

Guidelines

Application of the Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment on other forms of work as defined by the 19th ICLS resolution on statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization

1 Background/Rationale

The Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment (2015) applies the definition of employment as one of five forms of work set out by Resolution on statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2013. The Handbook, therefore, does not provide guidance on the quality of other forms of work than employment.

It is clearly a disadvantage when employment since the 19th ICLS resolution has a narrower scope and certain other forms of work are not covered by quality indicators. On the other hand, it also has to be considered that with the old definition of employment sometimes quite diverse working conditions would be measured together in one indicator. This might have obscured relevant differences in quality between work forms. The way forward is to apply the indicators where sensible and relevant to other forms of work. This facilitates a comprehensive but also differentiated analysis. Certain quality aspects may in practice be quite similar between several forms of work in a country, but also this sensibly is the conclusion of a precursory differentiated analysis.

While maintaining the scope of the Handbook, the Expert Group on Measuring Quality of Employment recognized as explained above that it is useful to consider the other forms of work than employment, which typically will play a more important role in less developed countries. Therefore, the relevance of the indicators of the Handbook for other forms of work should be assessed. For indicators found relevant for other forms of work, recommendations could be included in an update of the Handbook.

These guidelines present a first step towards that aim as a revised handbook will not be published in the near future. They are intended to give some general guidelines and support to NSIs, data analysts or data users who already want to use quality indicators for other forms of work. To this end, they firstly recaps the scope of the framework by describing the general definition of work and its five different forms with employment being one of them. Following that, they assess the relevance of each dimension and sub-dimension of the framework and give guidance for an application to the work forms. These guidelines present a general assessment. This does not mean that not recommended indicators can or should not be applied in a specific (national) context to one of the work forms.

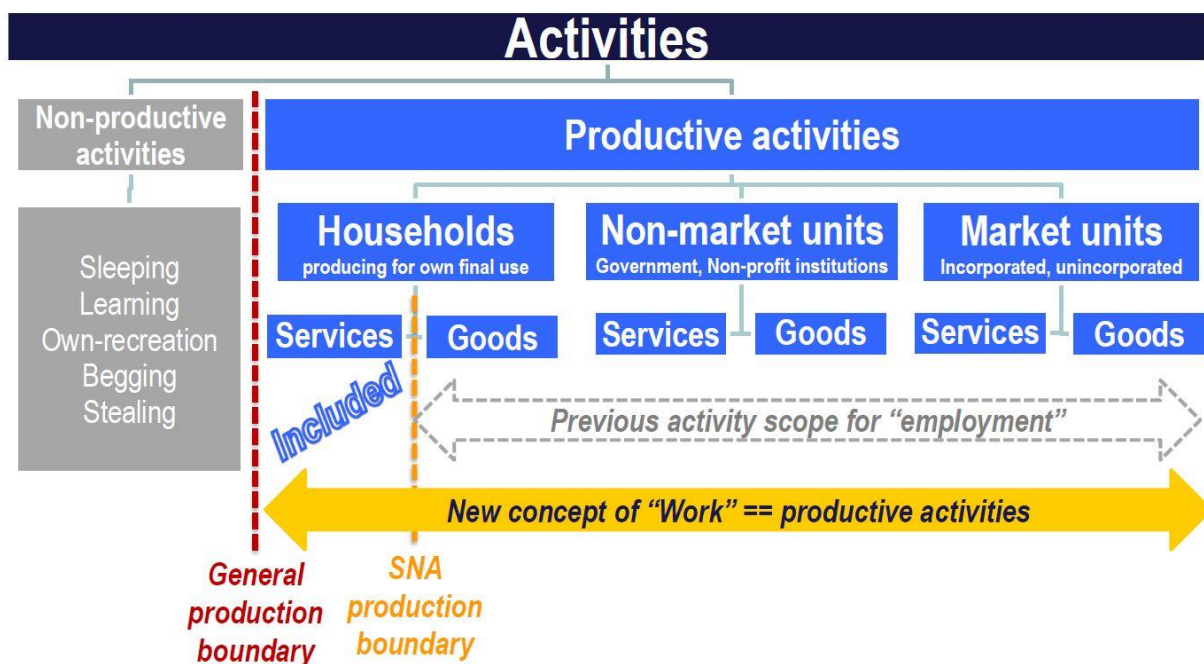
2 Definition of the 19th ICLS resolution

The 19th ICLS resolution on statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization established a comprehensive concept of work as a statistical standard while the 13th ICLS resolution from 1982 had employment as main defining concept¹. The activity scope for employment according to the 13th ICLS resolution is narrower than the activity scope of work according to the 19th ICLS resolution and broader than the scope of employment according to the 19th ICLS resolution. Thus, applying the employment definition of the 19th ICLS resolution in the Handbook means a narrower scope.

