

**<< Groupe de Paris >>**  
on Labour and Compensation

Report of the fifth session  
(London, 4-5 September 2003)

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## Foreword

The Paris Group on Labour and Compensation is a "city group" set up in early 1997 in response to an April 1996 recommendation by the UN Statistical Commission's working party on international statistical programs and coordination. The Commission approved the formation of the Paris Group at its 29th session in February 1997.

The Paris Group is an informal gathering of labour statisticians from national statistical institutes and international organisations such as OECD, Eurostat, and ILO. The aim of the Paris Group is to examine, assess and reconcile sources of information used to measure the labour market, and to contribute to improving concepts and their implementation. Administration of the Group and organization of plenary meetings is currently undertaken by the Paris Group Bureau established in December 2002. The Bureau responsible for the organisation of the 2003 plenary meeting comprised:

Didier Blanchet	INSEE
Richard Laux	ONS
Elizabeth Lindner	HCSO
Leif Persson	Statistics Sweden
Alois Van Bastelaer	Eurostat
Denis Ward	OECD

Membership of the Bureau is open to representatives from national agencies and international organizations willing to participate in the organisation of plenary meetings of the Paris Group. Such participation may be through attending Bureau meetings and/or providing substantive comment on meeting discussion papers prepared by the Bureau Secretariat for comment. Secretariat work of the Bureau is currently shared by INSEE, ONS and OECD.

The Paris Group Bureau responsible for organising the 2004 plenary meeting comprises:

Vivienne Avery	ONS
Elizabeth Lindner	HCSO
Olivier Marchand	INSEE
Leif Persson	Statistics Sweden?
Alois Van Bastelaer	Eurostat
Denis Ward	OECD

Since its creation, there have been five plenary meetings of the Paris Group.

	<b>Host and Location</b>	<b>Topics</b>
27-28 November 1997	INSEE, Paris	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Labour market dynamics</li><li>2. Reconciliation of estimates</li><li>3. Work duration</li><li>4. Self employment</li><li>5. Dimension of job quality</li></ol>
6-7 July 1998	ONS, London	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Longitudinal data and comparisons over time</li><li>2. Wages and labour cost statistics</li><li>3. Labour market indicators</li><li>4. Job search statistics</li></ol>

18-19 November 1999	INSEE, Paris	1. Labour market dynamics 2. Compensation
21-22 September 2000	Orebro (Sweden), Statistics Sweden	1. Labour market dynamics 2. Hours worked
4-5 September 2003	London, ONS	Working time measurement - 1. Working time arrangements 2. Measuring hours worked 3. Annual hours of work and other derived products

Further information on the Paris Group and reports from most of the above meetings are available on the INSEE website at [http://www.insee.fr/en/hom\\_def\\_met/colloques/citygroup/citygroup.htm](http://www.insee.fr/en/hom_def_met/colloques/citygroup/citygroup.htm)

Participation at plenary meetings of the Paris Group is open to all national agencies and international organisations with an interest in the topic(s) covered by the agenda for that meeting. Active participation by all delegates to these meetings is encouraged. As with all city groups, the "ticket" for attendance is the prior preparation of a brief paper which generally outlines current national practice with respect to the topic, main development issues and views on future directions / development of international standards, etc.

Paris Group Secretariat  
November 2003

## A. INTRODUCTION TO THE 2003 MEETING

Following a round of consultation at the national and international levels the Paris Group Bureau identified a strong interest in further work on working time measurement as the sole topic for the plenary meeting of the Group held in London on 4-5 September 2003. The meeting, which was hosted by the United Kingdom Office for National Statistics, was attended by delegates from 16 countries and three international organizations.

Meeting sessions on the working time topic were organized around three areas, namely:

- working time arrangements;
- measurement of hours worked; and the
- use of hours worked statistics in so-called “derived products” such as productivity measures, hourly labour costs, average weekly/monthly/annual earnings, etc.

The issues covered for each of these areas comprised: user needs, measurement issues; cross-classifications of data required; reconciliation and confrontation of related statistics available at the national level; best solutions; proposals/recommendations for improvement. The final session of the September meeting discussed topics for future work.

