**NINTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**
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**STRENGTHENING MIGRATION STATISTICS
IN THE REGION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE[1]**

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

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[1] The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

This paper is providing an overview of the activities the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in migration statistics. It highlights the methodological work carried out by UNECE task forces, capacity development initiatives and exchange and dissemination of data and information. The paper also refers to some future steps envisaged in these areas.

A. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) works towards improving the quality and availability of statistics on international migration by developing common definitions, methods and practices, and promoting them across the UNECE region. It also develops capacities in countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia to improve their migration statistics.

Methodological work on international migration statistics started in UNECE already in the late 1970s. Since 2000, biannual work sessions on migration statistics organized jointly with Eurostat have provided a sustainable platform for exchange of practice and development. Materials of these and other UNECE meetings on migration are available at its website[i].

The work is governed by the Conference of European Statisticians and coordinated by the Steering Group on Migration Statistics. Task forces are established to tackle specific tasks; capacity development initiatives are based on the demand expressed by member countries.

This document is providing an overview of the current and recent activities of the task forces, capacity development initiatives, exchange and dissemination of data, and some future steps envisaged in these areas.

B. METHODOLOGICAL WORK

1. Measurement of emigration using data collected by the receiving country

Data on emigration tends to be far less reliable than data on immigration, because of the difficulty to record departures. To deal with the limitations in the documentation of emigration data, the Task Force on the Measurement of Emigration Using Data Collected by the Receiving Country was established in 2005. It completed its work in early 2009 with the "Guidelines for exchanging data to improve emigration statistics"[ii] that were endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians in June 2009. The publication explores the possibility of using immigration data in receiving countries to improve emigration data in sending countries. Guidelines are provided to the countries interested in applying this approach to improve their emigration data. Additionally, advice on data collection, processing and dissemination is offered to immigration countries to ensure that their data are also useful for emigration countries. Based on the progress made with the guidelines, member countries urged UNECE to facilitate data sharing among countries.

2. Analysis of international migration estimates using different length of stay definitions

Two interrelated aspects of international migration estimates have often been discussed by statisticians and researchers over recent years:

- Different residency rules adopted by different countries and their impact on the comparability of international migration estimates

- Definition and availability of data on short-term migration flows

The definition of migration directly affects the size of the estimate produced. Accordingly, a broader definition of migration would allow for covering more moves.

The Task Force on the Analysis of International Migration Estimates Using Different Length of Stay Definitions was set up in 2008 to tackle these issues. It aims at (a) assessing the impact on international migration estimates derived from the use of different duration thresholds to define usual residence, (b) assessing the availability of data on short-term migration, (c) exploring their accuracy and (d) considering alternative definitions of short-term migration. The Task Force plans to conclude its work in 2011.

3. Improving migration and migrant data using household surveys and other sources

The Task Force on Improving Migration and Migrant Data Using Household Surveys and Other Sources, denoted as Suitland Working Group, was established in 2009. It will provide practical guidance on how to best use household surveys to measure levels and outcomes of international migration and the characteristics of migrant populations.

Its outputs will include tools and materials that will facilitate production and dissemination of high-quality and comparable statistics on migration and migrants, using data from household surveys in combination with other sources. The outputs target national statistical agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and universities in both developed and developing countries.

4. Measurement of socio-economic conditions of migrants

The 2010 joint UNECE-Eurostat work session on migration statistics concluded that additional research is needed to improve the measurement of the different dimensions of socio-economic conditions of migrants, and to improve the availability, quality and comparability of data in this field.

The Task Force on Measurement of the Socio-economic Conditions of Migrants was recently established to identify and develop indicators applicable to different contexts and population groups. The Task Force will focus on (a) a study of socio-economic dimensions that are most relevant to a better understanding of the situation of different migrant groups, including second-generation migrants, and (b) the review of definitions and practices adopted by countries for the measurement of the relevant migrant groups. Its main output will be the guidelines to countries intending to produce statistics on socio-economic conditions of migrants using existing sources or ad hoc surveys. The Task Force is coordinated with the Eurostat programme for the development of European statistics on migration.

