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#### Measuring international labour mobility

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### Addendum

### Results of the consultation on the report on measuring international labour mobility

### Note by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

The document summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the report *Measuring international labour mobility* (ECE/CES/2018/4). The UNECE Secretariat carried out the electronic consultation in April-May 2018.

A total of 42 replies were received to the consultation, from 38 countries and 4 international organizations. All responding countries and organizations considered the report ready for approval by CES, subject to the amendments resulting from the comments provided in the consultation. This note presents the substantive comments received, together with the replies of the UNECE Task Force on Measuring Labour Mobility, including suggestions for amendments to the report to address the comments.

In view of the support received, the 2018 Conference of European Statisticians plenary session will be invited to endorse the report *Measuring international labour mobility*, subject to the amendments presented in this document.



## I. Introduction

1. The document summarizes comments made by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the report *Measuring international labour mobility*.
2. The report is prepared by the UNECE Task Force on Measuring Labour Mobility (chaired by Israel), set up in October 2015. The CES Bureau reviewed the draft report in February 2018 and requested the UNECE Secretariat to send it to all CES members for electronic consultation. The UNECE Secretariat conducted an electronic consultation on the report in April-May 2018.
3. The following 42 countries and international organizations replied to the consultation: Albania, Armenia, Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Mongolia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-Stat), Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).
4. The comments and the Task Force's responses are summarized in sections II and III. Several countries provided detailed editorial comments and suggestions, which are not presented here but will be considered in revising the report. Comments on the specific situation in individual countries that have no direct reference to the content of the report are not presented in this document.

## II. General comments

5. All responding countries and organizations considered the report ready for approval by CES, subject to the amendments resulting from the comments provided in the consultation. They noted that the report provides useful guidance and agreed with the conclusions.
6. Many countries emphasised the great value of the report. For example:
  - (a) Germany: "From our point of view the report is a really valuable result [...]. With the last chapter on possible future work the report is comprehensive in tackling all the relevant issues for the development of statistics on labour mobility. Thanks for the work done."
  - (b) Hungary: "The HCSO appreciates the document and its innovative approach discussing international migration and labour migration. We especially welcome that the document emphasises the importance of data integration and the use of different data sources (e.g. register based and survey based). Because of its rich thematic content, the document is recommended to be shared with migration and census experts as well in the future."
  - (c) Lithuania: "The document provides useful, concrete and well-structured information on measuring international labour mobility. The overview of data availability and presented practical examples of how the international mobility is measured in several countries are very helpful and could be used as a reference for estimating the international labour mobility."

(d) Poland: “This report in a clear and synthetic way presents the essence of labour mobility concept. Setting definitions of international migration, labour and labour mobility is very important for statistical purposes. [...] Generally, we consider this guidance as very valuable, helpful and important step to harmonize and standardize measurement of labour mobility methods.”

(e) Serbia: “Significantly helpful and practical guidance suitable for consultations during the process of planning research on migration. Very interesting case studies, differences and similarities among selected countries useful for additional analysis.”

7. Belarus pointed out the need for frameworks for various categories of cross-border movements, and CIS-Stat mentioned the importance of applying common international standards and definitions to different data sources: population censuses, household surveys, labour force surveys and administrative data.

8. Belarus noted that data of partner countries can be used for estimating the scale of migration, and that the so-called mirror statistics can be very useful. Czechia, Dominican Republic, and Romania mentioned the difficulty to collect data on entries and exits in the case of free movement of people. Romania commented that the administrative data sources of many countries are not designed for measuring international labour mobility and improvements would take time. Sweden mentioned that new ways are needed in using existing surveys and administrative data sources to fill information gaps.

9. Mexico emphasised the need for a careful evaluation of the impact of potential adjustments in data collection strategy or statistical design of household surveys, before recommending any change. They suggested collecting information on countries’ experiences on such changes.

10. The United Kingdom commented that the report presents the complexity of the understanding and measuring of international labour mobility and the issues associated with the data available to measure it. They would welcome more exploration of the implications of not having the available data, and how comparisons across countries would be made when data are collected in different ways.

