



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/CES/2007/4/Add.4
14 December 2006

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

STATISTICAL COMMISSION

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Fifty fifth plenary session
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
Geneva, 11-13 June 2007

Report of the Meeting of Group of Experts on Migration Statistics
held on 20-22 November 2006

Note by the secretariat

The Work Session is organised jointly with Eurostat and in collaboration with UNFPA

INTRODUCTION

1. The joint UNECE/Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics was held on 20-22 November 2006 in Edinburgh. It was attended by participants from Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, United Kingdom and United States of America. The European Commission was represented by Eurostat. The International Labour Office (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) were also represented. Experts from Bermuda Government (United Kingdom), Moscow State University (Russian Federation), Statistics Aaland Islands (Finland), Université catholique de Louvain (Belgium) and MEDSTAT II Project participated at the invitation of the UNECE secretariat.

2. The Work Session was organized in collaboration with UNFPA. A number of participants could attend the Work Session thanks to the financial support provided by UNFPA, UNDP and Eurostat. The Work session was hosted by the General Register Office of Scotland.

3. Ms. Margaret Michalowski (Canada) was elected as Chairperson of the meeting.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

4. The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting:

Information session: Main challenges to statistics on international migration in the United Kingdom

- A. The challenges of measuring emigration and remittances
- B. Challenges to implement the Migration section of the CES Recommendations for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses
- C. The new EC Regulation on Migration Statistics
- D. The CES Work plan to improve migration statistics

5. The following participants acted as Discussants:

- Mr. Michel Poulain, Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium
- Mr. Werner Haug, Swiss Federal Statistical Office
- Ms. Catherine Borrel, INSEE, France
- Ms. Angela Me, UNECE Statistical Division

6. The discussion at the meeting was based on invited and supporting papers. The papers are available on the UNECE website at the following address:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2006.11.migration.htm>

7. The participants adopted the report of the meeting at its closing session.

III. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Information session: Main challenges to statistics on international migration in United Kingdom

Documentation: Presentations by United Kingdom.

8. Recent migration patterns of the United Kingdom were presented and compared with those experienced by other countries of the European Union. Specific attention was paid to the recent increase of immigration flows after the 2004 EU enlargement.

9. Several statistical sources on international migration flows exist in the United Kingdom, based on sample surveys and administrative data. The current methodology used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to estimate international migration flows is based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS), a sample survey of persons entering and exiting the country. Some adjustments are made to IPS estimates to account for changes in status (for

example visitors extending their residence in the country) while other sources are used to include flows that are not properly covered by the IPS, such as asylum seekers and flows to/from Ireland.

10. The experience of the United Kingdom shows that additional administrative sources such as work permits, the newly created 'Worker Registration scheme', the National Insurance Scheme can also provide very valuable information, especially on trends and geographical distribution of immigrants. Administrative sources can provide particularly important information for sub-national estimates, where estimates from sample surveys are not reliable due to the small sample.

11. The joint use of administrative data and statistical surveys should therefore be encouraged, but due attention should be paid to reconciling definitions and classifications. Coverage and definitions of administrative sources should be carefully examined against definitions and classifications adopted for official statistics.

12. A Task Force was established in the United Kingdom, including representatives of statistical agencies and other experts, in order to better identify user needs for migration data, ensure correspondence between statistical outputs and needs, and recommend specific methods to improve migration estimates. Challenges identified by this Task Force are: the measurement of short-term migrants, for which no existing data source can provide reliable estimates; and the joint use of various sources such as IPS, Labour Force Survey and administrative data, which may represent a possible solution.

A: The challenges of measuring emigration and remittances.

A.1. Measuring emigration through immigration data

Documentation: Invited papers by UNECE/Eurostat Task Force on Measuring Emigration Using Immigration Data, Switzerland, Portugal, Canada, Estonia presented by Switzerland and Canada.

