the temporary restriction of exit or entry into Azerbaijan of foreigners and stateless persons who have violated the migration-related legislation of the state.
- Acquisition of Azerbaijani citizenship.
- Restoration of Azerbaijani citizenship.
- Termination of Azerbaijani citizenship.
- Determination of Azerbaijani citizenship.
- Submission of information by an Azerbaijani citizen who has acquired citizenship of another state.
- Deregistration of a citizen of the Republic of Azerbaijan who has chosen a place of residence in another country.
- Readmission requests.
- Migrant children who are unaccompanied or become unaccompanied after arrival.

Instructions on the online use of applications are also provided by the SMS on the State Services Portal website.²

The SMS considers the development of guidelines on statistics and their definitions as the next step in utilising electronic services. All data from the above mentioned application forms are entered directly into the UMIS, the main database managed by the SMS and accessible to several other government institutions for consultation (view only access). The UMIS contains information on the application review process and a collection of statistical information on migration. Detailed information on the UMIS is provided in several sections of this report.

1.3 Legal Background of SMS Data Collection

The migration legislation of Azerbaijan incorporates the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the international conventions to which Azerbaijan is party, as well as other legal and regulatory acts adopted in accordance with these documents.

The Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan³ is the main legal document regulating international migration matters in Azerbaijan.

A number of other laws regulate various procedures related to migration issues:

- Regulations on the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan.⁴

² State Services Portal homepage: <https://www.dxr.az/xidmetler/struktur/3590A0AF-9A7F-49FD-94B9-07C4667F0A80/>.

³ Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <http://e-qanun.az/framework/46959/>.

⁴ Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Approval of the Regulation on the Unified Migration Information System of the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/12885/>.



- Regulations on the Unified Migration Information System of the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan.⁵
- Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Status of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons.⁶
- Rules for consideration of an application for granting “refugee” status.⁷
- Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan.⁸
- Regulations on consideration of issues of citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan and rules for their resolution.⁹
- Rules for determining a person’s citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan.¹⁰

The legislation regulating the responsibilities and work of the SMS also includes details on the types and subjects of data exchanged between government institutions in the field of migration, including in regard to the data which the SMS makes available to the relevant state bodies.

1.4 SMS Data Collection and Sharing

All data collected by the SMS when processing applications from individuals and other documents are recorded in the UMIS. The UMIS was established to maintain individual records of foreigners living on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and to provide state bodies involved in the management of migration processes with necessary information. The system enables electronic storage of documents, and search, monitoring and analysis of individual records, while providing e-services in this area. The UMIS is linked to the IAMAS,¹¹ which covers the information resources of the entire state. Whereas data from all proceedings involving foreigners are subject to the UMIS, the IAMAS system includes a simultaneously updated copy of the section relevant to the UMIS in the main IAMAS system.

The SMS shares the collected data with other government institutions to the extent necessary within the scope of each institution’s responsibility. Sharing primarily means the ability of each relevant state institution to access data collected by the SMS for queries provided through the IAMAS. As UMIS data is integrated into the IAMAS, it is available to relevant authorised government institutions, to enable them to fulfil their obligations according to the law. For example, visa and passport data are recorded when people cross the border and during visa issuance. Border control data are part of the IAMAS. If the traveller holds a residence permit, the data of this permit is also recorded at the border.

⁵ Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Approval of the Regulation on the Unified Migration Information System of the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/19674/>.

⁶ Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Status of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (Displaced Persons Within the Country), <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/4757/>.

⁷ Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Approval of the Rule for Consideration of the Petition for the Granting of “refugee” Status, <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/380/>.

⁸ Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan, <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/3187/>.

⁹ Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Approval of the Regulation on Consideration of Citizenship Issues of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Rules for Their Resolution <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/5317/>.

¹⁰ Decision of the Cabinet of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Approval of the “Rule on Determination of a Person’s Citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan”, <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/29815/>.

¹¹ See more in Chapter 9 ‘Interdepartmental Automated Information Retrieval System (IAMAS)’.



Visa and residence permit data, as well as passport data of foreigners are included in the UMIS, and are linked with other parts of the UMIS. For the issuance of a work permit, an application uploaded to the UMIS is made available to all relevant institutions by its background investigation system. If a person forgets to renew their residence permit, a notification is sent to the relevant authorities, including the State Border Service (SBS). Thus, the updated list of in-country foreigners with expired residence permits is available practically in real time.

The migration-related information and government institutions with which the SMS shares data are:

- Ministry of Internal Affairs – ID and passport information of Azerbaijani citizens.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs – visa information.
- ASAN – no direct exchange of information.
- State Border Service – information on border-crossing.
- State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and IDPs – no direct exchange of information.
- State Statistical Committee – migration statistics, in accordance with existing procedures.
- Ministry of Justice – information on marital status (marriage, divorce), registration of births and deaths.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population (MLSPP) – information on employment contracts.
- State Tax Service – information on foreigners and stateless persons registered as taxpayers in Azerbaijan.

1.5 Databases Managed by the SMS

The UMIS is a centralised information system that collects and maintains information on foreigners and stateless persons staying or residing (permanently or temporarily) in the Republic of Azerbaijan, persons granted refugee status by the SMS, acquisition, restoration and revocation of citizenship, persons illegally staying in the state, and Azerbaijani citizens living abroad. The main purpose of the system is to provide information necessary for the activities of state bodies involved in the management of migration processes, as well as to provide electronic services to citizens, foreigners, stateless persons, living or wishing to live in Azerbaijan.

To ensure the functioning of the system and the formation of the necessary information resources, the SMS manages and maintains the UMIS central server and enables the collection of data and recording in the UMIS. The UMIS is integrated within the following parts of the IAMAS: “Login and Registration”, the State Population Register of Azerbaijan, the “Licences and Permits” portal and the “Electronic Execution” information system. These databases are organised into both individual records and documents. The migration and document history of each person can be tracked.

