

**ELEVENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

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**ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
RELATED TO THE 2013 HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE
ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT^a**

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

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

A. INTRODUCTION^b

As international migration continues to grow and achieve prominence on the political landscape, so does the need for improving the collection and quality of migration data. International migration can have great societal and economic impacts on both individuals and countries of origin and destination. A conclusion of the first High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and subsequent Global Forums was that international migration could play an important role in national development, provided it was supported by appropriate policies and development strategies. This has in turn led to efforts to advance understanding and cooperation on the relationship between migration and development and thus fostered efforts to improve its measurement and use in evidence-based policymaking.

However, in many countries migration statistics remain incomplete, inaccurate, out-of-date or non-existent. Despite improved communication and efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of migration data, there is still a great need for improved data quality, critical for making evidence-based policy decisions and inform public debate, to better understand and address the implications of migration for human development at the national, regional and international levels.

The activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) support the goal of the Global Forum for Migration and Development to improve the measurement of migration and its use in evidence-based policymaking. 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. The work is governed by the Conference of European Statisticians and coordinated by the Steering Group on Migration Statistics

B. EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE

Since 2000, the biennial Work Sessions on Migration Statistics that UNECE organizes together with Eurostat have provided a platform for exchange of practice and development. The **2012 Work Session** (Geneva, 17-19 October)¹ discussed the following topics based on papers from national statistical offices, international organizations and invited experts: (a) experiences with using data from the 2010 round of censuses for measuring migration, (b) producing migration data using household surveys and other sources, (c) circular migration, (d) return migration, (e) aspects of migrant integration and (f) migration and development.

^b 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-building initiatives and exchange and dissemination of data and information. The paper also refers to some future steps envisaged in these areas.

The **session on migration and development** focused on how to best measure diaspora populations and their contributions to development in their countries of origin. The discussion acknowledged the challenges faced when trying to define the diaspora population and that the available data tend to drive how the diaspora are counted. It was also noted that older migrant generations tend to have weaker links with and less interest in their country of origin and their systematic inclusion as part of a country's diaspora may be erroneous. It was recognised that policy needs should be the driving force behind the definition, methods and type of analysis needed to link migration with development, and that further work on the concept and definition of diaspora is required.

UNECE maintains an **online inventory**² of sources of information on migration, including statistics, policies, legislation and programmes, for all UNECE member countries. Called "Migratory," this inventory covers governmental agencies, departments and ministries, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, research and other institutions. Migratory aims to serve as a practical guide for anyone interested in migration issues. It maps the many different migration actors and information sources in the UNECE region and informs about their activities. The purpose of the inventory is to encourage cooperation and facilitate networking among the different migration stakeholders.

C. METHODOLOGICAL WORK

The aim of the UNECE methodological work in migration statistics is to develop and promote international guidelines and recommendations to improve the efficiency, quality and comparability of official migration statistics. The work is carried out by task forces of experts from national and international statistical organizations.

In 2012, the Task Force on the Analysis of International Migration Estimates Using **Different Length of Stay Definitions** concluded its work³ showing the impact of different duration thresholds of defining usual residence on the estimates. It also assessed the availability and accuracy of data on short-term migration, and considered alternative definitions of short-term migration. Its recommendations for follow-up work included the examination of innovative methodologies to capture **circular migration** and the development of an international statistical definition of circular migration. The Task Force on Circular Migration was established in February 2013 to pursue this work.

The Task Force on Improving Migration and Migrant Data Using Household Surveys and Other Sources has developed **practical guidance on how to measure emigration**⁴ and **other hard-to-count migrant groups**⁵. The Task Force on the Measurement of the **Socio-economic Conditions of Migrants** is currently studying the measurement of socio-economic dimensions that are most relevant to better understanding the situation of different migrant groups.

D. CAPACITY-BUILDING

UNECE capacity-building activities in migration statistics aim at improved and durable training of national officers in global and regional standards for collection, processing and dissemination of migration statistics. From 2010 to 2012, UNECE organized **four capacity-building workshops** for national statistical offices in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Population Division, the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration.

The workshops helped to establish or strengthen pre-existing networks and encouraged the exchange of data and information between countries. They also improved communication, not only between countries, but also within countries, facilitating dialogue between data producers and users, especially those working in the field of policymaking. The workshops helped to develop an overview of sources⁶ and a **practical guide**⁷ on international migration statistics for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as providing impetus for data exchange that resulted in the establishment of the UNECE Clearing House on Migration Statistics⁸. These outcomes have helped to improve the development, comparability, dissemination and exchange of international migration data in the region.

In autumn 2013, UNECE will organize a capacity-building workshop “**Towards better evidence on migration and development** in Eastern Europe and Central Asia”, in cooperation with the European Free Trade Association. The workshop will bring together migration statistics experts from national statistical offices and representatives from national migration and other relevant agencies, as well as experts from international organizations. The objective is to raise the importance of migration-development nexus in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia and identify ways of improving measurement of the developmental impact of migration through the better use of existing data sources and the development of new sources. The workshop aims to identify various ways how migration impacts development and to look at data availability and data needs for measuring such issues as emigration, brain drain, labour migration, return and circular migration, remittances, and diaspora populations. Particular emphasis is placed on improving the collection and availability of migration statistics, with specific attention to data related to measuring the impact of migration on development.

E. EXCHANGE AND DISSEMINATION OF MIGRATION STATISTICS: DATA CLEARING HOUSE

As a result of Eastern European and Central Asian countries’ interest in data exchange, it was agreed to establish a central repository with online access to basic migration statistics for countries in the region. The **UNECE Clearing House on Migration Statistics** was established and designed in English and Russian, with a user-friendly interface and is intended to improve the availability and comparability of data by providing a flexible tool for the collection, dissemination and sharing of basic migration data between the countries. The establishment of a centralized location to store and disseminate migration data improves the accessibility of data to outside users. In the past, much of this data was not publicly accessible, nor was it presented in a standardized manner using internationally agreed definitions of international migration.

The establishment of this data repository increases the potential of regionally comparable migration data, as well as potentially improving estimates of emigration for these countries by utilizing immigration data from other countries in the region. Data were collected according to a set of tables agreed with the participating countries and international organizations and are available on the UNECE website.

NOTES

¹ <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2012.10.migration.html>

² <http://www.unece.org/stats/migratory/index.html>

³ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2012/7-TF_migration_estimates.pdf

⁴ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.10/2012/WP_8_US.pdf

⁵ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.10/2012/WP_9_UNECE.pdf

⁶ http://www.unece.org/review_of_sources_international_migration.html

⁷ http://www.unece.org/international_migration_statistics_guide.html

⁸ <http://w3.unece.org/pxweb>