

**Economic and Social
Council**Distr.
GENERALCES/2001/32
1 June 2001

Original: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**Forty-ninth plenary session
(Geneva, 11-13 June 2001)**Report of the May 2001 joint UNECE-Eurostat work session on migration statistics**Prepared by the Secretariat**PARTICIPATION**

1. The Joint UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics was held in Geneva from 21 to 23 May 2001. It was attended by delegates of Albania, Armenia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom and United States. The European Commission was represented by Eurostat and the DG for Justice and Home Affairs. Delegates of Morocco and the Syrian Arab Republic attended under article 11 of the terms of reference of the UNECE. Representatives of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), International Labour Office (ILO), International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) were also present.

AGENDA AND PROCEDURE

2. The study programme of the meeting consisted of the following substantive topics:

Topic (i): Progress in implementation of the UN Recommendations on International Migration Statistics;

Topic (ii): Methods investigating inflows and outflows highlighting definitions, different data sources used, and checks made on coverage and reliability;

Topic (iii): Progress in the second phase of the MED-MIGR project;

- Topic (iv): Cooperation between statistical offices and other ministries in developing new types of migration data;
- Topic (v): Strategies for developing statistics on international migration of workers,

3. Mr. David Pearce (United Kingdom) chaired the meeting. Topics (i)-(v) above were organised by the UNECE secretariat, Mr. Lars Ostby (Norway), Eurostat, Ms. Laura Staetsky (Israel), and the International Labour Office.

FUTURE WORK

4. A Task Force for discussing proposals on the future work that the delegates submitted was formed. It was constituted of Mr. David Pearce (United Kingdom), Mr. Lars Ostby (Norway) and Ms Anita Lange (Denmark). Members of the UN and Eurostat secretariats also participated in the Task Force. The Task Force converted the various suggestions for future work that had been submitted by delegations into a concrete proposal for the terms of reference for the next meeting. This proposal for by the Task Force served as the basis for discussion of this agenda item by the meeting.

5. The participants considered that it would be useful for countries to exchange experiences on developments in this field at a future meeting. They recommended, therefore, that the Conference convene a meeting in this field in two-years time, jointly with Eurostat and, if possible, with UN/ESCWA. Therefore they recommended that the following be included in the work programme of the Conference of European Statisticians:

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS (INCLUDING PROJECTIONS, MIGRATION, FERTILITY AND FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS)

Activities of the ECE:

Work session/seminar on migration statistics, jointly with Eurostat (and, if possible with UN/ESCWA) in 2002/2003, to consider: (i) First results on international migration from the 2000 round of population censuses, comparison with other sources and any indications on coverage and reliability (proposed organiser: France); (ii) Results of the pilot exercises on border card systems and work on residence permit systems carried out in 2002 in specific MED-MIGR and other countries, and the collection of international migration data from the MED-MIGR countries (proposed organiser: MED-MIGR expert); (iii) Estimates of undocumented migration and of other major categories of migrants not included in standard immigration and emigration statistics (proposed organiser: Eurostat); (iv) Synergies between international migration statistics and statistics on other topics with particular relevance to policy needs, including the need for international flow statistics in providing services across borders (proposed organiser: UNSD in cooperation with the Interagency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services).

6. The participants also considered that the important proposal made by Mr. Jean Langers (Luxembourg) concerning more actively involving officials from ministries responsible for administrative registers and records in future meetings should be addressed, where possible, both in future meetings on migration statistics organised by the UNECE and Eurostat and/or Eurostat, and in the 2001/2002 joint work session on registers and administrative records for social and demographic statistics. They also agreed that Session Organisers should be encouraged to more actively involve officials from these other ministries in their respective sessions at these meetings.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

7. The participants adopted this report and the attached summary of the main conclusions of the Work Session at its closing session.
8. The conclusions reached by the participants during the discussion of the substantive items of the agenda are outlined in the Annex.

