

*Regional Workshop on Developing Model Questionnaires for Coordinated Household International Migration Surveys in the Mediterranean Countries (MED-HIMS)*  
Brussels, 16-19 February 2009

**Activities under MEDSTAT II Migration in 2006-2008:  
From the national dimension of work to the proposals of Model Questionnaires  
and coordinated Household International Migration Surveys (MED-HIMS)**

Giambattista Cantisani and Samir Farid  
(MEDSTAT II - Lot 2 Project)

## **1. Introduction to the MEDSTAT II Programme and Migration Sector**

As part of the MEDA Programme, MEDSTAT II (*Regional Statistical Program in the Mediterranean Region – Phase II*, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/medstat>) generally aims at strengthening the national statistical systems of the Mediterranean Partner Countries<sup>(1)</sup> (MPCs), enlarging the production of harmonized statistics, establishing data exchange and developing a common framework to satisfy the data users. Eleven priority statistical sectors are addressed under a common umbrella. The Programme, which began in January 2006 and will end in summer 2009, is implemented through three parallel projects under the administrative supervision of EuropeAid Cooperation Office (Unit A3 - Centralised Operations for Europe, the Mediterranean and Middle-East) and the technical contribution of Eurostat. Differently from the past, the Programme uses a demand-driven approach and country tailored implementation processes and puts emphasis on ownership and durability of activities. The new approach means different activities and results in each country/sector.

Concerning the Migration Sector, the experience gained under MEDSTAT I (1996-2003) directed the focus to a general objective that can be realistically achieved during a mid-term period, i.e. “*contributing to the improvement of the sustainable capacity of the Mediterranean national statistical systems to upgrade the production of statistics on migration.*” The work program for the Implementation Phase, which was based on results of the Orientation Phase, confirmed the initial mandate which included activities relating to the following components:

- Strengthening the NSIs capacities to measure, in the long term, flows of migrants and stocks of population through further exploitation of administrative sources;
- Supporting awareness and coordination between national agencies;
- Assisting the preparation of migration modules for surveys and censuses;
- Strengthening the relationship between MPCs and selected EU Member States, possibly aiming to develop data exchange and bilateral cooperation;
- Enabling the exchange of information, experiences and practices at an international level.

The sector activities went through the approval and further planning of two Task Force meetings. The sequence of activities and the plans for the final period represent, for some aspects, the passage from the national level to the regional level of work. Further coordinated work should be hopefully carried out through additional funding.

---

<sup>1</sup> Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, occupied Palestinian territory, Syria, Tunisia.

## **2. Main activities and results reached so far and plans for the remaining period**

In the first part of the Implementation Phase, MEDSTAT II Migration carried out a series of activities basically responding to the different needs, priorities and timetables of the nine participating project countries. This was followed by two regional events held in the first quarter of 2008 which helped to identify possible areas of interaction between the national programmes and joint work at the regional level. The activities and results of the Implementation Phase thus far are summarised hereinafter.

### Study Visits

- Egypt to Italy (February 2007)
- Jordan to Italy (July 2007)
- Lebanon to Italy/Belgium (September 2007)
- Occupied Palestinian territory to Hungary (October 2007)
- Maghreb countries to France (November 2007)
- Israel to Netherlands/Finland (December 2007)
- Morocco and Syria to Spain (September 2008)

Overall forty national delegates from the MPCs were received by ISTAT in Italy, UCL-GéDAP and DG-SIE in Belgium, INSEE and INED in France, INE-Spain, the Central Statistical Office of Hungary, Statistics Netherlands and Statistics Finland, as well as several national authorities and centres in the seven host countries. The study visits were deemed invaluable by the national delegates as they were informed about the usefulness of comprehensive legal provisions, administrative registration and methods adopted in host countries, particularly the common instruments and procedures implemented under the EU umbrella, and the possible opportunities offered by a more in-depth use of administrative data. These events also helped to strengthen the relationship between participating agencies and countries and between host national authorities too.

Furthermore, the study visit of the delegates from Lebanon resulted in the identification of pilot work regarding the application of a new methodology for measuring yearly migration flows based on border crossing data. The study visit of the delegation from occupied Palestinian territory highlighted the positive attitude of the population towards registration procedures, the continued coordination between agencies and different types of registers as well as the prevalence of high statistical awareness. The visit of the delegates from Israel contributed to the finalisation of the plans for the next integrated census and the identification of strategies for the production and dissemination of statistics according to national and international requirements. Finally, the study visit of the delegates from Morocco identified possible bilateral work between Morocco and Spain.