The advantage of this structure is that it broadly accords with issues anticipated for discussion on working time measurement at the 17<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in Geneva on 24 November to 3 December 2003, thus making output from the Paris Group of more direct use by the ICLS. The intention was to cover the areas outlined above highlighting, for example, changes in user needs and the impact of changes in the working environment at the national and international levels over the last couple of decades. The adequacy of existing international standards/terminology was also examined, and recommendations on changes proposed.

Each participant at the September plenary meeting was asked to prepare a 5 page summary paper outlining current national statistical needs, national practice, key issues, problem areas, and suggested solutions on each of the three substantive topics covered in the meeting agenda listed above. In addition, a smaller number of national agencies and international organizations prepared more substantive papers (of around 10 pages) for presentation at the meeting on key aspects of working time measurement. All papers are available on the Paris Group website cited above.

## **B. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

### **Impact of changing work environment**

Statistics on working time are used by government agencies (with policy responsibilities covering finance and economics, labour market, health and safety, and industrial relations), central banks, trade unions, private companies, academics and researchers. They are required to further understand and interpret the nature, quality and volume of employment in the labour market. These data help users to identify individuals' labour supply choices, and to understand how these interact with the wider macro-economy. Working time statistics, encompassing hours worked and working time arrangements also help ensure that the well-being of workers (dependent on returns from work) can be monitored.

Although changes in working time arrangements differ by country, certain trends can be identified. Changes can be observed from both the supply side, how individuals supply their labour, and the demand side, how firms are prepared to (or find convenient to) package available work into jobs to produce their outputs.

One main development impacting labour supply choice, is the growing policy interest in working arrangements and the promotion of a work-life balance. Regulations on working hours or working time arrangements have been introduced or were recently changed in certain countries (e.g. European Union Working Time Directive or the statutory 35 hour week in France). Although take-up differs by country (and by occupation), guidelines have been introduced to protect workers' health, as studies show a direct relationship between number of hours worked and various individual health problems.

Demographic and societal changes have also affected labour supply. There has been a shift away from the traditional "nuclear" family and associated employment and home-life patterns. More single people (of both sexes) are choosing to live alone. There are also a greater number of couples who both work, and an increase in single parent families. These shifts, away from the "nuclear" family and from traditional male-orientated employment, are associated with increased female participation in the labour market, in both full-time and part-time employment. Other non-work commitments / life-style choices, and the requirement / choice to work, have also increased the supply of labour in "non standard" ways – to the extent that in many countries and for many labour market groups it is no longer meaningful to think of "standard" working arrangements.

These demographic, societal and regulatory changes have coincided with improvements in technology (such as laptops, mobile phones, and internet access) and travel, which allow for a greater choice for individuals supplying their labour.

From the demand perspective, improvements in technology and increased competition, combined with relaxation of certain trading practices (e.g. the 24/7 economy), have increased the demand for labour at "non-standard" times, e.g. night work, revolving shift work, weekend work, etc. The change has been accompanied by a general shift away from a demand for labour in the manufacturing and production sectors, to a demand for labour in the service sector. This shift is associated with a heightened demand for labour outside daytime hours on weekdays.

It is unclear whether employers or individuals have driven the diversification of working time arrangements, although changes have been observed from both perspectives. Certainly, working time statistics are relevant to both supply and demand sides although the focus of statistics on working time arrangements should be the person rather than the job. The "person" is

of interest with regards to quality of life and work/life balance issues and the “job” in other contexts, for example, in describing employment arrangements or working time arrangements which are specific to a job and where the hours usually worked in that job will be of interest. As will be further discussed below, one of the primary purposes for obtaining measures of hours worked are for productivity purposes where the focus should be on the job.