The SMS checks the completeness and accuracy of the entries in the database at regular intervals. However, there is no protocol document specifically designed for this purpose.

The UMIS database is accessible to the relevant structural units of the SMS at the level of individual records, based on their competences. For other ministries and government institutions, access to individual records is provided for queries under the UMIS regulation directly in the UMIS or via the



IAMAS. Access to individual records is only granted in accordance with the activities of the institution and its structural units. Information is disclosed to third parties only in accordance with the Law on Personal Data.¹² The other government institutions with access to the UMIS (e.g. the MLSP) can only consult and give an opinion on data collected from applications of individuals. Other institutions are not entitled to change the entries in the UMIS, but can propose the entry of new data or corrections. Any necessary corrections are made by the SMS. The same procedure applies to the SMS with regard to accessing those parts of the IAMAS managed by other government institutions.

1.6 Production of Statistics by the SMS

Since the UMIS contains all data on foreigners and stateless persons from the time of registration at the border crossing upon arrival in the state, the data are rich and timely and quickly available for production of statistics. For visa-based entries, data on the purpose for entry/immigration is also available.

In addition to the statistics produced on the basis of data in the UMIS, statistical data can also be produced by linking individual records from databases managed by other institutions and accessible to the SMS via the IAMAS. Thus, additional statistics can be produced, for example, on the number of foreigners who have employment contracts in Azerbaijan but do not have a work permit.

Statistical data are available in aggregated form (statistical tables) via a portal. In addition, the SMS Analytics and Statistics Unit prepares and publishes aggregated data on various topics on the SMS website on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis,¹³ which are also accessible to users outside of the SMS (other ministries and government institutions, researchers, consular offices, etc.). However, these published data are mainly administrative statistics on the different types of applications processed on a daily and monthly basis.

Based on UMIS records, a set of statistical data are produced and forwarded to the State Statistical Committee (SSC) for publication as national statistics.¹⁴ The statistics unit of the SMS reports data on migration issues to the SSC as part of its dissemination programme, in accordance with Form 1 'On foreigners and stateless persons in Azerbaijan of the "Resolution of the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan" dated 28.07.2015'.

Additional statistical data is provided to the SSC by specific request (e.g. on specific trends or for specific policy purposes). Of particular interest for migration policy development in Azerbaijan are statistics on migration trends, immigration, emigration, return migration, internal migration, and the impact of migration on human development, economic development, health care and the labour market. Upon request, specific statistics can also be prepared for other relevant topics on which data is collected and available in the UMIS and can be integrated into the IAMAS as needed, making the

¹² Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Personal Data, <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/19675/>.

¹³ SMS, Statistics, Press room, <https://migration.gov.az/en/statistics#>.

¹⁴ SSC homepage: <https://www.azstat.org/portal/>.



statistics available to the relevant government institutions. Based on these data, migration profiles have been developed covering various aspects of migration in Azerbaijan.

The SMS is also involved in the preparation of reports for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) for 2020 and 2022.¹⁵ In 2020, Azerbaijan submitted a voluntary report on the implementation of the GCM in 2019-2020, which was updated in April 2022.¹⁶ Information was also provided to the Ministry of Economy, which is responsible for the country report on work done to implement the relevant points of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁷

1.7 SMS Data Quality Management

The completeness and accuracy of the data collected is regularly assessed and monitored. Several capacity building projects aim at improving the data management in the SMS. Some examples of these projects are provided below.

Under the project “Consolidation of migration and border management capacities in Azerbaijan”, jointly implemented with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) during the period 2014-2018, activities were carried out to improve use of the UMIS for production and dissemination of statistics on migration, in close cooperation with the SSC.

Activities under the project “Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan (MOBILAZE)”, jointly implemented with ICMPD,¹⁸ contributed to the improvement of migration data management skills, increased the analytical capacity of SMS staff and raised awareness among Azerbaijani society on migration processes in the state.

Under the project “Strengthening Readmission Management in Azerbaijan”, jointly implemented by IOM since 2020, it was planned to increase the capacity for the preparation of statistics on readmission. The project remains ongoing, as reported in the National Voluntary Review Report on implementation of Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in April 2022 (see footnote 15).

¹⁵ Government of Azerbaijan (2020), *National Voluntary Review Report on implementation of Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan*, April 2022, <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/imrf-azerbaijan.pdf>.

¹⁶ Ibid. *The Regional Review Report on implementation of the “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration” by the Republic of Azerbaijan*, https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbdl416/files/docs/azerbaijan_gcm_impl-n_in_report.pdf/.

¹⁷ SSC (n.d.), Statistics on Sustainable Development Goals indicators, <http://sdg.azstat.org:8484/>.

¹⁸ The first MOBILAZE project was implemented between 2015 through 2019, while the follow-up project (MOBILAZE 2) began in June 2021, with a duration of 36 months.



2. State Border Service (SBS)

2.1 SBS Units Involved in Data Collection

Unit of Border Control.

2.2 Topics Covered by SBS Data Collection and Production of Statistics

The State Border Service collects data on persons and vehicles crossing the state border of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Persons and vehicles are registered through the “Entry-exit and registration” subsystem of the IAMAS. Data include both border crossings by nationals and foreigners. The collected data are based on information available in the traveller’s passport.

The IAMAS database contains the following personal characteristics and document information related to travellers crossing the state border:

- Date of border crossing.
- Direction (entry or exit).
- Date of birth.
- Sex.
- Country of citizenship.
- Passport number.
- Destination or place of departure.
- First name/surname.
- Name of parents.
- National personal identification (for Azerbaijani nationals and based on bilateral international agreements).
- Other information collected at the border, such as information on education, occupation, reason for travel.

