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Labour migration and its impact on the labour market

CES Task Force on Measuring Labour Mobility

Note by Israel Central Bureau of Statistics*

Abstract

Labour mobility is a topic of growing policy interest and concern. However, measurement of labour mobility is challenging as it cuts across several statistical domains.

The CES Bureau reviewed in-depth labour mobility and globalisation in February 2015, based on a paper by Statistics Austria. The plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) further discussed the topic in June 2015 to get input from all CES members. Based on the in-depth review the Task Force was established. It includes representatives of seven countries and five organisations. UNECE acts as Secretariat to the Task Force.

The objective of the Task Force is to develop practical guidance on the compilation of labour mobility statistics and review countries' practices in this area. The Task Force's focus is on cross-border labour mobility. Examples of Israel's and Mexico's sources of information on the subject are presented.

The output of the Task Force shall be a Guidebook aimed at the producers of data that will involve the intersection of many different domains, including labour statistics, migration statistics, national accounts, trade, enterprise and tourism statistics.

Work is progressing and materials have been contributed by a number of Task Force members. I invite anyone interested in joining the Task Force to contact me or the Secretariat of the Task Force.

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I. Background

1. Labour mobility is a topic of growing policy interest and concern. However, measurement of labour mobility is challenging as it cuts across several statistical domains. Harmonization of concepts and improved data availability are required to provide an adequate answer to the policy needs and changing economic realities surrounding labour mobility.
2. The CES Bureau reviewed in-depth labour mobility and globalisation in February 2015, based on a paper by Statistics Austria. The plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) further discussed the topic in June 2015 to get input from all CES members.
3. The review identified three main challenges in measuring labour mobility: (a) improving data comparability and coordination of work; (b) enhancing accessibility of existing information; and (c) filling data gaps.
4. Measurement of labour mobility is a cross-cutting issue, touching upon economic and social statistics. The different statistical areas consider labour mobility from different viewpoints. For example, migration statistics do not cover non-migrant foreign workers, they are better at measuring long-term than short-term migration, and often do not include the purpose of the move; tourism statistics measure short-term moves but not workers; and labour market statistics are often missing mobility information. Improvement of statistics on labour mobility requires coordination across several statistical domains and data collection systems, at both national and international levels.
5. Based on the in-depth review described above the Task Force was established. It includes representatives of seven countries (Armenia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Turkey), five organisations (ILO, IOM, OECD, WTO, UNSD) and academics from the ARITHMUS project. UNECE acts as Secretariat to the Task Force.

II. Objective of the Task Force

6. The objective of the Task Force is to develop practical guidance on the compilation of labour mobility statistics and review countries' practices in this area. (Terms of Reference, paragraphs 9-10 (ECE/CES/BUR/2015/OCT/7))
7. Three areas of focus will be
 - a. Preparing a collection of good practices;
 - b. Establishing a framework with common definitions;
 - c. Improving data exchange.
8. The Task Force shall work in coordination with the ILO Working Group on this subject. There is some overlap between the objectives of the two groups but the goal is to produce complementary outcomes. The main focus of the Task Force will be on practical examples through case studies while the focus of the ILO Working Group will be on standardizing definitions of labour mobility terms.

III. Scope

9. The Task Force's focus is on cross-border labour mobility and includes a multitude of issues related to this domain – one being the investigation of linkages between labour mobility

and labour migration – which should help in improving the international comparability of these data.

10. Results of the Task Force will involve the intersection of many different domains, including labour statistics, migration statistics, national accounts, trade, enterprise and tourism statistics. The output of the Task Force shall be a Guidebook aimed at the producers of data, with users benefitting as well because of the improved coordination between countries.

11. The Guidebook is planned to have the following structure:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Sources of Information
- Chapter 3: Concepts and definitions
- Chapter 4: Methodological issues
- Chapter 5: Country cases
- Chapter 6: Recommendations

IV. Country Case Studies

12. The main focus of the Task Force will be on practical examples through case studies. As of now Israel, Mexico and Norway shall be contributing case studies. We hope to add other countries in the near future.

13. Case studies will take into account social statistics data, national accounts data and the comparability and coverage of each. Sources of data will be reviewed including household surveys, enterprise surveys, administrative data, and any other relevant sources. Definitions should be compared – between sources and to recommendations of ILO, SNA and other relevant international recommendations.

14. More specifically, each source can be evaluated on the following:

- a. What is the survey unit?
- b. How is the population of these units defined?
- c. What is the statistical unit and the unit of observation?
- d. Is employment defined according to recommendations from the ILO and SNA?
- e. What is the definition of being resident in a country?
- f. Can employed immigrants be identified?
- g. What information are available about immigrants?
- h. Can cross border workers be identified?
- i. What information are available about non-resident cross border workers?
- j. What information are available about resident cross border workers (commuting out of the country)?

