Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

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Item 6 (d) of the provisional agenda
Reports, guidelines and recommendations prepared under the umbrella of the Conference:
Use of new data sources for measuring migration and cross-border mobility

Results of the consultation on report *Use of new data sources for measuring international migration*
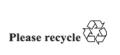
Prepared by the Secretariat

Summary

This note summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians on the report *Use of new data sources for measuring international migration* (ECE/CES/2022/6). The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation in March – April 2022.

A total of 48 replies to the consultation were received. The responding countries and organizations supported the endorsement of the report, subject to the amendments resulting from the consultation which are explained in this note. The final version with the amendments will be available at the web page of the 2022 CES plenary session.

In view of the support received, the Conference is invited to endorse the final report *Use of new data sources for measuring international migration*. The Conference is also invited to express views on possible further work in this area.

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1.   The present document summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the report *Use of new data sources for measuring international migration*.

2.   The report was prepared by the Task Force on the use of new data sources for measuring international migration and cross-border mobility, chaired by Italy. The Task Force was established by the CES Bureau in January 2019 with the aim to review existing experience and plans in national statistical offices (NSOs) for using new data sources for measuring migration and cross-border mobility, identify relevant examples from outside official statistics, compile the examples into a reference tool and develop a mechanism for updating it with new examples.

3.   In February 2022, the CES Bureau reviewed the draft report and requested the UNECE secretariat to send it for electronic consultation to all countries and organizations who participate in the work of CES. The consultation was carried out in March and April 2022.

4.   Section II summarises the outcome of the consultation. Section III provides a brief overview of the general comments received. Section IV summarises the comments and amendments on specific sections of the Framework, and section V presents a proposal to the Conference.

II. Summary of feedback

5.   The following 46 countries and 2 international organizations responded to the consultation: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, the United States, International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

6.   The responding countries and organizations considered the report ready for endorsement, subject to incorporation of the comments made in the consultation.

7.   Many countries mentioned that the report was very useful by providing aid in the production of migration statistics, and in monitoring the progress in this field in other countries. **Norway** noted that they already produce high quality statistics about migration through traditional data sources, in particular administrative registers. Other countries that currently produce migration statistics using administrative data and other traditional sources appreciated the information on emerging methods and innovations developed in other countries. Countries welcomed particularly the Database on Innovations in Migration Statistics (DIMiS), considered a very useful tool to help countries learning about innovative methods in measuring international migration, including new approaches using existing sources, or exploring new data sources.

8.   Countries provided suggestions for improving the text to further strengthen the document. The next sections summarise the comments and how these will be taken into account in the final version of the document.

9.   The responses to the consultation also included editorial and formatting corrections. These are not presented here but will be taken into account in finalizing the document.

10.   The Task Force thanks all countries and organizations that provided feedback.

III. General comments

11. Many countries expressed their appreciation for the report. For example:

(a) **Australia**: It is useful to share how new data sources have been used to improve the production of migration statistics.

(b) **Canada**: The report is useful when discussing emerging methods with stakeholders who are talking about the use of big data in order to manage their expectations.

(c) **France**: It is always useful to learn about the innovations done elsewhere, even if it cannot be exactly replicated in our country.

(d) **Lithuania**: Statistics Lithuania highly appreciates the report. The paper provides a comprehensive and useful overview of national experiences with big data and new data sources for measuring international migration.

(e) **Poland**: The report shows that national statistical institutes have limited experience in using new data sources for migration statistics. However, the potential of new data sources to address emerging migration problems and urgent data needs is promising. Sharing and updating relevant information and tools will facilitate the use of big data and new data sources to measure cross-border migration and mobility.

(f) **Portugal**: It is very useful to have both a compilation of procedures used in other countries and a compilation of research papers on methods for obtaining migration estimates based on different data sources.

(g) **Spain**: We have found this report very interesting, as it offers the possibility to identify countries in a similar position as yours, so that we can share or compare the research work.

(h) **Sweden**: Thank you for a well-done, interesting and inspiring report. It is a pleasure to read about ongoing developments in collections and quality improvements that are being made.

(i) **United Kingdom**: Overall the report does aid in our production of migration statistics. It is a useful way to benchmark our progress against other nations and see the benefits they have with transforming their migration statistics.

12. Two countries considered the report ready for approval by the CES subject to revision of the text to reflect the following general comments:

(a) **Finland**: The report could mention that the administrative data sources could be used to its fullest potential. For example, persons seeking asylum and illegal immigrants may not be counted in official migration statistics, for instance due to the lack of identification number. Tackling these limits in registration data would improve the quality of migration statistics and presumably would also be considered more ethical. Using the innovative data sources such as social media data and taking care of the individual privacy and the public confidence is a challenging combination.

(b) **Switzerland**: It would be helpful and important to define the different terms used when referring to "new data sources", namely – besides this one – "alternative data sources" and "big data". Are they in this report understood as synonyms or, on contrary, depicting different kinds of data/sources? (See also section IV.D. below)

Action by the Task Force

13. The comments by Finland will be reflected in section 6.1 of the conclusions chapter, where similar considerations were already included. The definitions of the terms used in the survey will be included in section 1.2.

IV. Comments and amendments on specific sections of the report

A. Chapter 1. Introduction

14.   **ILO** suggested a more succinct introduction, and to reduce repetition at the start of each section.

