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Longitudinal data on migration**Summary of comments from the consultation on the
*Guidance on the Use of Longitudinal Data for Migration
Statistics*****Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

This document summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Guidance on the Use of Longitudinal Data for Migration Statistics*. The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the Guidance in March–April 2020.

A total of 41 countries and 2 organizations replied to the request for comments. There was general support for the conclusions and recommendations and for the proposals for future work. All respondents agreed with the endorsement of the Guidance, subject to incorporation of the comments made in the consultation. Countries and organizations also provided detailed comments that are summarized in this document.

The Conference is invited to endorse the *Guidance on the Use of Longitudinal Data for Migration Statistics*, subject to amendments outlined in this document.



I. Introduction

1. The note summarizes the comments by the members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Guidance on the Use of Longitudinal Data for Migration Statistics*. The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the recommendations in March–April 2020. The CES members were asked to structure their comments according to a set of questions on general and specific issues.
2. The Task Force on the use of longitudinal data for migration statistics is chaired by Statistics Canada. It includes representatives from national statistical offices of Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Netherlands, Russian Federation, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Eurostat, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNECE.
3. The Task Force will amend the text as presented in this document to reflect the comments received through the electronic consultation.

II. Summary

4. In the electronic consultation, responses were received from the following 41 countries and organizations: Albania, Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, OECD, and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).
5. All respondents agreed with the endorsement of the Guidance at the CES plenary session, subject to incorporation of the comments made in the consultation.
6. The comments and the Task Force’s responses are summarized in sections III–V.

III. General comments

7. Many responding countries and organizations expressed support to the Guidance and appreciation for the work of the Task Force. For example:
 - (a) Brazil: “The guidelines are extremely relevant to guide the statistical institutes not only in the production of longitudinal data for international migrations, but also for the general use of administrative records and implementation of longitudinal research.”;
 - (b) Finland: “Thank you for the guidance! It provided relevant topics to be studied and published in migration statistics (e.g. indicators of employment, education and family relations of immigrants). To a larger extent, the integration of immigrants should be studied by longitudinal datasets. This guidance provides helpful tools for the analysis.”;
 - (c) Italy: “This Guidance clearly shows how longitudinal data could be developed and used for international migration statistics by providing an overview of types of data and explaining how to develop longitudinal data sources from integrated data.”;
 - (d) Latvia: “Recommendations are very useful, and we intend to consider specific recommendations for production of new migration statistics.”;
 - (e) Lithuania: “Statistics Lithuania welcomes very useful, well-structured and detailed Guidance.”;
 - (f) Russian Federation: “Rosstat fully endorses the Guidance. We believe that the work of the Task Force is an important and timely contribution to the development of longitudinal studies of population migration. It also fully meets the need for developing migration statistics in general.”;
 - (g) Poland: “Statistics Poland finds the Guidance very interesting and useful. Containing lots of examples of developing and usage of longitudinal data, the Guidance

clearly explains the advantages of longitudinal approach, but at the same time is not omitting its limitations. Described experiences and solutions adopted in different countries are very informative and inspiring.”;

(h) Switzerland: “The Guidance is a successful example of how theoretical or methodological principles and aspects can be combined with concrete and comprehensible instructions for practical application or implementation. Congratulations to all the members of the Task Force who produced this report.”;

(i) United Kingdom: “This is a significant step forward and fills a gap in the guidance available to national statistical institutes considering the production of migration statistics using longitudinally linked data.”

8. OECD highlighted the importance of the Guidance, its chapter 4 in particular, for other international work, notably by the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics.

9. Australia mentioned that a significant part of the Guidance looks at the sources and how to develop a longitudinal data set for migration; suggesting to change the title to “Guidance on the development and use of longitudinal data for migration statistics”.

10. Poland pointed out that the terms “migrant settlement” and “migrant integration” are used interchangeably in the Guidance and considered that using only the term “migrant settlement” may be more accurate.

11. UNSD recommended to include references to global standards, such as *Handbook on Measuring International Migration through Population Censuses* (2017), *Guidelines on the Legislative Framework for Civil Registration, Vital Statistics and Identity Management* (2019), *International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics* (2018) and *Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Management, Operation and Maintenance* (2018).

Response by the Task Force

12. The Task Force notes that adding the word “development” to the title would make it more precise but also less concise. On balance, the Task Force prefers to keep the current title of the Guidance.

13. To ensure a more neutral presentation, the term “migrant settlement” will be used instead of “migrant integration” throughout the text.

