

## **MINUTES of second STILE WP5 user group meeting Ireland**

Date: 25/6/02 15:00-16:00

Venue: Buswell's Hotel, Molesworth Street, Dublin

Present:

Nicola Tickner, Central Statistics Office;

Imogen Bertin, Cork Teleworking Centre;

Paula Carey, Irish Congress of Trade Unions;

Ivica Milicevic, Work Research Centre;

John O'Flaherty, MAC, University of Limerick (representing the Ework Action Forum);

Paul McGrath, Smurfit Business School, University College Dublin;

Michael McGloughlin, Amárach

Apologies: Timo Kauppinen, European Foundation and Katie Connolly, IBEC.

### **1. Introduction**

Imogen welcomed Michael McGloughlin to the group, bringing with him a wealth of knowledge from the commercial market research sector, particularly as Gerard O'Neill of Amárach had been involved in attempts to research the area for many years.

Imogen ran through developments on the project since the last meeting in April.

A meeting of the project partners was held in Kinsale in mid-May at which the responses of all the user groups were considered and agreement reached on the core statistical indicators. Two compromises had been made. Partners recognised the eventual ad hoc module recommendations would have to be considerably shorter, but felt it was worthwhile to pilot a longer list of questions. Additionally, some partners felt certain items were more important than others, so a nested structure was agreed with a core set of indicators, to be supplemented by nested extra questions to accommodate national differences. In order to look at some of the qualitative issues which could not be covered by a GPS it was also agreed to hold focus groups.

We had agreed that although we were not carrying out the 200-person pilot in Ireland that we would try to find 8 teleworkers representing different sectors (such as full time self-employed telehomeworker or multilocational employed teleworker) to use as a tiny pilot in Ireland in order to check wording issues on the questionnaire. This pilot group would also be asked to take part in a focus group.

A European user group meeting was held in Ghent at the end of May which included representatives from Eurostat. Responses had been highly positive and this was in fact now causing some problems for the project because pressure was being applied by Eurostat to bring forward work packages and to release results as early as possible – in advance of the original schedule.

Imogen also outlined the remaining timetable. There would be one further meeting this year when the results of the pilot were available to review the implications for revision of the questions. This would be likely to take place mid to late autumn, and could be carried out as an audioconference if the user group preferred rather than as a face to face meeting.

Finally, when the results of the autumn 2002 QNHS questions were available in spring 2003 we would have our last meeting but the timing of this meeting would depend on Nicola's workload since she would be processing the results. At that stage we would need to carry out a serious prune on the questions in order to reduce the length of the questionnaire to something feasible for an ad hoc module.

Imogen also mentioned that the decision on whether and when an entire module on teleworking would be added to the QNHS had been deferred to July by the National Statistics Board.

Imogen also explained that Katie was unable to attend due to a family bereavement.

## **2. Minutes of last meeting**

These were approved.

## **3. WP5 questionnaire**

Nicola began by pointing out that the pilot questionnaire contains a number of text answers and that these would not be allowed in an actual LFS module due to the time burden and complexity of the processing. We agreed that text answers were useful at a pilot stage.

### Question 2.1 ICTEQUIP

Michael and Ivica felt this question confused items of hardware with issues of communications and that this needed to be split into two sections – items 1-4 plus other/none options and then items 5-9 plus other/none options.

### Question 2.3 FREQCON

Paul pointed out that this question needed to be clear it was “online in relation to work” and not just online surfing. Paula felt an interviewer note was needed to clarify to interviewees that online did not mean just on the telephone – it meant a data connection.

### Question 2.4 PCUSE

There was general agreement that PC needs to be replaced by computer in order not to exclude Mac users.

### Question 3.1 DISTIME

Paula wondered if four weeks was a long enough period to pick up occasional teleworkers. Nicola and Imogen explained that it was a standard reference period for the QNHS plus we had to draw a line somewhere and we felt that anyone teleworking less than once a month probably had to be excluded in the interests of brevity. John pointed out that there could be seasonal effects in some professions (such as teaching or other professions with a slump in activity during the summer) so that the quarter in which the questions were eventually asked could be an issue.

### Question 4.2 DISTFORM

Michael asked what “formal” meant. Imogen said it meant that there was a planned scheme agreed between employer and employee. It was felt an interviewee note to this effect would be important as not everyone would immediately understand the term “formal”.

### Question 4.3 DISTMOT

Everyone felt that in option 3 the word “bad” needed to be replaced by “difficult”. Paula was concerned that the issue of space pressure (lack of working space) was not explicitly mentioned but it was agreed this would be included in option 3.

Option 6, experimentation, was also felt to be a little confusing and an interviewer note to the effect that it means a pilot arrangement was needed.

### Questions 4.4, 4.4a and 4.4b (DISTCONT, DFUTY, DFUTN)

There is a problem with the filtering of these questions in that what we want to know from DFUTN is whether employees are being forced to continue teleworking against their will by employers. Ivica suggested leaving 4.4 as it is, but combining 4.4a and 4.4b as follows:

4.4a (asked of everyone ie regardless of the answer to 4.4 but analysed with reference to 4.4)  
Will it be possible to continue?

1. Yes
2. No, I don't wish to for personal reasons

3. No, because of my employer
4. I don't know, depends on the employer
5. I don't know

Section 5 – type of self-employment.

Nicola feels these questions need to be asked at the beginning in section A for those who answer JOBSTAT=1 self employed, to provide better filtering.

Section 7 – other LFS indicators

Paula asked if it would be possible to pick up disability in order to examine whether the percentage of disabled teleworkers was higher or lower than for disabled people in the labour force in general. Imogen said that the Mitel UK research suggested the percentage was about the same. Nicola said that at the moment the European CLFS does not ask about disability but there is a plan to introduce a question into the QNHS for Ireland.

Paul asked about identifying public sector employment compared to private sector employment as this would be interesting to investigate. Imogen said to some extent this could be indicated through the INDUSTRY question 7.11. Nicola said that again, this was something which was likely to be added to the QNHS.

Nicola pointed out that questions 7.27 and 7.28 (work flexibility and working time) are actually from an ad hoc module and not from the main CLFS. It was agreed it would be worth asking them in a pilot but they were bound to get cut from an ad hoc module for reasons of space.

#### **4. AOB**

Imogen explained that another section of the project, on how to revise the NACE sectoral codings to take account of the huge changes in industry sectors, was likely to be brought forward and asked anyone interested in this area who was finding specific problems to let her know so that their concerns or research interests could be included in the discussions.

#### **5. Next meeting**

Will be mid to late autumn, date TBA. This meeting may well take place in the form of an audioconference with documents circulated in advance, depending on the complexity of the issues that arise from the pilot.