

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Approved

Meeting of the 2023 Bureau  
Geneva, 15-16 Feb 2023

Item 3 (a) of the Provisional  
Agenda

**MEASURING QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT:  
PROGRESS REPORT AND UPDATED TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE  
STEERING GROUP**

**Prepared by the Secretariat**

*The paper describes the results of the work of the UNECE Steering Group on Measuring Quality of Employment from 2018 to 2022, and presents a proposal for future work, including an updated Terms of Reference for the period of 2023 - 2028.*

*The Bureau discussed the progress report and approved the extension of Terms of Reference of the Steering Group on Measuring Quality of Employment until 2028.*

## I. BACKGROUND

1. The Steering Group on Measuring Quality of Employment was established in October 2015 by the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) Bureau to guide and oversee the CES work in this area. The Steering Group's Terms of Reference approved in October 2018 will expire in 2023 (ECE/CES/BUR/2018/OCT/13, Annex I<sup>1</sup>).
2. The Steering Group was set up with the purpose of coordinating CES work and guiding the work of the Secretariat in the area of quality of employment. Its objectives include following up on the implementation of the recommendations of the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment, A Statistical Framework*, keeping the statistical framework and the list of indicators up-to-date, and following up on the research agenda as outlined in chapter V of the Handbook, which includes the topic of forms of employment.
3. The following countries and organizations are members of the Steering Group: Austria, Azerbaijan, Canada, Finland, Germany, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Poland, Singapore, Switzerland, United States, Eurofound, Eurostat, ILO, OECD, Upjohn Institute and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). The Steering Group is co-chaired by Canada and Germany.
4. Section II of the current document summarises the activities and outputs of the Steering Group during 2018-2022. Section III presents a proposal to the Bureau on how to continue the work. The updated terms of reference for the Steering Group are presented in Annex.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2018/October/13\\_Quality\\_of\\_employment\\_approved.pdf](https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2018/October/13_Quality_of_employment_approved.pdf)

## II. ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS 2018-2022

5. In the period from 2018 to 2022 the Steering Group on Measuring Quality of Employment worked on the following issues:

### A. Follow-up on priority issues from the Handbook's research agenda

6. The Steering Group identified several topics of the research agenda included in chapter V of the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment* as priorities. The identified topics and the respective outcomes are:

#### (a) Development of existing indicators and identification of new indicators

##### i. New forms of employment (lead: Singapore)

7. With the growth of new forms of employment in recent years, the Steering Group assessed whether complementary information could be included into the framework on Measuring Quality of Employment (MQE) to address and capture these new forms of employment. The Steering Group reviewed the existing indicators related to forms of employment and summarized the proposed changes in the so-called indicator sheets, which provide detailed information on concepts and definitions, calculation methods, recommended data sources and disaggregation and interpretation guidelines.

8. Further breakdown of the *existing indicators 4a1 – fixed term contracts* and *4a3 – Own Account Worker* are suggested. Modifications to the *existing indicator 4a4 – Self-employed with one client* are suggested for further refinement. An additional *new indicator – Employee-sharing* was identified as an example to reflect employees who are involved in work related to various employment relationships.

##### ii. Telework (lead: Switzerland)

9. As the possibility to work remotely at other locations than the default place of work has emerged in recent years, the Steering Group identified a *new indicator 3cx - telework* in sub-dimension 3c (work-life balance) and developed an indicator sheet.

##### iii. Commuting time (lead: Israel)

10. The Steering Group reviewed the *existing indicator 3c3 – commuting time* and proposed changes to the definition of commuting time to exclude “work while commuting”. An additional *new indicator 3c3-1 – commuting time – share of employed persons*, a disaggregation of commuting time, was identified to capture share of employed persons traveling to work beyond 30 minutes or more. Indicator sheets for each of these indicators were developed.

#### (b) Guidance on other forms of work than employment (19<sup>th</sup> ICLS resolution) (lead: Germany)

11. *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. This brings an additional disadvantage as

with the narrower scope of employment set by the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS resolution, some work that was before covered as employment now falls out of that scope.

12. To support NSOs, data analysts or data users who want to use quality of employment indicators for other forms of work, the Steering Group assessed the relevance of each dimension and sub-dimension of the Handbook for other forms of work and prepared general guidelines on application of the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment* on other forms of work.

13. The indicator sheets of points i-iii under (a) and document for (b) have been made available on the Quality of Employment Wiki site as supplementary materials to the Handbook.

**(c) Promotion of the statistical framework** (lead: Germany)

14. A prototype of the designated webpage for exchange of research and practical experiences in measuring quality of employment has been set up. The webpage displays internationally comparable results of selected quality of employment indicators that have been implemented and compiled by countries, and provides examples of how these statistics are being published in different countries.

**B. Expert Group meetings on measuring quality of employment in 2019 and 2021**

15. Two meetings of the Group of Experts on Measuring Quality of Employment were held: on 6-8 November 2019 (Geneva) and on 9-18 November 2021 (online session).