13. The difficulties of producing reliable statistics on emigration are well recognized. Many countries report very limited information on emigration. A Task Force established at the last meeting of the expert group undertook an experimental data exchange among selected countries to establish if emigration could be estimated on the basis of immigration reported by destination countries. Nineteen countries participated in this work, in four groups lead by Canada, Estonia, Portugal and Switzerland. Several countries were members of more than one group.

14. The results of the analysis of the collected data were presented at the meeting together with a draft of the guidelines on how to measure emigration through immigration data.

15. The meeting concluded that this had been a useful exercise and thanked the Task Force for its considerable efforts in undertaking this work. The draft of the guidelines was accepted and it was agreed that it should be finalized taking into account comments received during the discussion.

16. It was noted that, despite problems on poor comparability and the use of a number of

different data sources, some positive results were obtained. Immigration statistics can provide useful information on emigration, although this should be not the only solution to gaps in the availability of emigration data, and should not replace the need for countries' efforts to try to develop emigration statistics based on their own data sources.

17. To increase the comparability of the data and its use as source for emigration statistics, the importance of following, wherever possible, the UN recommended definitions and providing adequate metadata to allow other countries to correctly interpret the exchanged data was stressed. Use of proxy variables to define the origin of emigrants (such as country of birth instead of country of last residence) should be avoided, if possible. It was suggested that a standard migration module be developed and added by countries to regular surveys. This would serve to increase the availability and comparability of data.

18. Different approaches were considered for countries wishing to continue the work on data exchange, including arrangements on bilateral basis between origin and destination countries, and multilateral actions driven by international organizations. A combined approach may be the best, possibly involving some changes to the Joint Questionnaire on International Migration Statistics, to collect data that can also be used from the point of view of emigration statistics. The participants suggested that group managing the Joint Questionnaire on International Migration Statistics consider the inclusion of some of the tables presented in the guidelines.

A.2: Challenges to measure remittances and emigration

Documentation: Invited papers by Eurostat, ILO, Republic of Moldova, Israel and Tunisia.

Supporting papers by Lithuania, Egypt and Inter American Development Bank (IADB)

19. This session focused on two different topics:
- measurement of emigration using data collected in sending countries
 - measurement of remittances: theoretical framework and statistical methods/ sources
20. Three countries presented different methods to measure emigration:
- a) Israel reported the method of estimating emigrant stock by linking census data, population register and border crossing information. This method has produced very promising results on emigrants stocks, thanks to the possibility of linking accurate and individual data on population stocks and flows. Problems that need to be addressed include the difficulty to register demographic events, notably births, deaths and migrations of Israelis living abroad;
 - b) Tunisia presented the special migration module that was used in the 2004 population census. This module identified emigrants by asking if some persons living in the household 5 year ago were living abroad at the time of census. The census also identified immigrants including returning citizens who were living abroad by using a question on the place of residence 5 years ago. The meeting considered this experience as a very valuable methodology to provide information on nationals living abroad, supplying useful information on individual characteristics of emigrants. Shortcomings of this module were also discussed, such as the difficulty to

cover households that have left the country in their entirety. It was also underlined that this source cannot cover the whole stock of emigrants but only those who emigrated in the last 5 years. Suggestions were made to compare these results with corresponding data in the receiving country;

- c) Lithuania described their estimation of non-official emigration by using the Labour Force Survey and identifying family members who left country without registering their departure.

20. There is an increasing interest at the international level in the measurement of remittances, given the role that these financial flows have in the economies of developing countries. In some countries these monetary flows have already reached or exceeded the level of foreign direct investments or official development assistance. However, it is generally recognized that data on migrant remittances have serious coverage and conceptual problems and there is an urgent need to improve the availability and reliability of these data.

21. A UN Technical Working Group (the Luxembourg Group¹) has recently developed a comprehensive and consistent framework to define and classify monetary and non-monetary transfers between households living in different countries. This work has been done within the framework of Balance of Payments (BOP) statistics. The Work Session considered this work as a very important accomplishment. Nonetheless, it was recognised that the new framework developed in the BOP context should be analysed to verify that the information needs deriving from a demographic and social perspective are properly taken into account. For example, the BOP framework covers transactions that are not necessarily linked to a migration movement. On the other hand, capital and monetary flows of returning migrants are not properly reflected in the BOP framework. Work is also needed on complementary issues such as classifications of the different channels - formal and informal - used to transfer money from one country to another. Remittances from internal migrants should also be considered when a household perspective is adopted.

