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Forms of employment

Results of the consultation on the *Handbook on Forms of Employment*

Prepared by the Secretariat

Summary

This document summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Handbook on Forms of Employment* (ECE/CES/2022/5). The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the Handbook in March–April 2022.

A total of 49 countries and organizations replied to the request for comments. All responding countries and organizations considered the Handbook ready for the endorsement by the Conference of European Statisticians, subject to incorporation of the comments made during this consultation. The final version of the Handbook with the amendments will be available at the [web page](#) of the 2022 CES plenary session.

In view of the support received, the Conference of European Statisticians is invited to endorse the *Handbook on Forms of Employment*.



I. Introduction

1. The note summarizes the comments by the members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the *Handbook on Forms of Employment*. The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation on the Handbook in March–April 2022.
2. The Handbook was prepared by the CES Task Force on forms of employment (chaired by Canada). The CES Bureau reviewed the draft Handbook in February 2022 and requested the Secretariat to send it to all CES members for electronic consultation.
3. The following 49 countries and international organizations replied to the consultation: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, European Labour Authority, Eurostat, International Labour Organization, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Statistics Division and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing.
4. In spring 2022, the Task Force updated the Handbook to reflect the comments from the consultation. All substantive comments were incorporated to the extent possible. Editorial comments and suggestions for clarifications were also considered. The updated version of the Handbook was edited by Joe Grice to ensure clarity and coherence throughout the chapters.
5. The Task Force thanks all countries and organizations who provided feedback to make the Handbook the result of a collective effort in developing a conceptual framework to classify and understand forms of employment.

II. General comments

6. All responding countries and organizations consider the Handbook ready for endorsement by CES, subject to the amendments resulting from the electronic consultation.
7. Many countries acknowledge the value of the Handbook in providing a clear conceptual framework on forms of employment and appreciate its usefulness in identifying and measuring emerging and established forms of employment (including: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Dominican Republic, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and United Kingdom). For example:
 - (a) **Albania:** “The Handbook offers a comprehensive view of the new forms of employment. It clarifies concepts and classifications that otherwise would be difficult to identify and measure in a correct and comparable way”;
 - (b) **Australia:** “We found the Handbook useful. We have already started using the ‘work relationships’ and ‘work modalities’ in our discussions with Australian stakeholders and can confirm that it is a useful approach. Cross-classifying them in a two-way matrix was also considered useful”;
 - (c) **Finland:** “We count on this handbook for ideas and guidance when developing our activities further. It may also serve as a good ‘tutorial’ especially for new recruits in employment statistics”;
 - (d) **Germany:** “The Handbook provides a well-structured analytical grid that allows systematically categorizing and analysing various forms of employment in Germany. The handbook combines and integrates the already existing frameworks in this field setting up a coherent and durable overarching framework. In many respects, concepts or indicators presented by the Handbook can be applied to data collected by official statistics in Germany. We are planning to review their application on our labour market reporting”;

(e) **Italy:** “We really appreciated the degree of detail with which the definitions provided, since it will be very useful for the construction of new indicators”;

(f) **Lithuania:** “The Handbook is very well structured, detailed and will be useful as a conceptual framework for collecting and analysing data on new forms of employment and other related statistical measurements”;

(g) **Netherlands:** “The Handbook describes useful possibilities for statistics on emerging forms of employment that are not yet described in our national data, like for example the ideas for measurement of digital platform employment. We can use these ideas for example for testing and finding a suitable way for measurement. It also describes very useful ideas to broaden/improve our existing statistics”;

(h) **Poland:** “The Handbook could be used when doing research on a variety of topics related to the labour market”;

(i) **Romania:** “The Handbook provides a very comprehensive conceptual framework for measuring forms of employment. Since new ways to organize work appeared in the recent years, measuring information on this topic is a must”;

(j) **Turkey:** “We would like to point out that this handbook has been carefully prepared by discussing the subject section by section, explaining it with the examples given, and identifying possible data sources and indicators”;

(k) **Ukraine:** “The Handbook is relevant and useful. The provisions given in this document are significant methodological foundation to measure different forms of employment and labour relations on the basis of administrative and statistical sources, particularly, to improve the methodology and Labour Force Survey program in line with international standards and taking into account the specifics of the national labour market”.

8. Ongoing work on measuring forms of employment has already taken place in several countries. The State Statistics Service of Ukraine indicates its plan to improve the Labour Force Survey (LFS) questionnaire in 2022 with regard to making additions to questions about the new forms of employment in order to obtain additional information to be analysed and disseminated among users from 2024. To get more information on employees working remotely, from April 2020 the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia has supplemented LFS with questions on possibilities, regularity and time of remote working. In 2022, Latvia also participated in the pilot data collection on digital platform employment. Mexico and Switzerland mention that some forms of employment are already (or intended to be) disseminated, including indicators mentioned in chapter 8 of the Handbook as well as indicators of quality of employment. Australia considers the Handbook particularly useful for Australian Bureau of Statistics in explaining concepts and measurement priorities on digital platform work and workers as it plans to publish information on this work in the second half of 2022 and plans to reference the Handbook.