## ICLS needs

The changes outlined above have heightened the need for existing international standards on working time statistics to be modified to take account of a more complex work environment and the development of new standards in emerging areas of need. In this context, the main issues with respect to working time measurement discussed at the September 2003 meeting of the Paris Group were those outlined in the section of the General Report to the 17<sup>th</sup> ICLS dealing with statistics of working time (Section 3.2, General Report to the 17<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 24 November – 3 December 2003. The relevant extract from the report is available from [http://www.insee.fr/en/nom\\_def\\_met/colloques/citygroup/pdf/Extract-Report-ICLS.pdf](http://www.insee.fr/en/nom_def_met/colloques/citygroup/pdf/Extract-Report-ICLS.pdf)). This report described (refer Section 3.2.22) the need to revise existing international recommendations for statistics on working time in at least three areas:

- a) “The revision of the existing international definition and measurement methodologies for the production of statistics on **hours actually worked** during short as well as longer reference periods. The current international definition should be broadened to cover all persons in employment, including the self-employed, by extending the content of each of the defining categories of working time to include all work situations, such as irregular, seasonal, work at home and unpaid work. Guidelines need to be developed on how to apply the revised definition in household-based surveys, including time-use surveys.
- b) The development of new international definitions and methodologies for the measurement of **other working-time concepts**, some of which are already being measured in countries. These include the hours usually worked, overtime hours, the hours of absence from work, and working-time arrangements. Full worker coverage should be targeted. Guidelines need to be developed on how to apply the revised definition in household-based surveys, including time-use surveys.
- c) The development of an international definition of **annual hours of work** that allows for alternative estimation procedures that takes into account variations in the type and range of national statistics of working time.”

## Paris Group discussion

The Paris Group agreed that further work is required to enhance existing standards and develop new standards and definitions for working time statistics. It believed that a sound conceptual basis is a prerequisite for identifying best practice in methodologies for collecting and analysing data. Nevertheless, there is a significant volume of existing knowledge, opinion and conceptual material to draw upon.

Discussion at the Paris Group was undertaken in the context of a framework which illustrated the relationships between the three areas for the evolution of international standards identified by the ILO. When referring to statistics on working time arrangements, data providers and analysts normally refer to the following four dimensions of such a framework, the:

- number of hours actually worked in a week, month, year;
- stability/flexibility of these hours worked from week to week;
- schedule of hours worked across the day, week and year; and the
- location where work is undertaken.

### ***Working time arrangements***

The various combinations of these four dimensions result in a myriad of working time arrangements in operation, both within countries and by different countries and, rather than proposing an exhaustive typology encompassing all potential forms of working time arrangements, the Paris Group believed that it was sufficient to describe and measure all working time arrangements in the context of these dimensions. Opinions expressed in this regard were quite diverse. On the one hand, there is the view that defining international norms with respect to individual working time arrangements is not a real priority, and that the focus of international efforts should rather be devoted to measurement issues concerning hours worked. Among those who consider instead that collecting cross-national data is necessary, there were two sub-options: either limiting oneself to collecting information on the working time arrangements as they exist or emerge across countries; or trying to build a very comprehensive conceptual framework for the description of working time arrangements, capable, in particular, of incorporating new specific arrangements which regularly appear.

However, care would need to be taken with the two latter approaches. The use of existing nomenclature or labels for working time arrangements that exist in various countries raises the risk of the adoption of terms that are not transposable from one country to the next or that some labels have different meanings in the different countries. The formulation of a conceptual framework could experience similar problems and would require the categories included being clearly spelt out.

Perhaps an intermediate and more pragmatic way to deal with the problem would be work back from user needs, though even here there has been some debate on the precise nature of those needs. From the demand side, employers are reluctant agree on regulations concerning working time arrangements which implies that they have no statistical request in this field. User need is instead more focused from the supply side of the labour market where there is a need to measure the frequency of some working time arrangements that are risk factors for health or that raise problems for the reconciliation of work and family life. In that case, it is perhaps sufficient merely to define a few categories of such working time arrangements or the variables/attributes that characterise various arrangements, instead of proposing an exhaustive typology encompassing all potential forms of such arrangements.

### ***Working time measurement***

This asymmetry of user need for information on working time arrangements may be contrasted with the case of measuring hours worked where there are needs both from the supply and demand side. The main issues for the evolution of standards from the perspective of the number of hours worked were:

- Deciding on which “activities” should be included or excluded from the measure - for example, travel, formal and informal training, unpaid hours, meal breaks, etc. Perhaps the basis of deciding on what is “in” or “out” could be in terms of whether the time is devoted to actual production (on the basis of SNA 1993, para. 17.9b) rather than on the basis of time during which the employee is at the disposal of the employer. It should also be recognized

that there are components of work time that are not devoted to production that remain essential to the quality of production such as breaks, training and travel. In addition, organisational differences may be associated with real productivity gains. Although, the “production” basis would still have a number of grey areas it does bring with it a number of advantages such as: the removal of the automatic reference to the employee, thereby bringing the self-employed more firmly into working time measurement; allowing a more extensive definition of working time that would for example facilitate inclusion of “non-standard” working arrangements such as working at home; being more suited for the purpose of measuring productivity.