14. The global standards will be mentioned in the introduction and in specific places in the text where directly relevant.

IV. Chapter-specific comments

15. This section summarizes comments on specific chapters of the Guidance. In addition, Germany, Lithuania, Mexico, Poland, Slovakia and Switzerland provided detailed editorial suggestions, which the Task Force will consider in revising the Guidance. Albania, Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, United Kingdom provided information on their activities in creating or working with longitudinal data sets.

A. Chapter 1: Introduction

16. Albania suggested to clarify the differences between this Guidance and the *Guidance on Data Integration for Measuring Migration*.

17. Colombia pointed out the need to refer to migration as a potentially repeating event in people’s lives. They suggested to refer to the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* in the 2nd paragraph of the Guidance.

18. New Zealand specified that a longitudinal approach can be used to identify whether a person is a migrant and would therefore be useful for statistics on migrant arrivals, migrant departures, and net migration, and in measuring durations, especially when disrupted by

multiple border-crossings. Recognising that these aspects are mentioned in the Guidance, they saw a need to elaborate further.

19. The United Kingdom requested to reflect the fact that not all statistical offices have access to administrative data in the way that some do, and adding that not all of them will have the resource or availability to produce longitudinal data. They may wish to consider alternatives suggested in chapter 2, for example synthetic cohorts.

Response by the Task Force

20. Sentences will be added to the Introduction to clarify all the above-mentioned points.

B. Chapter 2: Overview of longitudinal data sources for migration statistics

21. Israel suggested to add in the chapter's summary a reference to the opportunity to use innovative data ("Big Data") for evaluation or completion.

22. Mexico suggested to mention that some countries do not have a law that obliges owners of administrative data to share it with the statistical office, and that this could be dealt with through agreements with the owners, specifying the data to be shared, and at what conditions. Australia also requested to show how a statistical office would need to influence and collaborate with other agencies who may be collecting the administrative data.

Response by the Task Force

23. Section 2.2 will be expanded to clarify the above-mentioned points.

C. Chapter 3: How to develop a longitudinal data set for migration statistics using integrated data

24. Lithuania pointed out that it could be useful to provide a brief summary in the end of the chapter.

25. Finland wished that the chapter could provide more guidance on what kind of data systems national statistical offices should own to perform longitudinal analyses on migration.

26. Mexico suggested to add a comparative analysis of relevant software and description on methods of database pre-processing and integration of administrative records.

27. New Zealand requested clarification on the phrase "ideal or target concept". They were also wishing more or stronger guidance on quantifying linkage errors for migration, especially when complete matching is not expected, and on the linking of variables. New Zealand also raised the issue of including internal migration in the longitudinal measurement if the objective is to study and understand life events.

Response by the Task Force

28. A brief summary of the chapter will be added to its end.

29. The chapter looks at surveys as well as administrative sources, allowing countries to consider the advantages and disadvantages of both types of sources for longitudinal data. Concrete examples are provided from countries with different statistical systems, showing the wide variety of sources and data systems on which longitudinal data can rely, including data not in possession of the statistical office.

30. A comparative analysis of relevant software and description on methods of database pre-processing and integration of administrative records would go beyond the scope of this Guidance.

31. While focusing on international migration, the Guidance recognizes internal migration as a longitudinal project component in sections 3.3.1 and 4.1.1. Furthermore, examples from Canada, Kazakhstan, Spain and the United Kingdom refer to data on internal migration.

32. The Guidance does not attempt to define concepts. The phrase “ideal or target concept” was mentioned in tables describing the error framework in section 3.2, to label a reference point for harmonisation. This is now simplified to be “target concept”.

D. Chapter 4: Disseminating regular migration statistics from longitudinal data sources

33. Finland expressed hope that the topics recommended in this chapter would lead international comparisons of the integration of immigrants. Israel emphasised the usefulness of the presentation of indicators and good practices.

34. Belgium suggested to reflect the development of administrative sources on asylum applicants and decisions on applications, residence permits, and enforcement of immigration legislation. They proposed to refer to indicators on the reason for migration and migration trajectories, based on recent improvements in collecting such data. To measure the asylum process, they proposed to include in the Guidance additional longitudinal indicators under the topic “migration patterns”, in line with the *International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics*.

35. Mexico proposed to add six indicators without the time dimension under the topic “Time until change in residence or legal status, including citizenship”, and to call the topic “Legal status, including citizenship”, on grounds that it should focus on the legal status and not on time.