Through the IAMAS, the related data collected by the SBS are available for all other government institutions within the scope of their competences. Statistics on entry and exit at border crossings are regularly produced and made available through the IAMAS.

2.3 SBS Data Quality Management and Capacity Development

With the support of the European Union (EU), IOM, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and ICMPD, SBS staff have participated in 9 projects in the field of integrated border management and migration over the past 15 years; one project is still ongoing. The successfully implemented projects have made a positive contribution to the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including the improvement and capacity building of the migration and border management system, study of the positive experiences of EU states, and strengthening of international cooperation.



3. Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)

3.1 MIA Units Involved in Data Collection Related to International Migration

- Office of Organizational and Analytical Work, Department on Passport, Registration and Migration.
- Main Department on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. General statistics on the trafficking cases, but no specification on the cases prosecuted, protected victims, or victims settled in shelters.¹⁹

3.2 Topics Covered by MIA Data Collection

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for the registration of the place of stay or residence in Azerbaijan of both Azerbaijani citizens and stateless persons permanently residing in the Republic of Azerbaijan. It is also responsible for issuing identity cards and passports to Azerbaijani citizens. The procedures of data collection are laid down in relevant legislation. The information is included in the IAMAS.

3.3 Databases Used by the MIA and Production of Statistics

The MIA does not maintain any databases itself. As with other government institutions, the data collected under the responsibility of the MIA are contained in the relevant subsections of the IAMAS. The various departments of the MIA collect data on individuals and use their personal records kept in datasets incorporated into the IAMAS by linking data at the individual level. These data are used to identify the legal basis for the issuance of identity cards and passports, and to check the addresses of residence when needed.

The data used by the MIA from the IAMAS system relates to Azerbaijani citizens, both living in country and abroad, and stateless persons permanently residing in Azerbaijan. For citizens living abroad, the IAMAS includes information on their residence in Azerbaijan before leaving the state and their current permanent residence abroad. A detailed description of how the IAMAS is maintained and its data used is provided in the chapter 'The Interdepartmental Automated Information Retrieval System' of this report.

4. Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (MLSP)

4.1 MLSP Units Involved in Data Collection

Department for employment policy and demographic development issues.

¹⁹ MIA (n.d.), Statistics on crimes registered in the field of combating Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) in the Republic of Azerbaijan (for years 2005-2021), Statistics, <https://www.insanalveri.gov.az/?en/menu/59/>.



4.2. Topics Covered by MLSP Data Collection and Data Sharing

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population does not collect data from persons but receives necessary information on foreigners and stateless persons from the SMS through the IAMAS subsystem “Migration”, which includes a set of variables on foreigners and stateless persons that are available to the MLSP for fulfilling its tasks:

- First name.
- Surname.
- Passport number.
- Citizenship.
- Date of birth.
- Field of specialisation.
- Name of employer.
- Field of economic activity.
- Position.
- Level of education.

Access is given to the relevant authorised persons (only the institution controlling the database). With the exception of the relevant structural units of the Ministry, no other government agency has the level of access necessary to make adjustments. Individuals can obtain their own personal data by logging in with an electronic signature card.

4.3 Databases used by the MLSP and Production of Statistics

The data used by the MLSP for issuing work permits to foreigners is provided by the UMIS through the IAMAS subsystem “Migration”. The “Analysis” subsystem of the MLSP, which includes the centralised database “Statistics of opinions (decisions) on work permits for foreigners” is also a subsystem of the UMIS. In this way, the MLSP can have access to both IAMAS and UMIS data in accordance with its responsibilities.

Based on the information available in the database, the MLSP contributes to IAMAS data on employment history of each worker from abroad, including their area(s) of economic activity, decisions on issue of work permits, etc., from which statistical data are prepared. Generally, the statistics are produced for internal use within the MLSP. However, upon request, statistical data can also be produced for specific research purposes. Statistical data on number of work permit applications and number of employment contracts, etc. are of particular interest for the MLSP. The employment histories of foreigners can only be tracked on an individual record level.

To improve the statistics in this area, analyses are carried out on a regular basis by the MLSP, including checks on quality, accuracy and completeness of the data. If necessary, appropriate recommendations are prepared.

The MLSP has been involved in various different projects, trainings and seminars to build its capacity in using information on foreign workers collected through the integrated system IAMAS. To improve



the use and analysis of data on foreign work force, it would be necessary to further develop MLSP capacity to analyse collected data.

5. Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

The State Population Register Service of Azerbaijan, which is subordinate to the MoJ, operates in accordance with Regulation on the State Registry from 07.06.2007 No 28-T. One of the main activities of the State Population Register Service is to maintain the State Population Register of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

According to the above Regulation, the State Register registers the place of residence of persons permanently living in Azerbaijan, their demographic characteristics and other information about the person. The Ministry of Justice also registers babies born on the territory of Azerbaijan to both Azerbaijani and foreign nationals. The Ministry also issues personal identification numbers to all Azerbaijani citizens, as well as to foreigners with permanent residence, refugees and stateless persons living permanently in the state. Information on individuals and their ID numbers is entered into the IAMAS. Thus, the basic data for identifying the composition of the permanently resident population, and volume and direction of their migration is recorded in the State Register.

The documented information about the foreigners with permanent residence and refugee status, as well as stateless persons are included in the State Registry. Moreover, due to the integration of the information systems of State Registry and State Migration Service, information about foreigners with temporary residence is accessible in the Registry. On the other hand, it is worth noting that MoJ does not issue personal identification numbers to the foreigners with temporary residence because information about this group is not included in the overall category of information recorded in the Registry. In addition, Azerbaijani nationals who live permanently abroad are included in the State Register as living in country if they have not deregistered their permanent address in Azerbaijan.

