

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Meeting of the 2014/2015 Bureau
Geneva (Switzerland), 21-22 October 2014

For discussion and
recommendations

Item 2 (a) of the Provisional
Agenda

COMMENTS ON THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Prepared by Turkey

The note provides the comments from the Turkish Statistical Institute as input to the in-depth review of population projections.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Turkey appreciates the in-depth review paper written by the statistical offices of Canada and the United Kingdom. Turkey conducted similar studies and discussions within our institute in 2013. It sent questionnaires¹ to other national statistical offices about their projection activities.
2. In the light of many correspondences, Turkey prepared a report regarding implementation of population projections in countries. In this respect, this study is very similar with mentioned report. Therefore, it is important that this issue has been brought to the international arena.
3. Although TurkStat staff presented an oral report on Turkey's subnational population projections at "UNECE/Eurostat Work Session on Population Projections " (Rome, Italy) in October of 2013, unfortunately Turkey was not mentioned at the country practices section of this working paper.
4. This report clearly shows that it is necessary to establish international standards for the definitions, methods, time and periods of population projections. A "best practices" guide would be very useful. With the help of such a manual, common definitions, methods, etc. can be improved. However, this guide should be prepared by considering different country demographic structures and common use.

¹ Turkey, as many countries, makes deterministic population projections and uses cohort components method. Turkey tried to obtain information about the process of population projections from many countries via a questionnaire that includes questions such as "How have they been doing their population projections?", "What are their methods?", "What is the period of revision of the process?", "What are the data sources?", etc. Most of the countries were very kind to send an answer to our questions in time. However; answers are incomplete, inadequate and vary widely from country to country. The lack of standards gives rise to the need to have a study on setting them.

5. International organizations also produce projections for countries. At the same time countries make their own projections. Thus, for any given year, there have been several population values for a given country. It is not clear that which of these projections are accurate and valid. For example, CIA (World Fact Book) estimated 2013 population of Turkey as approximately 80 million. However, our population is approximately 76 million. The difference is 4 million. This is an important difference. A lot of time was lost to explain this difference to the public.

6. Therefore, it is necessary to make population projections in accordance with official data of a country, only from by a single agency. In this context, it is considered that setting up a UNECE database of information about projections will be one of the solutions on this issue.

7. Many countries make deterministic population projections. In addition, they produce probabilistic projections. These two different approaches require a different level of knowledge for interpretation and reading of the results. In particular, there is a need for a study for easier interpretation of probabilistic projections.

8. As for the comments on the in-depth review of population projections prepared by the Secretariat, regardless of the identity of the responsible organization for setting up the database, the content, sustainability, user-friendliness of the document and extent of utilization by all countries are important.

9. It is extremely important to set up the task force for the preparation of guidelines on population projections and develop the database for the improvement, interpretation and use of population projections. UNECE's undertaking of overall coordination and executive role is also noteworthy.

10. Turkey will be highly pleased to participate in population projections task force. In this regard, it is of great importance to develop a common document by sharing experiences which is to be used by all countries.

11. Turkey supports the idea of setting up the Task Force for preparation of international best practice guide on population projection and is willing to join it.

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