

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2016/2017 Bureau  
Ottawa, 11-12 October 2016

Item VI(b) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**REVISED REPORT ON  
DEFINING AND MEASURING CIRCULAR MIGRATION**

Note by the Secretariat

*This note summarizes the revisions made to the report on Defining and Measuring Circular Migration following a consultation among CES members in February-March 2016 and the discussion at the CES plenary session in April 2016. **The Bureau endorsed the Report on Defining and Measuring Circular Migration (document ECE/CES/BUR/2016/OCT/18/Add.1), and decided on areas for further work.***

**I. BACKGROUND**

1. The Task Force on Measuring Circular Migration was set up in 2013 to prepare a proposal for a common international statistical definition of circular migration. The Task Force presented its draft report to the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in February 2016.
2. Following the decision of the Bureau, the secretariat conducted a consultation on the draft report with all CES members in February-March 2016. The results were presented to the CES plenary session in April 2016 as document ECE/CES/2016/3/Add.1. A total of 43 replies were received to the consultation, from 40 countries and 3 international organizations. Countries and organizations generally supported the content of the report and suggested a number of editorial changes, minor clarifications and additions. A few substantive comments required consideration by the Task Force.
3. At its 2016 plenary session, the Conference expressed broad support to the report. It was noted that:
  - a) The topic is important and complex as migration has an influence on and can benefit all the involved parties (receiving country, sending country, migrants);
  - b) Further testing is needed to see how alternative definitions of circular migration work in practice, especially concerning the number of border crossings and length of stay used in the definition;
  - c) The possibility of adding definitions for short-term and seasonal circular migration should be considered.

4. The Conference asked the Task Force to:
  - a) Review the comments made during the electronic consultation and the discussion at the CES plenary session and reflect them in a revised version of the report;
  - b) Discuss the definition of circular migration at the UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics on 18-20 May 2016, including the need for developing practical guidance;
  - c) Present the revised report to the 2016 October meeting of the CES Bureau.

## II. SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

5. In revising the report, the Task Force considered all comments from the electronic consultation and from the discussions at the CES plenary and the UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics. The revised report as contained in document ECE/CES/BUR/2016/OCT/18/Add.1 has been reviewed and agreed by the Task Force.
6. Two key changes were made to the report following the consultation:
  - a) An extended definition of circular migration that accounts for short-term migration was added in section 4.2;
  - b) Section 7 on future work was added.
7. The **new extended definition of circular migration** meets policy needs for additional information by accounting for durations of stay of at least 90 days. As a result, the definition includes both circular migrants with repeated short-term migrations and those with a mixture of long-term and short-term migrations. It is intended as **a complement to the general statistical definition** for internationally comparable figures based on long-term migration with duration of stay of at least 12 months.
8. **Further work is recommended in four areas:**
  - a) further testing of the proposed concepts of circular migration. At the 2016 UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics, Hungary, Italy, United Kingdom and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights expressed interest in such testing;
  - b) practical implementation of the concepts and definitions presented in the report;
  - c) developing technical specifications and breakdowns for reporting circular migration statistics;
  - d) research on impact of circular migration on development.
9. Other additions or alterations were made to the text of the report to clarify that:
  - a) there is a demand from users to understand circular migration better as there may be both benefits and drawbacks to this type of migration;
  - b) international coordination is important for collecting data on circular migration;

- c) to produce statistics on circular migration from administrative sources, the possibility of linking data on individual migrations is essential;
- d) statistical offices can consider adding questions to statistical surveys to identify circular migrants.

10. A number of other minor editorial changes, clarifications, footnotes and references were added or altered to improve the accuracy and readability of the report.

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