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**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR
ORGANIZATION**

Fifty-third plenary session
Geneva, 13-16 June 2005

**REPORT OF THE MAY 2005 JOINT UNECE/ILO/EUROSTAT SEMINAR
ON THE QUALITY OF WORK**

Prepared by the UNECE Secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. The UNECE/ILO/Eurostat Seminar on the Measurement of Quality of Work was held on 11-13 May 2005 in Geneva. It was attended by participants from Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, and Ukraine. The European Commission was represented by Eurostat and DG Employment. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the International Labour Office (ILO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Bank for International Settlements, and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions were also present. An expert from ISFOL (Italy) participated at the invitation of the secretariat.

2. Mr. Johan van der Valk (the Netherlands) was elected as Chairperson of the meeting.

3. The following substantive topics were discussed during the meeting sessions based on the 20 invited and 4 supporting papers:

Topic 1: Quality of work and decent work: review of conceptual frameworks and methods of data collection

Session 1: Conceptual framework and dimensions of quality of work

Presentations given by ILO, European Commission – DG Employment, OECD, and European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

Discussants: Ms. Federica Pintaldi and Ms. Giorgina Brown, ISTAT, Italy.

Session 2: Indicators of quality of work

Presentations given by ILO, Republic of Moldova, Eurostat, and Ukraine.

Discussant: Mr. Peter Peek, ILO.

Session 3: Methods of data collection

Presentations given by ILO, Canada, and Finland.

Supporting paper by Italy.

Discussant: Mr. Farhad Mehran, ILO.

Topic 2: Access to labour market, social exclusion, long-term unemployment, youth employment

Session 4: Access to labour market, social exclusion, long-term unemployment, youth employment

Presentations given by Poland, Hungary, and Russia.

Supporting paper by Bulgaria

Discussant: Mr. Ralf Hussmanns, ILO.

Topic 3: Inadequate employment situations

Session 5: Type of contracts and excessive hours of work

Presentations given by Slovenia, The Netherlands, and Italy.

Supporting paper by Spain.

Discussant: Mr. Omar Hardarson, Eurostat.

Session 6: Labour market flexibility and job security

Presentations given by ILO, Italy, and Ukraine.

Discussant: Mr. Geoffrey Bowlby, Canada.

General supporting paper for the seminar by Azerbaijan.

4. All papers and presentations from the seminar are available on the UNECE website:

<http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2005.05.labour.htm>

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS AND OF THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS REACHED AT THE SEMINAR

Topic 1: Quality of work and decent work: review of conceptual frameworks and methods of data collection

Session 1: Conceptual framework and dimensions of quality of work

5. Several frameworks on quality of work were presented and discussed; from the European Commission, from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, and from ILO. The relation between quality of work and working time statistics was also discussed. The Paris Group deals with specific aspects of quality of work in the context of their current work on working time measurements.

6. Although frameworks do not need to be identical it was recognized that the overlaps needed to be consistent and linkages reinforced. Furthermore the level of consolidation of these frameworks is not equal and some revisions may be expected. For this reason, it would be desirable for future work to concentrate on the development of a common framework, which would serve the needs of the international institutions and Member States. There was also discussion on the need for terminology to be used to describe dimensions and associated indicators of any future consolidated framework to be, as far as possible, free of any value-biased judgment.

7. Measuring job quality with labour law indicators based on the changes in labour legislation could be a useful complement to the conventional way of measuring quality of work based on traditional surveys, like the LFS. However, there are still some problems in this approach since not all workers are covered and it is difficult to assess if legislations are violated.

8. The pros and cons of composite indicators to assess quality of work were discussed. The selection of indicators, the method of weighting and the difficulty in the interpretation are arguments against the use of composite indicators to synthesize dimensions on quality of work. The meeting recognized the need for multiple indicators to measure quality of work. The set of indicators needs to include both contextual indicators as well as other indicators.

Session 2: Indicators of quality of work

9. The meeting recognized the need for specific decent work/quality of work statistical indicators for EU, ILO and Member States. There is overlap in the dimensions of decent work and quality of work. The seminar agreed that there need to be convergence on what the priority areas to get at an agreed-upon set of indicators to measure quality of work. The conceptual framework for quality of work needs to be more structured and simplified.

10. Participants felt that some of the qualifying labels used for the indicators and conceptual frameworks are not necessary and should be more neutral like those of the EU. Along the same line, it was suggested that the label of “decent work” should be reevaluated and participants suggested that a new name be agreed upon.

11. With regard to in-job training, participants raised concerns that employees might view in-job training in a negative manner, i.e. as a stress factor, and it seems necessary to measure the relevance of the training to the individual's job.