### **III. Specific comments**

11. The Section presents the comments on specific chapters of the report together with the responses by the Task Force.

#### **A. Chapter II - Concepts**

12. Czechia, Dominican Republic and Estonia noted that the concepts are described in sufficient detail and improve the knowledge on the topic. United Kingdom considered the chapter useful to set out the complexity of measuring international labour mobility and the difficulties of comparing such statistics across countries.

13. Poland commented that paragraphs 15 and 16 do not fully comprise the complexity of the problem of establishing country of birth of people who had to leave their places of residence due to international border changes, and that the sentence “People born outside their country of current residence, but who are citizens of that country at birth (e.g. born abroad of national parent(s) living abroad) are sometimes excluded from statistics on foreign-born population” requires an extension.

14. Hungary commented that it would be useful to mention in section A “International migration” the difficulties with defining the usually resident population, and refer to alternative definitions, such as the legally present population and the annual resident population. Hungary also proposed to emphasise the changes in international migration patterns in the context of the European Union and incorporate the concept of “liquid migration”.

15. Australia mentioned the need to reflect that in practice, short-term migrants are not counted as usual residents of their destination country because they do not reach the duration threshold of 12 months, and that the distinction between short and long-term migrants is therefore rather clear whereas the distinction between short-term migrants and non-resident workers is often unclear.

16. Concerning the purpose of move, Australia suggested to reflect that arrival/departure cards would sometimes suit better for distinguishing between different types of travellers than visa or resident permits would, because of visa-free travel between countries. They also suggested the text to clarify that even if work is not the primary motive for migration, these people can still be part of labour mobility because they might be looking for a job as soon as (or even before) they arrive in their destination country.

17. Hungary commented that section A.5 “Irregular migration” should distinguish between regular and legal migration to get a clearer picture of the irregular migration. Mexico pointed out that the report uses different words for unauthorized movements of people: infiltrators, irregular migrants and undocumented migrants; one standardized expression would need to be used. UNSD commented that the whole section should not be included in the report because unlike other sections, it does not refer to basic concepts in existing international recommendations.

18. ILO provided a precise new formulation for paragraphs 39, 40, 41 and 43 related to the International Conference of Labour Statisticians Resolution concerning on statistics of work, employment and labour underutilisation.

19. Colombia suggested that the report should clarify (a) whether people who work in embassies are classified as labour migrants, (b) whether people with a dual nationality are classified as labour migrants if they are working, (c) whether unemployed migrants who have not been working in the last four weeks but in the month before are classified as labour migrants, and (d) the kind of workers who fall under the category of non-resident foreign workers.

20. Russian Federation mentioned that it would be difficult to obtain information from employers which is necessary to classifying non-resident workers and residents working abroad by the resident status of their employers. Hungary requested further clarification on the treatment and definition of daily commuters according to the criteria laid out in section C.3.

#### **Response and changes proposed by the Task Force**

21. The Task Force will revise the text reflecting the comments described in paragraphs 13, 15, 16, 18, 19 and 20.

22. Concerning alternative definitions of the population, the text will be expanded with references to other definitions contained in internationally agreed documents. The Task Force will refrain from opening a discussion of new not (yet) established concepts and definitions in this chapter.

23. Although not directly relying on existing international recommendations, section A.5 “Irregular migration” is deemed useful for obtaining the full picture of labour

mobility. The Task Force will clarify the concepts of regularity and legality in the text, and apply consistent terminology throughout the report.

## **B. Chapter III - Overview of data availability**

24. Australia referred to the potential usefulness of including in this chapter information to the extent censuses and surveys follow the definition of usual residence and whether they cover short-term migrants.

25. Czechia mentioned the need to refer in the report to the lack of coverage by household surveys of collective households such as hotels, dormitories, hostels, camps, prisons, and homes for the elderly. This is expected to have strong consequences on the accuracy of results on non-residents as they have different dwelling patterns than the domestic population.

26. Slovakia expressed the need to mention that the next EU-LFS ad hoc module "Labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants" will be carried out in 2021 according to the EU Regulation No 1851/2016.

### **Response and changes proposed by the Task Force**

27. The Task Force will include the references suggested in paragraphs 25 and 26. Additional information will also be provided on the use of the usual residence definition in the 2010 round of population and housing censuses, as suggested in para 24.