ANNEX

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS REACHED BY THE PARTICIPANTS DURING THE DISCUSSION

**Topic (i): Progress in the implementation of the UN Recommendations on
International Migration Statistics**

Documentation: Summary paper by the UNECE Secretariat; Supporting papers by Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Israel, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan; and relevant documents from the 2000 UNECE-Eurostat-UN/ESCWA work session on migration statistics (CES/SEM.42/2Add.1 and Add2, 16-20, 22 and 26)

1. As a follow up to the work launched by the 1999/2000 Task Force that was established in order to look into possibilities of the application and implementation of the 1997 UN Recommendation on International Migration Statistics (See CES/SEM.42/2 para 18.), the national statistical offices of the UNECE member countries were asked to prepare reports on the availability of data for individual categories of migrants that are identified in the recommendations. The discussion at the meeting was based on national reports submitted by 21 members countries.
2. **The participants agreed that the summary table (Working Paper No. 2) be circulated to respondent countries with a request to update and correct the information and to return it to the UNECE secretariat. They also invited countries not included in the summary table to send their replies to the questionnaire to the UNECE secretariat. The deadline agreed for both requests is 25 August 2001.**
3. A question occurred during the discussion on how to measure the quality of data, and in particular how to define good, medium and low quality migration data. The present country tables, and subsequently the summary table, contain a rough quality assessment based on intuitive assessments made by the countries themselves.
4. The representative of the ILO reported about a similar type of questionnaire used in connection with statistics on labour migration and offered to make it available to the Secretariat. The participants gratefully accepted this offer.
5. Under this agenda item, there was detailed discussion on countries' compliance with the international standard and with its relationship to national practices. The compliance with the UN Recommendations was understood as an ability to derive data that are more internationally comparable from unadjusted immigration and/or emigration data that are produced by countries for their primary national needs. It was suggested that using a variety

of different sources could contribute to an improved compliance with the UN Recommendations.

6. During the discussion it was suggested that the process of improving compliance with the UN Recommendations often involves obtaining migration data from a variety of sources and adapting national statistical systems more to international demands. It was also suggested that there might be some need to scale down the recommendations so as to make the requirements more realistic. **As a general conclusion on this issue, it was agreed that it is too soon to make concrete judgements on the applicability of the 1997 UN Recommendations. At present, countries in the UNECE region are still investigating possibilities of applying and implementing the recommendations, and the meeting recognised that most countries in other regions probably have not yet begun such investigations.** It was also suggested that it would be useful if the UN Statistics Division informed the UN Statistical Commission of the work that Eurostat and the UNECE have commenced on assessing how countries in the UNECE region view the application and implementation of the new set of UN Recommendations, as a mean of encouraging similar work to be undertaken in other regions.

7. Differences in patterns of short- and long-term migrants were also discussed at the meeting. Some participants stressed that it may be difficult to provide the information on both in one table only.

8. **There was general agreement that for encouraging greater progress, the focus of future work should be on tapping the potential of existing sources which are not currently being used for migration statistics but which could be used for this purpose.** It was emphasised that only those administrative sources which are widely and frequently used by the administration can be reliable. It was also stressed that it is important to look into secondary sources that complement the main sources of international migration statistics, so as to increase the possibilities of transforming the national data so that they would more closely approximate the UN Recommendations. **The need of being creative and responsive was also emphasised** in connection with investigating possible alternative or complementary sources of data on international migration.

9. Some issues were also mentioned in connection with administrative data sources. For example some countries stressed that they have problems to separate international civil servants from other labour migrants. Issues related to the use of population registers and to residence and work permits were also discussed.

10. Developments in the field of information technology were also mentioned in connection with the use of administrative sources. Technological advancements permit the wider automation of information retrieval from administrative registers and records, and to consider new ways of capturing the data.

11. The growing global demand for information on international migration with multiple use was stressed in the discussion. The measurement and monitoring of international migration flows was viewed as a growing challenge, partly as a result of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) agreements. The meeting recognised that international labour migration represents an important part of these agreements. A suggestion was made to develop future contacts with trade negotiators and with the Interagency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services. This issue was also discussed further under topic (v) below.

