



## Europese gebruikersgroep: STILE WP5: telewerk indicatoren Gent, 29 mei 2002

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### Agenda

1. Measuring Telework: experiences in the UK Labour Force Survey (*Cathy Gibbins, ONS – UK*)
2. Measuring Telework: lessons from the US and basic principles for a 'piggybacking strategy' for the Labour Force Surveys (*Joanne Pratt, —Joanne H. Pratt Associates. – US*)
3. Measuring Telework: Report on the work within STILE and a presentation of the questionnaire (*Francesca Dellarata, IRES – IT*)

### 1. Short summary of the presentations

#### 1.1 UK-experiences with telework questions

The UK-LFS is one of the most important resources on labour market statistics within the UK. The survey runs each quarter of the year. The first interview is a CAPI (computer assisted personal interview), further enquiries are based on the CATI-method (computer assisted telephone interview).

As the UK-LFS is one of the most important information resources, there is great demand from different policymakers to investigate a certain phenomenon in the questionnaire. In order to prevent the questionnaire becoming too extended, some questions are only asked yearly. This applies to the telework questions.

Telework questions taken up in the UK-LFS are:

- In your main job do you work mainly
  - In your own home?
  - In the same grounds or buildings as your home?
  - In different places using home as a base?
  - Somewhere quite separate from your home?
- Do you ever do any paid work at home for your main job?
  - Yes
  - No
- Have you spent at least one FULL day in the seven days ending Sunday XX working
  - In your own home?
  - In the same grounds or buildings as your home?
  - In different places using home as a base?
  - Not worked at home during reference week.
- Do you use both a telephone and a computer to carry out your work at home?
  - Yes
  - No
- Would it be possible to work at home (use home as a basis) without using both a telephone and a computer?
  - Yes
  - No

Answers on these questions can be cross-tabulated with some other LFS indicators. This way a richness on information can be given shape by adding only a limited number of questions to an existing survey.

## 1.2 Lessons drawn up from the US

The US have the same experience with adding some questions to larger population surveys<sup>1</sup>). Within the US the demand for an investigation of the number of teleworkers, has been originated within the department of transportation. Therefore, within the US attention has been paid exclusively to telehomework. Questions that are added to the US-LFS concern the following

- Does the respondent ever work at home?
- Is there a formal agreement to pay for this work?
- With which frequency does the respondent work at home?
- How many hours has the respondent worked at home?
- Which equipment (Information and Communication Technology) does the respondent make use of?
- Which are the most important reasons for working at home?

J. Pratt is a partner of the STILE-consortium. Based on her experiences, she has made an assessment of the indicators proposed by the different STILE-partners and their national usergroups. This assessment has led us to the conclusion that it is important to develop a limited list of core questions (indicators). These core questions lend themselves very well to be attached to the LFS in the short or medium longer term. The partners have to reach an agreement on the relevance and the composition of that list of core indicators, because they have to be tested in an identical way. Only in this way will it be possible to make international comparisons and to formulate some recommendations towards Eurostat.

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<sup>1</sup> Piggy-backing method is the term which is used in the US to identify this method

Depending on the national interests, the different countries involved can elaborate these core-questions with additional questions. The partners are free to study some indicators more in depth, the American partner talks here about 'nested questions'. These nested questions consist of a basic level, which has to be asked by all countries in order to sustain the comparability. Additional level questions, are questions which try to find some more detailed or background information.

An example from nested questions:

Does the respondent make use of a PC, a telephone, an internet connection when working at 'a distance'?

Additional question can focus for instance on the intensity of use, the communication partners or the task for which the link is used as a communication device.

### **1.3 Report on the work done during the past work period and on the questionnaire**

Based on the indicators proposed by the different partners, we have come to a delineation of the most important indicators. On the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of may, a partner meeting has been organised. In this meeting we have agreed on the list of core questions and of the most important additional questions.

As Ireland and Hungary have the opportunity to test some questions within the framework of their national LFS, it was very important to agree on core questions that can be added to the LFS. Core questions focus on the place of work, the use of ICT for working at a distance, the intensity of working at a distance, the motivation for teleworking. Next to these questions we have agreed on some additional questions. These are important to make an inventory of the circumstances in which telework takes place, but there is little chance that they can be taken up in the LFS. These additional questions focus on the intensity of ICT-use, the reversibility and the formal character of the arrangement, the activities which are carried out at a distance and the impact on the quality of work.

Because we also want to serve the academic statistical users and producers, some countries will unravel some indicators further. The more qualitative indicators will be dealt with in focus groups.

## **2 Discussion on the questionnaire**

The boxes below give a description of the questions formulated within the usergroup, the answers formulated are summarised beneath those.

LFS is a household survey: some of the questions in the questionnaire may be difficult to be answered by a proxy. How to cope with this problem?
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The UK experience is that a lot of questions can be answered by proxies. The more personal or detailed information is also asked from proxies. The analysis of these data has to take into account the questionable reliability of these answers.

For some groups of teleworkers, this will be less problematic, as the odds are that tele-homeworkers will be at home for the interview. For other categories of telework, such as mobile workers, the question is more expedient.

Next to the teleworking jobs, there are still some traditional forms of work at home and mobile work forms, such as farmers and truck drivers. The same goes for taking work home. How to distinguish them from teleworkers, based on the questionnaire?
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As the core question concerning telework is focused on the working conditions rather than on the number of teleworkers, we have chosen to investigate some core characteristics of the working conditions. Based on cross-tabulations of these different characteristics it should be possible to

distinguish different forms of telework and to separate teleworkers from non-teleworkers and from people who work traditionally at a distance from the employer-customer.

The advantage of this way of questioning is twofold:

- ~ First of all, the investigation does not have to start from a vague and controversial definition of telework.
- ~ Secondly, the investigation is adaptable to the continuous changes that take place with respect to this new work form.

Measuring the number of teleworkers is interesting as such, but the ultimate objective of investigating the composition of the world of telework is to get insights into the consequences this phenomenon has for the labour market and for the individual participants on that market. Why are aspects such as training opportunities, career opportunities, task characteristics, in general different quality-of-work aspects, not included in the questionnaire? Another interesting question would be whether the circumstances which have been the motivation for preferring telework, have improved since the respondents can work at a distance.

The partners all agree on the relevance of measuring the impact of telework on the quality of work and life. As it is impossible to take into account all these aspects within the framework of an LFS, we have concluded to take up just two simple questions, which can give a first indication of these consequences. There are however some opportunities to give an initial impetus to further related research:

- ~ Some information can be gained based on a comparison between teleworkers and non-teleworkers, based on indicators already in the LFS. Important indicators are: total number of hours worked, permanency of contract.
- ~ Qualitative information gained in focus groups has to underpin the findings of the questionnaire. Based on information gained in these groups, the aspects that are influenced by telework can be identified. This can be a first step towards the development of new indicators. More important is that focusgroups can help to assess the opportunities of adding some telework questions to existing surveys on for instance the quality of work (ao. European survey on working conditions)
- ~ Countries can also decide to add some questions related to quality of work in their questionnaire for the pilot. These questions can not be compared as not all participating countries will take up these questions. However, the information gained by these questions can be a valuable basis for setting up the focusgroups or as a first test of the information that can be found by adding some telework questions to existing quality of work questions.