UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Workshop on Migration Statistics
Geneva, 17-18 May 2016

23 May 2016

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP

I.   Organization and attendance

1.   The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) organized this workshop on migration statistics in cooperation with the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISStat), with financial support from the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the United Nations Development Account. The working languages of the workshop were English and Russian.

2.   Participants represented the following countries: Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Mongolia, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Experts from the Eurasian Economic Commission, Eurostat, the Inter-American Statistical Institute, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISStat), UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS, United Nations Statistics Division and UNECE participated as well. Experts from the Goldsmiths, University of London and the Moscow State University participated at the invitation of the UNECE secretariat.

3.   The workshop consisted of seven sessions over two days. The first day discussed the main recommendations of the *Handbook on the Use of Administrative Sources and Sample Surveys to Measure International Migration in the CIS Region*, with presentations from countries on their progress in measuring migration and further information from expert on how to use administrative sources to do the same. The second day examined the experience of Israel in linking administrative and survey- or census-based sources, and discussed both the implementation of the CIS action plan and the way forward in implementing the recommendations of the handbook. Presentations from the workshop are available on the UNECE website: www.unece.org/index.php?id=41272#/

II.   Objective

4.   The objective of the workshop was to review the progress in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in using administrative sources for measuring migration in the light of the agreed recommendations in the handbook. The staff of national statistical offices in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia were also to learn from countries that have advanced experience in this field, including in integration of administrative sources with survey and census data.

III.   Handbook on the Use of Administrative Sources and Sample

Surveys to Measure International Migration in the CIS Region: Main messages and recommendations

5.   The first part of the workshop was focused on the status of the *Handbook on the Use of Administrative Sources and Sample Surveys to Measure International Migration in the CIS Region.* Further information on recent progress in various countries as well as information on how to use administrative sources to measure migration was provided in a later session on the first day.

6.   To open the first session Ms Olga Chudinovskikh, from Moscow State University provided an overview of the chapter on administrative data in the Handbook, discussing both the primary recommendations of the Handbook as well as comments received during the recent consultation. UNECE next provided a similar summary of the chapter on survey data.

7.   Country presentations on progress in measuring migration were given by Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Ukraine. Each described their current methodologies in measuring migration. Georgia also provided an overview of the recent UNECE workshop on the use of administrative data in measuring migration that was held in Tbilisi in April 2016. The Bureau for Migration and Asylum in the Republic of Moldova described a dashboard that compiles data from various Moldovan agencies and elaborated on ways in which this dashboard can be improved. The Bureau of Statistics in the Republic of Moldova similarly noted the importance of cooperation between government agencies and highlighted its experience in transitioning to an electronic system for recording migration statistics.

8.   Tajikistan gave an extensive overview of the data collection process of migration data in the country and provided information on future studies including a new survey on labor migration. Ukraine provided information on the measurement of external labor migration in its country through the use of its Labor Force Survey. Tajikistan and Ukraine agreed to discuss their plans for surveys on labor migration in order to share information. Russian Federation noted its plans for improving the measurement of migration through improved surveys and eventually establishing a population register.

9.   In the discussion that followed these presentations, CIS-Stat noted that the basis of any database on migration statistics is local data and that if these data are of low quality, even high levels of cooperation between government agencies will not improve this quality. Participants generally agreed and stated that improvements are needed in the quality of these local data in the region, particularly in rural areas.

10.   Ms Chudinovskikh provided an overview of sources of administrative data. The main advantage of administrative sources is that they provide a cost-effective means of measuring migration, which is often underutilized in countries. The presentation discussed various types of administrative data, such as population or foreigner registers, border control data, visa types, and consular information, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each type, as well as the ability to link information across administrative sources to get other characteristics of migrants. Among the limitations of these sources are

issues of counting administrative procedures as opposed to actual migration events, unregistered migration, multiple nationalities, and general data quality concerns.

11.   A group exercise was held to give participants from different countries the opportunity to discuss the ways in which migration statistics can be collected. Participants were split into four groups and asked to discuss several questions. The responses to these questions included discussion of the different government agencies that are sources of various types of migration data in their countries as well as which government agencies might be good sources of data in the future. They also gave ratings to themselves based on the level of communication they have the country with regards to migration statistics. Each group made a brief presentation on the results of their discussion and feedback was provided by Ms Chudinovskikh.

IV.   Linking administrative and survey- or census-based sources

12.   In the next part of the workshop the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics presented information about their experiences in identifying emigrating Israeli families using official databases. This is a pilot initiative in Israel to use administrative data to track this information instead of the current method of using border control data. Administrative data from several different sources are linked using a common identification number issued to all Israeli citizens. Characteristics of the emigrant population were provided and compared against international sources. The conclusion of the study is that this method can yield reliable results and could be further implemented in the future.

V.   CIS action plan implementation

13.   CIS-Stat next presented the progress in implementing the CIS action plan for improving migration statistics. Specifics on the development of improved methodology in labor migration, the use of mirror statistics and in increasing the amount of information on migration requested in censuses were provided. Data in the CIS region as the result of improvements in data exchange were also discussed and shared.

VI.   Conclusions and recommendations

14.   Andres Vikat from UNECE led the concluding discussion on the way forward in implementing the recommendations of the handbook. Past work was reviewed including existing publications and recommendations from the high-level seminar held in Gelendzhik in 2013. Information was provided on future work and workshops to support countries in developing their migration statistics according to the agreed recommendations.

15.   Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with the workshop and its relevance to their needs. They appreciated the opportunity to discuss and exchange experiences among government agencies and with international experts and welcomed further collaborative work in the future.

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