

Practical experience Occupational coding exercise e-commerce job descriptions

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Method of coding

Coding was not done by the professional coders of Statistics Netherlands but by myself, because of the fact that the input to be coded does not fit in the computer-assisted coding system of occupations used by our professional coders. They had no time to do it otherwise. This system is used when the description of a job, originating from a persons' interview has not been coded in our batch coding system. Most of the 153 STILE job descriptions will not be coded in batch. The first step in coding is attributing of a so-called provisional code. This is done by a professional coder. Generally spoken, for this code information is used on:

- title of the job
- description of the main tasks within the job
- whether the position is an executive one, how many subordinates they have and a description of these executive activities,
- a description of the economic activity of the company or firm they work.

When coding of the e-commerce jobs is based only on the short job description (which is not more than a job title), information of the latter three types of information fails. This causes a number of jobs that cannot be coded at all, or the attribution of rest group codes ('other.....' or '.....not known').

The long job description usually provides information on the main tasks, executive tasks and the economic activity. In most cases this was satisfactory to provide a provisional code. The provisional codes are converted into the national occupational code and the ISCO code in a batch process. This process uses in a number of cases additional information on level and field of education and some other variables. This causes that a number of the attributed provisional codes of the STILE descriptions are provided with more than one ISCO code, depending of different possible values of these variables.

In about 60% of the job descriptions, ISCO codes of the short descriptions differ completely or partially from the codes of the long descriptions. I could not code at all 10 % of the short descriptions because of lack of clarity of the discription. All the long descriptions could be coded.

Necessary update of provisional codes and classifications

The Netherlands Standard Classification of Occupations and the provisional codes need to be updated exactly for STILE occupations (and other new or changed occupations). This causes that rather often provisional codes have been attributed that did not fit very well, often the codes of jobs most resembling, because fitting codes are not available now.

Language

In a number of descriptions I had to cope with language problems, even though the descriptions were translated into Dutch by HIVA. In cases of doubts on the meaning of the Dutch translations, I also used the descriptions in English. These were the following problems:

- some terminology is known in Belgium, but not in the Netherlands
- sometimes we use slightly different words in the two countries for the same concepts
- some English words may have more than one meaning within the context used; i.e. *inventory*
- the meaning of the abbreviated names of some software packages was not known, even to the information experts consulted during the coding process
- the meaning of the often used term *shared service centre* is not clear in the Netherlands. *Language localisation* was a term that was understood only after a long time and after consulting different persons. *QA*, quality assurance or question answer?

Such problems may also play a role in other countries and in other languages, I suppose.

Other problems

- the job levels of e-commerce jobs (especially at help desks and call centres) are often not clear.
- the coder has to make a choice between coding the subject matter side of a job, or coding the required e-tools and ICT knowledge the performer. When available I coded the subject matter side of the job.