Topic (ii): Methods investigating inflows and outflows highlighting definitions, different data sources used, and checks made on coverage and reliability

Documentation: Invited papers by Slovenia, Canada and Belgium; summary paper by Norway and a supporting paper by France

12. This session was organised by Mr. Lars Ostby (Norway). The discussion on this topic addressed questions on what can be done concerning the evaluation and quality control of existing data, and how migration statistics can be improved. Knowledge of the demographic, economic and social consequences of migration was identified as an important motive for making the statistics more reliable and comparable. The discussion focused primarily on flow data. It was agreed that emigration is the most difficult element to obtain data on. The meeting agreed with the suggestion of the Session Organiser to split this topic into two sub-topics. The first sub-topic was devoted to presentations of national experiences in collecting data on international migration, and the second one focused on comparing migration data that were obtained from different European national statistical systems and compiled according to national practices.

13. Examples were presented at the meeting where various statistical and administrative sources were combined for obtaining data on international migration. It was emphasised that national statistical offices need to develop closer links and relations with other relevant ministries and governmental agencies.

14. Several participants stressed that dealing with the differences between migrants' intended and actual length of stay represents a major challenge. Analysis of these differences in different countries confirmed that immigrants who originally declared on the border cards their intention often later change their plans and stay either longer or shorter periods of time.

15. The participants suggested that methods for estimating undocumented migration should be considered at a future joint meeting. Some delegates also stressed that it may be necessary to make estimates in order to monitor changes to both the de-facto and the de-jure population.

16. Differences between the legal instruments of individual countries have to be taken into account when considering national experiences of countries. For example, one country reported on building its Central Population Register from the 1991 population census data,

but this is not permitted in many other countries. Registration of citizens born abroad was also discussed. One country, for example, reported that children born abroad are registered in their Central Population Register as immigrants and emigrants at the same time.

17. The application of information technology methods for linking various administrative and statistical sources was proposed as one of the issues for further consideration.

18. An empirical study of statistical data that is aimed at assessing improvements in European migration statistics currently being collected by statistical agencies in some European countries was presented at the meeting. Data on migration flows from several pairs of countries were compared, where each migration flow was reported by both countries. The differences could be explained by different data methods used for collection, but also by varying reliability of the statistical systems in individual countries. It was stressed that it is important to compare emigration data reported by the country of origin with the immigration reported by the recipient country. These two figures represent different views of the same migration flow. Therefore, since the 1970s two-way migration matrices by both reporting countries are used in the UNECE region.

19. Examples of national statistical systems that use “removal cards” were also presented at the meeting. The efficiency and reliability of this system was emphasised. However, it was stressed that this aspect should be carefully considered as the public may feel that the use of removal cards limits their freedom.

20. Migration and migration policy is of increasing importance in Europe, but the quality and comparability of migration statistics have not developed fast enough to meet this need for information. **The participants stressed that the support of and relevant decisions by policy makers are needed if statisticians are to provide policy makers with reliable comparable statistics on international migration.** It was generally agreed that in some countries the introduction of removal cards could be considered as a useful tool for improving the statistics. Currently, policies in the region seem to be aimed at the gradual increase of mobility, mainly with respect to the labour market. The will of policy makers can also assist in minimising the differences between de-facto and de-jure data.

21. **The participants agreed that co-operation and confidence between NSIs and other agencies and ministries are a necessary precondition for improving international migration statistics in many countries.** They also agreed that the frequent use of administrative sources helps to improve their quality and reliability. This issue was further discussed under topic (iv) below.

22. The participants noted that some national statistical offices in the region do not limit their activities by the national boundaries. It was agreed that the globalisation of statistics is becoming more important because of the overall emerging environment of economic globalisation. **In particular, co-operation between statistical offices of various countries**

and their sharing of information can significantly contribute to the improvement of international migration statistics.

23. The Session Organiser, in his final remarks, identified some similarities between migration statistics and the trade and national accounts statistics, and highlighted the importance of considering lessons to be learned from these fields of statistics.