9. While acknowledging the added value of the Handbook, Albania, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and United States indicate that due to limited resources, experience, data availability, and current national/regional legislation, context and statistical priority, application of the Handbook will be challenging at the current stage. These countries however specified that the Handbook will be used as a next step in the future to identify and measure emerging and established forms of employment.

10. In the electronic consultation, countries were also asked about topics for possible further work and research, in addition to the proposed topics already listed in Section 1.6 of the Handbook, which include the development of practical guidance on data collection and measurement challenges as well as sharing of experiences and good practices in measuring new and emerging forms of employment among countries. The responses show that while all countries consider the above-mentioned topics essential for advancing work in the area, several new topics were suggested. Details on the suggested topics and the Task Force’s responses can be found in Section III of the report.

III. Comments and amendments on specific sections of the document

A. Chapter 1 - Introduction

11. **Chile** and **ILO** propose to add that further work on forms of employment should be aligned with the latest development in statistical standards and methods.

12. **United Kingdom** suggests that several topics and their interaction with forms of employment could be expanded or included to the discussion, for example, the sharing economy and the potential indirect implications of certain forms of employment to economic statistics.

Response by the Task Force

13. The Task Force recognizes that some of the topics raised in the Handbook are on the cutting edge of labour statistics and has emphasised the need to align further work with the conceptual and methodological development of those topics in section 1.6 of Chapter 1.

14. In response to United Kingdom's comments, additional texts have been added in Chapter 1 to encourage labour statisticians to stay informed of changes and innovations in other statistical areas such as national accounts, the classification of occupations and industries as well as digitalization and the sharing economy, in order to fully capture economic transformations.

B. Chapter 2 - Work relationships

15. **Australia** suggests highlighting how the tension between labour market flexibilization and precariousness of employment in some of the work relationships complicates their measurement and how changes in the prevalence of these work relationships are interpreted.

Response by the Task Force

16. The concept of precarious employment from the perspective of the interaction between personal characteristics and the form of employment is briefly discussed in section 5.6 of the Handbook. The Task Force takes note of the need for an extended discussion around flexibilization and precariousness of employment and suggests that further work on this topic could be taken forward by the Steering Group on Quality of Employment.

C. Chapter 3 - Work modalities

17. **Netherlands** and **France** ask whether all modalities discussed in the chapter are equally relevant and whether the list of modalities discussed is exhaustive. Both countries question whether the discussion around Section 3.3.5 "Cooperation within and across organizations" could be shortened given its limited significance in national context.

18. **United Kingdom** suggests that discussion on residence across countries as well as how it impacts other concepts such as national accounts could be expanded.

19. **Australia** expresses concerns that while a longer reference period (3, 6 or 12 months) is recommended to capture information on digital platform employment, challenges associated with longer reference period (e.g., difficulty of survey respondents recalling information over longer time frames) are not addressed in the Handbook.

Response by the Task Force

20. The Task Force considers that the objective of Chapter 3 is to propose a structure that help national statistical offices (NSOs) understand and categorize distinctive aspects of the way in which work is conducted. The Task Force has clarified in the text that not all

modalities described in the chapter should necessarily be treated as a priority for data collection. Additional texts have also been added to clarify that the list of modalities included in the chapter is not meant to be exhaustive and that more modalities may be added in the future. Section 3.3.5 on “Cooperation within and across the organization” has also been abridged to keep the most essential and relevant information for NSOs.

21. Discussion on country of residence of a worker and its implications for economic statistics, including national accounts, was already included in Annex A. The Task Force has added additional texts in “Country of residence and country work” section of Chapter 3 to direct readers to Annex A for more information on the topic.

22. The Task Force recognizes the concern raised by Australia regarding challenges associated with collecting data on digital platform workers reflecting a longer reference period. As mentioned in section 1.6 of the Handbook, these issues could be addressed in the practical guidance on data collection and measurement challenges, which is considered an important area for further work on forms of employment.

D. Chapter 4 - Stability and permanence in work relationships

23. **France** asks for a more extensive discussion on “regular client base” as an important factor to consider when measuring permanence among independent workers.

24. Regarding Section 4.4 “Gig work”, **ILO** proposes to add explanations on the policy concerns and objectives of identifying gig-workers to help readers get a better understanding of the context and the type of jobs that is intended to be included in the section.

