

**Workshop on Use of Administrative Data for the Measurement of Migration in Georgia**

Tbilisi (Georgia), 5-6 April 2016

12 April 2016

**REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP**

**I. Organization and attendance**

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) organized this workshop on migration statistics in cooperation with the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat), with financial support from the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the United Nations Development Account. The working languages of the workshop were English and Georgian.
2. Participants represented the following Georgian government agencies: Geostat, State Commission on Migration Issues, Public Service Development Agency, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), State Security Service of Georgia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees, Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Labour, Health, Social Affairs. Experts from Statistics Norway, Swiss Federal Statistical Office, Moscow State University, and UNECE participated as well.
3. The workshop consisted of five sessions over two days. The first day discussed sources of migration data in Georgia, the use of administrative data to measure migration, while the second day examined Georgia's plans for future information system on migration and the experiences of Switzerland and Norway in the integration of data sources and cooperation between the statistical office and different producers of administrative data and in developing methods for linking administrative sources. Presentations from the workshop are available on the UNECE website:  
[www.unece.org/index.php?id=41280#/](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41280#/)

**II. Objective**

4. The objective of the workshop was to examine existing sources of migration data, particularly administrative sources, and to investigate both how to best utilize and integrate existing sources and how to develop new sources to measure migration.

**III. Use of administrative data to measure migration**

5. The first day of the workshop was focused on the current situation in

Georgia regarding the collection and production of migration statistics. Further information on possible alternative ways of using administrative data for measuring migration was provided in later session on the first day.

6. To open the first session, Geostat presented sources and methods they use to estimate migration. Geostat pointed out the importance of migration statistics given demographic trends in Georgia. Several changes in methodology that have been implemented since 2002 were highlighted to show improvements made over this time period. Geostat currently uses data provided by MIA on border crossings by non-Georgian citizens. Geostat also called attention to a departure from international standards in that the usual residence is based on a requirement of accumulating more than 183 days of residence in Georgia rather than the place at which the person has lived continuously for most of the last 12 months. In addition, data on previous and next residence are not currently collected. In the ensuing discussion, several shortcomings of using border crossing data were observed, particularly the possibility that some border crossings might be missed or not properly logged by officials. MIA officials stated their confidence that most border crossings are properly accounted for.

7. UNECE gave an overview of the Migration Clearing House database, including its origin and current status, particularly in terms of the availability of data provided by Georgia. Examples of data analysis that can be done measuring the stock of migrants abroad using data from other countries were highlighted. The importance of metadata when using mirror statistics was also emphasized to ensure that comparisons are between like statistics. Discussion following this overview focused on how data from other countries can be used to improve migration statistics. Participants agreed on the usefulness of these data though urged caution when making comparison given possible methodological differences. Geostat noted the importance of metadata and that further effort could be given to disseminating this information in the future.

8. Ms Olga Chudinovskikh, from Moscow State University, provided an overview of sources of administrative data. The main advantage of administrative sources is that they provide a cost-effective means of measuring migration, which is often underutilized in countries. The presentation discussed various types of administrative data, such as population or foreigner registers, border control data, visa types, and consular information, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each type, as well as the ability to link information across administrative sources to get other characteristics of migrants. Among the limitations of these sources are issues of counting administrative procedures as opposed to actual migration events, unregistered migration, multiple nationalities, and general data quality concerns.

9. A group exercise was held to give participants from different Georgian government agencies the opportunity to discuss which migration statistics were important and how these data could be collected. Participants were split into four groups and asked to discuss several questions. The responses to these questions included discussion of data on migration that are important to giving a full view of migration trends in Georgia as well as

the data sources and data gaps that currently exist. Each group made a brief presentation on the results of their discussion and feedback was provided by Ms Chudinovskikh.

#### **IV. Integration of data sources to improve the measurement of migration**

10. The second day was devoted to discussion of examples of integrating data sources to improve migration statistics. Future plans in Georgia were presented and discussed as were examples of data integration in countries with developed data collection systems.

11. Representatives from the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues and Public Service Development Agency provided information on Georgia's plans to develop its Unified Migration Analytical System (UMAS). The planned system will combine data from several agencies dealing with migration in order to give a full overview of immigration into Georgia. Given the lack of a population register, data will be linked using probabilistic matching algorithms with an emphasis on providing information quickly to users by using "big data" processing tools. Geostat observed that this system could provide good information on immigration of foreigners (non-Georgian citizens), but that information on emigration and of movements of Georgian citizens will not be covered by the system in its currently planned form.

12. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO) presented information about the collection of migration statistics in Switzerland, including past experiences in setting up the current system and specific challenges in developing a decentralized system. The establishment of a constitutional article that explicitly demands the use of registers for statistics was spotlighted as an important step which propelled improvements in measuring migration. In addition, it was observed that often improvements in statistics were made in conjunction with other administrative improvements (eg. healthcare, pensions). It also noted the differences in data produced by FSO and by the immigration authority given the different motivations of the two organizations. Specifically, FSO noted the importance of recalling that people rather than permits must be counted in migration statistics.

13. Statistics Norway discussed the integration of data sources and collaboration with users of population register data in Norway. The history of its population register and cooperation with neighboring countries was highlighted as was its origins as a centralized system. It stressed the long development time needed to build effective registration systems, particularly for the measurement of migration. Statistics Norway also called attention to increasing challenges in measuring emigration and noted that upcoming changes to the data collected in the population register are being made through consultations with more than 20 Norwegian organizations.

14. Statistics Norway also presented information on a project undertaken to link personal identification numbers (PINs) found in its population register with purpose-driven identification numbers used for non-Norwegian

residents in the population register and generated by Norway's Directorate of Immigration for applicants. It stressed the need for developing a hierarchy of the reliability of the various sources being matched. Statistics Norway also demonstrated how its PIN system can be used to identify histories and characteristics of individuals.

## **V. Conclusions and recommendations**

15. Andres Vikat from UNECE moderated and led the concluding discussion.

16. In general terms, administrative sources provide more and more useful data given digitization of many transactions, but new legislation may be required to impose change toward the development of population registers. In many cases, countries with good statistical systems today use population registers whose creation was driven by motivations different than those of statistical agencies.

17. For any administrative data, coverage and metadata in general are important to users. As such, it is also important that data producers provide this information. Measuring emigration is another challenge in any system of data collection. Population registers can bring an improvement to migration statistics, compared to the use of surveys or border control data. For a good coverage of emigration statistics derived from such register, there has to be some incentive for a person to notify the authorities when leaving the country.

18. Participants agreed on the utility of a population register data collection system for migration statistics. However, Geostat acknowledged that this was more likely a long-term goal for Georgia than an immediate possibility. Continued work will continue on improving the current system in the interim period given common interests between statisticians and the MIA.

19. The new analytical system being developed in Georgia is a positive step toward integrating different sources. In the future, the inclusion of Georgian citizens and emigration events and would make this system more useful for generating migration statistics.

20. Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with the workshop and its relevance to their needs. They appreciated the opportunity to discuss and exchange experiences among government agencies and with international experts and welcomed further collaborative work in the future.