2.1 The 13th ICLS resolution of 1982

According to the 13th ICLS Resolution, a person was considered being in employment, if the person was engaged in a productive activity within the production boundary of the System of National Accounts (see figure 1). Employment was defined mainly as paid employment by referring to all persons who during a brief period were either (1) in paid employment for wage or salary, in cash or in kind or (2) in self-employment for profit or family gain. In addition persons engaged in the production of economic goods and services for own and household consumption should be considered as in self-employment if such production comprises an important contribution to the total consumption of the household.

Figure 1: The concept of work in the System of National Accounts (SNA; source: Castillo 2014)



Because of the reference to the SNA production boundary, the 1982 definition of employment implicitly allowed the inclusion of persons that were in a work activity that was not for pay or profit. Those were (1) unpaid apprentices and trainees, (2) persons who produced goods for own final use,

¹ Note that the term „work“ is nevertheless used in the resolution, however not as a distinct statistical concept, but synonymously with the notion of employment („at work“, „return to work“, „worker“)

like e. g. such as subsistence foodstuff producers, (3) persons who volunteered through or for organisations and (4) persons who volunteered to produce goods for other households.

2.2 The current 19th ICLS resolution of 2013 and its impact

The 19th ICLS resolution represents a new framework and set of guidelines for measuring different forms of work. It refined the back then existing ICLS standards and conceptual definitions on the labour force and related components.

It explicitly specifies for the first time the statistical concept of work, which is defined as any activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use. This definition of work is consistent with the general production boundary of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and enables full compilation of national production accounts and satellite accounts.

Five mutually exclusive forms of work are identified in this resolution, which are distinguished by the intended destination of the production (i.e. for own final use or for use by other economic units) and the nature of the transaction (i.e. whether monetary or non-monetary transactions and transfers):

- (1) Employment work,
- (2) unpaid trainee work,
- (3) own-use production work,
- (4) volunteer work and
- (5) other work activities.

The latter include e. g. unpaid community service and unpaid work by prisoners. The five forms of work are illustrated in Figure 2.

Consequently, with the introduction of the concept of work, the scope of employment activities was reduced compared to the 1982 definition of employment and other forms of work are explicitly excluded. In most developed countries, the impact of the change is rather limited as unpaid work for making a living have a smaller importance. But, in countries where persons engaged in the production of goods for own final use make up a sizable share it does make a difference if employment is defined according to the 13th or 19th ICLS resolution.

Figure 2: Forms of work and their allocation in the SNA 2008 (ILO 2013)

<i>Intended destination of production</i>	<i>for own final use</i>		<i>for use by others</i>				
	Own-use production work		Employment (work for pay or profit)	Unpaid trainee work	Other work activities	Volunteer work	
<i>Forms of work</i>	of services	of goods				in market and non-market units	in households producing
					goods	services	
<i>Relation to 2008 SNA</i>	<i>Activities within the SNA production boundary</i>						
	<i>Activities inside the SNA General production boundary</i>						

A further refinement of the 19th ICLS resolution concerns the definition of a “job” as “a set of tasks and duties performed, or meant to be performed, by one person for a single economic unit”. The equivalent concept for unpaid forms of work is referred to as “work activity”. In the context of the handbook on measuring quality of employment, it should be taken into account that people may have several jobs (with varying characteristics and quality) and employed people are also engaged in one or more other forms of unpaid work (at least in own-use production of services). A potential framework on quality of work should also tackle the issue of how to deal with multiple activities.

3 The scope and definition of employment in the handbook

The handbook on measuring quality of employment explicitly states the definition of employment in accordance with the 19th ICLS resolution:

“11. The statistical framework follows the definition of employment endorsed by the Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilisation adopted by the Nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) held in October 2013. [...] Employment work refers to work performed (for use by other units) in exchange for pay or profit. [...].

