

**NINTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division

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UNESCO'S ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF MIGRATION IN 2010-2011¹

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

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

A. BACKGROUND

UNESCO emphasizes the human face of migration and addresses the implications of the movement of people in its fields of competence. These include: the migration-education nexus and the challenges raised by the mobility of skilled professionals, student mobility, and the international recognition of qualifications; the migration-development nexus, with a particular emphasis on the development of knowledge diasporas through the use of ICTs; the impact of global environmental change on migration; social inclusion of migrants in host societies, with particular attention to the role of gender and to the balance between their cultural integration and the respect for cultural diversity; and the research-policy nexus through the creation of research networks and of innovative platforms enabling exchanges between researchers and policy-makers. It does so by cooperating with a wide range of partners, including intergovernmental organizations, civil society groups and universities.

B. MIGRATION AND EDUCATION

Migration and education are deeply intertwined processes. Education is a key factor among the forces that drive migration. People may migrate because they have acquired skills that can be used in foreign labour markets, or because they wish to study and acquire training abroad to enhance their professional opportunities. Alternatively, underdeveloped training opportunities may undermine people's socio-economic perspectives, thereby encouraging them to seek opportunities abroad.

A central issue in the international mobility of workers regards the recognition of qualifications and of technical training. UNESCO's activities in recognition are centred around its six Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications. These UNESCO conventions are legal agreements between countries agreeing to recognize academic qualifications issued by other countries that have ratified the same agreement.

- African States - Regional Recognition Convention (1981)
- Arab States Regional Recognition Convention (1978)
- Asia and the Pacific - Regional Recognition Convention
- European Regional Convention - Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997)
- Latin America and the Caribbean - Regional Recognition Convention (1974)
- Mediterranean Region - Regional Recognition Convention (1976)

Regarding recent developments, member-states in the Asia-Pacific are in the process of updating their regional Convention; a meeting is planned for November 2011. In Africa, member-states have similarly expressed their aim to do so and have yet to determine their program of work in this respect. At the request of Norway, a report was prepared on *Migration and Education: Quality Assurance and Mutual Recognition of Qualifications* (2009), which was the summary of an Expert Group Meeting that was held on 22-23 September 2008 in UNESCO Headquarter in Paris. The report provides best practices and policies based on nine country audits and discussed by experts from UNESCO, WHO, IOM, UNCTAD, the Commonwealth Secretariat, OECD and the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP). The nine case study countries were Australia, Canada, China, France, Malaysia, Morocco, the Philippines, Senegal, and the United Kingdom.

Another domain of activity at UNESCO regards the mobility of students and the statistical work thereon by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). Mobile students are students who have crossed a national border and moved to another country with the objective to study. Three operational definitions are widely used to identify mobile students – (1) by students’ country of permanent or usual residence, (2) country of prior education, or (3) country of citizenship. UIS runs annual surveys among Member-States to collect data on all levels of education, from preliminary to tertiary. Results are published in the annual Global Education Digest. In 2009, the GED focused on higher education and provides evidence surrounding the growing number of mobile students. Since 1975, the number of mobile students has grown by almost 3.5-fold, from 0.8 in 1975 to 2.8 million in 2007. The report provides in-depth statistics on sending countries, host countries, preferred destinations and types of program, most common fields of study, etc.

C. SKILLED MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A central feature of contemporary migration flows is skilled migration. While this corresponds to the current context of economic globalisation, it also raises major concerns for sending countries in terms of brain drain. States that invest in education resent their citizens’ departure to developed countries and the loss of skills this generates. UNESCO Science Report 2010 provides ample evidence and detailed analysis of the impact of skilled migration on R&D, and on development at large.

The report analyses the trends and developments that have shaped scientific research, innovation and higher education over the past five years, including the impact of the current global economic recession. It depicts an increasingly competitive environment, characterised by intense and multidirectional flows of information, knowledge, personnel and investment. With respect to migration, the report notes that countries are training many more scientists and engineers than before, but that graduates are having trouble finding qualified positions or attractive working conditions at home. As a result, migration of highly qualified researchers from South to North has become the characteristic feature of the past decade.

Yet, despite voluminous literature on migration, it is almost impossible to draw a systematic, quantitative picture of long-term migration of the highly skilled worldwide. Moreover, not everyone perceives the phenomenon in the same way. Some refer to brain drain, others prefer the term brain strain or brain circulation. Whatever the preferred terminology, several chapters in the report highlight the serious issue that brain drain has become and the barriers that this flow of knowledge out of countries creates for domestic R&D (especially in India, South Asia, Turkey or sub-Saharan Africa).

