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**GUIDELINES ON THE USE AND DISSEMINATION OF DATA ON INTERNATIONAL  
IMMIGRATION TO FACILITATE THEIR USE TO IMPROVE EMIGRATION DATA OF  
SENDING COUNTRIES**

**COUNTRY COMMENTS**

Note by the secretariat

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The present note summarizes the comments by countries and international organizations on the draft *Guidelines on the use and dissemination of data on international immigration to facilitate their use to improve emigration data of sending countries*, resulting from the electronic consultation conducted by the secretariat in April/May 2009.

**II. SUMMARY**

2. A total of 30 replies were received in response to the request for comments on the Guidelines. The following twenty eight countries and two supra-national and international statistical organizations replied: Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Eurostat and the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

3. In general, the countries and international organizations supported the endorsement of the Guidelines. No country indicated that they opposed the endorsement of the Guidelines. Fifteen countries made no comments about the Guidelines and 13 countries made suggestions for changing the wording in the document. These suggestions are summarized in Part IV of this note.

### III. GENERAL COMMENTS

4. A number of countries commented favorably on the potential usefulness of the Guidelines. Countries that had experienced significant migrant outflows over recent years mentioned that the application of the Guidelines would be of particular use to them.

5. Many of the responses outlined deficiencies in national data. Deficiencies apply to all data sources and occur with both immigration and emigration information. To illustrate, Poland pointed out that many people who leave Poland for several years fail to report either their departure or return and therefore are not counted in any registers. It was agreed that the most significant problems occur with emigration information. No country would be able to supply all the information outlined in the Guidelines but those that commented indicated that they would be able to supply at least some. There were some concerns expressed about the variable quality of data from different countries and different sources.

6. The following countries provided information on the national situation concerning the availability and quality of data on migration: Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Lithuania, Mexico, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovakia, Turkey, United Kingdom. This valuable information will be transmitted by the secretariat to the Task Force for information.

7. It was suggested that it would be preferable to have some overall coordination mechanism for the application of the Guidelines; possibly an international agency such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) or Eurostat. It was further suggested that information collected in accordance with the guidelines be stored in a central clearing house. As well as storing the data, it is suggested that information on metadata on definitions and data sources also be stored. It is proposed that these issues be considered for discussion at the next Joint UNECE/Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics, tentatively planned for March 2010.

8. A question was raised concerning the extent of the overlap between this project and the MIMOSA-project (Migration Modelling for Statistical Analysis) of Eurostat. The aim of the MIMOSA project, started in January 2007 and carried out by the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute in cooperation with the University of Louvain, is to harmonize immigration and emigration data between countries by means of estimating missing data. This is a complementary approach to the one described in the Guidelines.

9. Romania noted that the guidelines as well as the standard tables refer to immigrant stocks and do not allow the identification of flows. They also noted that the categories and variables are more comprehensive than the UNECE and Eurostat recommendations for the 2010 Population census.

10. The overall conclusion from the comments received is that countries support the approval of the Guidelines.

#### IV. COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC PARTS OF THE GUIDELINES

11. The comments that follow relate to specific parts of the Guidelines and exclude comments that concern the whole document (these were reflected in part III above). Some of the comments are more general and do not imply a change in the text of the Guidelines. For the more specific recommendations for changes, proposed amendments to the Guidelines are presented.

##### A. Part II: Different needs for emigration data and various typologies of emigrants

###### Paragraph 10

12. Comment from New Zealand: Interest in diaspora may also come from a need to identify nationals living abroad in terms of pensions and support they require once they leave the labour force. For example, what are the intentions of these people as they age? What are the ethical and legal obligations of support? With ageing populations and increasing competition for migrants, the size and location of expatriate populations may become increasingly important for some countries.

###### ***Proposal for amendment in the Guidelines:***

At the end of paragraph 10, add the following sentence: “In some countries there is also need to identify nationals living abroad in terms of pensions and support once they leave the labour force.”

###### Paragraph 12

13. Comment from New Zealand: With reference to the 'brain drain'...unless this is offset by inflows of similarly skilled people – the 'brain exchange' view.