- Determining the basis of working time measurement appropriate for different uses of data, for example, making a clear distinction between the main measures of: hours actually worked; paid hours; contracted hours, etc. However, it was strongly felt that hours actually worked is the key concept for national accounts purposes of measuring labour input for labor productivity measures though not necessarily in the context of quality of employment or work/life balance issues.
- Deciding on whether the working time concept should be a job-related or individual related concept. Are both approaches complementary and dependent on use? For example, the job-related approach seems more appropriate from the point of view of measuring productivity, the individual related approach necessary for measuring well-being or the potential impact of hours worked on health and family life. Different purposes may necessitate use of different measures of hours worked.

### ***Annual hours of work***

The need for accurate measures of annual hours of work was also recognized by the Paris Group, not least for use in measures of productivity. The requirement is for measures of levels, not only trends, because of user need to compare productivity estimates in absolute terms. The concept of annual hours of work is also important for social change (see impact of working time reduction in France). However, annual hours worked is not necessarily an important concept for the measurement of well-being where issues relating to working time arrangements come to the fore.

### ***Measurement issues***

The Paris Group supported the necessity of drawing a clear distinction between developing international standards for a target measure, such as hours actually worked, defined on the basis of a conceptual ideal, and the practical problems of measurement. The Group expressed a preference for direct measures instead of adjustments of hours worked. Dealing with measurement issues entails clearly outlining, in any international standard, the strengths and weaknesses of the various measurement methodologies available (establishment-based surveys, household-based surveys and administrative data) and identifying best practice to maximize the quality of the data collected for an intended use, for example, the use of household-based time use surveys to identify measurement problems with more on-going data sources and possibly as a source of information for their adjustment. Best practice with respect to measurement also involves:

- maximising the quality of data derived from an individual measurement methodology, through for example, modifications to questionnaire design to assist respondent recall;

- using a combination of different data sources to arrive at measures of hours worked, ascertain quality issues or identify areas of change to data collection processes or collection instruments;
- the provision of appropriate metadata on conceptual issues, collection methodologies and guidelines on the appropriate use(s) of the data for different purposes, e.g. derivation of productivity measures, assessment of well-being, etc.

### ***Specific problem areas of measurement***

The Paris Group also discussed a number of “problem areas” of working time measurement such as the measurement of overtime, absences from work and part-time work and their importance from a user perspective. These are best seen, not as additional or separate issues, but in the context of the three measurement dimensions referred to above. As such, the focus of any international standard covering them should be in the context of recommendations of best practice for their measurement, though perhaps for some work absences a “conceptual” decision is required in some instances with regard to their exclusion or inclusion in measures of actual working time.

- An explicit measure of absences of work and overtime may be necessary to obtain a good measure of actual hours of work and their difference from usual hours worked. Overtime for example is difficult to measure for workers whose working time schedule has an intrinsically high variability. An alternative approach used in some countries in lieu of obtaining explicit measures of hours absent or overtime hours is to ask questions about usual hours worked and actual hours worked and to explore reasons for differences between the two measures. In any case, the concept of overtime has been initially designed for wage earners (hours paid at a higher rate than normal time).
- The Paris Group discussed the issue of part-time work in the context of working time arrangements. The discussion centred on the debate between opposing tenants of an explicit threshold (30, 35 hours per week) and the approach of using self-reporting or self assessment of part-time work status. The view was expressed that the part-time “concept” is primarily another type of working time arrangement and that the mere “label” is itself not all that useful due to the increasing variability of individual schedules. However, the fact that the term is strongly imbedded in user culture was also recognized. The outcome of the discussion was that reaching international agreement on a uniform explicit threshold would not be possible and that effort should instead be focused on the best practice of using the term together with an explicit cutoff based on discrete data. International comparisons would then be formulated on the basis of such information rather than a single cut-off point. Furthermore, recommendations could be made about use of the terms full-time/part-time.

