

Intervention from the floor in session four, on international migration

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In this intervention, I will underline the need for better data on international migration. I will draw upon the experiences presented in the background papers and panel presentations for this session and the paper presented by David Coleman in the Monday morning session, in addition of course to my own experiences from the last decades.

It *is* a paradox that international migration, *international* by its very definition, obviously lacks *internationally comparable* high quality data for migration stocks and flows with information on reasons to stay, not to mention data on integration of immigrants. There is a number of weak and not well-coordinated activities going on, having made may be some, but very slow progress. The work of international organisations, our host the UNECE included, has not shown an increasing priority allocated to this. Longitudinal studies would probably have demonstrated a declining priority, during a period of increasing political priority of the subject area. We have for more than three decades had a serious of demanding and successful initiative to establish better comparable data in the field family and fertility. During the same period, there have been two sets of UN recommendations on statistics on international migration, neither of them have been able to create adequate data. May be we should try another approach?

To be able to analyse in a scientifically sound way, the magnitude, causes, and consequences of migration, we have a basic need for better data. I will urge the UNECE to take necessary steps to start a coordinated action together with other international bodies and the countries of the region to bring this unfortunate situation closer to an end. When I am in a provocative state of mind, I think many countries will avoid better data to be free to implement and defend a policy that is not knowledge based, and be able to camouflage the results of this policy or lack of policy. As population experts, we cannot accept this, can we?