###### ***Proposal for amendment in the Guidelines:***

At the end of the second sentence in paragraph 12, add the following text: “, unless there is an inflow of similarly skilled people”

##### B. Part III : National data sources on emigration

14. Comment from United Kingdom: The paper does not explore one of the key differences between administrative or register sources and sample survey sources. That is, the sample is used to provide a top level estimate of immigration and emigration, and then further disaggregated to provide information about the characteristics of migrants with the quality of estimates degrading as the data are disaggregated to increasingly finer levels. Register approaches are essentially bottom up, where estimates of migration flows can be derived at any level of disaggregation simply by taking a total for the number of people in a specified group. Quality in this case is determined by the adequacy of the data as a source of migration information in terms of

coverage of the population registering and de-registering, and how well it provides data that meets the required definition of a migrant.

Paragraph 15 (g)

15. Comment from New Zealand: Registers may not necessarily be administered by governments and maybe we need to look outside government processes too. Registers also tend to reflect intentions and definitions of "living" vary.

Paragraph 19

16. Comment from New Zealand: Border cards are often also based on intentions. Intentions about length of stay and even country of destination may change over time.

***Proposal for amendment in the Guidelines:***

At the end of paragraph 19, add the following sentence: "Moreover, border cards are often based on intentions about length of stay and even country of destination which may change over time."

**C. Part IV: Using other countries' immigration data to improve emigration data**

17. Comment from United Kingdom: Section IV B does not explore issues associated with partial data, although this is alluded to later on at the beginning of Section V. If acceptable quality information on an appropriate definition is only available from a small number of "receiving countries", this will result in issues for the completeness of emigration data, and it would be hard to assess whether this approach would provide an improvement in quality to overall estimates, and at what level an improvement could be detected. The Section also does not cover issues of double counting that may be present if for example a long term emigrant becomes a short term immigrant to two or three different countries during their time away from their home. It also does not cover people who may be missed as they do not settle anywhere, e.g travelers.

18. Comment from France: The issue of dual nationality makes the issue of measuring emigration even more complex. In some cases, even if, formally, the country of origin prohibits dual citizenship, people may be tempted not to declare their new nationality. Very few sources record dual nationality and most of the time available sources register only the nationality of the country of residence.

19. Comment from Turkey: The United Nations (UN) suggests a duration of least "12 months" for foreigners, but in one country foreigners are defined as foreign citizens who reside in the country for a period of at least 6 months or intend to reside in the country for at least 6 months.

Paragraph 21

20. Comment from New Zealand: A general problem which might usefully be described here is that it is hard to integrate information. The implication is that partial data can be obtained from a range of imperfect sources which can be patched together. There is no way of identifying where the sources overlap and where gaps remain.

21. Comment from Portugal: Considering that some countries, namely Portugal and Ireland, use sample surveys as a source of indirect measurement of emigration, then it is proposed that this source should also be marked in Table 1.

Paragraph 23

22. Comment from New Zealand: One of the difficulties is that this sector of the population is either the least well enumerated or, for some countries, specifically excluded

Paragraph 23 (a)

23. Comment from New Zealand: Actually very few censuses ask all three and then if they do they have different periods of interest and differing data quality. Country of citizenship is especially unreliable in those censuses that ask this.

***Proposal for amendment in the Guidelines:***

Modify the beginning of paragraph 23 (a), to read: "In many countries..."

Paragraph 24

24. Comment from New Zealand: While censuses are useful for stock figures, they are held at different times and with differing periodicity, making it difficult to measure international stocks at any given point of time.

Paragraph 26

25. Comment from New Zealand: Use of Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) - need to be careful that the addition of extra content does not diminish the prime purpose of the HLFS to provide internationally comparable data on the labour force.

Paragraph 27

26. Comment from Czech Republic: The Czech Republic only includes private households in their Labour Force Survey (LFS). Many immigrants live in lodging houses/hostels which are not included in the survey

Paragraph 27 (a)

27. Comment from New Zealand: This seems a circular argument. It is suggesting we need to have a measure of what we are measuring in order to measure it.

***Proposal for amendment in the Guidelines:***

Modify paragraph 27 (a) to read: The sample frame should be regularly updated to include newly arrived immigrants, if available; this is particularly crucial to obtain reliable estimation of immigrants' stocks.

Paragraph 27 (c)

28. Comment from Norway: In paragraph 27 c and elsewhere in the paper, concern is raised about the sample size in Household surveys, urging the National Statistical Institutes to increase the sample size when necessary. The sample size can never be large enough to give a basis for statistically sound estimates of every relevant stock or flow. Even more important, however, is the selective non-response among newly immigrated respondents with inferior knowledge of the national language, and perhaps lack of trust in the national institutions of the host country.

