

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

For discussion and  
recommendations

Meeting of the 2014/2015 Bureau  
Geneva (Switzerland), 17-18 February 2015

Item 2 (b) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**COMMENTS ON THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF LABOUR MOBILITY AND  
GLOBALISATION**

**Prepared by the Secretariat**

*This note provides comments from UNECE as input to the working draft of the in-depth review of labour mobility and globalisation.*

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The note is prepared based on an internal discussion in the UNECE Statistical Division on labour mobility and globalisation. The document “In-depth review of labour mobility and globalisation,” prepared by Statistics Austria, provides an excellent summary of a number of challenging conceptual, data and statistical issues related to the topic.
2. This work is non-traditional as it intersects across demographic and economic statistics. It moves beyond permanent migration and takes into account both migrant and non-migrant foreign workers.
3. The paper suggests to:
  - a) Create a new Task Force to address the measurement and exchange of data on labour mobility and globalisation.
  - b) Conduct a technical seminar on harmonised classifications for non-migrant foreign workers.

**II. COMMENTS**

4. The paper makes the distinction between methodological work on migration statistics as part of social statistics and international labour movements in national accounts. It also addresses the additional work that is still needed to measure labour mobility from a national accounts perspective. UNECE supports developing cross-cutting methodological work across these two areas, despite inherent challenges in integrating national accounts and population statistics terminology and data.
5. The first step towards making progress in this area is to develop internationally agreed terms and definitions. ILO's working group on labour migration is expected to contribute towards this endeavour. However, it is important that whatever statistical definitions are developed by this group be consistent with current international recommendations on migration statistics. This includes making a distinction between short-term and long-term

migrants, as well as migrant workers and non-migrant foreign workers.

6. It will be important to develop definitions and data sources that can distinguish between long-term migrants (change of usual residence for at least 12 months), short-term migrants (change of usual residence for 3 to 12 months) and non-migrants (no change of usual residence or for a period shorter than 3 months). Measurement of short-term migration has proven to be challenging for national statistical agencies, as is measurement of irregular migration and trafficking.

7. As mentioned in the in-depth review paper, issues pertaining to national accounts (and economic statistics more generally) were addressed in the *Guide on the Impact of Globalisation on National Accounts* in the chapter on international labour movements. The chapter reviewed the most common measurement problems related to international labour movements and trade in services through the movement of persons and suggested potential solutions. It also proposed analytical tables linking labour statistics and national accounts, using a social accounting matrix framework. However, the relevance of the proposed framework has not been tested on data from different countries. Countries with different structures of inflow or outflow of labour and services rendered by persons could be invited to test the framework and report whether it fits various analytical needs.

8. The in-depth review and proposed Task Force are currently focused more on aspects of social statistics. In order to ensure that the recommendations (and the proposed framework) developed by the Task Force would also meet the data needs of economic statisticians it is recommended to consult the national accounts community. This could be done through inviting the UNECE Steering Group on National Accounts to comment on the research programme of the TF and on the developed recommendations. Ways to involve trade statisticians should also be considered.

9. The increased outsourcing of production functions and international posting of people within MNEs calls also for a review of the links between labour statistics/accounts and production accounts and the resulting productivity measures.

10. There are also issues that concern data exchange and mirror statistics, such as:

- a) There is a need to first have harmonized definitions and data sources before information can best be used for data exchange. However, data exchange at the initial stage can help determine where data gaps exist;
- b) Mirror statistics are primarily utilized in migration statistics for two things. Either to validate outflows and inflows between countries, or to use inflow data to fill data gaps for countries unable to accurately measure outmigration (e.g. to measure emigration). It is unclear from the recommendations how mirror statistics would be applied in this case, thus a first step would be exchange of information on statistical methodologies used to measure labour mobility, before actual exchange of data takes place.

11. UNECE is currently involved in or developing the following methodological work which could support this initiative:

- a) Migration statistics workshop held in 2014 included discussion of regional statistical definitions of labour migration in the CIS region, as developed by CIS-Stat;
- b) The next Work Session on migration statistics in 2016 will include a session

- on labour migration;
- c) UNECE will contribute to work of the ILO working group on labour migration;
  - d) New data requests could be added to the Migration Clearing House database, though countries are currently unable to provide information on short-term migration. These requests would be more effective after a common methodological approach is developed for measuring the phenomena;
  - e) Two CES Task Forces touch upon this topic: the Task Force on measuring circular migration and a proposed Task Force on integration of migration data;
  - f) The current Task Force on circular migration is planned to finish its work in late 2015, which would allow for creation of a new Task Force on this topic.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

12. UNECE suggests to **create a Task Force on labour mobility in 2016**, taking into account the following:

- a) Give careful consideration to the composition of the Task Force. Since this is a cross-cutting topic, **the group should include both economic and social statisticians**. This could prove challenging given the different goals and terminologies used by both groups but is necessary for the success of the work;
- b) Both the **Steering Group on National Accounts and the Steering Group on Migration Statistics should be consulted during the work**.

13. The Task Force objectives should be well defined to work towards a specific goal. It will be important not to duplicate the work of ILO's working group on labour migration, and the Task Force should work in close coordination with their activities. Some possible activities that the Task Force could undertake include:

- a) **Inventory of the current state of work in the field**. This would include an inventory of available data sources, methods currently used to measure labour migration, as well as analysis of the comparability of national accounts and social statistics on labour mobility;
- b) **Development of common definitions to measure labour mobility**, including how to integrate national accounts and social statistics information on labour mobility;
- c) **Exchange of data on labour mobility**, with the goal of helping to determine where data gaps exist, to what extent mirror statistics can be used to help improve measurement within and between countries, and provide an overview of what is available across the UNECE region on this topic.

14. Given the high quality of this paper and the important topic it discusses, the Secretariat proposes that the Bureau discusses **ways to better disseminate the in-depth review papers**, including publishing this and similar papers. The creation of a discussion paper series could be considered.

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