## **C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE**

The following recommendations for change are presented in the framework of discussion topics for the 17<sup>th</sup> ICLS. The proposals are intended for discussion at the ICLS and for future, more focused work on the working time measurement topic by the Paris Group at the 2004 plenary meeting – refer Section D of this report below

### **Hours worked**

- To develop standards – definitions, recommended methods of data collection and analysis, presentation of appropriate metadata – in relation to hours worked in a short reference period (day, week, month). This should include: actual hours, usual hours and overtime. The concepts of paid hours, hours worked and contracted hours would need to be explained in the context of their use to derive measures of actual and usual hours.
- To develop standards for estimating total hours worked for a long reference period – particularly annual hours worked – for different purposes (such as for productivity calculations, or labour cost indices).

### **Measurement of other working-time concepts**

- To explore the possibility of a conceptual framework to encompass working time arrangements within the context of working time statistics generally. Such a set of organising principles would have the following purposes:
  - provide a structure to consider different types or examples of working time arrangements, especially new forms as they emerge;
  - informs the planning of work on collecting data about hours worked;
  - improves international comparability, and coherence between data sources;
  - helps the prioritisation of ongoing conceptual and statistical work.

Any such framework would have the following elements:

- identification of components of working time arrangements, distinguishing between (i) duration, stability/flexibility, scheduling, location; (ii) clarifying the inter-relationships between different types of working time arrangements, e.g. shift work at weekends (iii) addressing demand/supply side issues; (iv) legal elements; (v) policy elements;
  - identification of the key stakeholders (producers and users), and their interests;
  - an exploration of the links between working time arrangements and other related frameworks (e.g. 1993 SNA) and statistical domains, including the economic domain (labour inputs) and social life (well-being, work life balance);
  - identification of the main data sources of the different elements of working time arrangements, and of best practice in collecting and analysing these data.
- A review of the usefulness of the concepts of full- and part-time for describing labour market activity, including exploring whether the presentation of data on employment by usual hours worked might not be more valuable.

## D. FUTURE PARIS GROUP WORK

The future work of the Paris Group was discussed at the concluding session of the September plenary meeting. Delegates identified a broad range of possible topics for future work (listed below) but there was broad consensus on the need to undertake further, more focused work on working time statistics. In this regard it would be appropriate for the 17<sup>th</sup> ICLS to remit developmental work, as recommended by the Paris Group, back to the Paris Group to take forward in consultation with the International Labour Organisation. Specific details for such work would be formulated in December 2003 following the ICLS meeting. Proposals would then be forwarded by the Paris Group Bureau to national statistical agencies and relevant international organizations that month in a round of consultation before finalizing the topic for 2004.

One possibility raised during the September meeting was to extend the 2004 meeting to three days, the first two being devoted to further work on working time statistics and the final day for an initial foray on a new topic. Support for this proposal will be canvassed in the December consultation process.

### Possible additional future topics

Experiences in dealing with data from different sources. Reconciliation of data from different sources.	Denmark, Hungary, UK, Norway
Measurement issues of productivity and other indicators concerning comparisons of competitiveness.	Hungary
Strategies for reconciling family responsibilities and paid work	Hungary, Portugal
Income from employment. How to measure new types of remuneration, etc	Hungary, UK
Problems around the aging workforce such as:  Labour market attachment, specifically ways of measuring labour market attachment of the inactive.  Indicators of shortage and unmet demand.  Indicators of barriers to labour force participation.  Ranges of measures of labour underutilization, boundaries of employed / unemployed / not in labour force examining underemployed and marginally attached	UK, Canada, Australia, Hungary
Use of labour market statistics in describing job creation.	Norway
Vocational training statistics and their impact, for example, on productivity and innovation for enterprises and on mobility and wages improvement for employees.	Portugal
Job vacancies	OECD

## **Appendices**

## Meeting Agenda

### Day 1 – 4 September

#### **Session 1 – Working Time Arrangements (WTA)**

Aims:

- To develop a shared understanding of the existing and emerging WTA patterns in different countries.
- To identify what users needs to know about WTA, including contextual information.
- To understand the strengths and limitations of different ways of collecting information about WTA.
- To discuss a conceptual framework for considering WTA.
- To identify the implications of changes in WTA for measuring hours worked.

