



Activities of the International Labour Organization in preparation for the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians

Information Note by the ILO Department of Statistics

1. In October 2013, the ILO will convene the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in Geneva, Switzerland. The Conference will review and discuss for possible adoption a revised, draft resolution on statistics of work and the labour force. If adopted, these revised statistical standards will update the current international standards contained in the *Resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment*, adopted by the 13th ICLS in 1982 and related guidelines. Apart from this draft resolution, the ICLS will be informed of and discuss topics related to revising the International Classification of Status of Employment (ICSE), to green jobs, decent work indicators, and statistics of child labour and forced labour.
2. This information note provides an overview of the multiple activities the ILO Department of Statistics has carried out these past several years to prepare for the 19th ICLS. It describes the scope of the review process and priority areas in the current proposals to update the 13th ICLS resolution.

I. Economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment

3. Work to update these international standards was initiated by the ILO following recommendations by the 18th ICLS and the 39th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), both held in 2008. The former recommended future ILO work to revise the current resolution and related guidelines, as well as the *International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93)* and adopted a *Resolution concerning the development of measures of labour underutilization*. The latter considered the *labour statistics programme review*.
4. The *programme review* highlighted among the priority areas for future work in labour statistics:
(a) the changing structure of the labour force; (b) an update of the labour statistics framework to address the dynamic aspects of labour markets; (c) the interaction between paid and unpaid work; and (d) the interaction between labour statistics and other domains of statistics.

5. To undertake its review process, the ILO conducted with national labour statisticians and regional statistical organizations: the *Seminar on Employment and Unemployment Statistics*, held in parallel with the 18th ICLS (2008) and the *Technical Workshop on Measures of Labour Underutilization* (2009). In 2009 it also established the *Working Group for the Advancement of Employment and Unemployment Statistics* that has now met three times.

Working Group for the Advancement of Employment and Unemployment Statistics

6. The Working Group serves as the main advisory mechanism in carrying out the ILO review and update of the standards. It is composed of experts in labour force statistics from the National Statistical Offices (NSO) of 40 countries from major world regions, and international organizations: Afristat, Eurostat, and OECD. Consultations with the Working Group have been carried out through an online platform and meetings held in 2009, 2011 and 2012.¹

Regional Preparatory Meetings of Labour Statisticians

7. In view of the importance of the topic under revision, the ILO conducted, for the first time, the five regional meetings, organized in collaboration with the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions and other regional partners. In total, representatives from 100 countries,² participated in the regional consultations.
8. These meetings served to: (a) inform participants about the process in preparation for the 19th ICLS; (b) present the current proposals for review and update of the international statistical standards for measurement of the labour force; and (c) gather feedback and promote discussion among countries in order to further develop and refine the proposals. The meetings were also instrumental in identifying the main labour market issues and policy concerns of each region, to ensure that the revised standards address them adequately.

Tripartite Meeting of Experts in Labour Statistics

9. In accordance with the ICLS procedures, the ILO convened a Tripartite Meeting of Experts in Labour Statistics in January 2013. The meeting discussed and made recommendations on the preliminary proposals, on the basis of which, the ILO Department of Statistics is preparing a revised draft resolution to be submitted for consideration by the 19th ICLS.

¹ The ILO Department of Statistics intends to maintain this advisory Working Group to promote methodological developments in labour force statistics in the future. To this end, the online communication platform will continue to be accessible only to registered Working Group members at: <https://papyrus.ilo.org/empstats/EMPSTATS/>

² 16 in the Americas, 21 in Asia-Pacific, 19 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 10 in the Middle East and North Africa, and 34 in Europe and Central Asia.

Scope of proposed revisions

10. To address the priority areas arising from the 39th UNSC programme review and the 18th ICLS, the proposed revisions to the current international standards of statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment, cover three main areas:
 - a. The introduction for the first time, at the international level, of a general statistical definition of Work, aligned with the General production boundary of the System of National Accounts (2008 SNA).
 - b. The development of a conceptual framework for Work statistics, within which Employment is defined more narrowly than at present to improve its relevance for monitoring labour markets and to inform employment creation and income generation policies (see below).
 - c. The development of broader measures of labour underutilization to supplement the unemployment rate
11. An important concern throughout the review has been to ensure, to the extent possible, the historical continuity of labour force statistics. To this end, the Department also carried out extensive reviews of national practices to assess in particular, in particular, implementation of the current standards in national household surveys and population and housing censuses.
12. The proposals incorporate identified good practices that address specific gaps and concerns regarding the implementation of the standards to improve guidance to countries and for the international comparability of the statistics. Those elements of the current standards that have proved to be sound and necessary to guarantee the internal consistency of labour force statistics and their coherence with other statistical domains remain unchanged. Notable among these is the labour force measurement framework based on the activity principle, priority rule, one-hour criterion and short reference period of measurement.
13. More specifically, the revisions being proposed include:
 - a. A comprehensive, yet flexible, general framework for work statistics that distinguishes between employment and other forms of work, amongst which are production of goods for own final use, provision of services for own final use, and volunteer work;

