

First meeting of the 2008/2009 Bureau

Washington D.C. (United States), 20-21 October 2008

Item 5c of the Provisional
Agenda

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE STEERING GROUP ON MIGRATION STATISTICS AND ITS TASK FORCES

Note prepared by the UNECE secretariat

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Steering Group (SG) on Migration Statistics was created by the Bureau in 2005 (CES/BUR.2005/13). The Steering Group's objectives are to coordinate the work of the CES Task Forces on migration issues, provide advice as necessary, and to plan future UNECE meetings and workshops in the field of migration statistics, in collaboration with Eurostat and other international organizations.
2. The Steering Group includes representatives from Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States (chair), Eurostat and UNECE.
3. The Task Force on the measurement of emigration through using data collected by the receiving country has worked under the guidance of the Steering Group. This Task Force was set up in 2005 and completed its work in March 2008, when the Joint UNECE-Eurostat Work Session adopted the '*Guidelines on the use and dissemination of data on international immigration to facilitate their use to improve emigration data of sending countries*'.

II. PROGRESS ACHIEVED TO DATE BY THE STEERING GROUP ON MIGRATION STATISTICS

4. The Steering Group (SG) developed the agenda and organized two joint UNECE-Eurostat Work Sessions on migration statistics:
 - (a) Joint UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics which took place in November 2006 in Edinburgh (United Kingdom)¹;
 - (b) Joint UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics which took place in March 2008 in Geneva².
5. The SG also developed the agenda and organized the Joint UNECE/World Bank/US Census Bureau Meeting on the contribution of household surveys to measure migration and

¹ For more information see <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2006.11.migration.htm>

² For more information see <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2008.03.migration.htm>

remittances, held on 14-15 January 2008 in Suitland, Maryland (USA) at the U.S. Bureau of the Census Headquarters³.

6. Under the supervision of the SG, the following substantive topics were addressed in the last few years:

(a) *Measurement of emigration*: this represents a major challenge for many statistical offices. Two methodological options were explored to improve availability and quality of emigration data, which should be considered by NSOs in addition to existing practices and sources:

- Measurement of emigration through immigration data of receiving countries: a Task-Force was set-up and completed the work by issuing relevant guidelines (see below);
- Use of emigration module at census: analysis of country experiences was carried out and published⁴;

(b) *Inventory of definitions adopted by countries on stocks and flows of migrants*: in April 2008 a comprehensive questionnaire⁵ was sent out to collect information on definitions and sources used in countries to collect information on stocks and flows of migrants, results will be presented at the 2009 Work Session;

(c) *Measurement of difficult-to-count groups of migrants*: first review of existing methods was presented at the 2008 Work Session on migration statistics⁶; further information has been collected through a questionnaire and will be presented at the 2009 Work Session;

(d) *Impact of different duration thresholds on migration estimates*: at the last Work Session, a group of countries proposed to set up a Task Force to analyse different residency rules adopted by country and their impact on comparability of international migration estimates (see para. 14(d));

(e) *Measurement of short-term migration*: information on definitions and available sources has been collected through a questionnaire. The Task-Force above (point (d)) will also analyse data availability and comparability on short-term migrants;

(f) *Review practices, harmonize concepts and develop survey tools to collect data on migration and migration-related topics such as remittances*: a review of national and international efforts to collect data on migration and remittances was made at the Joint UNECE/World Bank/US Census Bureau Meeting on the contribution of household surveys to measure migration and remittances (14-15 January 2008).

7. The issues above were addressed at the Work Sessions on Migration Statistics (2006 and 2008) through presentations of country experiences and international reviews, as well as through specific activities of the Steering Group and Task Force.

³ For more information see <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2008.01.migration.htm>

⁴ For more information see <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2008.03.migration.htm>

⁵ *UNECE Questionnaire on International Migration Statistics: Building a crosswalk of definitions on international migration and exploring methods to estimate "difficult to measure" migrant groups.*

⁶ For more information see <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2008.03.migration.htm>

A. Report on the Task-Force on measuring emigration through immigration data of receiving countries

8. The creation of a Task Force on measuring emigration using data collected by the receiving country was proposed at the Joint ECE-Eurostat Seminar on International Migration (21-23 March 2005). The TOR were approved by the CES Bureau at its meeting of 24-25 October 2005 in Washington D.C.