6. State Committee for Work with the Diaspora

The State Committee for Work with the Diaspora is concerned with the following activities:

- Participating in the formation of a unified state policy towards the diaspora.
- Assistance in granting and exercising basic rights and freedoms of Azerbaijani citizens living abroad, including in preserving their national identity, learning and developing the use of their mother tongue, and establishing and developing relations with the diasporas of nations that maintain friendly relations with Azerbaijan.
- Supporting the exercising of rights and freedoms of Azerbaijanis living abroad to establish nationally and culturally based public unions.
- Collecting, analysing and assessing information on the living conditions of Azerbaijanis abroad and establishing a special database for this purpose.



No specific subpopulation groups of Azerbaijanis living abroad are identified. There are only two categories for which data is available – deaths of Azerbaijan citizens abroad and requests for assistance from Azerbaijan citizens abroad.

7. State Committee for Refugees and IDP Affairs

The State Committee for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Affairs collects personal information on refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) which includes:

- Personal case number, surname, name, father's name, gender, date of birth and place of birth.
- IDP document data (series, type and number, date of issuance, expiry date, status date).
- Address of registration.
- IDP status details.
- Information on relatives and family of the IDP.
- Accommodation details (temporary, current) and benefits received by the IDP from the Government, reason for termination of benefits.

Data are maintained in a specific database called the “Unified database on IDPs”. The database consists of several separate local databases (collections of information). Local databases consist of individual personal records including all collected information, so that it is possible to track the individual histories of IDPs, which consists of all the above mentioned information collected when processing their cases.

Access to the data is mainly for the State Committee for Refugee and IDP Affairs, its structural units and subordinate bodies. Other state institutions using these data are “AzerIshiq”, the State Exam Centre, the Justice system (e-courts), the Ministry of Education and the MLSPP.

In addition, IDPs and recognised refugees are recorded in the IAMAS, together with (other) Azerbaijani citizens and foreigners, and are likewise included in the total population of Azerbaijan, and in the population stock with international migration background or international migration flows, if arriving from abroad.

8. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

The MFA is responsible for issuing visas for various periods, and deals with assisting the return of Azerbaijani citizens from abroad. The rules for registration of the certificate of return to Azerbaijan were approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan No. 110 of 13 July 2007.

Information on the application and issuance of electronic visas is processed through ASAN (both issued and refused visas). Information on visa applicants is entered into the IAMAS, to which the MFA has access, verifying the information provided. Based on these checks, a visa is granted or refused to the applicant. The issuance of visas is regulated by Decree 5 of the Cabinet of Ministries, with reference to



the type of visa, purpose of travel and other information required for the visa application. Decree 5 also regulates access to data by the authorities responsible for controlling visa matters; for example, the Ministry of Security. Embassies also record data on visas in the IAMAS. Data on foreigners who have obtained a visa but have not entered Azerbaijan is also available in the IAMAS.

The MFA is also responsible for consular registration of Azerbaijani citizens living abroad and issuing certificates for return to Azerbaijan if required. Information on emigrants is collected through self-declaration of Azerbaijani citizens abroad at the respective embassies/consulates. Such registration at the representation abroad, which is regulated by the Decree of Registry of Azerbaijanis Abroad, is recommended to citizens abroad but not obligatory. Special application forms are used to collect these data. The individual records of the registered persons are entered by the embassies into the Consulate subsystem in the IAMAS. Those citizens who register their residence abroad also consent to their data being passed on by the relevant state institutions.

Azerbaijani nationals abroad can apply to renew their passport or receive a new passport at the respective embassies. All the information on old and new passports is entered into the IAMAS. The embassies transmit the relevant information to the MIA, which issues the passport and forwards it to the respective embassy in accordance with the appropriate procedures.

Information on students from Azerbaijan studying abroad with a state scholarship is primarily collected by the Ministry of Education and forwarded to the MFA as required. Data on a student paying for their studies abroad with their own private funds or funds from sources other than state funds are only available if the student voluntarily registers with the respective Embassy in the country of study.

9. Interdepartmental Automated Information Retrieval System (IAMAS)

The IAMAS is a central information system of the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan that connects all relevant government agencies, including all state border checkpoints, identity card and passport registers, into a single network. The IAMAS consists of subsystems that support each other and use shared information resources, as well as relevant local segments of each government agency. The IAMAS was established by Decree No. 744 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 22 April 2008, and is jointly managed by the institutions that collect administrative data on individuals in the course of fulfilling their legal duties.

The IAMAS links all government agencies involved in migration processes and enables effective control of migration processes along the state border. Data entered by numerous government institutions, such as the SBS, the MFA, the MIA, and the SMS, contain information on border crossings, residence permits, addresses, employment, education, etc. It appears that information from the State Registry of the Ministry of Justice is not fed into the IAMAS, yet the personal identification number is included as a common variable at the level of individual records through the issuance of ID cards and passports.

The IAMAS and the UMIS are linked and integrated. While the IAMAS includes various information on all Azerbaijani citizens, the UMIS contains only information on international movement of foreigners and their residence in Azerbaijan. Thus, data on foreigners and stateless persons whose temporary



staying period is extended, who are issued temporary or permanent residence, or granted refugee status are transferred from the UMIS to the IAMAS, while border crossing records are transferred from the IAMAS to the UMIS. In fact, the IAMAS contains a simultaneously updated copy of the UMIS, thus enabling government institutions to access data in the UMIS relevant to their migration-related responsibilities and tasks. In addition, a statistical subsystem introduced in the IAMAS provides government institutions with access to statistical data relevant to their area of migration management.