Session 3: Methods of data collection

12. This session focused on the methods already utilized by international institutions and national statistical offices in measuring the quality of work. As pointed out by the discussant, the papers reveal a diversity of methods when measuring quality of work. This is in sharp contrast to many other aspects of the labour market where the degree of standardization is much higher. The presentations and discussions also revealed many issues that need to be studied further. For example, when reporting statistics on quality of work, the data should be distinguished between official and research-related data.

13. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the main tool to assess labour market indicators, including employment and unemployment conditions. The relevance of the LFS to produce and deliver results on the quality of work was recognized. During the discussions, it was mentioned that it is important to produce and analyze statistics on all fields of employment, including self-employment.

14. It was felt that analysis of the trade-offs between the various quality aspects could be of interest. Often an improvement in one indicator would be offset by a poorer performance of another indicator. Participants stated that they are taking measures to ensure that the most relevant indicators are used. The meeting noted that there is also a need to study the actual uses of the data by national governments and other relevant parties.

15. The measurement of mismatch between skill requirements of jobs and worker's qualification was discussed. The validity of objective and subjective measurements should be investigated further. Analyses of survey results from Finland indicated that self-reporting or self-assessment of skill mismatch are very gender sensitive. It was pointed out that in many countries there have been changes in higher education, so that universities are accepting ever higher proportions of each age cohort. This development is not necessarily reflected in more demand for persons with high level educational qualifications in the labour market.

Topic 2: Access to labour market, social exclusion, long-term unemployment, youth employment

Session 4: Access to labour market, social exclusion, long-term unemployment, youth employment

16. During the plenary discussion, it was indicated that in countries like the Russian Federation or the Republic of Moldova the engagement of persons in the household production of agricultural goods was more widespread than in other countries of the UNECE region.

17. It was pointed out that, especially with respect to women, the international comparability of labour force statistics was also affected by the way in which countries classified persons on long-term

childcare leave by activity status. A suggestion was made that international organizations should collect and disseminate information on how countries, in their labour force surveys, classified persons on childcare leave by activity status and work toward a common guideline on how to classify them.

18. Clarification was sought on the statistical definition of informal employment endorsed by the 17th ICLS (2003) and on the problems of measuring informal employment in labour force surveys. It was mentioned that, in line with the international definition, employment in the informal sector and informal employment in the formal sector needed to be distinguished. The Moldavian experience was reported as an example for collecting data on informal employment, which covered both types of informal jobs.

Topic 3: Inadequate employment situations

Session 5: Type of contracts and excessive hours of work

19. During this session, findings of studies on certain aspects of the employment situation were discussed, with emphasis on type of contracts, excessive hours of work and underemployment. The variety of the work contracts depend on the capacity of the labour market actors to adapt to the constraints entailed by their own situations. The historical background of the economies also affects the distribution of practices. The overall expectation is a permanent contract with relatively stable hours of work.

20. Participants emphasized the importance of flexible work options and part time as a career. Potential of jobs to be flexible between full time and part time work is an important aspect for employees with care taking responsibilities. Future research is needed on how people establish a balance between work and family life. Participants pointed out that reduced contracts for working parents, which are part of the legislation, are not always feasible for a working parent.

Session 6: Labour market flexibility and job security

21. The seminar noted employment insecurity is rising, with growing proportions of those in the labour force having insecure employment statuses and with more workers lacking employment protection. At the same time, job insecurity has increased with more workers having to switch jobs and learn new working skills.

22. Participants agreed that the classification of atypical employment based on the Italian experience would enrich the conventional measuring tools of the qualitative aspects of labour. A link is needed between this classification and the quality of work framework.

23. It was noted enterprise surveys could provide supplementary information to labour force surveys on quality of work. The Ukrainian experience was considered a useful example.

FUTURE WORK

24. The participants were unanimous in their view that while Quality in Work and Decent Work

dimensions reflected the priorities of the European Union Social Policy and the ILO Decent Work Agenda, they had manifested linkages, overlaps and consistencies in their dimensions and indicators.

25. The Seminar recommended that a small Task Force organized by ILO and with the participation of UNECE, EUROSTAT and individual experts from the UNECE member countries be established with the objectives: (1) to develop a converging conceptual framework embracing the two paradigms of ILO and EU, taking into account the conceptual work of the European Foundation; and (2) to select appropriate terminology and a set of statistical indicators measuring the quality aspects of labour and employment. The above activities should take into account work carried out by the ILO, Eurostat, OECD, national statistical offices and other groups and organizations on working time measurement to ensure consistency and linkages with the relevant dimensions of quality of work.

26. The seminar recommended that a further joint UNECE/ILO/Eurostat Seminar on Quality of Work be organized in approximately two years' time where the results of the Task Force would be presented and discussed, subject to the approval of the Conference of the European Statisticians and its Bureau.

27. The meeting also recommended that the planning and preparatory work for the meeting commence in 2006 by the organizations concerned. To assist in the organization of the future meeting, the meeting recommended that an organizing committee be formed.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

28. The participants adopted the report of the meeting at its closing session.
