Producing migration data using household surveys and other sources

Note by the National Bureau of Statistics, Republic of Moldova

I. Context

Labour force migration continues to be for the Republic of Moldova one of the most important social-economic problems, being consequence of the poverty and a key strategy to deal with it. The phenomenon of migration has a direct impact on labour market of the country; as a result one of the leading directions specific for employment established by the National Strategy for Employment Policies for 2007-2015 is the Management of migration impact on labour force market. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) plays an important role in monitoring and evaluating the process of labour market policies in the respective field.

In this document presents the experience of the NBS Moldova in the statistical measurement of the labour migration through household survey.

II. Household surveys on migration

1. Labour force survey

In the beginning of the 90s Moldovan citizens started to search for work abroad. The migration phenomenon became an important issue and a statistical measure was needed. At the end of the 90s, NBS decided to estimate the dimension of the labour migration in the frame of the Labour force survey (LFS), adding some questions to the main LFS questionnaires. Starting with 2000, the LFS’ questionnaires comprise questions regarding the presence/absence of the household’s members at the moment of the interview. One of the absence reasons is “left abroad for work or looking for work”, i.e. “labour migration”. This information is provided by the other members of the households who are present in the households. These data can be disaggregated by some socio-economic characteristics. The
LFS allows measuring the number of labour migrants by: sex, areas, age groups, level of the education, citizenship, marital status, country of destination and duration of the absence (less than 1 year, more than 1 year).

Thus, based on the LFS sample design, the NBS estimates the number of persons which are declared by the households as “being abroad for work or looking for a job”. This information presents the situation at the moment of interview.

During 2000 - 2011 periods the number of migrants increases 2.3 times.

**Figure 1. Evolution of the labour migration during period 2006 – 2011**

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Most migrants are men (64,5%) and people from the rural areas (71%). Two in three migrants are married, one in five migrants has specialized secondary or higher education (4-6 education levels accordingly to ISCED 97).

The main destination countries are the Russian Federation (64,6%) and Italy (18,4%).

The information is collected and provided quarterly, but for analytical and policy makers purposes these wasn’t enough. Conducting specialized surveys on migration on a regular basis would be the optimal approach. However, due to the high costs of undertaking frequent specialised survey this approach would not be sustainable. A cost-effective alternative is to include a module on labour migration in a household survey that is already a part of the regular official national data collection system. Labour force surveys are a good option for the inclusion of a module on labour migration given the close links between the topics and their relatively large sample size.

### 2. The 2008’s Labour Migration Survey

To address the lack of sound estimates of international labour migration, in the 2nd quarter of 2008 the NBS included a module on “Labour Force Migration” in the national Labour Force Survey (LFS). The module was carried out by the NBS in the frame of the Project “Elimination of human trafficking from Moldova and Ukraine through labour market based measures”, implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO Statistical Office and the SAP-FL - Special Plan of Actions for Combating Forced Labour) jointly with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and in partnership with the Ministry of Economy and Trade.

The purpose of the module was to obtain additional characteristics concerning the persons who left abroad for work or in search of work, such as: reason for leaving, channels for labour migration, migration costs, ways to look for a job and working conditions, residence
status in the destination country, occupation and industry of the job abroad, working relations, problems faced, assistance sought, etc.

The survey sample comprised: a) the basis LFS sample for the 2nd quarter of 2008 and b) the sub-sample of households that in 2007 had at least one member abroad working or looking for work. In total, 12,430 households took part in the survey. Data from 5,730 persons who “at the moment of the interview or during the last 12 months prior to the interview, were abroad, for work or looking for job” were collected.

Taking into account the specifics of the sample, the survey tools comprised two questionnaires, and namely:

- Questionnaire for “absent migrants” – persons who were absent in the household at the moment of the interview, and the reason of absence was leaving abroad for work or looking for a job. The information needed to fill in this questionnaire was provided by other present members of the household during the interview; and

- Questionnaire for “returned migrants” – persons who at the moment of the interview were in the household and who stated that during the last 12 months prior to the interview there were abroad for work or looking for a job.

Thus the term “migrants”, according to the survey methodology, includes all persons who were abroad, for work or looking for a job, at the moment of the interview or during the last 12 months prior to the interview.

At the same, it is necessary to mention that within the framework of the Labour Migration Survey in 2008 NBS tested the methodology/statistical indicators regarding forced labour as related to the trafficking in human beings, which was developed by ILO/SAP-FL. The results of the study were been analyzed using the deduction-based modern statistical science, which was tested for the first time in this survey.