36. New Zealand praised the way the data uses are identified, and complexities are highlighted in this chapter. They pointed out the need to ensure that the compiled longitudinal data allows analysing new topics such as the relationship between internal and international migration.

37. Lithuania pointed out that it would be useful if some possible examples of visualisation of meta-data and methodology were presented. North Macedonia suggested to think about interactive graphs of each indicator.

Response by the Task Force

38. A description of recent development of administrative sources on asylum seekers and refugees will be included in section 4.1.1. Reference will be made to the following indicators in the *International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics*: (1) proportion of persons in a country for international protection who have remained for 5/ 10/ over 10 years; (2) recognition rate (which can be adequately calculated from longitudinal data). Indicators without a time dimension would not be longitudinal and would thus go beyond the scope of this Guidance.

39. In section 3.3.1, the inclusion of internal migration is listed among the questions that need to be addressed at the stage of setting objectives for a project on longitudinal data. Whether any longitudinal data set would allow covering internal migration would depend on the answer to this question and the availability of such information in the source data. In either case, the considerations described in this chapter would apply.

40. For the figures and tables in the Guidance, the Task Force relied on the material that its members could readily supply for illustrating their experience or methodology. Developing additional visual enhancements would go beyond this Task Force’s remit.

E. Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

41. New Zealand welcomed the considerations that Guidance provided for improving comparability and wished that more countries would be able to build longitudinal data sets. Finland pointed out that a better international coordination of registering migration, for example where countries report immigration to the country of departure, would greatly improve emigration data.

42. Finland, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom mentioned that many recommendations may be challenging to carry out in many countries, in particular the regular production the indicators in chapter 4. Switzerland would prefer less specific and less demanding recommendations on indicators. Sweden pointed out the usefulness of its registers for constructing longitudinal data sets and the fact that they do not include all the recommended variables. Kazakhstan, Romania, Serbia and the United Kingdom highlighted the limitation in terms of the availability of integrated administrative data sources and the fact that these sources are not designed for statistical purposes.

43. Sweden mentioned that the use of the guidance may be increased by including recommendations that are more concrete. Furthermore, to enable international comparisons of the statistics, a proposed next step could be to develop common definitions.

Response by the Task Force

44. The Guidance provides a typology of international practices. Its chapter 3 is entirely devoted to concrete explanations of how to develop a longitudinal data set and chapter 4 is defining the recommended (thus prioritized) indicators.

45. The description of how to construct a longitudinal data set is considering the perspective of surveys as well as administrative sources, so that countries could consider the advantages and disadvantages of both types of sources when planning longitudinal data projects in their national circumstances. The Guidance includes concrete practical examples from countries with different statistical systems. Countries can thus consider the examples from the contexts that are most relevant for their situation.

46. The recommendations in the Guidance are meant to apply regardless of statistical context and the specific examples are meant to help apply these recommendations in specific contexts. Tailoring specific recommendations for a large variety of country contexts would go beyond the scope of this Guidance.

47. National statistical capacities, laws and policy priorities vary and it is well understood that not every country can implement all the recommended actions fully. Yet the Guidance enables the interested countries the construction of longitudinal data sets. To reflect this, paragraph 417 is reformulated as follows:

“It is recommended that, where feasible based on data availability and other possible constraints, countries regularly produce the longitudinal indicators for migration statistics covering the topics as described in Chapter 4.”

48. A new paragraph is added to the end of section 5.2, Recommendations:

“These recommendations, and the guidance provided in earlier chapters, provide concrete next steps for national statistical offices to work towards integrating longitudinal data into official migration statistics. However, it is also recognized that not all countries have the infrastructure, capacity, or established priorities to follow all of the recommendations in this guidance. While there would be benefits to making further recommendations, especially in the area of data sharing or establishing international standards for longitudinal indicators, these country-specific constraints must also be acknowledged. Further international collaboration to address these areas is recommended.”

49. The following paragraph is added to the end of the Introduction:

“Statistical systems vary greatly in the opportunities that they have in constructing longitudinal data sets. The provision of sufficient means and statistical capacity is therefore crucial. The present Guidance provides orientation for countries participating in the Conference of European Statisticians, recognizing that not all countries would be able to apply all aspects of the recommendations.”

V. Proposal to the Conference

50. The Conference is invited to endorse the *Guidance on the Use of Longitudinal Data for Migration Statistics*, subject to amendments outlined in this document.