- b. Within this framework, a more refined concept and definition of employment that focuses on work to generate income, to serve as the basis for the production of labour force statistics;
 - c. General definitions and operational guidelines to measure participation in the forms of work other than employment;
 - d. Detailed operational guidelines to measure employment and unemployment that build on the accumulated experience of country interpretations over the past 30 years of implementation, with the aim of facilitating and improving international comparability;
 - e. General guidance on developing classifications of persons outside the labour force for different purposes, including the assessment of their labour market attachment;
 - f. Other measures of labour underutilization to focus on insufficient absorption of available labour among persons in employment and those outside the labour force;
 - g. Guidance for countries at different statistical levels on implementing a rational programme of work and labour force statistics to satisfy short and long-term needs, taking account of the national context and resources.
14. The draft revised proposals aim to: (a) better meet the demand for labour force statistics to monitor labour markets, including labour absorption, and to inform employment creation, income and other related socio-economic policies; (b) shed light, through separate measurement, on patterns of participation in forms of work other than employment to generate income, particularly to track participation in production for own final use where the production of goods is significant, or when the measurement of services for own final use or volunteer work is required; (c) thereby enable comprehensive measurement of labour input into all productive activities, and the contribution of the different forms of work to economic development, to household livelihoods and to well-being; (d) improve the integration of labour force statistics with other work statistics, and with statistics in other domains, particularly production statistics; and finally (e) promote the future development of dynamic labour market measures.

Next steps during 2013

15. In response to the recommendations by the Tripartite Meeting of Experts and the feedback received during the regional consultations, the ILO will conduct pilot tests in selected countries to

assess the practical implementation of some of the proposals through labour force surveys. In addition, case studies using existing survey micro-data from specific countries will assess the potential impact of the proposals on key labour market indicators such as labour force participation rates, unemployment rates and time-related underemployment rates.

16. Updates on the preparatory activities in support of the 19th ICLS, including relevant technical documents, may be accessed through the Website of the ILO at: <http://www.ilo.org/19thICLS>.

II. International Classification of Status in Employment

17. The International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93) was adopted through a resolution of the 15th ICLS in January 1993. There is concern that the categories adopted no longer provide sufficient information to adequately monitor changes in employment arrangements that, in many countries, are blurring the boundaries between self-employment and salaried employment. It is also felt that the classification does not provide sufficient detail for the provision of statistics that adequately satisfy user needs. It is likely that the revision of the standards for economically active population, employment, and unemployment and underemployment statistics described above will have a significant impact on the scope and nature of statistics on status in employment. They should also lead to a change in the boundary, for statistical measurement purposes, between employment and other forms of work. It is not advisable, however, to develop a complete proposal to revise ICSE-93 for consideration by the 19th ICLS, since any resolution on status in employment would need to anticipate the outcome of the deliberations on work and labour force statistics at the same conference.
18. The ILO will, therefore, present a discussion paper to the 19th ICLS summarizing the known problems with ICSE-93 and the range of existing national practices with respect to statistics on status in employment and other aspects of the employment relationship. It will identify ways in which either ICSE-93 could be modified, and/or other standard classifications and variables could be developed as a complement to status in employment, in order to better reflect contemporary realities and economic and social concerns. Various options to revise ICSE-93 that align with possible ICLS outcomes will be discussed at a Working Group during the 19th ICLS to seek guidance on the proposals and how best to progress towards revising status in employment.

III. Green Jobs

19. Over the past decade, the international community has emphasized the implications of climate change for economic and social development, for production and consumption patterns and therefore for employment, incomes and poverty.
20. The concept of the green economy has thus become a focus of policy debate and mainstreamed into the work of the UN and its specialized agencies. The UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference), held in Brazil in June 2012, considered the green economy as an important pathway to sustainable development. This was reflected in its outcome document, *The future we want*³.
21. This led to an increasing need for reliable statistics on green jobs in order to (i) gain a better understanding of the impact of ‘greening the economy’ on the labour market, and (ii) ensure that effective policy measures and tools are formulated to respond to the desired shift to a greener economy.
22. To respond to this growing demand for both statistics and conceptual guidelines on the measurement of green jobs, the ILO is developing proposals that aim to reach agreement on a statistical definition of green jobs and on associated methodological guidelines. These guidelines could be used to produce internationally harmonized statistical indicators for use in monitoring progress towards greening the economy and on the impact(s) on employment.
23. To promote discussion of this topic, the ILO held an informal technical meeting (November 2012) bringing together national and international experts and ILO officials to share experience and discuss the draft definition(s). An ILO concept paper reviewed current practice in selected countries and suggested a standardized definition applicable by countries in all regions, at various stages of economic and social development. It draws on other international statistical work in related fields, such as environmental-economic accounts and energy statistics and discusses methodological issues, potential data sources and the types of indicator that could be produced. A draft statistical definition of green jobs and associated methodological guidelines will be presented for discussion by the 19th ICLS.

³ The Future We Want - Outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development available at <http://www.uncsd2012.org/futurewewant.html#IIIc>