

UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION and
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(EUROSTAT)

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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Joint ECE-EUROSTAT Work Session on Migration Statistics
organised in cooperation with the UN Statistics Division
(Geneva, 21-23 May 2001)

**Background information for item (ii) on the agenda:
Method investigating inflows and outflows, highlighting definitions,
different data sources used and checks made on coverage and reliability**

By Lars Østby, organiser for item (ii)

1. The prime concern for this session is the limited availability of relevant data on international migration for cross-country comparisons, compared to other domains of population statistics. The new set of Recommendations should ideally improve the situation, but it will take some time before we can see any results of the revised recommendations. Further, the TF meeting on the implementations of the new recommendations on international migration statistics in Luxembourg 8 February 2000 and the Joint ECE-EUROSTAT-ESCWA WS on Migration Statistics in Geneva 8-10 May 2000 did not give basis for strong optimism concerning rapid improvements.
2. Under item (ii) in this Work Session, we will try to address questions on what can be done concerning evaluation and quality control of existing data. We are aiming at contribute to how migration statistics can be improved. This can of course be done in many ways. In item (ii), we will apply two different approaches, one international and one national. The main focus should be on migration flow data, but stock data will be included wherever that seems justified.
3. The international approach will be an evaluation of the empirical outcome of the statistical work to produce data on international migration. This empirical analysis will add to the information established by analysing metadata about the statistics, which has been done at several occasions. Basic characteristics (demographic, regional, time trends etc.) of the migratory pattern should be clearly mirrored by the data, if we are to believe in their quality. This will be simple tests of the plausibility of data. The data to be used will be those already collected by the international organisations, in their joint data collections or otherwise. The comparisons will either be done internally in the data collection, or, when appropriate, other sources of international statistics (like statistics on refugees or decisions on asylum

applications) should be introduced in the comparisons. One well experienced migration researcher will present a main paper along the lines of this paragraph.

4. Often, and most typically in the register statistics countries, official statistics on international migration are based on only one national source. There are, however, in many countries several sources of different nature that are used to produce statistics on migration flows (and also on stocks). Supplementary sources may be used to throw light on the quality of official statistics, or they can be used directly for estimation purposes, for instance to be able to produce at least a yearly or periodical "demographic account" for the country. The existence and availability of such supplementary sources will vary much for one country to another, but with many features in common for a number of countries. It will be of great interest to the countries to see how such sources are or can be used for estimation purposes, or for quality control and quality improvements of existing estimates by other countries. Hopefully, this can give a basis for including more sources in ones own work. For the WS we would like to have some presentations of national experiences of this kind.

5. I am asking you (or a colleague from your country if you prefer to pass the request on to someone you know have the qualifications and time) to write a short paper (approximately 5-8 pages) presenting how your country applies different sources in producing your migration statistics (flows, but stocks can also be mentioned). I am asking a limited number of countries to present their methods. The selection of countries is made to give the Work Session as good picture of different examples of "good practice", and thus presenting them for a basis for improving their own migration statistics, if needed. The oral presentation should be 10, or maximum 15 minutes, to allow a discussant to make a critical evaluation of the different approaches in the light of the aims of migration statistics. Some time will then be devoted to discussion and questions from the floor.

6. I (and the Work Session) will be very grateful if you, or a colleague of you, could present a short paper along these lines, for the benefit of our common goal, making migration statistics better, and better comparable.

7. Such a short paper should not be needed to translate, so in order to reproduce the paper, it should be in Geneva by 9 April, at the latest. Papers arriving later, can be distributed only through the Internet.

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