

Approved

Meeting of the 2023/2025 Bureau  
Geneva, Switzerland, 14-15 February 2024

Item 3(a) of the Provisional  
Agenda

## TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE TASK FORCE ON DEFINING AND MEASURING NEW FORMS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

**Prepared by the Steering Group on Migration Statistics and the Secretariat**

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

*The Bureau reviewed and approved the terms of reference for the Task Force on defining and measuring new forms of international migration.*

### I. BACKGROUND

1. The definition of long-term international migration from the 1998 UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, based on a threshold of 12 months, has been considered for many years as difficult to implement and insufficient to reflect the reality of migration and mobility.

2. Apart from the pandemic years, global mobility has increased in the last two decades, including the movement of transient populations who do not fit into the standard definitions of international migrants. These populations may include circular migrants, who make regular, shorter visits to a country. They may include displaced persons whose length of stay is unpredictable: they may settle, move on or return. Nomadic, itinerant and seasonal workers often do not meet the long-term migration definition, and international students may do under various interpretations. There may be cities or regions within a country which see high seasonality and changeability in population.

3. These types of movement can be challenging to define and measure. It seems increasingly unfeasible to use past behaviours and patterns of movement to make the assumptions required to generate statistics. Therefore, a radical and ambitious approach is needed for developing definitions of movement, migration and mobility that reflect the current reality of migration.

4. The increasing practice of some countries to use administrative data to identify migratory behaviour provides new opportunities to measure migration in more detailed and different ways. This may uncover strands of migration that have been invisible or very hard to measure up to now, and provide ways to meet identified and unidentified needs of policy makers and other users.

5. Understanding new patterns of movement would allow policy makers to plan accordingly. Understanding the needs of users for new measures of migration is an important step to developing methods.

6. In April 2021, the UN Expert Group on Migration Statistics published a new conceptual framework for measuring migration. The conceptual framework and accompanying statistical definitions on international migration and temporary mobility have been endorsed by the 2021 United Nations Statistical Commission (decision 52/109), superseding those of the 1998 recommendations. This did not change the main concepts of migration but did identify temporary population mobility as an important factor in the process of population change.

7. The Task Force on Defining and Measuring New Forms of International Migration will complement but be distinct from the other developments in migration statistics currently underway. New migration patterns have already triggered new statistical initiatives, including within the UN Statistical Division, ILO and UNECE. These alternative definitions of migration need to be incorporated and expanded. In particular, the task force will build upon the work on the revision of the 1998 Recommendations on Statistics on International Migration, to be submitted for endorsement by the UN Statistical Commission in 2025.

8. The current definition of long-term international migration is an important component of population measurement. Any new measures should be considered for their compatibility with the equivalent measures of population, such as time of year/day population estimates, and address issues of statistical coherence between them. There will be migration measures that necessarily stand alone, but a proliferation in migration measures will necessitate communication of how and when to use the different measures, and for which purpose.

9. In October 2023, the Bureau discussed what can be done under CES and agreed that a radical and ambitious approach is needed for developing definitions of movement, migration and mobility that reflect the current reality and consider use of administrative data sources. Further, it is important to bring the known needs of policymakers and other users to the attention of the international groups currently working on concepts and definitions of international migration and ensure their consideration through participation in those groups. And finally, the concepts and definitions developed under the existing international initiatives should be expanded with definitions of specific population groups and types of migration and mobility, proposing more detailed definitions and developing concepts for new forms of migration and mobility.

## **II. MANDATE**

10. The Task Force on Defining and Measuring New Forms of International Migration reports to the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) through its Bureau. The Task Force will be created for a period from February 2024 to June 2026.

## **III. OBJECTIVE**

11. The objective of the Task Force is:

- (a) To investigate the needs and opportunities to measure new forms of migration.
- (b) To consider opportunities for joint research within the Task Force, for example to look for those leaving one country arriving in the destination country by a range of definitions.

- (c) To provide a review of what is happening and what is possible, with a view to formulate recommendations for national statistical offices ensuring consistency with existing standard terms and definitions.

#### IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

12. The Task Force will conduct in Year 1 (from February 2024 to February 2025) the following activities:

- (a) Send a questionnaire to countries to determine the needs and opportunities to measure new forms of migration.
- (b) Experiment in a few countries participating in the Task Force to test different measurement approaches.

13. These activities in Year 1 will inform the work plan for Year 2 to prepare a report on the measurement of new forms of migration, possibly with a collection of good practices and recommendations for further work.

14. The activities of the Task Force are currently planned as follows:

February 2024	Establish the Task Force
March – June 2024	Collect information on needs and opportunities to measure new forms of migration
May 2024	Meeting of the Task Force to plan and discuss experiments to test different measurement approaches
June – September 2024	Carry out experiments in a few countries participating in the Task Force to test different measurement approaches
June – October 2024	Analyse the material collected through questionnaires and experiments
October 2024 – December 2024	Prepare and review work plan for Year 2, agree on activities and outputs
February 2025	Work plan for Year 2 of Task Force is discussed by the CES Bureau
February 2025 – February 2026	Implement the work plan for Year 2
February 2026	Present the report on the outcome of work to the CES Bureau
April-May 2026	Electronic consultation on the report among all CES countries
June 2026	Expected endorsement of the report by the CES plenary session

#### V. METHOD OF WORK

15. The Task Force will work in English only, primarily 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.

## **VI. MEMBERSHIP**

16. The following statistical offices have expressed interest in participating in the Task Force: Canada, Ireland, Mexico, Poland, United Kingdom (Chair), OECD and UNSD. New Zealand and IMF offered to share information and material with the task force. Other countries and organizations are welcome to join the Task Force.

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

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