## **C. Chapter IV - Country case studies**

28. Dominican Republic, Estonia, Israel, and Latvia highlighted the important and useful information contained in the case studies. Dominican Republic commented that extending the survey coverage to non-residential areas to include construction sites and agricultural sites, as planned in Israel, might be costly because of a higher planning and coordination effort, and it might be difficult to find an appropriate sampling frame and calibrate the data to the entire target population.

29. Italy and Portugal provided specific details for adjusting the figures. Mexico commented about the need to use consistent ordering of sub-sections so that Sources appear before Analysis.

### **Responses and changes proposed by the Task Force**

30. The Task Force will make the changes mentioned in para. 29.

## **D. Chapter V - Conclusions and recommendations**

31. Mongolia and UNSD referred to the need to reflect Sustainable Development Goal indicators among the recommended variables. UNSD referred specifically to occupation injury. They also suggested referring to the upcoming 2018 International Conference of Labour Statisticians that is expected to introduce a major revision of the International Classification of Status in Employment, and to include some dimensions of social protection as it is a major challenge for migrants to have proper social protection coverage in the host country.

32. Denmark suggested that the report reflect that surveys are not necessarily the best source for measuring international labour mobility. They pointed out that administrative

sources can be better if available, typically for measuring actual employment and length of employment, and that the use of administrative sources is broader than just improving or complementing survey data.

33. Many countries (Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Mexico, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden) expressed concerns with the recommendations on adjusting labour-force surveys in para. 319 of the report and suggested that it would not be possible or useful to implement them. The concerns included the following:

- (a) Difficulty in sampling the non-resident population and the potentially high cost required to access them;
- (b) Since the non-resident population would not be included in regularly used sample frames, face-to-face interviews would be necessary and many countries do not use this relatively expensive method;
- (c) Difficulty in interviewing foreign workers because of their possible reluctance to respond and language barriers;
- (d) The number of non-resident workers who would be included in the sample would not be sufficient for statistical inference;
- (e) Difficulty in defining and covering workplaces that serve as irregular residences;
- (f) Difficulty to obtain population benchmarks to allow weighting the sampled units of short-term migrants and non-resident workers;
- (g) Expected high non-response among residents working abroad to questions on country of work;
- (h) Respondents' lack of knowledge of the residence status of their employer, especially in the case of proxy interviews;
- (i) The impact of the proposed changes has not yet been evaluated or tested.

34. Albania asked for further explanation on the effects of proxy interviews when asking for the purpose of stay in surveys.

35. Israel emphasised the need to use more frequently data integration from different sources. Finland proposed to mention the use of microdata from other EU countries on residents working abroad and non-resident foreign workers, acknowledging the difficulties to the exchange of microdata from the legal viewpoint.

#### **Responses and changes proposed by the Task Force**

36. Work-injury victims are one of the population groups distinguished in SDG indicator 1.3.1 for coverage by social protection floors/systems. The task force will include a relevant variable in the recommended variables table.

37. The potential of administrative sources as potentially best source for measuring labour mobility will be mentioned.

38. Section V.B.3 "Adjustment of surveys" will be moved to chapter VI "Future work". Explanations will be added on the anticipated challenges and on the need to test any changes to the surveys before they could be recommended.

39. Suggestions for microdata exchange, including among EU countries, will be added.

## **E. Chapter VI Future work**

40. The Dominican Republic highlighted the value of connecting information on employed persons and their enterprises for statistical purposes, and that employment services could be a valuable source for additional information on labour mobility.

41. Finland commented that their 2014 LFS included a variable on working abroad during the last 10 years. Even though a reference period of 10 years was used, the number of those working abroad in the sample was too small. Finland commented that it could test using registers to produce some information, as Norway did.

42. Latvia agreed with the use of complex data sources for measurement of international labour migration, especially for estimating the flow of unauthorized migration.

### **Responses and changes proposed by the Task Force**

43. The challenge of obtaining responses from a sufficient number of people who have worked abroad will be mentioned in connection with potential further work on adjusting surveys.

## **IV. Conclusion**

44. All responding countries and organizations supported the endorsement of the report subject to amendments presented in this document.

## **V. Proposal to the Conference**

45. The Conference is invited to endorse the report “Measuring international labour mobility”, subject to amendments presented in this document.

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