16. Topics discussed in the meeting on 6-8 November 2019 include:

- *impact of the 19th and 20th ICLS resolutions on work statistics and work relationships*
- *new forms of work and their measurement*: discussing for instance the gig economy and internet-mediated platform work
- *country experiences with the introduction of quality of employment indicators*
- *experimental indicators on measuring quality of employment*.

17. The meeting on 9-18 November 2021 discussed the following topics:

- *quality of employment during the Covid-19 pandemic and after*: topics include measuring labour underutilisation during Covid-19, impact of the pandemic on employment, meeting data expectations during the pandemic, changes in work life during the pandemic, working time arrangements and work-life balance indicators during the pandemic, etc.
- *new forms of employment*: work of the UNECE Task Force on the *Handbook on Forms of Employment*, update on the *EC-ILO-OECD Handbook on Measuring Platform Work*, remote work and gig economy in countries.
- *national experiences with the quality of employment indicators and new approaches*.

18. Detailed summary of the meetings and their outcomes can be found in the reports of the meetings<sup>2</sup>.

### C. Development of the *Handbook on Forms of Employment*

19. In July 2021, the CES Bureau established the Task Force on Forms of Employment to develop a conceptual framework for measuring forms of employment. Members of the Steering Group on Quality of Employment actively took part in the initiative and collectively contributed to the development of the *Handbook on Forms of Employment*, which was endorsed by the CES plenary session in June 2022. To better promote the conceptual framework, the Steering Group members also contributed to the development of a webpage on forms of employment visualizing key elements of the Handbook.

20. Steering Group members who were also part of the Task Force on Forms of Employment include: Canada, Finland, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland, Singapore, Switzerland, United States, ILO, Eurostat, OECD and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).

21. In October 2022, the co-chairs of the Steering Group (Canada and Germany) presented the statistical framework on measuring quality of employment and the conceptual framework on forms of employment at the Precarious Work Research Consortium (PWR) webinar organized by an international group of researchers studying non-standard and precarious employment.

### III. NEXT PHASE OF THE WORK IN 2023-2028

22. For the next phase of work in the period 2023-2028, the Steering Group, based on discussions at the 2019 and the 2021 Expert Group meetings, identified the following priority topics:

#### (a) **Forms of employment** (lead: Canada)

23. With the publication of the *Handbook on Forms of Employment*, the Steering Group on Measuring Quality of Employment decided to establish a subgroup on forms of employment to move forward work in this area. Potential activities of the subgroup include:

- mapping emerging forms of employment onto the framework (e.g. developing fact sheets on emerging forms of employment)
- ensuring ongoing cross-fertilization between the framework and quality of employment indicators
- sharing of experiences and good practices in measuring new and emerging forms of employment among countries
- exploring common data collection and measurement challenges and discovering possible solutions to overcome those (e.g. developing model questionnaires, measuring digital employment)
- tackling the remaining conceptual questions which were not or not fully addressed in the Handbook (e.g. gig work, hybrid work)

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<sup>2</sup>[https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.12/2019/Report\\_EG\\_MQE\\_2019.pdf](https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.12/2019/Report_EG_MQE_2019.pdf)  
<https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Report%20QoE%202021%20new.pdf>

- keeping the Handbook updated and aligned with the conceptual and methodological development of the cutting-edge topics of labour statistics raised in the Handbook (e.g. aligning the Handbook with the outcomes of the 21<sup>st</sup> ICLS).

**(b) Job quality profiles** (lead: Finland)

24. In the 2021 Expert Group Meeting on Quality of Employment, Statistics Finland presented the outcome of a study of the development in employment quality profiles using factor analysis based on the results of the Finnish 2018 work-life survey. Variables from the work-life survey are first aggregated into five quality of work indices. Workers are then grouped into five job quality profiles by clustering jobs that have similar scores (pattern) across the work quality indices. The study showed, among other things, a gender gap in quality of work, that strengths in some working conditions can compensate shortcomings in others and that good/decent working conditions are possible in all types of jobs.

25. There was a great interest from different user groups in quality job profiles (including different professional groups such as teachers and cleaning personnel). Hence, a task team was established after the meeting to explore topics in this area and allow countries to benefit from Statistics Finland's lessons learned. The task team will also examine possible solutions to tackle the foremost methodological challenge on the topic – difficulty in using different data sources for the study.

**(c) Promotion of the statistical framework** (lead: Germany)

26. A task team will continue to improve the webpage for exchange of research and practical experiences in measuring quality of employment and explore other possibilities to promote the statistical framework for quality of employment.

**(d) Adapt indicators related to status of employment based on ICSE-18** (lead: ILO)

27. The terms used in the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment* (e.g. “employed”, “self-employed”, etc) refer to definitions in the International Classification of Status in Employment 1993 (ICSE-1993) and are not up-to-date. Hence, a task team led by ILO has been established to assess the extent to which the Handbook would need to be updated and prepare the update of the references to status in employment according to the International Classification of Status in Employment 2018 (ICSE-18).

**(e) Other planned activities**

28. The Steering Group will follow up on recommendations of the CES Bureau and consider future activities based on the outcomes of the 2023 ICLS. The Steering group will also evaluate and consider the need to update the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment*.

