
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Will Moy
Full Fact
9 Warwick Court
London
WC1R 5DJ

8 February 2016

Dear Will,

NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBERS ISSUED TO RECENT MIGRANTS

Thank you for your letter of 23 December regarding a Freedom of Information (FOI) request from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research on the numbers of National Insurance Numbers (NINOs) issued to recent migrants who were 'active', which was initially turned down by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

It is not the role of the UK Statistics Authority to comment on whether the Freedom of Information Act has been complied with, but we have examined this issue with regard to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. There is nothing in the Code that would be an obstacle to releasing data which addressed these questions. In addition, releasing such information would support the principle of equality of access to statistics.

We have been in contact with HMRC and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to discuss data on active National Insurance Numbers (NINOs) allocated to EU citizens. We were informed that such data were not straightforward to assemble. To do so requires linking data between two large databases (one held by DWP and the other held by HMRC). While I am pleased to note that on 4 February¹ part of the information² requested by Mr Portes was provided, it is disappointing that this was two months after the release of the ad hoc release referred to in Mr Portes' FOI request³. Such a delay is not in keeping with the spirit of equality of access which the Code of Practice promotes.

I understand that work is underway to provide information on the receipt of benefits and tax paid associated with NINOs held by people whose country of origin is outside the UK. The planned release of these data was also confirmed in a response to a written parliamentary

¹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/migrants-and-tax-credits>

² The numbers of recent migrants from EEA member states (other than the UK) claiming tax credits.

³<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-benefit-and-tax-credit-claims-by-recently-arrived-eea-migrants>

question, in which the Financial Secretary to the Treasury stated that HMRC plans to publish further information on this subject 'early in 2016 once it has been properly collated'⁴.

The Office for National Statistics is preparing a report to be published in the first half of 2016 which will include a discussion of the differences between the data sources on migration for work, including the International Passenger Survey (that collects data on EU nationals who immigrate to work in the UK) and NINo data. When available, the linked DWP and HMRC data will be incorporated into this work to provide additional evidence for how the different data sources compare.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Dilnot". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

⁴<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-12-17/20697/>