Data further show that South to North and North to North are dominant directions for migration but that, overall, a much more varied array of destinations is emerging: South Africa, Russia, Ukraine, Malaysia and Jordan, for example, have also become attractive destinations for the highly skilled. In addition, the report outlines how diasporas act as a useful departure point for the design of policies for more effective technology transfer and knowledge spillovers. This phenomenon motivates countries to elaborate policies to lure highly skilled expatriates back home. This was the case in the Republic of Korea in the past and can be seen in China and elsewhere today. The aim is to encourage the diaspora to use the skills acquired abroad to bring about structural change at home. Moreover, the diaspora may be invited to participate ‘from a distance’, if the prospect of a permanent return home is unlikely.

D. MIGRATION AND GENDER

UNESCO is aiming to make migration of women both more visible and better understood in research and policy-making discussions. Many issues, especially how migrant women fare in terms of their human rights and empowerment, have not fully been addressed. To accompany ongoing work on migration and gender at the international level, which often focuses on economic aspects, UNESCO is taking a human rights approach by exploring migration outcomes for women. It does so by initiating a dialogue on how women themselves evolve throughout migration, ultimately gaining or losing from the experience in terms of personal security, decision-making power, access to jobs and social services, and other rights-related issues.

UNESCO brings together perspectives of gender specialists, researchers involved with migrant associations, and policy specialists from UN agencies in the *Diversities journal issue on “Female Migration Outcomes: Human Rights Perspectives”* (March 2011). In addition, UNESCO will launch a thematic programme on “Women’s Rights in Post-Conflict Situations and Prevention of Violence against Women” to support women’s role as agents of progress in post-conflict societies, and to advance the elimination of violence against women, including in the context of migration and forced displacement.

E. MIGRATION AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Climate change is one of the major concerns for the international community. Among its social and human dimensions, its impact on migration is the object of increasing attention from both policy-makers and researchers. Greater resource scarcity, desertification, risks of droughts and floods, and rising sea levels could drive millions of people to migrate. Yet, despite the interest in the links between climate change and migration, the amount of research and the policy development on the issue remain limited. There are uncertainties surrounding the mechanisms at stake, the number of persons affected and the geographical zones concerned and there is disagreement between those who stress the direct impact of the environment on population flows and those who rather insist on the social, economic and political contexts in which such flows occur. Most importantly, the impact on policy-making remains largely unexplored. UNESCO has brought together researchers from all over the world to provide a comprehensive overview of the climate change – migration nexus. This will result in a volume providing empirical evidence on the links between climate and migration and bringing together case studies and analysis from different disciplines. It investigates the key policy issues raised by climate change and migration, including states’ policy responses and the views of different institutional actors; critical perspectives on the actual relationship between the environment and (forced) migration; the concepts and notions that are adequate to address this relationship; gender and human rights implications, and finally international law and responsibilities.

To follow up on this report, UNESCO will develop toolkits addressing the relevance and efficiency of resettlement and migration as a disaster risk reduction measure, as well as its articulation with broader disaster risk reduction plans. Case studies will document recent practices and lessons learned on this topic in Africa and Asia/Pacific in order to systematize these experiences and develop a methodology to manage resettlement as an option to reduce the risk of disaster due to climate change. The practical toolkit will help policymakers prepare and implement resettlement programs through a wide range of policy

orientations and best practices surrounding human rights, cultural issues, governance and the role of stakeholders.

F. MIGRATION AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

In cooperation with the UN University, UNESCO has launched a world survey of regional organisations' attitudes toward migration and increased freedom of movement. The project explores the perspectives for agreements of migration governance within regional integration processes. This is largely a new idea as regional integration has long addressed predominantly the free movement of goods and services. Yet, as the example of the EU shows, migration management can gain enormously from a regional perspective. The project will lead to the publication of a *World Report on Regional Integration and Migration*. The volume will contain an overview of the issues at stake with policy recommendations, along with chapters dedicated to the situation in several regions of the world.

G. PUBLICATION ACTIVITIES

UNESCO regularly publishes high-quality books, reports or journal issues on matters relating to migration. Books include *Migration without Borders* (2007), *Democracy and Human Rights in Multicultural Societies* (2007), *Migration and Human Rights* (2009) and *t* (2010). Forthcoming books will address the relationships between global environmental change and migration, regional migration agreements, and skilled migration. In addition, UNESCO publishes an on-line journal entitled *Diversities*, in cooperation with the Max-Planck Institute for the study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, which constitutes a platform for international, interdisciplinary and policy-related social science research in the fields of migration, multiculturalism, and minority rights.