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Reports on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians, its Bureau and Teams of Specialists

Report of the Work Session on Migration Statistics

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Conference of European Statisticians, at its sixty fourth plenary session in April 2016, approved the activities undertaken under the UNECE Statistical Programme 2016, and endorsed the list of meetings planned to be organized from January 2016 onwards, as provided in document ECE/CES/91 (Report of the sixty fourth plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians, paragraph 25). This list included the Work Session on Migration Statistics, which was held in Geneva on 18-20 May 2016.

The present document is the report of that Work Session, and is provided to inform the Conference of European Statisticians of the organization and outcomes of that Work Session.

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1.   The joint UNECE/Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics was held on 18-20 May 2016 in Geneva. It was attended by participants from Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Egypt, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uzbekistan and State of Palestine. The European Union was represented by Eurostat, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU-FRA), and the MEDSTAT IV Consortium. The Eurasian Economic Commission, the Inter-American Statistical Institute (IASI), the International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISStat), the UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS, the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and the World Bank were also represented. Experts from the Goldsmiths, University of London and the Moscow State University participated at the invitation of the UNECE secretariat.

2.   A number of participants could attend the Work Session thanks to the financial support provided by the European Commission, the European Free Trade Association and the United Nations Development Account.

II. Organization of the meeting

3.   Mr. Antonio Argüeso from Spain was elected as Chair of the meeting.

4.   The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting:

   a)   Data integration and good practices in communication between national statistical offices and producers of administrative data

   b)   Migration statistics and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

   c)   Socio-economic characteristics of migrants and people with foreign background

   d)   Measuring circular migration

   e)   Labour migration and its impact on the labour market

   f)   Dissemination and use of migration statistics for policymaking

   g)   Emerging issues, including new methods to estimate and project migration

   h)   Asylum seekers and refugees.

5.   The following participants acted as Discussants: for sub-session (a) Ms. Sarah Crofts (United Kingdom), for sub-session (c) Ms. Ima Okonny (Canada), for sub-session (e) Ms. Barica Razpotnik (Slovenia), for sub-session (f) Mr. Jason Schachter (United States), for sub-session (g) Ms. Inga Masiulaitytė-Šukevič (Lithuania) and for sub-session (h) Mr. Gunter Brückner (Germany).

6.   The discussion at the meeting was based on papers are available on the UNECE website.[1]

.   III.   Summary of discussion

A.   Data integration

7.   Discussion was based on papers from Australia, Canada, Colombia and Spain.

8.   The presentation from Australia was on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) use of data integration techniques to maximise the use of administrative data sources held by other government organisations. The ABS has made significant headway in this area and is now realising the benefits as evidenced by several examples in the presentation. The presentation provided information about these linked datasets, including an overview of the linkage methods used, key findings from the data, and plans for possible development of this work into the future. The presentation also shared key challenges experienced including the relationship between the ABS and producers and users of the administrative data.

9.   A joint paper from Canada was presented by representatives from Statistics Canada and Immigration, Refuges and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) on the benefits of collaboration between Canada's national statistics office and migration services. The IRCC first described the data it collects and its dissemination of these data. The strong relationship with Statistics Canada was highlighted, including frequent communication and data linkages. Statistics Canada next described the steps that the two agencies continue to take to improve harmonization and noted several challenges faced – including differences in terminology.

10.   The paper from Colombia discussed the experience of Colombia's National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) in its exploration of the use of administrative records for the production of information on migration issues. The presentation focused on the methodological development of the estimation of international migration flows in Colombia from the administrative border control register. The presentation also discussed the estimation algorithm and evaluation of results by comparing emigration flows from Colombia and those registered in other countries.

11.   Spain presented a paper which noted some shortcomings of current migration statistics and the opportunities for improving these statistics through cross-border data sharing. The benefits of exchanging information between countries were highlighted and statistical offices were encouraged to exchange information in order to improve migration and population statistics. In particular, the paper proposed the exchange of individual data, not only aggregate figures.

12.   Discussion of this item focused on the challenges faced by statisticians when linking data and the need to understand data in both sources before they are integrated. Despite these challenges, several participants noted the gaps in coverage in individual sources and recognized the opportunities available through combining information from different data sources, including between survey and administrative data and across borders. The value of communication between producers of data, including on the protection of data was also highlighted. In addition, presenters responded to individual questions related to their papers.

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[1] www.unece.org/index.php?id=41274#/

B. Migration Statistics and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

13.   Discussion was based on a presentation from UNECE.

14.   The presentation from UNECE provided a background on the development of the indicators chosen to measure the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specific attention was given to the importance of migration statistics in the 2030 Agenda. Challenges were discussed, including the need to further disaggregate migration statistics and to continue to improve international coordination.

