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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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<div style="border:1px solid black">Approved</div>

Item III (d) of the Provisional Agenda

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TASK FORCE
ON MEASURING EMIGRATION

Prepared by the Steering Group on Migration Statistics and the Secretariat

> *In February 2023, the Bureau discussed future work on international migration statistics and decided to establish a task force on measuring emigration. The UNECE Secretariat, together with the Steering Group on Migration Statistics, prepared the present terms of reference for the Task Force on this topic.*
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> ***The Bureau reviewed and approved the terms of reference for the Task Force on measuring emigration.***

I.   BACKGROUND

1.   Measuring international migration is one of the more challenging areas of official statistics. Traditional data sources, such as population and housing censuses, household surveys and administrative records, all have their strengths and limitations for measuring international migration. Integration of data from different sources is promoted as a way to enrich data and reduce problems with coverage and accuracy[1].

2.   Most of the work done to improve the production of international migration statistics has focused on immigration. Emigration is traditionally more difficult to measure than immigration because the emigrant population is no longer resident in the country and therefore cannot be measured directly using censuses or surveys. Administrative sources are used in several countries to produce estimates for emigration, but in most cases the figures are underestimated because many emigrants do not register their departure, although they are expected to do it. Even in jurisdictions where border-crossing data is comprehensive allowing for a direct estimate of the levels of emigration, attributes such as the destination of emigrants remain elusive.

3.   To overcome these problems and produce better statistics on emigration, researchers and national statistical offices (NSOs) have developed various techniques, including residual methods, indirect estimation, sampling methods, and statistical modelling. In 2013, a CES working group on migration statistics[2] produced a review of those methods[3], discussing the relative strengths and limitations of each approach. Since then, more administrative data have become available in many countries. Some countries have been able to make use of new data sources[4]. Administrative data or new data sources, for instance, can be used to identify

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[1] UNECE 2019. Guidance on data integration for measuring migration. Geneva, United Nations
[2] Task force on improving migration and migrant data using household surveys and other sources (also known as "Suitland Working Group")
[3] Jensen E. 2013. A review of methods for estimating emigration. Working paper 101. United States Census Bureau
[4] UNECE 2022. Use of new data sources for measuring international migration. Geneva: United Nations

emigrants who have not communicated their departure. Data integration and other methods suitable for measuring emigration data have significantly developed. For instance, in Austria social security data are linked at unit record level to the population register to identify persons who emigrated without communicating their departure. In Israel, border control data are integrated with the population register to calculate the length of stay abroad and then identify emigrants and return emigrants. In Canada, where there is no population register, emigrants are estimated by using data from the Child Tax Benefit programme and the Canada Revenue Agency, but also from the United States Department of Homeland Security regarding emigration to the United States.

4.   Countries strive to improve the quality of emigration statistics because of its high importance for policymaking. In the United States, for instance, emigration data are required for the postcensal population estimates, population projections, and coverage evaluation programs at the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau for decades used a residual method on information from decennial censuses to indirectly measure emigration of residents who are foreign born. However, this method has some weaknesses, and alternative methods have been developed to improve emigration estimates[5].

5.   Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of understanding emigrant populations from the perspective of the source jurisdictions. As borders closed, and populations that had limited access and rights in host countries were exposed, source jurisdictions did not have good information on their citizens living outside their borders, to offer sufficient support or pathways back to the source nation.

6.   Considering the high policy relevance of emigration statistics, the progress made in the last few years, and the fact that there is still room for improvement in this field, it is timely to review the data sources and methods available for the production of emigration statistics, to identify good practices that could lead to improvement. New work could entail the review of existing data sources (since the 2013 review), methods for each source, and key indicators to produce from each source.

7.   At its October 2022 meeting, the UNECE Group of Experts on migration statistics discussed topics for future work and expressed strong support for launching new methodological work on measuring emigration.

8.   In February 2023, the Bureau discussed future work on migration statistics and agreed to establish a task force on measuring emigration, with terms of reference to be reviewed at the October 2023 meeting of the Bureau.

II.   MANDATE

9.   The Task Force on Measuring Emigration reports to the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) through its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period from October 2023 to June 2025.

III.   OBJECTIVE

10.   The objective of the Task Force is to develop guidance to NSOs on data sources and methods for measuring emigration.

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[5] United States Census Bureau 2019. United States Census Bureau methods for estimating emigration of the foreign born. Working paper 15, UNECE Work Session on Migration Statistics, 29–31 October 2019.

IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

11.   The Task Force will conduct the following activities:

(a) Collect information and material on existing experience and plans in NSOs and other government agencies for measuring emigration, focusing on new data sources and innovative methods, on cooperation initiatives between countries, and on emigrants (not including the children of emigrant parents);

(b) Identify examples from outside official statistics to estimate migration that could be potentially relevant for NSOs for measuring emigration;

(c) Analyse and review the collected material, and provide guidance to NSOs for measuring emigration;

(d) Compile the examples into an online reference tool and develop a mechanism for updating it with new examples.

V. TIMETABLE

12.   The activities of the Task Force are planned for the period from November 2023 to June 2025 as follows:

November-December 2023	Establishment of the Task Force and drafting of a work plan with activities, timing and division of work
January-April 2024	Collect information and material on existing experiences in national statistical offices and outside (activities *a* and *b*)
May 2024	Meeting of the Task Force and presentation of preliminary review of current practices to the meeting of the UNECE Group of Experts on migration statistics
June-October 2024	Analysis of material collected and drafting of the guidance (activity *c*)
September-December 2024	Compile the examples into an online reference tool and develop a mechanism for updating it with new examples (activity *d*)
November-December 2024	Editing of the full guidance
January-February 2025	Review of the guidance by the CES Bureau
February-March 2025	Revision based on the comments by the CES Bureau
April-May 2025	Electronic consultation among all CES countries
June 2025	Expected endorsement of the guidance by the CES plenary session

VI. METHOD OF WORK

13.   The Task Force will primarily work via e-mail, wiki workspace, and online meetings. A face-to-face meeting of the task force is planned to be organized back-to-back with the meeting of the UNECE Group of Experts on migration statistics in May 2024.

VII. MEMBERSHIP

14.   The following statistical offices have expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Canada, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, United Kingdom (Chair), United States, Eurostat and OECD. Other countries and organizations are welcome to join the Task Force.

15.   UNECE will provide the Secretariat to the Task Force.

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