Topic (iii): Progress in the second stage of the MED-MIGR project

Documentation: Invited papers by Morocco and the Syrian Arab Republic

24. Ways for improving international migration statistics that have been identified in Eurostat's MED-MIGR project were considered at the meeting. The discussion on the invited papers touched plans for combining administrative sources of immigration data and consulate data with data obtained through censuses and statistical surveys. The development and experience with the use of border cards were also discussed.

25. Migration related questions in population censuses were also discussed, in particular the related time scale. It was noted that in censuses the questions usually ask persons to specify their place of residence one or five years prior to the census.

26. Eurostat informed the participants about the future work plans of the MED-STAT 2 programme. It was noted that in the future the programme would include more activities on social statistics. The migration statistics project (MED-MIGR) will continue, and the pilot activities launched in the past will be broadened. In addition, the participants in the MED-MIGR project will closely look into possibilities of developing migration statistics for countries in the Mediterranean region, including labour statistics. The importance of comparing the statistics provided by both receiving countries and countries of origin was recognised.

27. The participants noted that the UNECE cooperates closely with Eurostat on the MED-MIGR project. The participants also noted that the different UN Regional Commissions have been encouraged to co-operate more closely with each other in a regional and interregional framework. **In this connection, the meeting noted that the UNECE and Eurostat have co-operated in the past with UNESCWA in the area of international migration statistics, and they considered that this field of statistics was an ideal one for UNECE and UNESCWA and other Regional Commissions to work together. Therefore, the participants encouraged the institutions concerned to continue this type of co-operation in the future.**

Topic (iv): Cooperation between statistical offices and other ministries in developing new types of migration data

Documentation: Invited papers by Denmark, Israel, Netherlands and Switzerland

28. This session was organised by Ms. Laura Staetsky (Israel). Examples of co-operation between the statistical office, immigration authorities, the office for refugees, border police and authorities maintaining population registers were presented.

29. The participants discussed obstacles to co-operation between national statistical offices and other ministries. These are related to priority settings by the ministries and the administration, where statistics are not always considered of a high priority. Other obstacles relate to policies, and in this regard actions of policy makers are needed to improve the situation. Finally there are numerous issues of a technical nature that need to be resolved.

30. It was pointed out that while administrative data often constitutes an important source of information for international migration statistics, they have some shortcomings with respect to the 1997 UN Recommendations. For example, some administrative sources do not distinguish between short- and long-term migrants, and the distinction can only be made retrospectively on the basis of actual stay instead of intended stay.

31. Some delegates suggested that international standards and/or regulations related to the use of administrative sources for statistical purposes and adopted within the UNECE and/or Eurostat's framework may assist national statistical offices in breaking through the obstacles. This suggestion was discussed in greater detail. It was noted in this connection that the adoption of relevant Community Regulations (EU) and their consequent inclusion in the "Acquis Communautaire" could contribute to an improvement in the situation in both EU member countries and Accession Countries.

32. The delegates also stressed that statisticians need to demonstrate to officials responsible for administrative records and registers the possible benefits that they could obtain by modifying their practices and obtaining in the process more reliable international migration statistics. It was stressed that this is a priority issue, which should not be postponed.

33. The participants agreed that it would be useful if officials working in ministries responsible for administrative records and registers would also be invited to a future meeting dealing with this issue. Several possibilities were proposed for addressing this issue including having it considered at the next UNECE-Eurostat work session on migration statistics, Eurostat's next working party on migration statistics and the 2002 joint UNECE-Eurostat work session on the use of administrative registers and records for social and demographic statistics. It was agreed that the UNECE secretariat and Eurostat should investigate, in co-operation with the session organisers involved in the respective meetings, the possibility of involving experts from other ministries and governmental offices in addressing such problems at the future meetings.

34. An example of using the central register of non-citizens to study motives for immigration was presented at the work session. The participants discussed in this connection, among other things, family migration, and pointed out that family member often migrate at different time and with a different primary migration motives (labour, asylum, etc.). Some participants, however, questioned the use of the term “motive” to describe a classification that is based on the type of residence permit.