Government institutions and agencies have access to the IAMAS database in accordance with the relevant legislation. The formation, coordination, maintenance and development of information resources, as well as the determination of legal, organisational, and technological bases of information security are agreed with each user. There is a Coordinating Council established by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan and a working group consisting of specialists who control and coordinate access to the database.

Decision No. 5 of 12 January 2012 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Access to Information Resources of State Agencies Entry-Exit and Registration Interagency Automated Information Search System (IAMAS) lists the state institutions granted access to IAMAS datasets. These institutions can process, search and monitor the individual records contained in the IAMAS. The State Committee for Statistics is not among these institutions. Thus, for producing national statistics, the SSC has no direct access to IAMAS datasets, and so needs to rely on the statistics compiled and provided by other government institutions responsible for collection of relevant data. In the case of international migration statistics, this is mainly the SMS.

10. State Statistical Committee

10.1 SCC Units Involved in Data Collection

Department of Population Statistics.
Department of Labour Statistics.
Department of International Relations.

10.2 Legal Background of SSC Data Collection

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Official Statistics²⁰ mandates the SSC to produce statistics on various topics, including international migration. The Law regulates the production of official statistics, including the use of administrative data for this purpose by ‘state statistical bodies’, in accordance with the “programme of statistical works” recommended by the Statistical Council. The amendment of the Law designates the SSC as the competent executive body.

The establishment of a statistical register is one of the significant steps to be taken to this end. All state and local bodies now must provide the SSC with access to their administrative data collected, processed and stored in their respective jurisdictions – in particular, that held in registers and other

²⁰ Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Official Statistics, https://www.stat.gov.az/menu/3/Legislation/law_az.pdf/.



data files – to the extent necessary for the compilation of statistics. However, the Law does not establish access to individual data records for statistical bodies, but only to statistical reports. In this respect, it is not clear how a statistical register could be established. The contents of the statistical data are agreed bilaterally between the SSC and relevant institutions, detailed in a memorandum according to the Law.

There is an agreement on the integration of the databases of the SMS into the SSC statistical database via the “Electronic Government Information System” (through the ASAN Bridge System). This integration has been operationalised since 2022.

10.3 SSC Production of Statistics

The statistics produced in the field of international migration are:

- Official Statistics Report Form No. 1 (Migration) on “Foreigners and stateless persons in Azerbaijan” and instructions for completing the Form.²¹
- Statistical summary on “Demographic indicators in Azerbaijan”.²²

Data on population stocks published by the SSC are based on data collected in the censuses. No data are published on annual population number disaggregated by citizenship or country of birth.

At the time of writing this report, the most recent census data were available from the 2009 census for the following population groups:

- Foreign citizens currently living on the state territory on a usual basis (i.e. resident permit holders, work permit holders, foreign students, other foreigners with long-term visas).
- Foreign-born nationals currently residing on the state territory.

Other categories of persons (e.g. emigrant household members or returned nationals) were not included in the census.

The latest census was conducted on 1 October 2019. It included the following questions relevant to international migration:

- Place of birth.
- Citizenship.
- Permanent residence in this residential area/building:
 - *Since when have you been living in this residential building?*
 - *In which country did you previously reside?*
 - The main purpose of relocating within the country/ to Azerbaijan.
- Place of stay of permanent residents temporarily absent and information on their absence:
 - The reason for absence.
 - Duration of absence (in months).

At the time of writing this report, the results of the 2019 census had not yet been published.

²¹ Access this document at: <https://www.azstat.org/onlinedoc/d03102111.rar/> (downloads a zip file).

²² SSC (n.d.), Demography, <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demography/?lang=az/>.



The annual population update is calculated based on census data, taking into account natural increase and net international migration. Data from both the General Passport Registration Office and the SMS are available for statistics on arrivals and departures (from 2013 onwards). While the General Passport Registration Office of the MIA registers both nationals and foreigners reporting a change of residence, SMS data appear to include only foreigners in the statistics for both flows.

For international migration statistics, the SSC defines ‘immigrants’ as foreigners who enter the state to reside permanently (which is only granted after two years of temporary residence, in accordance with the Migration Code); and ‘emigrants’ as persons who deregister to leave the country for permanent residence abroad.²³ Accordingly, the statistics only include migrations for permanent residence. Moreover, there are inconsistencies between immigration and emigration flows in terms of the definitions of the population groups covered.

The SSC does not process any individual data for annual statistical reports on migration issues. Published statistical data on arrivals in and departures from the state come from the SBS. The statistical tables from the SMS are reconciled according to the official document *Resolution of the State Statistical Committee of The Republic of Azerbaijan, 28.07.2015, Form No. 1 (Migration) “On foreigners and stateless persons in the Republic of Azerbaijan”*, providing for the collection and use of statistics on the number of:

- Number of foreigners and stateless persons registered upon place of stay in the Republic of Azerbaijan by country of citizenship (for stateless persons, country of permanent residence) and gender.
- Number of foreigners and stateless persons who have obtained a temporary residence permit in the Republic of Azerbaijan, by country of citizenship (for stateless persons, country of permanent residence) and gender.
- Number of foreigners and stateless persons who have obtained temporary residence permit in the Republic of Azerbaijan by grounds for issuance of the permit and gender.
- Foreigners and stateless persons granted a temporary residence permit in the Republic of Azerbaijan, by place of residence and gender.
- Foreigners and stateless persons granted a permanent residence permit in the Republic of Azerbaijan, by age and gender.
- Foreigners and stateless persons granted a permanent residence permit in the Republic of Azerbaijan, by country of citizenship (for stateless persons, country of permanent residence) and gender.
- Number of foreigners and stateless persons issued and renewed work permits for paid employment on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan by countries of their permanent residence.
- Foreigners and stateless persons with valid work permit for paid employment on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the end of reporting period, by economic activity, age group and gender,

²³ SSC (2016), Demographic Indicators of Azerbaijan.