C. Socio-economic characteristics of migrants and people with foreign background

15.   Discussion was based on papers from Italy, the Russian Federation, the United States and the Households International Migration Surveys in the Mediterranean countries (MED-HIMS) programme.

16.   Italy described its development of indicators on the integration of migrants. The gaps in coverage of general population household surveys were discussed and the presentation underlined the reasons for its development of a survey focused specifically on the coverage of the foreign population. Italy described the methodological aspects of this new survey and provided information on the survey's strong and weak points. The final part of the presentation displayed some recent results of the survey and how these results are shared.

17.   The presentation from the Russian Federation described the details of the recent micro-census conducted in October 2015 where over 2 million people were surveyed. For the purpose of a detailed research of migration process respondents were asked several migration-related questions. The census contributed to obtaining information on long-term absent household members, reasons and period of their absence, their socio-demographic characteristics, family relation to other members of the household. The questions related to registration also gave an idea of scale of deviations of the number of resident population from the so-called legal or registered population. This deviation might be used for further analysis when developing methodology both for the next Census and current accounting of the population during the inter-census period

18.   The United States' paper provided an overview of data collected on immigrants by the U.S. Census Bureau and outlined ongoing efforts to improve data quality, specifically on recording the year of entry of immigrants. The paper concluded with a snapshot of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of immigrants in the U.S.

19.   MED-HIMS presented an analysis of the determinants and consequences of international migration in Egypt, using data collected in the 2013 Egypt Household International Migration Survey (Egypt-HIMS). The survey was implemented by the Central Agency of Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) as part the MED-HIMS programme which is a joint initiative of the European Commission/Eurostat, the World Bank, UNHCR, UNFPA, ILO, IOM, and the League of Arab States. The paper provided a demographic and socioeconomic profile of the survey households and population according to the migration status of the household. The analysis highlighted who migrates, why, to where and how; with what characteristics, and with what impacts. Main findings and key indicators were presented on a wide range of aspects of international migration.

20.   In the discussion following this item, participants highlighted the importance of understanding both the characteristics of migrants and why they choose to migrate. Further discussion focused on the ways in which response rates can be improved in the types of specialized surveys described in the presentations. Cooperation between data producers was

also highlighted as a way to improve the quality of these statistics. Participants also noted that policy needs continue to drive the requests for further understanding of the socio-economic characteristics of migrants.

D. Measuring circular migration

21.   Discussion was based on the report of the CES Task Force on Measuring Circular Migration.

22.   UNECE presented the main points of the report and highlighted the results of the recent CES consultation. The specific points requiring further discussion were underlined, particularly the point by Hungary that the definition of circular migration should reflect short-term migration as well. The UNECE described the expected next steps of the Task Force to edit the report according to proposals received during the consultation and submit to the meeting of the CES Bureau in October 2016.

23.   In the discussion, several participants noted the usefulness of the report and were of the opinion that more emphasis should be given to short-term circular migration or mixed circular migration (long-term and short-term) in the definition. Members of the Task Force clarified that short-term circular migration was not excluded from the report and noted challenges in measuring this phenomenon. Other participants highlighted the difficulty in measuring circular migration (both long-term and short-term) and their current lack of capacity in this area. Several countries and organizations expressed an interest in testing methods of measuring circular migration on surveys and agreed to follow up with the Task Force after the Work Session.

E. Labour migration and its impact on the labour market

24.   Discussion was based on papers from Hungary, Israel, and Mexico.

25.   Hungary presented its development of indicators of integration of foreigners. Due to the low presence of foreigners within Hungary's population, their uneven regional distribution and other linguistic and cultural reasons, the Hungarian Labour Force Survey does not adequately measure the socio-economic characteristics of foreigners. In 2014, an ad hoc module was attached to the Labour Force Survey with the purpose to measure labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants. The module included oversampling of addresses where the probability of living third countries' citizens was likely high, increased availability of paper questionnaires in selected foreign languages, web questionnaires and increased interviewer training for the contact with migrants. The result of the conducted survey was a more detailed picture on the labour market integration of third countries' citizens in Hungary and an increased opportunity to assess the reliability of available registers.

26.   Israel described the ongoing methods used and challenges faced by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics in constructing an estimate of Israel's illegal foreign population. Since 1995, the estimate has been based on statistical interpretations of data from the Border Control Register administrative system. The paper discussed several changes in the Border Control system over the past 20 years as well as structural changes within other government ministries charged with managing foreigners' data, changes in immigration policy, etc. These changes required updating and re-evaluating the methods used for estimation of foreigners in general and illegal foreigners in particular. Past experience, the advantages and disadvantages of the various methods and the possible outcomes of each were discussed.