Action by the Task Force

15.   The text will be reviewed with the aim to shorten it and reduce repetitions, when appropriate.

B. Chapter 2. National experiences with big data and new data sources

16.   Some countries commented that the United States example is too long compared to the others and contains detailed information that is not relevant for other countries.

17.   The **Republic of Moldova** provided a short text on their experience and proposed text to be included in this chapter.

Action by the Task Force

18.   The text of the United States example will be reviewed with the aim to shorten it and remove text that is not relevant for other countries.

19.   The text provided by the Republic of Moldova will be included in section 2.2

C. Chapter 3. Reasons for not using new data sources

20.   **Germany** informed that new data sources are used for producing experimental statistics in other statistical fields, and that material is available at their website.[1]

21.   **Czechia** and **Slovakia** requested revising the text referring to the two countries in paras. 59 and 58 respectively and provided revised versions of the text.

22.   **Austria** noted that in Chapter 3.2 page 17 it is only stated very briefly that individual privacy concerns and legal constraints constitute the most often mentioned reason for countries to not use big data. However, this may deserve a broader discussion, e.g. are there specific concerns related to specific data sources? Privacy concerns and legal restrictions may encompass different things (ethical vs. legal reasons).

23.   On the same subject, **Poland** noted that in the case of Statistics Poland, the main obstacle are legal issues. The use of data from mobile operators will become possible only after the amendment of relevant regulations.

Action by the Task Force:

24.   The information provided by Germany will be added.

25.   The text concerning Czechia and Slovakia will be revised as requested.

26.   Concerning the comments by Austria, unfortunately countries did not provide detailed information on privacy concerns and legal constraints in the survey. The text will be amended to highlight that this type of information would be useful (although currently not available). The information provided by Poland will be included.

D. Chapter 4. Significant innovations on measuring international migration

27.   **Hungary** and **Switzerland** requested revising their information in table 2.

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[1] https://www.destatis.de/EN/Service/EXDAT/_node.html

Action by the Task Force:

28.   Table 2 will be revised based on the requests by Hungary and Switzerland.

E.   Chapter 5. A literature reference tool: Database on Innovations in Migration Statistics (DIMiS)

29.   Many countries praised specifically the usefulness of the DIMiS database, including:

(a)   **France**: This will be a very useful tool for sharing and developing new methods for estimating migration flows.

(b)   **Lithuania**: The development of the DIMiS database is very useful. It can be useful not only to focus on new data sources but also to share experiences on how to deal with existing data sources and what can be improved.

(c)   **Portugal**: The tool developed by the TF is very relevant and useful. As the report states, it will need to be updated and further developed, but it may become a very significant contribution for the NSO to find information and methodologies to further explore the use of non-traditional sources to measure migrations.

(d)   **Serbia**: The existence of an initial version of the DIMiS database will be of great help to countries working to introduce innovation in measuring international migration, including new approaches using existing sources, or exploring new data sources.

30.   **Austria** noted that the link to DIMiS is rather hidden, and that it would be helpful to find it at the top of the chapter.

31.   Various countries shared information that could be considered for inclusion in the database, or provided suggestions for improvements and promotion of the database:

(a)   Statistics **Canada** released a paper on the measurement of the Canadian diaspora very recently: https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220413/dq220413b-info-eng.htm This detailed technical paper uses several sources to compute an estimate of the number of Canadian citizens who reside abroad

(b)   **Germany** informed that some examples are available at https://www.destatis.de/EN/Service/EXDAT/_node.html

(c)   **The Netherlands** informed that in 2017 Statistics Netherlands have analysed the use of satellite data in combination with certain search topics in Google Trends in order to get a grip on future refugees/migration flows in the EU.

(d)   **Switzerland** suggested that to valorise its potential and favour innovation in the field of migration statistics it could be useful to promote the DIMiS in networks of academic researchers. The latter may be apt to generate stimuli and carry out explorative research that could potentially be consolidated and later taken over by institutional statistic-producers

(e)   The **United States** noted that with the current format of the database it would take much effort to read through all the articles to determine usability for production of official statistics. Perhaps longer summaries and evaluation, aside from just short abstracts, could be a useful UNECE product in this regard.

(f)   **ILO** noted that it would be helpful to consider how methodological developments by NSOs that are not resulting in publications, could be also integrated or continued to be documented, for use by the network of NSOs practitioners. These developments and experiences, focusing more on administrative sources, source integrations, and various modelling techniques, could be more directly relevant to other NSOs work and have more potential for promoting further innovation and improvements in official statistics.

Action by the Task Force:

32.   As suggested by Austria, the link to DIMiS will be added at the top of the chapter.

33.   The comments and suggestions by other countries for improvement and promotion of the database will be evaluated and implemented if possible.

F.   Chapter 6. Conclusions and next steps

34.   **ILO** suggested to further strengthen the conclusions regarding ongoing work shared by NSOs and recognizing the focus on administrative sources, source integration and various modelling approaches. Suggest also considering as part of next steps, options to continue promoting sharing in these areas, and not only with emphasis on big data.

Action by the Task Force:

35.   The text will be revised taking into account the comments by ILO and by Finland (see para. 0).

V.   Proposal to the Conference

36.   The Conference is invited to endorse the report *Use of new data sources for measuring international migration*, subject to incorporation of the amendments by the Task Force listed above.

37.   The Conference is also invited to support possible further work in this area.