12. According to the 19th ICLS Resolution on work statistics, persons in employment are defined as all those of working age who, during a short reference period, either worked in a job for pay or profit for at least one hour or were temporarily absent from such a job in which they had already worked. Pay or profit refers to work done as part of a transaction in exchange for remuneration, which may be payable either as wages or salaries for time worked or work done or as profit (or loss) derived through market transactions from the goods and/or services produced. Remuneration may be in cash or in kind, whether actually received or not.”

The handbook also deals with the case of multiple job-holders and their coverage by the indicators:

“Persons may have one or several jobs. Notably, for many quality of employment indicators, including those related to employment-related income and working time, indicators should ideally cover all jobs of multiple jobholders, since the employment quality perspective of the employed person is taken into account. This is a feature distinguishing the quality of employment framework from a job quality framework. In cases where the main job is used as the reference amongst multiple job-holders, the main job should refer to the one with the longest hours usually worked, as defined in the international statistical standards on working time.”

As noted above, one of the issues of a potential integration of unpaid forms of work would be how to deal with the fact that people may have several jobs or work activities in parallel.

While the scope of the framework is limited to employment, users are encouraged to apply the indicators to other forms of work as well, however without providing further guidance:

“14. The statistical framework was designed for measuring quality of employment (i.e., work for pay or profit). Many dimensions and indicators could however also be relevant for other types of work, for instance own-use production of goods and unpaid trainee work. According to national circumstances, countries may consider extending the scope of parts of the indicators to other forms of work, if deemed necessary. In this case, however, it is recommended to provide breakdowns by form of work.”

There remains one major exception from definition of the handbook’s scope to employment work, which concerns sub-dimension 1b on forced labour and child labour:

“In the case of sub-dimension 1b (Child labour and forced labour), a broader scope is suggested, as the restriction to employment work does not seem appropriate in this specific case.”

The background of this exception is that a strict application of the scope of the framework would have resulted in including only paid forms of child labour and forced labour, as well as in excluding child labour of children below working age (usually 15 or 16 years). As it did not seem sensible to include only part of the persons concerned by child labour and forced labour, it was decided to exceptionally use the scope as defined by the relevant international standards and recommendations on child and forced labour. This decision however results in an inconsistency regarding the overall scope of the handbook, which could be tackled when making modifications in reaction to the 19th ICLS resolution.

Further consistency issues exist regarding the indicator on informal employment (4ax2), for which the scope given in the indicator sheet (in accordance with 17th ICLS Guidelines concerning a statistical definition of informal employment) includes, amongst others, “workers engaged in the production of goods exclusively for own final use by their household, if they are considered employed given that the production comprises an important contribution to the total household consumption”. This group is not included in employment according to the 19th ICLS resolution, but was according to the 13th ICLS resolution. The background is that the 17th ICLS guidelines still refer to the previous definition of employment. As this indicator is still marked as experimental, its role in the handbook still has to be discussed. It could as it relates to “informal” employment belong to a set of indicators that cover various work forms. It could also be strictly focussed on employment while corresponding indicators referring to other work forms could be added.

4 Applicability of the sub-dimensions to other forms of work

The scope of employment as defined by the 19th ICLS resolution is not sufficient to cover the quality of relevant forms of work in all countries that want to use the Handbook. This is important to be acknowledged because for many people in certain countries work besides employment represents a big part of everyday life, is essential to make a living and consequently the conditions under which such work is performed have a significant impact.

As way forward, the expert group agreed to keep the framework’s scope on employment and its general structure with its dimensions and indicators. But, as a first step users should be provided with recommendations, which (sub)dimensions are relevant for unpaid forms of work. In a later step, for indicators that were identified in these guidelines as relevant for one or several forms of work recommendations will be made regarding their application (data source, modified definition, interpretation) and eventually added to the respective indicator sheets.

According to this first assessment a bit more than one third of the indicators can be applied to other forms of work than employment.

The following section gives general advice to data users who want to apply the framework to other forms of work than employment.

(1) Safety and ethics of employment

This is a fundamental dimension as for all activities and work being a specific sub-set it is essential that they don't hamper physical and mental wellbeing. If work includes exchange or collaboration with others it is also essential that this takes place in a fair and respectful manner.