27.   The paper presented by Mexico's national statistics office (INEGI) illustrated its response to the challenges of measuring labour migration and mobility. The country-specific context in regard to migration was highlighted to first demonstrate the main concerns of public policy. The conceptual framework of labour migration and daily mobility as derived from international recommendations was also discussed in detail before a thorough review of the available sources in Mexico. The utility of the various sources for analysis was explained with regard to different expressions of labour migration as a social aspect of globalization and its impact on labour markets. The conclusion of the presentation focused on the gaps as well as on challenges in generating information on labour migration.

28.   The chair of the CES Task Force on Measuring Labour Mobility (Mr. Mark Feldman, Israel Central Bureau of Statistics) presented the Task Force's progress and goals. The Task Force was established in 2015 and includes representatives of seven countries and five organisations and its objective 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 and will involve the intersection of many different domains, including labour statistics, migration statistics, national accounts, trade, enterprise and tourism statistics. The Task Force will produce a guidebook aimed at the producers of data. Additional countries or organizations interested in joining the Task Force were encouraged to contact the chair of Task Force or the Secretariat.

29.   Discussion focused on the future work of the Task Force on Measuring Labour Mobility. Several participants expressed their interest in seeing the outcome of the Task Force given the importance of the topics. Several also noted that given the broad range of topics which fall under its stated objectives, the proposed work is ambitious. Presenters also responded to specific questions related to their papers.

F.   Dissemination and use of migration statistics for policymaking

30.   Discussion was based on papers from Republic of Moldova, Sweden, and MEDSTAT IV.

31.   The Republic of Moldova presented information characterizing the national policy priorities in the field of migration as underlined in the strategic programs of the Government of the Republic of Moldova. It noted that the Moldova-EU Association Agreement brings collaboration in the field of migration flow management and migration statistics issues to a new level. The main trends in statistics improvement were also presented in the development strategy of the national statistics system for 2015-2020

32.   Sweden provided some results of its recent work on circular migration. The Swedish government in 2014 assigned Statistics Sweden and the Swedish Migration Agency the task of undertaking a mapping study of available statistical data on migration. Some results of the study were presented and show the overall potential of measuring circular migration. In 2016, the Swedish government allocated funds to Statistics Sweden specifically for the purpose of producing yearly statistics on circular migration. As a result Statistics Sweden will begin the process of creating an alternative register that will be used to produce statistics on circular migration. Preliminary results were presented to show the potential of register data for measuring trends in circular migration.

33.   MEDSTAT IV presented an overview of MED-HIMS, the programme of coordinated national household surveys on international migration launched in 2012 by the European Commission and its partner organisations. MEDSTAT IV is a European Commission programme of support to the national statistics offices of the countries of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean, in particular for the development of the MED-HIMS. The paper outlined the components and main features of survey programme, and

reported on the current status of operations and future plans following the successful implementation of the surveys in Egypt and Jordan. The need to review the model instruments before launching of surveys in other participating countries was also discussed and examples of the type of data that may be derived from the national surveys was also shared.

34.   In the discussion which followed the presentations, participants explained further the role of policymakers in driving migration statistics initiatives. The need to communicate the principles of official statistics to those funding projects was highlighted as an important step in ensuring a better understanding of the possibilities when collecting statistics. Challenges faced when policies or administrations change were also underlined. Some participants expressed their hope that more policymakers could speak at future Work Sessions in order to provide different perspectives on the topic. In addition, presenters responded to individual questions related to their papers.

G.   Emerging issues, including new methods to estimate and project migration

35.   Discussion was based on papers from Albania, Canada, Latvia, Slovenia and EU-FRA.

36.   Albania presented its use of indirect methods to estimate net migration in the country. Emigration was one of the major reasons for the population decline in Albania between the 2001 and the 2011 censuses and presents a challenge when calculating its annual population. As Albanian emigrants have not systematically registered when leaving the country, data on emigrants from registers is not considered accurate. Indirect estimation methods were studied as a potential method of producing an estimate of the individuals who have emigrated between recent censuses. Results of this method were presented and a new approach used recently by using the Labour Force survey on measuring migration was also discussed.

37.   Canada provided information on a 2016 Census of Population project to add immigrant admission category (e.g., economic immigrants, refugees) through a record linkage to administrative immigration data. The project is intended to fill a gap in data from the Canadian Census of Population on the conditions under which immigrations came to the country. The results from this record linkage will be used to better understand the socio-economic outcomes of immigrants and also to support and evaluate immigration policies and programs in Canada. The presentation provided a brief overview of this project and an outline of the methods being considered to address resulting inconsistencies between the linked administrative variables and self-reported variables traditionally collected in the Census.

