



## Measurement of the absentees: a pilot survey to examine the emigrants

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Shortages of migration statistics and in particular problems of emigration data are well-documented in the relevant literature. Although survey type data collection might appear as an obvious substitute that could overcome the shortcomings of administrative data in the field, making an appropriate research design to capture important features on a representative set of the emigrant population poses serious challenges to the researcher. The key problems are (1) lack of an appropriate sampling frame, (2) the fact, that emigrants most often constitute a rare population in the destination countries and that (3) migration is a sensitive domain often biased by low response rates. Because of difficulties (1) and (2), survey studies on emigrants tend to use non-random sampling methods (very often snowball sampling) not aiming at representativity. Respondent Driven Sampling, although an attractive alternative to these has led to no convincing, well-documented results in the field of migration as yet. Beside being non-representative, emigrant surveys usually are also of limited scope in concentrating on a selected group of migrants e.g. by profession or most often by receiving country.

In the framework of the SEEMIG project on the migration of the South-east European region, Labour Force Survey (LFS) pilot surveys were supplemented by an emigrant module in Hungary and Serbia in 2013. In the first phase questions were asked on emigrant household members with an extended migrant definition and contact details were compiled on Hungarian citizens living abroad. In the second phase these emigrants were surveyed with the use of the contact information. The target groups were the following: 1) any LFS household member who lived abroad at the time of the survey; 2) any person who have left abroad from the household since 1990; 3) emigrant siblings of any household member. Hereby the sample-size was increased to reach a sufficient number of emigrants for the analysis and on the other side we could reach out to migrant persons who moved abroad together with all their previous household members.

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.

**Keywords:** population; migration; labour; sampling.