22. Various sources of data are currently used to collect data on remittances, often based on official channels such as bank transfers. Sources on formal monetary transfers have problems in differentiating remittances from other monetary transfers, while “informal” and “in-kind” cannot be captured. Promising sources to measure remittances are household surveys, which could improve the coverage of total remittances and at the same time collect characteristics of migrants and their families. Complementary and parallel surveys could be implemented respectively in the country of origin and in the country of destination of migrants.

23. Important examples of household surveys to measure remittances were presented and discussed: the ILO module on remittances was tested in two countries, Armenia and Thailand, while Moldova carried out an IOM-sponsored survey. These experiences confirmed that household surveys represent a very valuable tool to collect data on remittances. Important challenges remain in the identification of proper questions to identify migrant status of household members, to detect and measure remittances, both monetary and in-kind transfers, and

¹ Members of the Luxembourg Group are Eurostat, IMF, the World Bank, Albania, Brazil, Centre for Latin American Monetary Studies (CEMLA), Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, USA.

concerning the classifications on remittance channels and utilization of the received money.

B: Challenges to implement the Migration section of the CES Recommendations for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses.

Documentation: Presentation by UNECE.

Invited papers by Norway, United States, Eurostat and IOM.

Supporting paper by Tajikistan.

24. The meeting addressed chapters 3 and 8 of the CES Recommendations for the 2010 Censuses of Population and Housing, which are relevant to international migration. The core topic 'place of usual residence' defines persons to be included in the main census tabulations. It is based on actual or intended residence of a duration of 12 months or more. The core topics 'country/place of birth', 'country of citizenship' and the non-core topic 'place of birth of parents' allow for the identification of the population groups relevant to international migration. Information on the timing and the geography of international migration are covered by the core topics 'ever resided abroad' and 'year of arrival in the country'. It was discussed that paragraph 385 of the CES Recommendations presents two different concepts, which are used for different purposes: i) the number of people having moved in the year prior to the census which may be used for population estimates and projections, and ii) duration of residence at the current place of residence, which may be used for grouping the population into categories of migrants based on duration of stay.

25. Implementation of the CES Recommendations was recognized to be challenging by a number of countries. 'Place of birth' could be a complicated concept in situations where there was the formation or break-up of countries, or where boundaries had changed. In many cases, definitions of residence applied by national administrations are based on residence durations, which differ from 12 months. In some cases, definitions of migration focus on an intention for a 'permanent' change in the place of residence, rather than one with a particular time criteria. Definitions of usual residence based on duration of stay could conflict with national perceptions of place of residence, which may be based on criteria such as 'permanent residence' or the location of a family home. Due to political, geographical and historical circumstances, residence and migration topics are of particular sensitivity in some countries. The meeting also recognized the importance of ensuring adequate human, financial and technical resources for each stage of the census operation.

26. The specific problems faced by countries that adopt register-based censuses were discussed. In many cases, the national statistical institute has quite limited influence over the authorities responsible for the population register. It could be difficult or impossible, for example, to change the residence duration thresholds used in the register. Unauthorized migrants are generally not included in the registers. Similarly, asylum seekers and others, whose long-term residence in the country remains to be decided, might not be covered, even though they may in fact stay for 12 months or longer. The recording of 'intention' to remain for a certain period was also discussed as a difficult concept to measure for countries using registers. Some

difficulties could be overcome by the provision of detailed metadata to explain deviations from the Recommendations. The supply of special tables and data extractions for international comparisons based on the recommended definitions was also a possibility. The meeting recommended that the UNECE Steering Group on Censuses consider the development of guidelines on how countries relying extensively or exclusively on registers can implement the CES Recommendations.