15. When dealing with administrative data a relevant source of information can be records on permits to stay in a country – types of permits, whether it is active and can they be linked to employed persons.

V. Country Case Study – Israel

16. It is helpful to define different groups of interest regarding labour mobility in Israel. Among residents there are foreign-born and native-born. Since we are focused on those who work the foreign-born can be divided between legal permanent immigrants (mostly Jewish and family unification) and foreign workers. Foreign workers can then be divided into those who came to Israel to work in specific fields promoted by the government (agriculture, construction, home care givers), Palestinian workers, and border infiltrators from Africa (mostly Eritrea and Sudan). When dealing with emigrants the picture is less clear cut due to the lack of reporting required when Israelis leave Israel.
17. Israel has multiple sources of information on cross-border labour mobility – each with its own advantages and limitations.
18. Household surveys – The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the main source of information on employment of residents – including immigrants. Country of birth and year of immigration are standard questions in LFS. Similar to demographic definitions, legal permanent immigrants are included in the population of the survey from the moment they arrive (and receive an ID number) while others born abroad but living in Israel must be residing in Israel more than a year to be included in the LFS population.
19. Sampling in the LFS is of residential dwellings so any foreign worker living in a dwelling included in the sampling frame may be included in the LFS. This provides good coverage of home care givers who live with their Israeli client but is limited for coverage of agriculture and construction workers who often reside on-site in places not considered residential dwellings. In addition, the survey is weighted and calibrated to the Israeli population based on the Population Register which does not include foreign workers, therefore limiting the reliability of the estimates.
20. Israelis residing abroad for less than a year are included in the LFS population – provided that a member of their household is in Israel to include them on the LFS questionnaire. Foreigners are not included in the population from the moment they leave Israel.
21. Inclusion in the labour force requires working in Israel or for an Israeli entity abroad, therefore the LFS does not cover most cross-border workers (including those working in the Palestinian Authority).
22. Possibilities for the future: Question those not included in the population and/or labour force regarding labour force characteristics and mobility while not including them in the final estimates.
23. Population Census – The 2008 census estimates and the upcoming census estimates are based on the Population Register which does not include foreign workers. On the other hand it does include a question on place of residence 5 years previous. While in 2008 it was limited to place of residence in Israel an option for the future could be widening the scope to include country of residence abroad.
24. National Insurance Institute and Employment Services – Data on employee jobs of foreign workers are calculated from National Insurance Institute (NII) files received at ICBS. The NII does not check the legal status of the workers. Data on Palestinian employee jobs is received from the payments department of the Employment Services.
25. Border Control Records – Border Control data (with corrections) is used to estimate the stock of foreigners in Israel. Much has been written on the method that need not be repeated here.

26. Infiltrators from Africa enter Israel illegally through the southern border with Egypt. They are estimated by the Population and Immigration Authority based on their work in enforcing immigration laws.

27. National Accounts – In their calculations National Accounts combine data from National Insurance Institute, estimates of infiltrators from Africa and data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

VI. Country Case Study – Mexico

28. Mexico has identified surveys, administrative data and neighbouring country data as sources for measuring labour mobility. The surveys include: (a) 2015 Intercensal Survey and (b) Surveys on Migration at the Northern and Southern Border of Mexico (EMIF Norte/Sur). Administrative data is available from the Statistical Form for Mexicans and Migratory Form (FEM and FMM by their Spanish acronym) and data is also available from USA sources.

VII. Timetable

29. Presented here is a general timetable of the Task Force. Dates refer to the expected time of completion. Writing is planned in stages to allow submitting drafts, receiving comments and making revisions.

Establishment of Task Force	October 2015
1 st teleconference	7 March 2016
Division of labour between Task Force members	April 2016
1 st in-person meeting	May 2016
Preparing literature review	31 July 2016
Country case studies	28 February 2017
Writing guidebook – not including Recommendations	30 April 2017
Writing guidebook – Recommendations	30 September 2017
Review of full draft guidelines by the CES Bureau	October 2017
Revise the guidelines to take into account comments by CES	December 2017
Electronic consultation among all countries in CES	February-April 2018
Expected endorsement by the CES plenary session	April 2018

VIII. Update on progress of the Task Force

30. Work is progressing. Materials have been contributed by a number of Task Force members including input on country case studies from Mexico and Norway and sources for literature review from Turkey, OECD and UNSD. All documents are uploaded to the Task Force wiki space for use of all members.

31. I invite anyone interested in joining the Task Force to contact me or the Secretariat of the Task Force.