In the distribution by sex, the greatest share of migrants is formed by men (66%), and in the distribution by residence area the greatest share is formed by people from the rural area (68%). More than 3/4 of migrants are persons aged 25-54 years. The average age of migrants is 35 years.

The distribution of migrants by destination-countries shows that most migrants work in Russia (61.4%). The fact of such an imposing number of migrants leaving to Russia is caused by the relatively low expenses for travel, visa-free entry, knowledge of Russian language, etc. In this country, there worked mostly men and persons from rural areas (72.9% and, respectively, 64.6% of their total number).

On the other side, in the countries of the European Union (EU 27), where the access is much more difficult due to the costs and visa regime, there were 28.8% migrants working. The share of migrant women is higher than that of men. Compared to migrants in Russia, those in EU are older, have a higher education level, and until they left abroad a great part of them had a job.

For more details see: http://www.statistica.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=350&id=2570

3. The 2012’s Labour Migration Survey

In the 4th quarter of 2012, NBS is carrying out a new “Labour Force Migration” module as an attachment to the LFS, with a sample of 12,000 households. The main goal of the module is to provide information on labour migration and its skills dimension (some aspects).
The purposes are:
- Providing information on the skills composition (linked to related characteristics) of 
migration flow for analysing and evaluation of its (migration) impact on potential of 
country skills and competences;
- Using the data collected for the design of legal labour migration schemes (to build 
result-based monitoring and evaluation systems).

The survey is jointly supported by the ILO Project “Effective Governance of Labour 
Migration and its Skills Dimensions” and the UN Joint Project “Strengthening the national 
statistical system of the Republic of Moldova”. Moreover, ILO Department of Statistics 
(ILO DS) assisted NBS in development of questions on skills related issues.

The 2012’s survey is conducted using newly developed questionnaires that include 
questions on skills and a limited number of questions applied in 2008 in order to assess 
changes over time.

To examine issues related to labour migration and skills, information is needed on the 
labour force and skills-related characteristics of the target population (migrants and non-
migrant) as well as before, during and after the trip abroad for persons with migration 
experience. A set of questions on skills-related topics was suggested by the ILO 
Department of Statistics for consideration.

NBS agreed with the majority of ILO suggestions. The proposed (by ILO) questions as well 
as other questions are arranged into the following four sections, with indications of the 
target population:

A. Characteristics before the current/last trip abroad
B. Characteristics during the current/last trip abroad
C. Characteristics after return to Moldova
D. Intention to migrate

Thus, the module includes the following items:

- Section A: destination country, duration of staying in that country, reasons for trip, 
educational attainment, field of study, other training before last trip, type of training 
attended, language proficiency, main activity prior to departure, activity status before 
current/last trip, job search before current/last trip, duration of job search, occupation 
of last job, industry of last job, status in employment in last job, reasons for stopping 
last job, reason to look for work/work abroad, intended industry of work abroad;
- Section B: education and training during current/last trip, kind of education/training, 
field of study, equivalency of studies sought/received, duration of job search abroad, 
usual working hours per week, occupation, industry, status in employment, type of 
labour relations, social protection, wishing recognizing the qualifications, volume of 
monthly remittances, their main using, including investment in education and training, 
average monthly earnings, legal status in destination country,
- Section C: main reason of returning to Moldova;
- Section D: intention to migrate, intended place of destination, intended purpose of trip, 
tention to work, intended duration of trip, concrete plans to undertake travel abroad, 
networks abroad, training in the last 12 months, type of training attend, field (subject) 
of study, some general information regarding respondents knowledge about legal ways 
to migrate for work.

To ensure sufficient cases of labour migrants in the sample, the reference period is of 24 
months for the measurement of international labour migration. Finally in the case of the 
measurement of potential migrants, a 6-months period is considered adequate to identify 
those persons with concrete plans to migrate abroad.
The target population represents all members of households, including a) current and returned migrants, as well b) potential migrants. Different questionnaires are applied for these three categories.

To adequately cover older labour migrants, the age limits for the measurement of labour migration is 15-64 years.

For estimate the „skills dimension” of migration NBS will be using (for the first time in Moldova) the European Classification of Fields of Education and Training (Fields of Education and Training Manual, Eurostat, December 1999) which will be tested in the frame of this survey.