- Foreigners and stateless persons with valid work permits for paid employment on the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the end of reporting period, by type of economic activity, level of education and gender.
- Foreigners and stateless persons registered on the territory of Azerbaijan who are not required to obtain a work permit, by gender.

The methodology and metadata for producing migration statistics is specified in the above mentioned official document. Relevant statistical tables and periodical publications are presented on the website.²⁴ The Azerbaijan Statistical Information Service (ASIS) presents only the annual numbers for arrival to and departure from the state, as well as net migration (as the difference between the two figures). The official webpage of the SSC provides some further methodological explanations in this regard, including the information that the statistics are based on data from the SMS since 2013.

The areas for which methodological notes provide information are outlined below.

The information on migration between Azerbaijan, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and other states is obtained by processing data from the statistical forms compiled by local bodies of the Migration Department of the MIA simultaneously with registration of arrivals/departures. Data are transmitted to the SSC according to the official statistical report form No. 1 (Migration) quarterly (annually) “On foreigners and stateless persons in the Republic of Azerbaijan.”

Immigrants are persons who arrive in Azerbaijan for permanent residence; **emigrants** are persons who leave Azerbaijan for permanent residence²⁵. Both include national citizens and foreign citizens and stateless persons who settle to live or living permanently in Azerbaijan, as enshrined in the Migration Code.

The definitions of ‘immigrants’ and ‘emigrants’ are subject to certain conditions, as a person’s permanent residence can change several times within a given year.

Net migration is the difference between the number of arrivals and the number of departures during a calendar year. The net migration rate is calculated as the ratio between net migration and the current resident population stock. Net migration for the calendar year is in ratio to the average annual population size. The ratios are calculated per 1,000 people.

The SSC receives all data in the form of statistical tables from the SMS. No personal data is accessible to the SSC on these topics. Some official statistics listed in the Report Form No. 1 (Migration) on “Foreigners and stateless persons in Azerbaijan”, prepared and provided to the SSC by the SMS, are neither used nor disseminated (e.g. data on temporary residence).

In addition, data on emigration of Azerbaijani nationals for permanent/long-term residence abroad have been collected annually since 2000, using cut-off slips attached to the statistical registration sheet of arrivals/departures prepared by local offices of the General Passport, Registration and Migration Department of the MIA. To date, data on registration of persons at their place of residence does exist,

²⁴ Ibid. (n.d.), Demography, <https://stat.gov.az/source/demography/ap/?lang=en/>.

²⁵ Ibid.



according to information given by the SSC. The data on emigrations collected on the basis of the cut-off slips are reported to the SSC by the General Passport Registration Office of the MIA. However, statistical data on international migrations published by the SSC are acquired from the SMS based on the official statistical report, and only includes movement of foreigners.

There are no other sources of migration data which the SSC can draw upon in compiling or publishing national statistics, as indicated by this assessment. No data on diasporas based on consular registers are published and, at the time of this report, there was no intergovernmental committee aimed at improving the data collection process.

According to the agreement on the integration of the databases of the SMS into the statistical database of the SSC through the “Electronic Government Information System”, the access of the SSC into the UMIS has been granted.

Nevertheless, there are currently no specific short- or medium-term plans to improve or change the current migration data collection system. The collection of migration data through the Labour Force Survey is not considered suitable (due to increasing cost and possibly quality issues connected to the longer questionnaire).

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

This concluding part of the report summarises the findings of the study and proposes possible developments that should be taken into consideration to improve international migration statistics in the Republic of Azerbaijan in line with the UN recommended methodology for data collection and the principles of European statistics. The below recommendations take into account the practices of national statistical institutions in other states, and recent UN initiatives to improve international migration statistics.

Improvement of methodology for official migration statistics

1. The European Statistics Code of Practice states that statistical authorities should have **a clear legal mandate to collect data and access information** from various data sources. Administrations, enterprises and households can be compelled by law to provide access or to supply data. The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan regulates the production of official statistics, including the use of administrative data for this purpose by ‘state statistical bodies’ according to the “Programme of Statistical Work” elaborated by the Statistical Council. The State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan is designated as the executive body responsible for the production of statistics.

To strengthen the basis for fulfilling its responsibilities and independence in choosing the methodologies for production of official statistics, **the national legislation should explicitly state that individual records in various state registers and other administrative databases should be provided for statistical and analytical purposes**, when appropriate information, technological



solutions and data protection measures are implemented. Processing individual records rather than publishing predefined aggregated administrative statistics should be prioritised in the statistical work programme of the SSC.

2. The State Migration Service regularly produces statistical data on various aspects related to movement of foreigners. These are based on the UMIS records and are made available to other users in an aggregated form on their portal. The main purpose of the system is to provide the information which is needed for the activities of different state bodies involved in the management of migration processes, and to provide various electronic services for nationals, foreigners and stateless persons. The administrative statistics provided by the SMS are needed for country-specific purposes, including for regular monitoring of the efficiency of the administrative system and the development of specific policies.

Nevertheless, statistics produced by the SMS cover only foreigners registered by the UMIS. Moreover, **the statistics are based on concepts and definitions defined by the law and administrative rules and do not align with international recommendations.** Whereas population statistics are based on census results, the net migration statistics used for the annual update of the population stock is based on administrative data concerning registration and deregistration, the number of the latter being considered as inaccurate and largely underestimated. To ensure international comparability and provide reliable statistical data on total population, including migration flows in and out of the state, the official statistics should ensure the exhaustive coverage of international migrants and compatible definitions with other topics in statistics, including population census, as well as being aligned with the international standards.