Paragraph 28

29. Comment from New Zealand: This needs to be rewritten to say what is intended. People calculating the response rates generally will know the language(s). What seems to be intended is that the language skills of the respondents may result in non-response or incorrect responses.

***Proposal for amendment in the Guidelines:***

Paragraph 28 should be redrafted to read: "The knowledge of the host country language can also play an important role. Immigrants who are not proficient in the local language may be more likely not to respond, or to provide incorrect responses."

Paragraph 33

30. Comment from New Zealand: A difficulty is that permits are generally issued with information on citizenship but not necessarily country of origin (may differ) and for many countries, permits are required only for selected countries of citizenship or origin.

***Proposal for amendment in the Guidelines:***

In paragraph 32, modify the last sentence to read: "The population universe is the legal non-national population. In countries where permits are required only for selected countries of citizenship or origin, the information provided will be clearly limited to these countries."

Paragraph 40

31. Comment from New Zealand: A very important distinction between people and events - often unclear from the data sources which is being collected and generally, without rigorous matching of events and people, it is very difficult to get a count of people. The time criterion is also important - does one include only those with a demonstrated 12 months residence completed or include those with stated intentions of more than 12 months residence? This has a huge impact on the numbers in cases where the modal period of residence in any country is 2 years, for example, since a significant proportion of the foreign nationals at any time will not have completed 12 months, while those who have completed more than 12 months are about to leave.

32. Should there be an additional point about people who "live" in more than one country at the same time (international commuters)? Depending on definitions used, they may be counted in both, neither or one of the countries involved.

Paragraph 45

33. Comment from New Zealand: Complex patterns of on-migration are becoming much more common. This could suggest that the concern will become more severe. This harks back to the lack of an agreed definition of diaspora - does a person who migrates from one country after a number of years and perhaps travel with a locally born family but holds citizenship of a third country become part of both countries' diaspora?

Paragraph 49

34. Comment from France: France wondered if the reason that the census is not included as a possible source of information for sending countries is because the question on previous residence is on residence 5 years before. This is not always the case, as is the situation in France where a rolling census is carried out.

**D. Part V: Improving availability, quality and accessibility of data on international migration to improve emigration estimates of sending countries**

35. Comment from United Kingdom: The United Kingdom considers that for most countries the quality of the estimates of emigration to the United Kingdom will be unacceptably poor. The exception is likely to be countries with large flows to the United Kingdom.

Paragraph 57(b) and (c)

36. Comment from Austria: Austria suggests that in-depth analysis on migration from LFS could be conducted by Eurostat as they possess the individual data for European Union (EU) countries.

Paragraph 57 (c)

37. Comment from New Zealand: The inclusion of a census question on residence 1 or 5 years ago may not be motivated by the need to measure external migration but may be more oriented to measures of internal migration. Countries may need to accept the costs of capturing additional information to provide detail on external moves.

Paragraph 61

38. Comment from Slovakia: It is suggested that "partner country" be supplemented with mark "X". The following new wording is proposed: "In the following description 'partner country' = (X) is a country with which a table is exchanged."

***Proposal for amendment in the Guidelines:***

Modify the text in the last sentence of paragraph 61 to read: "In the following description 'partner country' = (X) is a country with which a table is exchanged."

Paragraphs 59, 63 and 64

39. Comment from Austria: Austria believes data exchange could be arranged by Eurostat for EU countries as they already have the information under European Commission (EC) regulations on migration statistics.

**E. Annex to the Guidelines**

40. Comment from France: Return migration is difficult to measure from the tables. They give the example of Algerian born people with French nationality who will show Algeria as country of birth. This migration can be estimated by the country of residence one year before (Tables S1, S2 or S3 but not S6).

41. Comment from Bulgaria: Concerning the proposed standardized tables for immigration data compilation and exchange, different cases of cross-tabulation between the country of previous usual residence, country of citizenship and country of birth would better describe the immigration and emigration situation respectively in the receiving and sending countries.

**V. PROPOSAL**

42. In view of the general support by countries and organizations to the adoption of the Guidelines, **it is proposed that the Conference adopts the *Guidelines on the use and dissemination of data on international immigration to facilitate their use to improve emigration data of sending countries*, subject to the inclusion of the amendments indicated above.**

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