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### EDITORIAL

### The harsh reality of numbers

*The statistics of the major receiving countries confirm once more the drop in the number of inter-country adoptions throughout the world. If the major countries of origin continue to be more or less the same, their evolution is notably different. The magnitude of demand in receiving countries still remains a huge unknown.*

In 2008, the adoption situation became tenuous for most receiving countries throughout the world. Even if some of them succeeded in keeping a number of adoptions more or less equivalent to the year 2007 (Netherlands and Sweden), most countries watched their number crash to varying degrees (Denmark:- 7.9%; USA:-11.1%, Germany:-12%, Spain: -13.4% Norway:-28.6% in Canada:-29.5%). It was only France (with more than 33%) and Italy (more than 14%) who had recorded growths, but these two countries show an increase in the average age of children being adopted (from 5.25 in 2007 to 5.6 years of age in 2008 in Italy for example), and for Italy there was also an increase in the proportion of sibling adoptions (from 22.9% in 2007 to 25.7% in 2008, more than a quarter of the adoptions!).

Of course, our analysis remains limited given that the statistics of certain receiving countries are not available, and very few central authorities give the public access to detailed information about the profile of adopted children. Nevertheless, this bulletin (see p.5) showcases a number of trends that makes it possible to give a relatively clear picture of the adoption context today for both receiving countries and countries of origin.

### A kind of stability in countries of origin

As far as the countries of origin are concerned, the statistics show that very little changed in 2008. Whilst 2007 was characterised by an increase in the number of countries of origin, 2008 witnessed a decrease. For example, in 2008, France collaborated with 67 countries in 2008, that is seven less than in 2007. The larger countries of origin remain relatively the same, even if, as the graph shows on p.6, China and Russia have clearly lowered their quotas.

### 30,000 children

Inter-country adoption is also a matter of figures: how many candidates are on waiting lists, how many adoptable children are there, how much time will the adoption take? For the nine receiving countries presented in this bulletin, they represent more than 30,000 children (and therefore the same number of biological and adoptive families) which are hidden by the figures. Their destinies are sometimes (often?) influenced by very little: a law that changes, a closed waiting list, a politically favourable context, etc. One can see that the machinery that deeply influences the present inter-country adoption environment has specific consequences for

numerous children, even if they have nothing to do with the preparation of an individual life plan for a particular child.

**And in the receiving countries?**

If it is more or less possible to draw a clear picture of adopted children, the same can not be said for prospective adoptive parents. There is only scant usable information that would make it possible to understand better their situation from a global point of view, as one does with children. When one sees the number of inter-country adoptions diminish we conclude that the number of applicants on the waiting list must be considerably more.

But is this really the case? In Norway for example, the number of intercountry adoptions has been divided by two in just seven years. Is this reduction based on the applicants themselves? Can one detect a weakening of the demand, in Norway or elsewhere? A better grasp of this decline in adoption seems more and more necessary so that the social workers and politicians can implement appropriate measures for the challenges to come.

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