Therefore, it would be more appropriate that, as the part of the population change, **official statistics on international migration will be produced by the SSC in line with the UN recommendations for international migration statistics.** To apply harmonised definitions in the area of population statistics, individual records from the state information systems (UMIS, IAMAS) should be regularly transmitted to the SSC, and include an appropriate identifier that allows linking to records related to the same person from multiple data sources.

3. The European Statistical System 2020 Vision envisaged the creation of statistical registers that integrate data from various sources, both statistical and administrative, to facilitate use of administrative data sources for the production of official statistics and ensure the quality of results produced from administrative sources.²⁶ The tasks given to the SSC also include the establishment of a statistical register in the Republic of Azerbaijan. To this end, all state and local administrative bodies should provide the State Statistical Committee with access to their administrative data collected, processed and stored within their respective jurisdictions at individual level.

Currently, the contents of **statistical data to be provided to the SSC is bilaterally agreed between the SSC and relevant institutions, but only in form of aggregated statistical data.** There exists an

²⁶ European Commission (n.d.), ESS Vision 2020 ADMIN (Administrative data sources), https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/content/ess-vision-2020-admin-administrative-data-sources_en/.



agreement between the SMS and SSC to integrate the databases of the SMS into the statistical database of the SSC “Electronic Government Information System” via the IAMAS. Nevertheless, there is no sign of any specific short- or medium-term plans to improve or change the current migration data collection system.

A statistical register that includes individual data on demographic and socio-economic topics would facilitate producing statistics timely and compatible between statistical domains. Therefore, **the SSC should launch an action plan to develop a statistical register that maintains individual records of residents for various statistical purposes**, including migration statistics. Ad hoc procedures should be elaborated and agreed for transmission and processing of individual data collected for administrative purposes for statistics and scientific research.

Definitions

4. The UN recommends implementing the concept of “country of usual residence” in the migration statistics and defining international migrants as persons who change their country of usual residence. The definition of the country of usual residence is based on the fixed time criteria of 12 months. Applying the definition of country of usual residence is essential to ensure coherence between the population stock, which is based on census data, and migration flows, which are collected in the course of administrative procedures. Statistical authorities should be able to apply this definition to any data source used to compile migration statistics. In the European Union, for example, Member States may collect data according to their administrative definitions, but robust estimates should be produced so that the figures are consistent with the UN recommended definitions. Currently, **the requirements for alignment with the UN recommended definitions used in migration statistics are not fully met in Azerbaijan.**

The total population data collected in census 2009 met the recommended definition of the usual place of residence, including the maximal 12-month time threshold for presence in or absence from the country. However, the net migration, used for updating annual population stocks, is based on numbers of immigrants and emigrants counted in administrative data sources that do not follow this time criteria. Using the time criteria differently in measuring population stock and migration flows effects the annual population estimates. Concretely, many native-born emigrants who left after the census was conducted and live abroad for more than 12 months are still included in the total population of the country. Conversely, foreign immigrants who arrived for temporary stay in Azerbaijan are not included, even if they stay for more than 12 months.

The SSC acknowledges the problem with the following explanation in the methodological notes: “Definitions of ‘immigrants’ and ‘emigrants’ with certain conditionality characterize migration, as a person’s permanent residence may change several times in the course of a year”.²⁷ With this note the SSC recognises that the numbers of immigrants and emigrants in Azerbaijan are not in full accordance with definitions recommended by the UN. Nevertheless, the SSC receives only

²⁷ SSC (n.d.), Demography, <https://stat.gov.az/source/demography/ap/?lang=en/>.



aggregated statistical data from the SMS, the holder of migration databases, and therefore has more options to select data for adopting the required definitions. Moreover, the data collected include only foreign migrants, but alignment with the UN recommendations would require the inclusion of all international migration (of both nationals and foreigners). Therefore, **the SSC should make the necessary changes to its methodology and data processing procedures to achieve alignment with the UN recommendations**, with some adaptations in legislation potentially required to do so (e.g. making it obligatory for nationally residing citizens to register any temporary absence of more than 12 months in duration).

Coverage and reliability

5. International migration has become an important driver of the changes in the world's population and economy, as it occurs for a variety of reasons and in many different forms. A revised conceptual framework for the production of migration statistics has recently been proposed by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD),²⁸ building on intense exchanges among migration statisticians and migration stakeholders. The revised framework aims to strengthen the link between migration flows and population stocks, with the former being essential for updating the latter. For consistency reasons, the same **internationally accepted definitions must be heeded by all Azerbaijani institutions collecting and using statistics on migration**.

This applies to statistics on migration flows and the identification of the resident population, and the statistics produced must include, according to the same definitions, both national citizens and foreign citizens, while the revised conceptual framework suggests clearly distinguishing between international migration and temporary international mobility based on duration of stay. Temporary mobility would include movements of people between states that cannot be considered as international migrations due to time criterion included in the definition of migration. Any movement that ends in a stay of longer than a fixed period given in the definition of migration, has to be considered as international migration, regardless of whether the foreigner has the right to stay permanently or temporarily, whereas shorter movements must be considered as temporary mobility. In terms of change in population stock, only international migrations need to be considered.

To follow the UN recommendations, **statistics must be collected on both international migration and temporary mobility**. Currently, migration flow statistics in Azerbaijan include only foreigners for permanent residence, and respective net migration used in calculating annual population estimates is not fully compatible with population stock based on census data. The discrepancy is

²⁸ UNSD (2021), *Final Report on Conceptual frameworks and Concepts and Definitions on International Migration*, UN Expert Group on Migration Statistics, 27 April 2021, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/migration-expert-group/task-forces/TF2-ConceptualFramework-Final.pdf/>.



mainly due to the emigration of citizens that are administratively reported as temporary, even those emigrating for long durations.