#### **IV. PROPOSAL FOR DECISION BY THE BUREAU**

29. **The Bureau is invited to:**

**(a) comment on the progress of work of the Steering Group;**

- (b) review and approve the proposals for further work as described in Section III;**
- (c) review and approve the updated Terms of Reference of the Steering Group on Measuring Quality of Employment (Annex).**

## ANNEX

### TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE STEERING GROUP ON MEASURING QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT

#### I. BACKGROUND

1. In June 2015, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) endorsed the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment, A Statistical Framework*. The CES supported further work on measuring quality of employment, including continuing to organize Expert Group meetings. On this background the Bureau in October 2015 established a Steering Group to guide and oversee the work of CES in the area of measuring quality of employment. In 2018 the mandate of the Group was extended until 2023.

2. The quality of employment and decent work remain high on the policy agenda as the work modalities and relationships are constantly changing. The measurement methods have to adapt to the changing reality and there is a need for ongoing statistical work in this area. Therefore, updated Terms of Reference of the Steering Group are submitted to the Bureau for approval for the period of 2023-2028.

#### II. MANDATE

3. The work of the Steering Group is conducted within the CES work programme. The Steering Group reports to the Bureau on CES activities in measuring quality of employment, as well as on linkages between the conceptual framework on forms of employment and quality of employment indicators. The Steering Group's mandate covers the period of 2023-2028.

4. The Steering Group may identify concrete tasks or activities to support its work that could be undertaken by groups of experts (Task Forces or Task Teams). In such cases, after having verified the interest by a sufficient number of CES member countries and the availability of resources, the Steering Group will submit proposals for Task Forces to the CES Bureau for review and approval.

#### III. OBJECTIVE

5. The Steering Group has the following objectives:
- a) Coordinate CES work in the area of measuring quality of employment and guide the work of the Secretariat in this area;
  - b) Promote the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment*, follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations of the Handbook and collect further feedback from countries on the use of the Handbook;
  - c) Review the list of indicators and context information based on country feedback and developments in methods and data sources. Consider the need to update the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment* to ensure its continued relevance and practical usability;

- d) Follow-up on the research agenda from the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment*: identify emerging topics and priority areas for further work and research to support countries in measuring quality of employment;
- e) Promote the *Handbook on Forms of Employment* and ensure ongoing cross-fertilization between the framework and quality of employment indicators;
- f) Organise biennial Expert Group meetings on measuring quality of employment to follow up on the research agenda, the implementation of the statistical framework and issues related to forms of employment;
- g) Facilitate the sharing of experiences, methods, statistical techniques and other resources related to measuring quality of employment and forms of employment, e.g. through wikis;
- h) Ensure coordination and cooperation with other international organisations working in quality and forms of employment, in particular Eurostat, ILO and OECD.

#### IV. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

6. The main outputs of the Steering Group on measuring Quality of Employment in 2023-2028 will be:

- a) Promoting and following up on the implementation of the recommendations of the *Handbook on Measuring Quality of Employment*;
- b) Keeping the statistical framework and the list of indicators up-to-date;
- c) Organising biennial Expert Group meetings on measuring quality of employment to follow up on the research agenda, the implementation of the statistical framework and forms of employment related issues;
- d) Identifying emerging issues in the area of measuring quality of employment, further priority issues of the research agenda where more work is needed, and following up on already identified priority issues, including: forms of employment; impact of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> ICLS resolutions on work activities and employment; job quality profiles; adapting indicators related to status of employment to ICSE-18; and further promotion of the statistical framework;
- e) Promoting the *Handbook on Forms of Employment* and moving forward work through the subgroup on forms of employment on the following topics:
  - Developing practical guidance on data collection and measurement challenges;
  - Sharing of experiences and good practices in measuring new and emerging forms of employment among countries;
  - Monitoring conceptual and methodological developments related to the measurement of forms of employment and making relevant updates to definitions and guidelines.

#### V. TIMETABLE

7. The work on promotion and implementation of the recommendations of the Handbook is ongoing. The next Expert Group meeting on measuring quality of employment is planned to take place in 2024.



8. The CES Bureau will review the Terms of Reference of the Steering Group in 2028.

## **VI. METHODS OF WORK**

9. The Steering Group will primarily work via email and Microsoft Teams meetings. The Group will hold hybrid or face-to-face meetings on the occasion of Expert Group meetings on measuring quality of employment, or other events where a significant number of the Steering Group members participate.

10. Members of the Steering Group are expected to contribute actively to the work and provide ideas for future activities. The Steering Group elects its Chair or Co-chairs.

## **VII. MEMBERSHIP**

11. The Steering Group comprises: Austria, Azerbaijan, Canada, Finland, Germany, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Poland, Singapore, Switzerland, United States, Eurofound, Eurostat, ILO, OECD, Upjohn Institute and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). Experts from other countries or organisations may be invited to contribute to the work of the Steering Group.

12. UNECE acts as Secretariat of the Steering Group.

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