35. The discussion underlined that linking different administrative registers can be difficult in the absence of unique identifiers for individual records. This issue is particularly important in countries where personal identification numbers (PIN) do not exist, or are not available for use by statisticians. For example, one country reported that with the changing status of immigrants over time (e.g. from student to employee, from asylum seeker to refugee, etc.) their PINs are changed, and PIN changes cannot be tracked by the statistical office.

36. It was pointed out that the primary concern of statisticians in this field when collaborating with other ministries and government agencies remains the production of more reliable international migration statistics. In this connection it was suggested to study the possibilities to retrieve information on multiple migration reasons in addition to the primary migration motive.

37. The co-operation between and active involvement of different parts of the national statistical offices in deriving the required types of data was also mentioned as an important issue related to this topic.

Topic (v): Strategies for developing statistics on international migration of workers,

Documentation: Strategy paper by the ILO

38. Discussion on this topic was organised by the International Labour Office. The importance of increased and improved capacity for international labour migration statistics was emphasised, as many countries are experiencing flows of international labour mobility for which they have not been fully prepared. This is a consequence not only of the creation of regional economic unions, but also the liberalisation of trade and the relocation and dispersion of production units. In particular, the importance of statistics on certain forms of international labour migration has increased in connection with the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

39. It was observed that in many regions of origin of labour migration (e.g. Africa, Asia and Latin America) labour migration statistics are still very limited or do not exist. It was also stressed that many countries are reluctant to monitor closely the exit of persons from their territory.

40. Possible administrative and statistical sources for information on the outflows, inflows and the return of labour migrants were considered at the meeting along with their quality assessment. Visas, work permits, insurance schemes, population registers, unemployment registers, records of recruitment agencies and similar types of registers and records were mentioned as possible administrative sources for the data. Labour surveys, household surveys, establishment surveys and passenger surveys were also mentioned when discussing possible statistical sources. Several relevant topics which are included in population censuses that may be useful for labour migration statistics were identified.

41. Several participants stressed that before considering additional questions to be included in censuses and surveys, the possibilities of deriving the necessary data from existing sources should be analysed. A need for better and closer synergy between population statisticians, demographers, labour and economic statisticians and economists was underlined in this respect. As far as the quality of data is concerned, it was pointed out that it is important to estimate errors that are found in whatever data sources are used.

42. The representative of the United Nations Statistics Division reported that her office is aware that work is required in the development and elaboration of the use of migration statistics for studying the growth of trade in services and the internationalisation of services production through the increase in the movement of natural persons as service providers across borders. Trade in service involving the “presence of foreign nationals” is defined in the General Agreement on Trade in Services as “Mode 4”. Further discussion of this matter is now available in the draft ‘Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services’ which was approved for adoption by the Statistical Commission in 2001, and will be published as United Nations Publication **ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/86**. Some important technical issues and the process that has been followed to develop this draft are also described in UN Statistical Commission document **E/CN.3/2001/10**. The Manual notes that although no existing national statistical system satisfactorily captures the temporary presence of natural persons abroad from the trade perspective, the UN Recommendations on International Migration Statistics do provide a framework for the characterisation of different categories of international migration and refers to categories of international migrants and non-migrants, some of which may be relevant to GATS Mode 4 if in each case the period of stay is restricted (that is, non permanent and related to the supply of service product). The specifics of the GATS requirements for such statistics are presented in Annex 1 of the above mentioned Manual (paras. 26 – 32), and ultimately would require further elaboration and refinement in the UN recommendations on international migration statistics, in order to meet these specific information needs more effectively. **The participants agreed that it would be useful to consider this question at the next joint meeting. It was also agreed that for such discussion, it would be useful to invite a representative of the Interagency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services to the meeting for the discussion related to labour migration statistics. It was also agreed that more active participation of statisticians in the work of the Interagency Task Force should be encouraged.**