Further initiatives to improve international migration statistics in Azerbaijan should consider the possibility to capture data on the large spectrum of international mobility, and to distinguish clearly those international migrants as recommended by the United Nations. Improvements in the collection, management and analysis of migration data could be achieved by advanced use of the border registration records possibly being linked with other administrative data, for which capacity improvement would be needed in the area of methodology and IT solutions.

6. Whereas international migration concerns both nationals of the given state and foreign citizens, states are usually more interested in data on foreign immigrants and national emigrants. Typically, states collect significant amounts of data on foreign immigrants, as these persons are subject to immigration controls. In contrast, collecting data on emigration of nationals is usually difficult, even though some states have taken administrative measures to improve the accuracy of these flows. However, to fully understand the impact of international migration on the population and national economy, all international migrants, both nationals and foreigners, should be captured in the statistics by the administrative registration system.

Currently, the main actor in data collection on international movement of foreigners is the State Migration Service, maintaining the Unified Migration Information System (UMIS). The SMS does not register in the UMIS migrations of Azerbaijani citizens who move abroad (temporarily or permanently). In addition to the UMIS, another system cover migrations of national citizens: the General Passport Registration Office of the MIA collects data on both national and foreign citizens reporting a change of permanent place of residence. However, based on the registrations and deregistrations of permanent residence, emigrations and return migrations of nationals seem to be largely underreported. The information on emigration of Azerbaijani nationals is also collected by embassies/consulates of the Republic of Azerbaijan, but this is only based on voluntary self-declaration, whereas the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also takes care of supporting the return of Azerbaijani nationals from abroad. Despite these various data collection activities, the statistics on migration flows of Azerbaijani citizens to and from abroad are incomplete.

Accordingly, **the administrative registration system should enlarge the data collection to cover all international migration flows**, including both permanent and temporary migrations of Azerbaijani citizens and foreign citizens. Given the urgent need, this should be done within a short time frame.

7. In states that manage a population register of good quality, population statistical figures, including migration data, are usually derived from this register. In the Republic of Azerbaijan, such a register is managed by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The State Population Register records the place of residence of persons living in Azerbaijan, their demographic characteristics and other personal information. Accordingly, the basic data for determining the composition of the resident population of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and its migration, is collected in the State Population Register. In addition, the MoJ issues personal identification numbers to Azerbaijani nationals, and foreigners and stateless persons living on the national territory. The information on persons and their

identification numbers are merged through the IAMAS and statistical data on migration-related population and migration flows can be consistently collected.

However, foreigners are only recorded in the State Population Register if living permanently and have been granted refugee status in Azerbaijan. In addition, nationals are still recorded as residents even when they have left the state and have been living abroad for many years. Thus, **the State Population Register should be used to update the resident population figures at regional and local levels**, addressing seriously the problem of nationals who ‘usually’ live abroad but whom are not deregistered.

8. A systematic assessment is needed on how to collect more accurate information on the resident population living in country, and more specifically on how to **improve the information concerning national emigrants and their return from abroad**. Possible improvements could be achieved, underpinned by closer cooperation among the SBS, the MIA, the SMS, the MFA and the MOJ. Such improvements could include providing stronger incentives to increase citizens’ interest in reporting their change of place of residence abroad to national authorities or to the respective consulate or passport registration office abroad.

While a complete registration of all changes of residence of nationals from and to Azerbaijan would be difficult to achieve, developing the methodology for combining data from various administrative sources, such as population register information, border-crossing registration information and data from consular registers should be encouraged. This could provide the possibility to identify national citizens who are de facto not living on the state territory compared to the information recorded in the State Population Register. Thus, **a systematic assessment should be undertaken to identify how the accuracy of information on the resident population can be increased** and beneficial improvements achieved. The precondition for such improvements is closer cooperation between the respective government institutions.

Dissemination

9. The Population and Housing Census is a very useful and widely used source for collecting migration data, especially for describing population stocks with a migration background. Most importantly, census data are needed to update the basis for annual population estimates. **The latest census in Azerbaijan was conducted in 2019, but the results were not yet available** at the time of conducting this study, with even not preliminary numbers on total population available based on the census enumeration.

Census data on resident population stocks should be made available as soon as possible to update the corresponding annual population figures since the year of the census. In particular, census data by citizenship or country of birth should be published and disseminated. The census is the most important source of population estimates, and effort is needed to minimise the time gap between collection of data and dissemination of results. It is particularly important in the case of migration statistics, as the flows can change quite rapidly, often as a consequence of external causes.



10. There is also a need for improvement of the methods of statistical data dissemination and sharing considering the needs of the various interested parties (e.g. the general public, the media, academic research, internal and international policy).

More detailed analysis of existing data and use of modern data analysis methods should be undertaken, aimed at better understanding migration processes. For more advanced use of existing data, rules and solutions must be created for the safe transmission and processing of microdata collected by the SSC and academic researchers for administrative, statistical, and wider analytical purposes.

11. Whereas the SBS, the MIA, the SMS, the MFA and the MOJ are the main stakeholders in the field of migration statistics, there are other agencies involved in certain areas of migration, but their responsibilities related to data remain still unclear. For example, no information was available for the present report on the type of data collected (variables, forms) in existing databases and on data exchange between the State Committee for Work with the Diaspora and the UMIS of the SMS.

Therefore, **a complete structural framework of the migration data management system should be prepared**, covering all areas where any migration-related statistics are produced or used, charting relevant databases and data sharing environments, stakeholders and actors – including their area of responsibility and the interlinkage between them. Documentation of the whole migration data management system would support further identification of the gaps in the data management system and needed developments.