27. Certain population groups relevant to study migration can be classed as ‘difficult to count’ groups in sample surveys and censuses. Approaches to assessing and improving the coverage of these groups were discussed. Experience of the United States with testing the effects of rewording survey questions on citizenship and year of entry was discussed.

28. Surveys offer the possibility of moving beyond simple counts of migrants, providing richer social and economic information about migrant populations. In this context, plans for the implementation of a special module on migrants and persons of immediate migrant descent in the EU Labour Force Survey were presented.

C: The new EC Regulation on Migration Statistics.

Documentation: Presentation by Eurostat.

Invited paper by Austria.

Supporting paper by Norway.

29. The main objective of the European Commission Regulation on Migration Statistics is to give a legal basis to EU data collections in this field. The regulation will also provide national statistical authorities with a strong basis and mandate to produce data on international migration.

30. The regulation has been developed around harmonized statistical definitions while leaving to countries the choice of the most appropriate statistical sources. Although some adaptation of data sources may be envisaged, it is not intended to force EU Member States to implement completely new data sources. The statistics covered by the Regulation follow closely Eurostat’s existing data collections on migration flows, foreign population stocks, acquisition of citizenship, asylum, measures against unauthorized migration, and residence permits. The information needs of data users within the European Commission and the European Parliament were taken into account in drafting the legislation.

31. At the EU level, discussion on the EC Regulation has focused, for a long time, largely on concepts and definitions. The harmonization process in this field is not always straightforward given the many different statistical practices existing across EU countries. Moreover, the EC Regulation underwent a close scrutiny because of its legal nature. At the meeting, Austria tried to summarize experiences with searching for a resolution acceptable both to EU institutions and EU member states. Problems were mentioned concerning de jure vs. de facto harmonization when implementing outputs included in the resolution.

32. In the next few years, technical guidelines will be drafted in order to assist countries in the implementation of the EC Regulation. Major projects are planned to assist EU Member States to develop potential data sources and to make appropriate use of statistical modeling techniques.

33. The implications of the EC Regulation for countries that are not EU Member States were also discussed. The attention to definitions in the preparation of the legislation, and the guidelines for implementation, would also be of use for non-EU countries. The priorities will continue to be the cooperation between international organizations through the Joint International Migration Questionnaire, and to avoid duplication of work for national data suppliers.

D: The CES Work plan to improve migration statistics

Documentation: Invited papers by United States, OECD, Australia, UNSD and MEDSTAT II Project.

34. The session focused on the CES work plan to improve international migration statistics. The work plan was launched by the CES in order to increase efforts to address many of the challenges identified in the 1998 *Recommendations*, as well as new challenges that have emerged in the recent years. The immediate objective of the plan is to build a framework for the collection of comparable international migration statistics that will directly benefit the 2010 round of censuses. Cooperation among national statistical offices (NSOs) and international organizations (IOs) is essential, and will have important implications for national and international policy in such areas as national security, international relations, and economic development.

35. A common theme throughout the work plan is the need to improve categories and harmonize definitions so that data might be shared and compared meaningfully on an international basis.

36. The work plan is structured around six outputs.

- 1) Metadata inventory of definitions: Review definitions of immigrant flows and stocks used by countries, providing a comprehensive classification of migrant typologies, and compiling practices used by countries to measure the difficult-to-measure migrants;
- 2) Pilot projects to assess the impact of different duration thresholds on migration estimates;
- 3) Pilot project to measure emigration using receiving country data;
- 4) Definition of residency rules for temporary migrants including temporary workers;
- 5) Harmonization of concepts and definitions of remittances between balance of payments and household survey data;
- 6) Recommendations for improving the collection and use of migration statistics.

37. The Work Session agreed with the proposal presented by the United States to work

collaboratively toward the achievement of output 1 through 3 and to raise outputs 4 and 5 at the global level (e.g., at the December 2006 UNSD Expert Group Meeting on Migration Statistics). The Steering Committee established to oversee the implementation of the plan invited the participants to join in the activities, through participation in the Steering Committee or the outputs. Those who are interested were invited to inform the UNECE Secretariat within two weeks of the Work Session.