### Activities in the MPCs and technical assistance missions

- Syria (April 2007 and October 2008)
- Lebanon (April and December 2007)
- Jordan (April 2007, November 2007, January 2008 and November 2008)
- occupied Palestinian territory (April 2007, meeting in Amman, and October 2008)
- Egypt (May 2007, October 2007 and June 2008)
- Morocco (June 2007)

MEDSTAT II contributed to almost all national committees' meetings and workshops; directly involved national partners, and promoted the processing of administrative data at the level of individual records. The experience demonstrated good responsiveness and cooperation by national agencies but not in all countries, mainly due to overlapping with other ongoing operations, the involvement of several actors, and staff turnover. Therefore the improvement of national awareness and collaboration still remains the main challenge for enhancing the use of administrative sources.

Based on new inter-institutional relationships, Lebanon and Morocco started elaborating individual data available respectively through the registration of border cards and residence permits data. The access to individual records was also attempted in Egypt, resulting in some improvements to the current production of statistics. In Jordan and Syria, in spite of the high commitment of national partner agencies, developments towards better use of administrative data remain dependent on the possible new status of the NSI and the reorganisation of national institutions. Meanwhile, the development of administrative registration systems is continually evolving in most countries.

Concerning the statistical operations, migration modules were prepared with MEDSTAT II assistance for the future UNICEF-funded MICS 3 in Lebanon and for the 2008 Census in Algeria, whilst contents of other survey modules were discussed in Morocco. A pilot module on labour migration was also administrated in the Summer 2007 Labour Force Survey in Egypt as part of an international project under the coordination of ILO. Tunisia mostly consolidated the use of statistical operations already pursued since the end of the previous programme and developed panel instruments for the sector.

In addition to the migration modules, Egypt, Jordan, the occupied Palestinian territory and Syria prepared project proposals for new international migration surveys. These four proposals built upon a specific theme proposed by the first MEDSTAT II regional workshop held in Wiesbaden in March 2008— a meeting that also recommended the preparation of Model Questionnaires for coordinated migration surveys to be carried out, outside MEDSTAT II, in a number of countries. Such model questionnaires should be composed of a set of core modules dealing with *out-migration*, *return migration* and *intention to migrate*, with some flexibility on the application of single questions in order to take into consideration countries' needs and circumstances, as well as optional modules linked to emerging issues such as *circular migration*, *irregular migration*, *brain drain* and *remittances*. Further interest in the aforementioned survey was more recently expressed by Lebanon and Algeria; while Morocco considered the possibility of including common modules in their upcoming Demographic Survey. On the other hand, Tunisia has suggested a similar exercise but for immigration.

Finally, Israel introduced innovations in the methodology of the 2008 Integrated Census; improved the methodology for estimating emigrant stocks; considered moving towards a 'Dual Record System' capable of meeting national and international standards and launched the preparation of the 2009 survey on integration of recently arrived immigrants.

#### Regional events and other meetings

- Joint UNECE / Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics (Edinburgh, 20-22 November 2006)
- Task Force N.1 (Brussels, 13-14 March 2007)
- MEDSTAT II Regional Training on Concepts, Definitions and Methods (Lisbon, 12-15 February 2008)

- Joint UNECE / Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics (Geneva, 3-5 March 2008)
- MEDSTAT II Regional Workshop on Strengthening the Measurement of Migration Statistics in the Euro-MED Region (Wiesbaden, 10-13 March 2008)
- Task Force N.2 (Rome, 20-21 May 2008)
- MEDSTAT II Regional Training on Methodologies for Measuring the Impact of Migrants' Remittance Flows on Household Budgets and National Accounts (Lisbon, 17-21 November 2008, under Social Statistics Sector, organised jointly with Migration and National Accounts)

The international meetings further contributed to the development of methods applied at the country level and under the coordination of international organisations, and highlighted the challenge of producing good and comparable migration data to that of the EU countries. Moreover, the MPCs were briefed about the recently established guidelines on using immigration data for measuring emigration, the methodology of specific national surveys and exercises, and the solutions for measuring difficult-to-count migrants. Concerning the latter, MEDSTAT II directly contributed to the preparation of a paper on methods for estimating the stocks of irregular migrants.

