Frequently asked questions
for the LFS ahm 2009
"Entry of young people into the labour market"

This document presents the main questions received (in blue) as of 15/01/2008 and Eurostat answers.

Do we have to ignore all kinds of courses and concentrate only on full programmes that lead to a full or additional diploma (besides the ‘main’ diploma)? (With programmes, I mean a combination of a couple of subjects).

The focus is on leaving formal education. This is not easy to define and questions providing the main characteristics at national level should be found (one semester of duration like in UOE questionnaire + criteria provided in the explanatory notes on Circa). Full programmes might not be a criteria for respondents although all of them would usually be formal. Other might be formal too (an analysis of the UOE questionnaire would allow drawing a list of the most relevant programmes).

In case of a combination of subjects or even one single subject, the content (formal) and the duration (one semester in full time equivalent) would the reference.

Do we have to take into account only people that really “return” to the ‘normal’ education system to “be a student” (regardless full-time, part-time or in the evenings and regardless their actual labour market position) and ignore people who follow ‘some kind of course’ and “don’t feel like students” (regardless full-time, part-time or in the evenings and regardless their actual labour market position)? Do we have to make a distinction between people that “feel themselves as students” (and count that followed education/course) and people that “feel themselves as workers or inactive” and besides they followed ‘some kind of course/programme’ without really “returning back” to the formal education system?

There should not be any filter with the main status (i.e. whether the person consider themselves as students or not). Of course, this might help in the interview through the variable EDUCSTAT in case one person is currently studying. Once someone has not been studying in the last 4 weeks (EDUCSTAT=2) he/she will be asked for the date of leaving formal education for the last time.

On the other hand the characteristics on the labour situation of the respondent (core variable ILOSTAT) will allow identifying working students.

What kind of people do we want to cover?

Any idea what is meant by “return to education” (after that ‘return’ follows the ‘leave’ of course!)?

Pay attention: in the cases where we ignore these ‘short part-time courses’, we ‘lose’ all the people that followed these courses because these kind of courses (although formal) will not
make a part of the respondent’s education career (the respondent has never “returned” to formal education and has never left it then).

Since it is difficult to cover all cases, it was decided to focus on formal education. Other courses would be of importance in some aspects of transition into work but formal education should cover most cases. It is possible to study lifelong learning paths (after leaving formal education) through other analyses and variables. The addition of national variables are however always possible provide they do not hamper the definitions proposed at EU level.

If someone left formal education in 1998, was then employed for 6 years and in 2006 started degree but was still a student during the interview. Does this person have no first job because is still in formal education now or maybe first job is the one of 6 years duration?

The variables on the fist job (JOBSTART, JOBDUR, etc.) will not be asked at all in this case as they should be blocked by the filter on variable EDUCSTAT). The situation like this will be captured by the variable WORKEDUC coded as 2.

STOPDATE

The purpose of the module is to find out the influences of formal education for the first important working experience of young people. Thus leaving an "episodic" participation in formal education should not be counted as the turning point for the module. On the other hand we need some easy and clear criteria are needed for defining what leaving of formal education for the last time means.

In principle the definition of formal education delivered by the Classification of Learning Activities (CLA) does not give any restrictions as for the duration of the program. In the explanatory notes there is however additional characteristics of formal education i.e. the program should be covered by the joint UNESCO-OECD-Eurostat (UOE) questionnaire and this implies the duration of a program should minimum one semester, full time equivalent defined nationally.

A priori, a field should not be a criterion for classifying the program. It could be however helpful in eliminating non-formal education courses to be classified as a formal education. There are simply topics which could hardly ever be subject for formal education studies, e.g. (course on how to take care of a dog). In such cases the interviewer is advised to asked additional questions on the qualifications obtained by the respondent in order to judge the type of education activity.

The intensity of taking part in a program (whether it was full time or part time) should not be crucial for the classification provided that the full time equivalent duration is of minimum one semester. One semester might indeed be used as a proxy in case of numerous formal education programmes which can hardly be listed in the interviewer guidelines. The correspondence with UOE formal education programmes and characteristics listed in the 2009 ad-hoc module explanatory notes should however be privileged.

If someone left formal education in 1998, worked (or was unemployed for 4 years) and then did a degree and completed it in 2006 - what would be the STOPDATE?

The last leaving of formal education would be taken into account. From the duration of studies and WORKEDUC, we would be able to see whether there was an interruption in education for work. Moreover, the most recent situation of the graduate is more interesting for analysis (last leaving of education versus first leaving). It is true that we will concentrate only on the 1st work after the end of the last studies and will
not be able to learn about the work done just after the 1st leaving of studies. While a panel approach is not possible in the EU LFS, retrospective question for events which might have taken place years ago were not considered as appropriate by the Task Force who prepared this module.

- **How to consider participation in short part-time courses in formal education?**

  Participation in short part-time courses in formal education after entering the labour market should be disregarded in determining the STOPDATE.

- **Someone has completed university studies in 2000 and immediately started to work. In 2005, this person has followed a computer (or language) course for 5 months (1 evening a week for 3.5 hours) as evening courses in formal education. He obtained a certificate for this course. Can we say that this is this person's last leaving of formal education? Is 2000 or 2005 the year of leaving formal education?**

  The course might not be recognised as a formal education programme in the UOE in the view of its duration. If the course was long enough to be considered as formal education then the year of finishing formal education would be 2005, otherwise it would be 2000. It seems that 2000 would better correspond to the clarifications given above.

- **Someone has completed university studies in 2000 and immediately started to work. In 2008, this person obtained a 2nd university diploma from a study followed in formal education in the evenings from 2005-2008. Is 2000 or 2008 the year of leaving formal education?**

  Two dimensions should be kept in mind in case of doubts on the date of leaving formal education: content of the programme (formal) and duration (match with UOE questionnaire). Here the duration of the last activity is significant and the year of leaving formal education should be 2008.