38. OECD challenged the concept of long-term migration based on duration of stay because it may not be relevant for some policy makers and proposed a new definition for long term migration based on residence permits which reflect residence rights in the receiving country. The policy needs for data based on stay or residence rights were acknowledged. However, it was emphasized that a clear distinction needs to be made between the two approaches (one based on duration of stay and the other one based on permits). The two approaches are complementary and respond to different needs. The importance of clear terminology distinguishing the two definitions was also highlighted. There was agreement on the need to develop shared definitions of migrants based on different criteria, such as reason for stay, education, economic activity, family status, etc.

39. Classification of migrants can be done according to demographic criteria, based on place and duration of residence, as for example short-term vs. long-term migrants. Different classification approaches are often used for policy purposes, where the focus is on individuals' characteristics (reason for stay, education, economic activity, family status, etc.) and on his/her legal status. It was recognised that in addition to statistics on total migration stocks and flows there is a need to develop further frameworks on persons crossing international borders that will facilitate the development of statistics on characteristics of individuals and their legal status that will be reasonably comparable internationally.

40. Australia shared lessons learned from an initial analysis for Output 2. Results showed that there is a substantial difference between the expected and actual duration presence/absence in the country. The strict use of the 12-month threshold could be misleading. A better approach may be the use of a actual presence/absence of a person for 12 months over the following 16 months. The results showed the benefit of looking at different concepts of duration and their impact on estimates of inflows/outflows and net migration. It was suggested that additional analysis be done to examine the impact of different duration thresholds on migration estimates in Australia and in other countries in the region.

41. UNSD brought to the attention of the meeting the upcoming UN Expert Group Meeting on measuring international migration to be held in New York on 4-7 December 2006. This meeting will review countries' practices and identify challenges in compiling international migration statistics. The outcome will be a set of recommended strategies and activities for improving migration statistics, including suggestions for the scope of a handbook to be prepared by UNSD.

42. The representative of the EU-funded MEDSTAT project presented the objectives and activities of the second phase of their project on migration statistics, which focuses on the cooperation and support of countries in the Mediterranean area. The Work Session discussed the synergies of the work done under MEDSTAT and the CES work plan. The inclusion of the Project and MED countries in the activities of the CES work plan were also considered.

IV. FUTURE WORK

43. The meeting recommended to continue the work towards the achievement of outputs 1, 2 and 3 as presented in the CES Work plan. The following activities were suggested:

Output 1 (Metadata inventory of definitions)

- Review all metadata already collected in the field;
- Submit to countries a questionnaire in order to check and complete this review;
- Analyze the results;
- Present the results at the next meeting and draw conclusions on best practices.

Output 2 (Pilot project to assess the impact of different duration thresholds on migration estimates)

- Develop a common protocol for analysis (based on outputs so that it can be used with different sources) to look at:
 - Impact of different concepts of duration: actual, intended, legal duration, over what period of time?;
 - Impact of different thresholds;
 - Feasibility of measuring different thresholds;
- Coordinate the different countries' implementation of the analysis;
- Prepare a summary report to be presented at the next meeting.

Output 3 (Pilot project to measure emigration using receiving country data)

- Finalize the guidelines by including:
 - A summary of the results obtained by each team;
 - A table with pros and cons of the different methods that can be used to measure emigration (to understand where the receiving countries data could fit);
 - Description of under what conditions receiving countries data can be used;
 - Guidelines to establishing bilateral agreements.

44. Participants suggested that UNSD bring to the attention of the forthcoming Expert Group Meeting the need to work at global level to achieve the objectives of outputs 4 and 5 of the CES Work plan. UNSD was also asked to explore the possibility to carry out concrete steps to advance work for outputs 4 and 5.

45. The Work Session requested that the UNECE Steering Group on Censuses to explore the possibility of working towards recommendations for the implementation of the CES Recommendations in register-based countries.

46. It is proposed that the next meeting be held late in 2007 or early in 2008. The agenda

should be based on the outputs of the CES Work plan on migration statistics.