38.   Latvia presented its work on a new method for more precise estimations of its population. This method was proposed in response to the results of the Population and Housing Census 2011 where the number of resident population of Latvia, differed notably from the population number as based on the Population Register. The new method is based on statistical classification and migration mirror statistics. The statistical classification model was developed with the help of logistic regression analysis and provides a probability that people listed in various registers are residents of the country. The presentation explained the developed method, including the data used and problems foreseen.

39.   Slovenia presented information on its efforts to link annual migration databases and annual usual resident population databases in order to determine how many emigrants tend to return (and possibly emigrate again) and their characteristics. The study was motivated

by increases of the number of Slovenian citizens emigrating in recent years and concern that more of the emigrants may be highly educated. The presentation shared some results showing that in general highly educated seem no more likely to emigrate than others. Other challenges were also highlighted, specifically on the short time period for which comparable data on educational attainment of international migrants is currently available.

40. In its presentation, EU-FRA discussed the challenges of collecting data from hard-to-reach groups by outlining the approach of the second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II), which EU-FRA conducted in 2015/2016 to assess progress since the first survey was carried out in 2008. The second wave of EU-MIDIS collects comparable data in all 28 EU Member States to assist EU institutions in developing evidence-based legal and policy responses to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of persons with immigrant or ethnic minority background, including Roma. The areas which EU-MIDIS II covers were highlighted, including immigrant integration and experiences of discrimination in different areas of life, criminal victimisation, social inclusion and societal participation. The data are collected through sampling methods designed to obtain a representative sample of the target population. The expected benefits of this survey were underlined along with several difficulties in reaching minority groups, including the lack or incompleteness of sampling frames.

41. Discussion covered the challenges in implementing these new methods, particularly the difficulties related to response rate. Some participants highlighted the importance of validating new methods and information was provided by presenters on how this was done. Concerns about overusing imputation methods were also expressed by some participants. Lastly, presenters responded to individual questions related to their papers.

H. Asylum seekers and refugees

43. Discussion was based on papers from Turkey and United States.

44. Turkey presented its experience on providing statistics on refugees as well as a summary of the types of protection offered to such migrants. In recent years, Turkey has seen large increases in refugees as a result of the war and crisis situation in Syria and in order to drive policy it is important to register these refugees. Within this scope, the presentation described a new database the Migration-net (GOC.NET) system where the detail, accurate, reliable data is stored is actively used in 81 provincial directorates of migration management. The system is now connected to and compatible with the databases of relevant public institutions in Turkey.

45. United States provided information on its methods of recording levels of refugee and asylum seeker admittance to the country. This paper discussed recent historical levels of admittance to the United States by country of origin, as well as the data sources used to collect these numbers. It provided a view of the information collected on refugees/asylum seekers by U.S. Census Bureau surveys and how these groups could be simulated using information on country of origin and year of entry from the American Community Survey (ACS). As the number of refugees by country of origin is relatively well-documented in the United States, the presentation focused on their characteristics and possibilities for analysis of integration over time. Lastly, the presentation discussed possible methods to integrate administrative data on refugees with data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

46. The issue of measuring refugees and asylum seekers raised several points from participants. Several noted that importance of measuring this category of migrant can be very different between countries based on their particular circumstances. Participants also noted that the large swings between years in the number of refugees entering a country can create a problem where statistical offices are not prepared to measure the characteristics of

these migrants when their numbers increase. Differences in the statistical treatment of this group of migrants were also discussed. While according to current international census recommendations, refugees and asylum seekers should be counted in countries' populations, this is not always the case. Some participants highlighted the need for international harmonization of the definitions in order to improve comparisons.

IV. Recommendations for future work

47.   The meeting confirmed that the next Work Session on Migration Statistics is scheduled to take place on 24-26 October 2017. The following topics were suggested for discussion in the 2017 Work Session:

a)   Data integration

b)   Socio-economic characteristics of migrants and their descendants

c)   Labour migration and its impact on the labour market

d)   Education-related migration

e)   Longitudinal studies of migrants

f)   Circular migration

g)   Dissemination and use of migration statistics for policymaking

h)   Asylum seekers and refugees

i)   Undocumented migration

j)   Emerging issues, including new methods to estimate and project migration.

V. Adoption of the report of the meeting

48.   The meeting adopted parts I, II, IV, and V of the report before it adjourned. Part III was finalised by the secretariat after the meeting.

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