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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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Aguascalientes (Mexico), 25-26 February 2020

Approved

Item 3(b) of the Provisional
Agenda

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TASK FORCE ON THE USE OF NEW DATA SOURCES FOR MEASURING INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY

Prepared by the Steering Group on migration statistics

As an outcome of the in-depth review of measuring migration and cross-border mobility in October 2019, the Bureau asked the Secretariat to consult with the UNECE Steering Group on Migration Statistics and present a proposal for further work on the use of new data sources for measuring migration and cross-border mobility. The UNECE Work Session on migration statistics (28-29 October 2019) discussed and supported a proposal for further work on this topic.
The Bureau approved the terms of reference for a Task Force on the use of new data sources for measuring international migration and cross-border mobility.

I.   BACKGROUND

1.   Migration and other forms of cross-border mobility are issues of high policy importance. Demands for statistics in these areas have further increased in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018). The statistical community continues to be challenged to capture international migration and cross-border mobility in a way that would meet the growing needs of users.

2.   Measurement of migration and cross-border mobility relies on a variety of sources, such as population and housing censuses, household surveys and administrative records, with each of them having their own strengths and limitations. Integration of data from different sources is often seen as a way to enhance the richness of data and reduce coverage or accuracy problems. Yet, even this would often not capture all dimensions of migration and cross-border mobility.

3.   New non-conventional data sources, such as data gathered from the use of mobile telephones, credit cards and social networks — generally known as big and social media data — could be useful for producing migration statistics when used in combination with conventional sources. The UNECE Guidance on data integration for measuring migration proposes further work on utilising the potential of big data, "to share the emerging practices internationally, to support countries' first steps towards harnessing the potential of such data for producing migration statistics".

4.   Notwithstanding the challenges of accessibility, accuracy and access to these new sources, examples are emerging that highlight their potential. The 2018 UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics illustrated the use of Facebook data for obtaining age

profiles of 'expats' by origin and the use of geo-tagged tweets for estimating mobility. The 2019 work session featured an example from official statistics, from the United States Census Bureau, on the use of air passenger data for improving migration estimates. As more examples are emerging, they would need to be collected and analyzed, to support national statistical offices in embarking on the use of new data sources. Such activities should build on the results of the UNECE big data projects for official statistics and other initiatives that look at the relationship of official data providers and big data.

5.   In October 2019, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) Bureau reviewed in-depth the statistics on international migration and cross-border mobility, based on a paper by Mexico and a note by UNECE. The Bureau brought up the importance of gathering examples where national statistical offices are using the new data sources for producing official statistics in this area and pointed at the 2019 UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics as a pertinent forum to discuss this further. It requested the Secretariat and the Steering Group on migration statistics to present to the next Bureau meeting a proposal for further work on the use of new data sources for measuring migration and cross-border mobility.

6.   Participants of the UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics (Geneva, 29-31 October 2019) recognised the need to work towards using new types of data sources, such as mobile devices, social media networks, satellite images and Internet platforms, and to review existing examples of use of new data sources for the benefit of producing official migration statistics. To meet this need and the Bureau's request, the UNECE Steering Group on migration statistics prepared the present terms of reference for the Task Force on the use of new data sources for measuring international migration and cross-border mobility.

II.   MANDATE

7.   The work of the Task Force is conducted within the framework of CES and its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period from March 2020 to June 2022.

III.   OBJECTIVE

8.   The objective of the Task Force is to develop guidance for national statistical offices on the use of new data sources for measuring migration and cross-border mobility.

IV.   PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

9.   The Task Force will carry out the following activities:

(a)   Review existing experience and plans in national statistical offices for using new data sources for measuring migration and cross-border mobility;

(b)   Identify examples from outside official statistics where new data sources have been used for measuring migration and cross-border mobility;

(c)   Compile the examples into a reference tool and develop a mechanism for updating it with new examples;

(d)   Analyze the collected material to guide national statistical offices in the use of the new sources.

V.   TIMETABLE

10.   The activities of the Task Force are planned for the period from March 2020 to June 2022, according to the following tentative schedule:

March-April 2020	Establishment of the Task Force and drafting of a work plan with activities, timing and division of work
May-October 2020	Review existing experience in national statistical offices (activity *a*)
October 2020	Meeting of the Task Force and presentation of the review of current practices to the UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics
November 2020 – January 2021	Identify examples from outside official statistics (activity *b*)
February-April 2021	Compile the examples into a reference tool and develop a mechanism for updating it with new examples (activity *c*)
April-September 2021	Analysis of examples and drafting of guidance (activity *d*)
October 2021	Meeting of the Task Force and presentation of the draft report to the UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics
October-November 2021	Editing of the full report
December 2021 – January 2022	Review of the guidance by the CES Bureau
February-March 2022	Revision based on the comments by the CES Bureau
April-May 2022	Electronic consultation among all CES countries
June 2022	Expected endorsement by the CES plenary session

VI.   METHOD OF WORK

11.   The Task Force will primarily work via e-mail, wiki workspace, and audio or video conferences. Face-to-face meetings of the Task Force are planned back-to-back with the UNECE-Eurostat Work Sessions on Migration Statistics in October 2020 and 2021.

VII.   MEMBERSHIP

12.   The following statistical offices have expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Australia, Canada, Georgia, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, United Kingdom, United States, Eurostat and the United Nations Statistics Division. Potential contributors from outside the official statistics community have been identified in Australia, Germany, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Other countries and organizations will be invited to join the Task Force after the Bureau approves the terms of reference.

13.   UNECE will be the Secretariat to the Task Force.

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