



EMN INFORM

Indications of the effect of the economic crisis from EU migration statistics in 2009¹

This EMN Inform summarises indications from EU migration statistics in 2009 of the effect of the economic crisis, based on the most recent relevant statistics available for analysis by the EMN. The full effects of the crisis are likely to become more apparent when complete statistics for subsequent years are also available for analysis.

1. Key Findings

- The effects of the economic crisis are reflected best in statistics for legal migration. Nine out of twelve Member States that experienced a decrease in the number of immigrants in 2009, explicitly cited the economic crisis and the Member State's specific economic situation, as an important reason for the decrease in immigration. This suggests that the reduction in employment opportunities resulting from the crisis has had an impact on the numbers of immigrants arriving in some Member States.
- The picture on emigration in 2009 in relation to the economic downturn is rather more mixed. Net-migration for the EU remained positive in 2009 (i.e. there was a larger inflow than outflow of migrants); however, the downward trend in positive net migration from 2007 to 2008 has continued into 2009, with a significant decrease of some 20%.
- The perception of reduced opportunities relating to the crisis may have influenced individual decisions in relation to irregular migrants coming to the EU for the purpose of employment, which *may* have contributed to the decrease in the number of persons refused at the borders, by -21%.
- There is some evidence that the economic crisis may have influenced increases in the numbers of apprehensions and returns. Many irregularly staying third-country nationals who were apprehended (and subsequently returned) in 2009, initially entered the Member States legally, and then overstayed their visas or residence permits. This was observed in **Belgium, Estonia and Poland**.

2. Impact on legal migration

In relation to legal migration, nine of the 12 Member States that experienced a decrease in the number of immigrants in 2009 explicitly pointed to the economic crisis, and the Member State's specific economic situation, as an important reason for the decrease in immigration (**Finland,**

¹ The EMN Inform is based on the EMN Annual Report on Migration and International Protection Statistics 2009 Synthesis Report, which was compiled from National Statistics Reports for 2009 submitted by twenty-one EMN NCPs (**Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden and United Kingdom**), available from <http://emn.europa.eu> under "Annual Report on Migration and International Protection Statistics 2009." Eurostat Statistics for other Member States (not in bold) are also used.

Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia and Slovakia). This suggests that the crisis has had an impact on the numbers of immigrants arriving in some Member States where employment opportunities have reduced.

Other, more specific, indicators support this perspective. In nine Member States in 2009, the primary reason for issuing a first residence permit was on the grounds of remunerated activities. These were: **Slovenia** (76%, 11 910), **Cyprus** (54%, 13 762), **Lithuania** (51%, 1 358), **Italy** (47%, 235 966), **Slovak Republic** (43%, 2 302), Denmark (42%, 11 113), Czech Republic (41%, 11 312), **Hungary** (37%, 5 326) and **Poland**² (33%, 11 123). Of these nine, only two (EU-15) Member States, **Italy** and Denmark, reported an increase in the number of first residence permits for the purpose of remunerated activities, of 65% and 50%, respectively. For the other seven Member States, all reported a decrease in the number of first residence permits issued for work reasons, of some 40% or more, compared to 2008,³ suggesting that the economic crisis has had an effect on labour migration.

This same general trend could be observed at EU-level where 19 out of 26 Member States reported a decline in the number of residence permits issued for remunerated activities reasons. Further, in spite of policy initiatives in 2008 in several Member States to attract labour migrants, there are several examples of a decline in labour-related immigration from third countries, especially the US, India and Japan.

Compared to 2008, immigration by EU citizens from other Member States decreased by 4 percentage points, whereas the return of nationals to their home Member State has increased by 3 percentage points, which may also be most likely attributed to the economic crisis. **Poland** recorded the largest share (77% of the total number of immigrants) of nationals returning to their home country of all Member States in 2009, followed by **Lithuania** (74%), **Portugal** (56%) and **Estonia** (43%).

The picture on emigration in 2009 in relation to the economic downturn is rather more mixed. Whilst the largest number of people emigrating from the EU Member States and Norway (a total of 1 644 000 people) was recorded in the **United Kingdom** (368 000), this constituted a decrease in emigration compared to 2008 by 14% (-59 000). The second largest number of emigrants in 2009 was reported by Spain which registered an increase compared to the previous year of 21% (57 200), in both Spanish and third-country nationals, which may well be related to the employment situation. In relative terms, the largest increase compared to 2008 was recorded by **Slovenia** (55%, 6 700), where 80% of those emigrating were third-country nationals (double the number in 2008 in absolute terms). Relative increases in emigration, compared to 2008, were also registered by **Norway** (32%, 4 100), **Lithuania** (29%, 5 000), **Latvia** (23%, 1 400), the Czech Republic (20%, 10 300), **Malta** (12%, 800), **Hungary** (9%, 900), **Ireland** (8%, 5 100), **Estonia** (6%, 300), Denmark (4%, 1 500) and **Belgium** (3%, 3 400).

Whilst overall net-migration for the EU remained positive in 2009, by about 1.04 million people,⁴ and for **Norway** (i.e. in total there was a larger inflow than outflow of migrants), the downward trend overall in positive net migration from 2007 to 2008 has continued into 2009 with a further decrease of some 20%. This can be attributed to many factors, although it is reasonable to assume that the impact on labour migration resulting from the economic crisis will have played a significant role.

² Data on first residence permits issued for remunerated reasons does not include long-term visas issued for this purpose.

³ Except in **Poland**, where a simplified system for employing foreign workers has been implemented allowing entry to and work in **Poland** on the basis of a visa only, and extending the period of legal employment without an obligation to apply for a work permit from three to six months. This has created a lower demand for work and residence permits for nationals of Ukraine, Belarus, Russian Federation and Moldova.

⁴ Note that this number does not include Bulgaria, **France**, Greece, **Poland** and Romania.

3. Impact on irregular migration

Regarding indicators relating to irregular immigration, at EU-level, there was a continuation in the tendency for decreasing numbers of refusals at the external borders. A total of 499 645 third-country nationals were refused entry into an EU Member State in 2009, which represents a notable decrease of 21% compared to 2008.⁵ The number of persons apprehended for irregular stay (some 567 427 in total), decreased by 7%, while the number of orders to leave (595 553) and actual returns (252 779) remained largely stable compared to 2008. Whilst other factors in relation to efforts by Member States and Third Countries to decrease the numbers of irregular migrants at the borders have also had an impact, the perception of reduced opportunities relating to the crisis *may* also have influenced individual decisions in relation to irregular labour migrants.

It could be expected that the economic crisis would influence the number of apprehensions and returns as the legal reason for stay for some third-country nationals might expire *inter alia* due to redundancy. Many irregularly staying third-country nationals who were apprehended (and subsequently returned) in 2009, initially entered the Member States legally and then overstayed their visas or residence permit. This was observed in **Belgium, Estonia and Poland**.

Lithuania, for example, witnessed the largest increase in the number of irregularly staying third-country nationals being apprehended in 2009, and has attributed this development mainly to the impacts of the economic crisis. On the one hand, the crisis has resulted in job losses for third-country nationals, and thus the loss of their legal ground for stay, and on the other, third-country nationals have used the Member State as a transit country in their quest for employment elsewhere in the EU. The economic crisis has also been attributed as a cause of increased irregular immigration to **Slovenia** by citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina (while irregular immigration from other Balkan countries decreased due to visa liberalisation).

4. Further Information

Should you have specific questions or require further details, please contact the EMN via HOME.EMN@ec.europa.eu.

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⁵ It should be noted that a large part of the decrease is attributed to a significant decline in the number of nationals of Morocco being refused at the Spanish border.