9. The Task-Force has considered the feasibility of improving emigration statistics by using immigration data from host country. This was done by considering:

- (a) Actual data availability in destination and sending countries;
- (b) Different criteria used to define stocks and flows of international immigrants, respectively for destination and origin countries;
- (c) Various available sources (census, household surveys, administrative records), both in destination and origin countries;
- (d) Data accuracy, cost and timeliness.

10. The Task-force carried out an intense data exchange and comparison exercise. Data on immigration and emigration were collected from 19 countries, divided in four clusters. The Task-Force designed a set of tables to exchange data and methodological information on stocks and flows of migrants by country of origin in host countries, with a view to providing relevant data from the perspective of countries of origin.

11. On the basis of available data and metadata, the Task Force developed the “Guidelines on the use and dissemination of data on international immigration to facilitate their use to improve emigration data of sending countries”. The final version was presented at the Joint UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics in March 2008. The meeting welcomed and approved the guidelines.

12. The “Guidelines on the use and dissemination of data on international immigration to facilitate their use to improve emigration data of sending countries” are presented now to the Bureau in Add.1 to this document for discussion and endorsement.

B. Challenges for the coming period

13. In the coming years, the Steering Group will, subject to the approval of the Bureau, carry out the following activities on the selected topics:

- (a) *Measurement of emigration*: finalization and publication of the “Guidelines on the use and dissemination of data on international immigration to facilitate their use to improve emigration data of sending countries”;
- (b) *Inventory of definitions adopted by countries on stocks and flows of migrants*: replies to questionnaire will be analysed and results will be presented at the 2009 Work Session on migration statistics;

(c) *Measurement of difficult-to-count groups of migrants*: replies to questionnaire will be analysed and results will be presented at the 2009 Work Session;

(d) *Impact of different duration thresholds on migration estimates*: it is proposed to create a Task force to work on this topic (draft TOR are attached to this document). Subject to approval by the Bureau, the Task Force would implement its work plan and present results at the 2009 Work Session;

(e) *Measurement of short-term migration*: work on this topic should be conducted by the same Task Force indicated above in point (d); subject to approval by the Bureau, the Task Force would implement its work plan and present results at the 2009 Work Session;

(f) *Review practices, harmonize concepts and develop survey tools to collect data on migration and migration-related topics such as remittances*: further analysis of the possible uses of household surveys to measure migration will be carried out, taking into account the various statistical systems in place in different countries. Particular attention will be paid to developing common definitions and survey tools to be used in household surveys measuring different aspects of migration, such as migration flows, size and characteristics of resident migrant population, and migration-related issues, such as remittances.

14. The SG will organize a meeting in the first half of 2009 to:

(a) Review the most relevant uses and methodological issues related to household surveys on migration;

(b) Select the topics that will be addressed by the group and set priorities;

(c) Identify the deliverables of the group;

(d) Complete a work plan.

15. On the basis of the activities above, the SG will develop the agenda and start preparations for the next UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics (planned to be held in November 2009).

B. Proposal for the creation of a UNECE Task Force on the Analysis of International Migration Estimates Using Different Length of Stay Definitions (see Add. 2)

16. The rationale for this Task Force stems from two different but interrelated critical aspects of international migration estimates that have often been discussed by statisticians:

(a) Different residency rules adopted by countries and their impact on comparability of international migration estimates;

(b) Definition and availability of data on short-term migration flows.

17. This project aims to explore definitions and data in a number of selected countries to provide an evidence base for discussing these issues. Concerning the different residency rules, the Task Force will try to assess the impact on international migration estimates derived from the use of different duration thresholds to define usual residence. Concerning

the second issue, the Task Force will assess the availability of data on short-term migration, explore their accuracy and consider alternative definitions of short-term migration.

18. More details on the activities, work plan and outputs are provided in the proposed Terms of Reference for this Task Force.

III. PROPOSAL

19. The Bureau is invited to:

(a) Endorse the “Guidelines on the use and dissemination of data on international immigration to facilitate their use to improve emigration data of sending countries” (ECE/CES/BUR/2008/OCT/12/Add. 1);

(b) Approve the creation of a new Task Force on the Analysis of International Migration Estimates Using Different Length of Stay Definitions (ECE/CES/BUR/2008/OCT/12/Add. 2).

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