25. **ILO** suggests stating more explicitly that further work is required to define appropriate statistical boundaries in order to identify gig workers and that NSOs are encouraged to conduct further testing and methodological work on this topic.

26. **Mexico** proposes to add discussion of “seasonal workers” under the section “Regularity of employment” as seasonal workers can be considered to have less stable employment.

Response by the Task Force

27. A paragraph has been added under Section 4.3.1 “Definition of permanence in work relationships” to define “regular client base” further.

28. Additional texts have been added in Section 4.4 “Gig work” to explain the increasingly popular term “gig” and how operationalizing and measuring gig work may help NSOs track the share of employment that has no guarantee of permanence and a high potential for instability.

29. Texts have been added in Section 4.4 to stress that NSOs are encouraged to conduct further work and methodological testing to define appropriate statistical boundaries to identify gig workers and that more specific measurement guidance on gig work may be provided in the future as NSOs and researchers develop new survey questions and data collection strategies.

30. The Task Force agrees with Mexico and has added discussion of “seasonal workers” in section “Regularity of employment”.

E. Chapter 5 - Measuring interactions with personal circumstances and characteristics

31. **Netherlands** proposes to complement the existing examples in paragraph 5.4 by adding an extra example which shows how different perspectives of businesses and workers can result in variation of information reported.

32. **ILO** suggests adding a reference to the question sets developed by the Washington Group on Disabilities in paragraph 5.15 since NSOs are recommended by ILO to use these questions when identifying persons with disabilities in LFS.

33. ILO suggests adding definition of the main job of individuals who have more than one job at a time.

34. ILO suggests adding “jobless household” as an additional example in section 5.3.3 “Type of household or family”.

Response by the Task Force

35. An example has been added to paragraph 5.4 to stress that perspectives of businesses and workers matter when measuring permanence.

36. Reference to the Washington Group on Disabilities has been added in paragraph 5.15 as suggested by ILO.

37. Definition of main job as specified in ILO’s *Resolution concerning statistics on work relationships* has been added to Section 5.5.2 “Multiple jobs”.

38. A category of “jobless household” – households where no one is employed has been added to section 5.3.5 “Type of household or family”.

F. Chapter 6 - Employment and social protection

39. ILO proposes to add discussion on typical challenges for social protection coverages among contributing family workers in paragraph 6.12 and figure 6.1.

Response by the Task Force

40. The Task Force takes note of the need for an extended discussion on social protection coverage challenges faced by contributing family workers and suggests that further work on this topic could be taken forward by the Steering Group on Quality of Employment.

G. Chapter 7 - Forms of employment and quality of employment

41. **United Kingdom** considers that given the recent changes to working lives as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, there are potentially new developments in the field of quality of employment and its relationship with forms of employment which are not fully captured by Chapter 7, as the chapter mainly draws on the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment: A Statistical Framework* which was developed by UNECE in 2015.

Response by the Task Force

42. The Task Force recognizes the need for an updated review of more recent developments in quality of employment indicators and its interaction with forms of employment. The Task Force suggests that further work on this topic could be taken forward by the Steering Group on Quality of Employment.

H. Chapter 8 - Data sources and indicators

43. ILO and **Netherlands** point out that Section 8.1 “Data Sources” seems to have a strong emphasis on examples from EU-countries in the description of the different sources and suggests that examples from other regions could be added.

44. ILO and **United States** propose to stress that NSOs are not required to implement the indicators listed in Table 8.1, these are only recommended indicators for measuring forms of employment.

45. ILO suggests adding a reference of SDG 8.3.1 to indicator “Informal Employment” in Table 8.1.

46. ILO proposes to add two new indicators for “Informality” in Table 8.1 and suggests that the proposed indicators provide a better estimate of informal employment than the existing indicator “Employees with a written form of work contract”.

Response by the Task Force

47. The Task Force agrees with ILO and Netherlands, and has added examples and practices (e.g., Canada, Korea, Mexico and United States) from other regions in Section 8.1 “Data Sources”.

48. The Task Force recognizes the need to emphasize that the indicators listed in Table 8.1 are recommended for NSOs to implement. Additional texts have been added to reflect that the recommended indicators are not all encompassing nor do consist of the only indicators NSOs may want to implement. NSOs may produce the indicators that are in accord with their countries’ needs and budget.

49. A reference of SDG 8.3.1 has been added to indicator “Informal Employment” in Table 8.1.

50. The Task Force recognizes the concern raised by ILO on the existing indicator “Employees with a written form of work contract”. The Task Force has removed the indicator and added the two proposed indicators which provide a better indication of informality in a country.

IV. Proposal to the Conference

51. In view of the strong support expressed by countries and international organizations, the Conference is invited to endorse the *Handbook on Forms of Employment*, subject to amendments outlined in this document.