(a) Safety at work

To protect physical safety and health is key to any activity and consequently a key element for assessing the quality of all work activities. The data collection here is more complicated than for employment as other work activities often take place in a less structured and organised context and reporting systems that count e. g. any kind of accident connected with specific work activity cannot be expected. While the occurrence of occupational injuries or exposure to physical or mental risk factors can theoretically be collected through a household or labour force survey, information on fatal injuries might be hard to get.

The definition and formula for calculating the indicators can be directly applied to all forms of work. The interpretation of the indicators is straight forward as lower numbers are always a desirable goal. The policy implications might be quite different as security measures can be more easily introduced in more organised employment systems with central players as big employers and unions. Severe injuries have a more significant negative impact on workers who rely on own use production as their product mainly depends on their own work force and there are probably less insurances that will compensate for the loss of that production.

(b) Child labour and forced labour

This sub-dimension is the only one in the handbook that already goes beyond the scope of employment as child and forced labour by definition are not restricted to paid work and also do not respect the minimum age of 15 years.

All definitions and recommendations provided in the handbook on this sub-dimension and the corresponding five indicators sheets can be used directly.

(c) Fair treatment in employment

This sub-dimension has a mixed relevance regarding other forms of work than employment. Salaries (1c1) and shares of persons in managerial occupations (1c2) as indicators for fair treatment clearly relate to employment only. Access to managerial or leading positions in big non-profit organisations can be discriminatory. But, as this kind of top level staff is mostly regularly employed and paid this kind of work actually is counted as employment and already covered. It could also be interesting to look at the gender balance in own-use production: to what shares is the own-use production in households lead by a man, woman or on equal terms.

Discrimination and any other unfair treatment (1c3) can always take place when people come together. It may be difficult to disentangle work from private relationships in own-use production households. Unpaid apprentices and volunteers can experience such discrimination. For the former that is additionally relevant because discrimination can have an influence on successfully completing the apprenticeship and finding an employment (with the same employer), afterwards. Questions on self-perceived discrimination in a household survey can provide suitable data. So far, corresponding questions only refer to employment as in the EU-LFS or the European Working Conditions Survey.

(2) Income and benefits from employment

The indicators of this dimension with its sub-dimensions (a) Income and (b) Non-wage pecuniary benefits cannot be applied to other work forms than employment because they consider the remunerative aspects of quality which is a defining element of employment.

(3) Working time and work-life balance

(a) Working hours

Any work activity needs time to be performed. The volume of this working time but also the distribution over the week are highly relevant. The more time is spent on one activity the less remains for other work or private activities and time for recovery that all have to be reconciled with each other.

The most suitable source for retrieving such data is a Time Use Survey because it provides a comprehensive picture of all the time spent for all different activities. Other household surveys can possibly provide more specific information e. g. on time invested into volunteering or a Labour Force Survey can collect data on time spent in employment, perhaps on own-use production and how much time in total is needed to make a living.

The indicator on involuntary part-time employment can theoretically be applied also to other work forms but at least from a general point of view this seems to provide no relevant insight.

When applying the indicator on multiple job holders (3a5) it makes sense to count all work activities a person is engaged in including employment providing a comprehensive measure of all work activities. This can be broken down by work form to give an insight into the relative importance of each form. For the interpretation it has to be kept in mind that the time invested into each activity can vary significantly.

(b) Working time arrangements

Explicit or formally agreed working time arrangements are probably mostly used for jobs in employment. But it is also plausible that volunteer assignments, unpaid training and other work forms take place at agreed times. Own-use production work is probably performed at a typical time of the day that could then be classified as evening, night or weekend work. Employment may take place mostly during daytime, while other work activities are pushed to the off-peak times. In so far, the indicators on working time arrangements can be applied to all forms of work. Their meaningful interpretation presupposes differentiated background knowledge of the conditions of each work form as they are often less standardised as those of employment. E. g. volunteer work that is often performed in the evening can mean 20 hours per week or 2 hours every second week.

The indicator on flexible work schedules can also be applied to all other forms of work. That may be straightforward for volunteers and unpaid apprentices where a supervisor sets more or less rigid rules for a work schedule. But, it may also be other circumstances limit time flexibility and e. g. leave no other possibility but to do own-use production work or volunteering during evening hours or the weekend.

(c) Work-life balance

The indicators of this sub-dimension can only sensibly be applied to employment.

(4) Security of employment and social protection

(a) Security of employment

This dimension targets on the security of a stable and sufficient income and thus has a clear reference to employment.

