



# Monthly Review

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## EDITORIAL

### Available 2015 statistics: A new perspective on the numbers...

*Whilst the 2015 intercountry adoption numbers continue to reflect the trend initiated in 2005, a series of recent research contributes to offering a new perspective on these data and on those relating to alternative care.*

Having statistics on children in alternative care and adopted children is essential to the assessment of the merits of the decisions made in their interests, to the planning of the reforms needed for a genuine consideration of their rights and their unique needs. This year, the ISS/IRC suggests analysing these numbers by looking at these in a different way.

### More visibility for children in alternative care?

One year after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see Monthly Review No. 195 of October 2015 and No. 198 of January 2016), which include the concept in accordance with which nobody should be forgotten, have children in alternative care gained visibility? Strictly speaking, the reply is negative, given that the SDG indicators do not include the issue of alternative care. In order to offer a remedy to this gap, and to make these children more visible, over 250 organisations have launched the international campaign *All children count, but not all are counted* (see p. 8), in order for every child to appear in the statistics. Once this goal is achieved, how should these data then be compared amongst the various countries with a view to improving practices? This is a challenge assumed by the TransMonEE database, established in Central and Eastern Europe and the Community of Independent States, and which aims to expand to other regions in the world (see p. 8).

Furthermore, will this exercise consist in establishing new databases or rather take advantage of the data that is already available, *e.g.* through population census<sup>1</sup> or other information systems, such as the global study on violence against children (see p. 10)? Would making use of these numbers not be part of the response (*e.g.* current number of child-headed households or children placed with their extended family, such as in Namibia (see p. 5))? In the absence of such indicators, the *Tracking Progress* tool (see Monthly Review No. 189 of February-March 2015) intends to support countries in their identification of the data that must be compiled in order to assess the compliance of a child protection system with international standards and, if not compliant, to initiate the needed legal and practical reforms. This tool will soon be launched in various pilot countries.

## More visibility with regards to the evolution of applications in accordance with the decreasing number of intercountry adoptions?

Receiving country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
USA <sup>1</sup>	9,319	8,668	7,094	6,441	5,648
(Italy)	4,022	3,106	2,825	n/a	n/a
Canada <sup>2</sup>	1,785	1,367	1,242	905	895
France	1,995	1,569	1,343	1,069	815
Spain	2,560	1,669	1,188	824	799
Sweden <sup>3</sup>	538	466	341	345	336
Germany <sup>4</sup>	934 (579)	801 (420)	661 (272)	209	308
Netherlands	528	488	401	354	304
Switzerland <sup>5</sup>	367	314	280	226	197
Belgium <sup>6</sup>	360	265	219	144	136
Norway	297	231	154	142	132
Denmark	338	219	176	124	97
Australia <sup>7</sup>	215	149	129	114	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,258</b>	<b>19,312</b>	<b>16,053</b>	-	-

It has now been 10 years since we started witnessing a consistent decrease in intercountry adoptions (see boxes): is this observation also true in terms of applications? These numbers – when they do exist – are less visible. However, these data are essential for receiving countries to adapt their system of delivery of suitability certificates and to manage the flow of applications. Thus, Spain<sup>II</sup>, in its report on child protection, mentions the evolution of intercountry adoption applications between 2010 and 2014, which reflects a decrease in approximately 80%. Similarly, Belgium’s French-speaking Community mentions a decrease in registrations for the process of adoption preparation, due, in particular, to a realistic and

responsible speech on intercountry adoption through various means<sup>III</sup>. Let us be clear: it is not a matter of drawing a bleak picture of intercountry adoption, but rather to support the applicants in self-determining their project and to confront it with the complex reality of this process, which requires a considerable availability of the prospective adoptive parents (see p. 7).

In addition to the increasing percentages of children with special needs placed for intercountry adoption<sup>IV</sup>, would it not be interesting to describe the practices developed by receiving countries in response to this development, such as the adjustment of more specific assessment and preparations stages in relation to the applicants (see Monthly Review No. 191 of May 2015) or the support offered to adoptive families, e.g. in health and education issues (see Monthly Review No. 202 of May-June 2016)? As highlighted by Johanne Lemieux, it is incumbent upon receiving countries to ‘support the adoption of a child with the genuine interest and care in ensuring the best possible conditions in terms of the preparation of the parents and professional resources’ (see p. 12).

Country of origin	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1. China	4,098	3,998	3,316	2,734	2,817
2. Ethiopia	3,144	2,648	1,933	975	543
3. South Korea	920	797	206	494	406
4. Colombia	1,522	901	562	355	359
5. Philippines	472	374	525	405	354
6. Ukraine	1,054	713	674	560	339
7. Vietnam	620	216	293	285	287
8. Bulgaria	259	350	421	323	262
9. Haiti	142	262	460	551	236
10. India	688	362	298	242	233
11. Dem. Rep. Congo	339	499	580	240	229
12. Russia	3,017	2,442	1,703	381	210
13. Uganda	219	246	289	203	208
14. Latvia	116	59	131	96	189
15. South Africa	120	81	147	176	172
15. Thailand	258	251	272	207	172
15. Taiwan	311	291	188	147	172
16. Nigeria	218	238	225	175	163
17. USA	97	178	167	155	160
18. Poland	304	236	332	106	107
19. Ghana	107	172	188	128	93
20. Hungary	154	145	104	77	84
21. Brazil	359	337	246	31	32
22. Mali	154	127	4	36	25
23. Central African Republic <sup>8</sup>	19	43	73	44	15