09.00 - 09.20	Registration and refreshments	
09.20 - 09.30	Welcome and introduction	Barry Werner, ONS, UK
09.30 - 09.50	LM Statistics in the 21st Century	Len Cook, Director of ONS, UK
09.50 - 09.55	Comments	
09.55 - 10.00	Back ground to Paris Group and meeting	Didier Blanchet, France
10.00 - 10.05	Aims of the morning session	Paivi Keinanen, Finland
10.05 - 10.20	Presentation of Overview paper	Richard Laux, ONS, UK
10.20 - 10.40	Presentation from NSI	Manuel Joao Duarte, Portugal
10.40 - 11.00	Coffee break	
11.00 - 11.40	Presentations from NSIs	Elizabeth Lindner, Hungary Trish McOrmond, UK
11.40 - 12.40	Discussion	
12.40 - 12.55	Summary & conclusions	Paivi Keinanen, Finland
12.55 - 13.00	Closing comments	Barry Werner, ONS, UK

Lunch – 13.00 - 13.55

#### **Session 2 – Measuring hours worked**

Aims:

- To develop a shared understanding of the issues and problems faced by different countries in measuring hours worked
- To understand the strengths and limitations of different ways of measuring hours worked
- To identify what users needs to know about hours worked, including contextual information.
- To discuss a conceptual framework for considering hours worked.

14.00 - 14.05	Welcome back	Barry Werner, ONS, UK
14.05 - 14.10	Aims of the afternoon session	Deborah Sunter, Canada
14.10 - 14.30	Presentation of Overview paper	Denis Ward, OECD
14.30 - 15.10	Presentation from NSIs	Jianchun Yang, China Eugen Spitznagel, Germany
15.10 - 15.30	Coffee break	
15.30 - 16.10	Presentation from NSIs	Didier Blanchet, France

		Michele Naur, Denmark
16.10 - 17.10	Discussion	
17.10 - 17.25	Summary & conclusions	Deborah Sunter, Canada
17.25 - 17.30	Evening arrangements	Barry Werner, ONS, UK

Evening – Group meal

## **Day 2 – 5 September**

### **Session 3 – Annual hours of work and other derived products**

Aims:

- To agree a complete list of products derived using hours worked data.
- To develop a shared understanding how these products are compiled – sources and methods.
- To understand issues of coherence (between different derived products, or between products and other labour market statistics).
- To agree where international standards and guidance would be most useful.

09.15 - 09.20	Welcome back	Barry Werner, ONS, UK
09.20 - 09.30	Aims of the morning session	Barry Werner, ONS, UK
09.30 - 09.45	Presentation of Overview paper	Alois Van Bastelaer, Eurostat
09.45 - 10.25	Presentations from NSIs	Alain Vuillé, Switzerland
10.25 - 10.40	Coffee break	
10.40 - 11.20	Presentations from NSIs	Deborah Sunter/Jean-Pierre Maynard, Canada Lucy Eldridge, US
11.20 - 12.35	Discussion	
12.35 - 12.50	Summary & conclusions	Barry Werner, ONS, UK
12.50 - 13.00	Closing comments	Barry Werner, ONS, UK

### **Session 4 – Wash up session**

Aims:

- To identify key features of preceding discussions.
- To agree the structure of inputs to the 17th ICLS meeting, and how to do this.
- To review the Paris Group – effectiveness of current meeting, and agree whether - proceed with the Paris Group, (if so) topics for the next Group meeting.

13.45 - 13.50	Welcome back	Barry Werner, ONS, UK
13.50 - 13.55	Discussion / reminder of the key features of the previous sessions	Barry Werner, ONS, UK
13.55 - 14.15	Inputs to the ICLS	Didier Blanchet, France
14.15 - 14.45	Discussion	
14.45 - 15.00	Coffee break	
15.00 - 15.15	Review of Paris Group - discussion	Didier Blanchet, France
15.15 - 15.45	Future projects for the Paris Group	Denis Ward, OECD
15.45 - 15.50	Goodbye	Barry Werner, ONS, UK

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