The two regional meetings under the Migration Sector at the beginning of 2008 enabled the sharing of experiences within the Euro-MED Region, and emphasized the benefit of the regional approach and the means provided by the Programme. The contributions of representatives from Eurostat, UNECE, World Bank, EU/CARIM, ISTAT, INE-Portugal, INE-Spain, INED and UCL-GeDAP as well as independent experts were both useful and greatly valued. The attention was drawn to some key issues, bearing in mind that international migration has social/economic and political dimensions as well as statistics and numbers. Recommendations from the Workshop included keeping MPCs informed of progress on pilot works and developments; continuing the coordination and cooperation with ministries; documenting and publishing the use of modules, definitions and methods, as well as a Statistics in Focus (by Eurostat); and developing common instruments (e.g. Model Questionnaires) for coordinated migration surveys.

Concerning migrants' remittances, the regional training allowed the seven participating countries to share experiences, discuss common migration and remittance issues, explore the international recommendations for measurement under the balance of payments approach, and learn about the new methods for collecting data through household surveys, thereby improving the national capabilities in this area.

#### Other main activities undertaken in 2008

Upon a suggestion by Eurostat, anticipating the recommendations from the MEDSTAT II Workshop of 2008, a synthesized guide on the compilation of migration statistics with reference to the Euro-Mediterranean Region was prepared as output of the regional training. This guide includes sections on key statistical concepts, frameworks of international coordination, national statistical systems of special interest, research initiatives, different administrative and statistical sources, and the practices adopted in both the European and Mediterranean countries for the production of basic migration statistics, i.e. annual migrant flows and stocks.

In the second half of 2008, MEDSTAT II also defined and recommended possible paths for follow-up activities in the Sector and investigated possible sources of funding under the EC umbrella. Results of this activity, which have been already submitted to the EC and MPCs, are summarised in another document prepared for this Regional Workshop.

### Work program between now and the end of MEDSTAT II

The work program for the final period of MEDSTAT II should mostly focus on the preparation of the Model Questionnaires, the contribution to a meeting jointly organised by the US Census Bureau and UNECE on using household surveys to measure migration and the size, distribution, and characteristics of migrant populations (first meeting of the so-called Suitland Working Group scheduled on 16-17 March 2009), the organisation and holding of sector final workshop (June 2009), and the preparation and publication of a final report.

### **3. The opportunity and challenge of the Model Questionnaires and MED-HIMS**

MEDSTAT II has proposed to AIDCO and the MPCs to launch the preparation of Model Questionnaires through a regional workshop that would involve working in small groups composed of national and international experts and representatives of international institutions/projects. The organization of the meeting required rather a long time, mainly due the concomitant preparation and the undertaking of experts' missions for the preparation of the survey proposals, as well as the lengthy consultation process. As a result of these activities, a good convergence of national positions in alignment with the original mandate was reached, with five out of nine project countries committed to carry out a MED-HIMS in 2009 or 2010, and all seeking technical assistance and complementary funding from the EC or other donors, whilst being open to coordinated operations.

The responsiveness of international and national institutions was also high, with Eurostat, ESCWA, the World Bank, EU/CARIM and the NSIs of Italy and Spain willing to contribute to the preparation of Model Questionnaires and hopefully subsequent activities. The World Bank counterpart has also advanced the intention of mobilizing resources through a Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building or other means, for the finalization of Model Questionnaires or towards the developmental stage of the MED-HIMS. The consideration and support by AIDCO and Eurostat were also adequate, with relevant awareness and promotion initiatives on the exercises of Model Questionnaires and MED-HIMS and other future activities in the Sector amongst relevant EC services and parallel projects. Finally, considering the interest so far and availability of high level international experts, it may be said that the proposed project is gaining *momentum*, hence actors should promptly find a way to implement the proposed MED-HIMS project at the regional or sub-regional level.

With regard to the Model Questionnaires and MED-HIMS, the following challenges may be defined:

- holding this unique workshop (in fact, a rather operational and high level experts' group);
- enlargement of the number of MPCs interested to undertake coordinated MED-HIMS;
- development of Model Questionnaires taking into consideration country needs and international requirements; the questionnaires being acceptable to several countries with regard to its content and structure, with eventually the option of having common modules to be attached to general surveys;
- active participation of national experts and work modality for the finalisation of Model Questionnaire in the following 3-4 months;
- modality for organising, implementing and funding a project such as MED-HIMS, with possibly a central coordination unit;
- interaction and usefulness of such an initiative with further developments of national systems for data collection and harmonised statistical production in the Sector as well as other activities relevant for the countries and the Euro-Mediterranean Region;
- synergies and collaboration between institutions and existing/future projects and initiatives.