## More visibility with regards to the breakdowns in intercountry adoption?

Even though these remain less visible, some numbers relating to breakdowns in intercountry adoption are starting to arise in the intercountry adoption statistical reports, such as in the USA<sup>V</sup>, or in those on child protection, such as in Spain<sup>VI</sup>. These numbers – even though they remain incomplete and difficult to make use of, in particular due to the absence of a definition and of a harmonised system of compilation of these data – reflect progress in the willingness to better prevent and support these sensitive situations at

human level, but also politically and legally. To address this issue with transparency is essential to move forward towards greater success in intercountry adoptions – a challenge taken up by the ISS/IRC through its drafting of a professional handbook aimed at all intercountry adoption actors, and which many experts from varied geographical and professional backgrounds have kindly agreed to contribute to.

**The compilation of data aimed at making every child – and the vulnerable situation affecting their life – visible is a fundamental element of the implementation of the rights of the child. These data are the first step forward towards the adjustment of laws, policies and practices to the needs of those, who hold tomorrow’s world.**

The ISS/IRC team  
November 2016

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## References:

<sup>I</sup> Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

<sup>II</sup> *Boletín de datos estadísticos de medidas de protección a la infancia*, Boletín No. 17, Datos 2014, p. 89. Available at: [http://www.observatoriodelainfancia.msssi.gob.es/productos/pdf/Estadistica\\_basica\\_de\\_proteccion\\_a\\_la\\_infancia\\_17.pdf](http://www.observatoriodelainfancia.msssi.gob.es/productos/pdf/Estadistica_basica_de_proteccion_a_la_infancia_17.pdf).

<sup>III</sup> *Rapport d’activités (2014-2015)*, Direction de l’Adoption, Autorité centrale communautaire, pp. 12 and 13.

<sup>IV</sup> E.g. France: 2015: 66% (including 41% of children over the age of five, 22% of groups of siblings and 25% of children with health problems) vs. 63% in 2013 and 2014, and 53% in 2012. Statistics available at: Mission de l’adoption internationale, <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/adopter-a-l-etranger/la-mission-de-l-adoption-internationale/les-statistiques-de-l-adoption/article/consulter-les-statistiques-2015-de-l-adoption>.

<sup>V</sup> Fiscal year 2015: *Annual Report on Intercountry Adoption*, US Department of State, p. 5. Available at: [https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/aa/pdfs/2015Annual\\_Intercountry\\_Adoption\\_Report.pdf](https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/aa/pdfs/2015Annual_Intercountry_Adoption_Report.pdf).

<sup>VI</sup> *Boletín de datos estadísticos de medidas de protección a la infancia*, Boletín No. 17, Datos 2014, p. 100.

## Notes on the statistical tables:

Central Adoption Authorities; other governmental bodies; Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law. For further details, please contact the ISS/IRC.

Noting diverse collection methods, ISS encourages that statistics be collected uniformly within a country using the same standardised framework each year in order to have one national figure that is truly representative and coherent.

<sup>1</sup> Fiscal year: 1 October 2014 – 30 September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> For 2011, 2012 and 2015, the statistical data was provided by the Canadian Central Authority; for 2013 and 2014, the data come from the statistics provided by the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

<sup>3</sup> Swedish Central Adoption Authority, MIA.

<sup>4</sup> Until 2013, the number of adoptions reflects the number of adoptions of children of foreign nationality undertaken by German agencies and accredited bodies, excluding private adoptions but including the adoptions of children of foreign nationality with habitual residence in Germany (domestic adoptions in accordance with the 1993 Hague Convention). Given that the German Central Authority has mentioned to the ISS/IRC that there are no official and exact statistics relating to intercountry adoption, the ISS/IRC has decided to use the data published by the Hague Conference for the year 2014. In 2015, we used the website of the *Statistisches Bundesamt*, whose numbers exclude relative adoptions (see <https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Soziales/Sozialleistungen/KinderJugendhilfe/Tabellen/Adoptionen2015.html>).

<sup>5</sup> These numbers do not include relative adoptions. Between 2011 and 2013, the numbers were provided by the Swiss Central Authority, whilst those relating to 2014 are statistics published by the Hague Conference. As for 2015, the numbers are from the Federal Statistical Office.

<sup>6</sup> As from 2014, the ISS/IRC has included Belgium in its statistical presentation. For 2014, the numbers reflect the statistics published by the Hague Conference, and for 2015, we used the numbers of Belgium’s Central Federal Authority. The latter are divided into: 88 adoptions undertaken by the Communities, 19 adoptions, in relation to

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which the parents already had an adoption decision prior to settling in Belgium, and 29 adoptions, in relation to which the adoptive parents (of which at least one had Belgian nationality) had their residence abroad. It is worth mentioning that these numbers are different from the total amount of the data provided by the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking Central Authorities, which amounts to 179 adoptions.

<sup>7</sup> Fiscal year: 1 October 2014 – 30 September 2015 (see <http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129553828>).

<sup>8</sup> According to our sources, the children from the Central African Republic were only adopted by French and American citizens.

Several countries, like Australia and Norway, cluster some countries under general categories, such as ‘several Asian countries’ or ‘other countries’; thus, it is impossible to list with precision the origin of these adopted children. These numbers do, however, represent a limited minority of all adoptions in each country. As for Germany and Switzerland, we do not have any information as to the adopted children’s origins.