5. Inventory of definitions of migrant stocks and flows

In April 2008, a comprehensive questionnaire was sent out to collect information on definitions and sources used in countries to collect information on stocks and flows of migrants. The analysis of the results of the questionnaire was presented at the 2010 work session[iii].

C. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

UNECE capacity development activities in migration statistics aim at improved and durable training of national officers from participating countries in global and regional standards for collection, processing

and dissemination of migration statistics. The involvement of other international agencies and programmes brings synergies and helps identify gaps and prevent duplication. These partner agencies include the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Population Division, the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Office, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the World Bank and the United Kingdom Department for International Development.

UNECE carries out its capacity development activities based on requests from member countries. Financial support has been received from UNFPA and the United Nations Development Account[iv].

1. Workshops

In cooperation with UNFPA and the United Nations Population Division, UNECE organized two capacity development workshops in 2010 for national statistical offices in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. The workshops were held in February in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and in December in Istanbul (Turkey). Participants discussed key migration trends and policies at the global and regional level and identified gaps in the availability of data on international migrant stocks, flows, and characteristics of migrants. Within this framework, participants reviewed the internationally agreed standards and recommendations for international migration statistics and assessed discrepancies between these international norms and the available data. Practical steps and follow-up activities were agreed upon for the incorporation of key elements of international standards with the aim to close these gaps. Participants expressed the need for tools offering practical guidelines to improve the production, quality and comparability of migration statistics in the region.

In the second workshop in Istanbul, representatives of ministries of labour and foreign affairs, migration services as well as specialists of international organizations participated in addition to statisticians. The workshop followed up on the practical steps agreed upon in Bishkek in February. In particular, the plan for establishing the UNECE Clearinghouse on Migration Statistics (see section D.2) was agreed upon. Both workshops provided the opportunity for the exchange of good practice and sharing of information on initiatives on collecting migration data.

2. Toolkit

In 2010, UNECE developed a toolkit "Statistics on international migration – a practical guide" that offers practical information and suggestions for various categories of producers and users of migration data, such as government officials, statisticians, scholars and journalists. Based on best practices and international recommendations, this tool has been developed in order to stimulate interest and support the better comprehension of different types of statistics. It offers basic background in statistics of international migration at both national and regional levels, describes the main data sources and illustrates the major challenges in interpretation and publication of data. It is expected to improve the production, quality, comparability and exchange of migration data in the region.

The toolkit was produced in the Development Account project[iv] on migration. It targets specialists from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, but could be useful also in other regions.

D. EXCHANGE AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION AND DATA

1. "migratory" – online inventory of sources on migration

In 2010, UNECE developed an online inventory of migration institutions, "migratory", to facilitate the dissemination of information about institutions, programmes and networks related to international migration and based in UNECE countries. The institutions covered in "migratory" include national statistical offices, other governmental institutions, international organizations, universities, research centres, and non-governmental organizations working on migration issues. Currently, "migratory" is in the final round of review before a full-scale launch later this month. A test version[v] is already available. Work on "migratory" has been supported from the United Nations Development Account[iv].

2. Data clearinghouse

UNECE is currently developing a new Clearinghouse on Migration Statistics. This initiative aims at facilitating the collection, dissemination and sharing of basic migration data initially from twelve countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. The UNECE Clearinghouse initiative was promoted as a follow up to the "Guidelines for exchanging data to improve emigration statistics" (see section B.1). The data will be collected according to a set of tables agreed with the participating countries and international organizations. During the first half of 2011, UNECE will develop a first version of the Clearinghouse. It is expected that the preliminary results will be discussed with participating countries and partner organizations in a workshop in the second half of 2011.

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[i] http://www.unece.org/stats/archive/01.01b.e.htm

[ii] http://www.unece.org/stats/publications/Guidelines_improve_emigration_statistics.pdf

[iii] http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.10/2010/wp.3.e.pdf

[iv] Project "Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration: maximising development benefits and minimising impact", carried out jointly by the United Nations regional commissions.

[v] http://www.unece.org/stats/migratory

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