There are two indicators in this dimension that address job tenure (4a2) and the perceived job security (4a5). Both can be applied to own-use production work because in many countries it significantly contributes to making a living. The information can be collected with a household survey or an LFS that also covers other forms of work. The indicator definitions might need to be adapted but in general they provide information on the timespan a person has been engaging in own-use production work and if he/she expects to be able to rely on it for more than 6 more months. The latter might also be relevant for unpaid training in a sense that these trainees expect to complete their training / fear not to be able to complete it.

(b) Social protection

This sub-dimension is only applicable to remunerated forms of work that count as employment. Social subsistence, a minimum income or free medical service can be provided by the state and give additional financial security but there is no direct link to employment or work. This can be useful background information.

(5) Social dialogue

This dimension explicitly relates to conditions in connection with employment and cannot be applied to other forms of work than employment.

(6) Skills development and training

Dimensions six and seven are rather connected with conditions of the work process or at the workplace and thus have a higher relevance for all forms of work.

The development of skills in connection with other work forms than employment is a relevant quality property because it can help to better perform the tasks or work activities, feel more at ease with them and be more productive. Only the application of this dimension to unpaid apprenticeships seems to be somewhat redundant. Nevertheless, the indicators on usefulness of training and employability (6.3 and 6.5) add pertinent information.

For the other work forms most of the indicators of dimension 6 make sense: Volunteers working in organisations can receive corresponding non-formal education. Own-use production workers can engage themselves in relevant continuing education and training. Work performed for whatever destination can help improving own skills. The indicator on employability (6.5) even adds an additional insight: it can show if work besides employment facilitates access to employment or the labour market, respectively.

The only indicator that cannot usefully be applied to other workforms is skill match (6.6). This does not mean that this information might not be relevant. But, corresponding data will be very difficult to be collected (it is already difficult enough for employment) and a simple indicator cannot provide meaningful information. Own-use production or volunteering workers may only need a limited set of skills who are significantly exceeded by their knowledge. How should this be interpreted? Is it troubling over-qualification even though workers could be very satisfied with their tasks and feel no need for change. On the other side, these non-employment work activities can be more easily adapted to match a lack of existing skills. Does the resulting skill match necessarily mean that there is no potential for improvement? It might also be that skills necessary for such work activities are unspecific (soft skills) and not consciously perceived by the worker. From this general point of view it appears to be more pertinent to have specific research on such issues.

(7) Employment-related relationships and work motivation

(a) Employment-related relationships

The indicators of this dimension are most relevant to all work activities that are performed within organisations. This mainly refers to volunteering and unpaid traineeships. They can also be applied to own-use production work and any other work activity when they are performed in a group or in some kind of collaboration with other people. Only the indicator on the relationship with the supervisor (7a2) is not applicable on other work than employment.

(b) Work motivation

The last sub-dimension gives a mixed picture regarding its applicability to the various work forms. Any kind of work activity can be evaluated by the intrinsic rewards (7b3) it provides and its work intensity (7b4). The latter has some limits in its interpretability because a highly intense activity that is only performed for two hours per week might still not be very burdening.

The extend of job autonomy (7b1) can vary in almost every work form and may be influenced by a supervisor, deadlines set by clients, available technology or seasons. Regarding own-use production workers it could be interesting to determine the actual freedom they have in organising their own work. For unpaid trainee work we expect low or no job autonomy and consequently this indicator provides redundant information. Organisational participation (7b5) makes sense for volunteering and any other work activity when it is performed in (large) organisations.

The feedback from the supervisor (7b2) can be a pertinent indicator regarding all workers in organisations or units who work as volunteers, unpaid apprentices or in other work activities.

5 Outlook

This paper provides an overview over the relevance of the seven dimensions of the Framework for measuring quality of employment on the other forms of work besides employment as defined by the 19th ICLS resolution. The paper reveals where the application of the framework to these other forms makes sense. It also points at possible data sources and occasionally discusses the applicability of individual indicators.

Still, it is a general assessment. Data users who want to measure the quality of other work forms by using the framework still have to undertake detailed reflections for every indicator on how to adapt its definition, how it can be interpreted and which data source could be used.

The Expert Group plans to undertake these detailed reflections for all relevant indicators in view of a revision of the Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment. The appendix to this paper already presents an indicator list with a tentative assessment. The revised Handbook could contain additional or supplemented indicator sheets that give corresponding guidance.

References

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