- **Someone has completed secondary education in 2000 and immediately started to work. In 2008, this person obtained a diploma/certificate as bookkeeper from a study followed in formal education in the evenings from 2005-2008. Is 2000 or 2008 the year of leaving formal education?**

  2008 (see below)

- **Someone has completed secondary education in 2000 and immediately started to work. In 2008, this person obtained a diploma/certificate as bookkeeper from a study followed in formal education in the afternoons from 2005-2008 (so the person was a part-time student and has a part-time work). Is 2000 or 2008 the year of leaving formal education?**

  As for the question above, this should be 2008. There is no impact of when the course was followed (evenings or afternoons as a part-time student, as long as the programme is the same and is classified as formal education of a duration of at least one semester in full time equivalent..

- **A housewife has completed secondary education in 2000. In 2005, she followed an evening course in formal education about 'floristry' (a hobby-course). She obtained a certificate. Is 2000 or 2005 the year of leaving formal education?**
We have doubts that a hobby course was a formal education at all. If it does not follow the criteria (explanatory notes and clarifications added in this note), 2000 is the year of finishing formal education.

WORKEDUC

- **Job duration (one month):**
  
  The purpose is to identify a job which was important for the respondent, i.e. which gave him/her a first approach to the labour market and its rules. The purpose is to avoid declaring very minor and occasional jobs. The duration of one month given in the explanatory notes should be used as a proxy.

- **It is mentioned that "work" means a job for pay or profit (the well-known definition in LFS). in some countries, some traineeships/internships (as a compulsory part of the education system) are not paid, but can take some 2-4 months...In these cases, the respondent will answer with code ‘0’ (‘no work’ because unpaid) whereas a traineeship of 3 months is a good starting point and the very first contact with the labour market. So when we restrict the definition of 'work' to 'pay or profit', we will lose the 'acquired experience' of these people and the results/the overall picture will be different! I think, what we want to know with this question is to detect the 1st work experience (and not if this work was paid or not), don't you think? Any idea how to avoid this problem?

- **Do we have to count also the experiences of young people on works in the parents' business or on the parents' farm without pay?** We have some experiences of this type in the period of studies.

  The module is going to be implemented now and we cannot modify the definitions and variables used in it. The TF preparing module decided to concentrate on the first important work experience as being paid and lasting long enough. These are important criteria to filter out small "work experiences". Moreover it is in line with the concepts of employment already used in the LFS (employment is always for pay of profit) and this covers unpaid family workers.

  We do agree that some country specific cases could be lost this way You could add a national code for unpaid but important first work experience - but it should not hamper the comparability of results between countries (an extra code for specific category if relevant, e.g. unpaid trainees). We could arrange the transmission of this additional information to Eurostat later on for analyses.

JOBDUR

- **Could we code this question with something like 3-6 months, 6-12 months, 1-2 years, 2-5 years, 5-10 years, >10 yrs?**

  As proposed in the explanatory notes, the months should be asked, at least for the first 2 years. The bands of 3 months could be proposed after that. As for years, it is recommended to ask for the number of years (aggregations for e.g. 2-5 years would imply significant biases in average durations and problems of comparability with other Member States surveys).
FINDMETH

- Problem with the variable FINDMETH and its code 7 (launching private business). Is this code only applicable for persons who start their own business? What about persons who are self-employed and join or take over the family business and the business of a friend? Which code applies for these persons: code 7 or code 5 (via family or friends)?

Eurostat propose to code this situation as 7, particularly if it is a long term objective to take over the family business. Code 5 would apply to situations where the person has taken a job as an employee or a family worker without aiming at taking over the family business.

- How to code teachers who got their job without application, directly assigned by the Ministry of Education?

Code 1 (via educational institution) is applicable when the educational institution helped on its own initiative the person to find the job – by forwarding an advertisement or a vacancy notice or by facilitating contacts with employers. The active role of the educational institution is important as a criterion.

In the case of the assignment (with no really choice given to the person) by a ministry, it is proposed to code this method as 8 (other) since this is not the educational institution but the ministry which is the main actor. This might be applicable to other occupations too.

If the person passed a competition to become official in the public administration but had the choice of the job place, code 4 is proposed (submission of the application was needed).

TRANSACT

- Expression "first job of more than 3 months" is used in most variables, but variable TRANSACT (col. 231) is using expression "first job of at least 3 months". What to do with jobs that lasted exactly 3 months, do they belong to group "more than 3 months"? So, what is the minimum length for a job "more than 3 months", is it three months, three months and one week, or four months?

It should be "job of a duration of more than 3 months" - if possible, please correct it in the national questionnaire. It would however be possible to subtract people with first job duration of exactly 3 months by comparing variable 231 and those 216-230.

- How can we calculate that the 1st job started more than 3 months after the STOPDATE (so that we can filter persons to this question) in the cases where the person’s current job is also the first job, but we do not know the MONTH (var.47-48)? Variable 47-48 is only asked when REFYEAR-YSTARTWK<=2

Example:
STOPDATE: 1998 06
YSTARTWK: 1998
MSTARTWK: Unknown (because we do ask the question due to the filter REFYEAR-YSTARTWK<=2)

If MSTARTWK was 01, then TRANSACT should not be asked.
If MSTARTWK was 12 for example, then TRANSACT should be asked.
You are totally right, we have troubles with the filter on the month of entering the job for people who worked longer than two years. And that imply the problems with the variable TRANSACT. We cannot do much at the EU level now as many countries started the fieldworks. What we could propose at the national level is to ask the variable MSTARTWK for all the respondents.