Frequently asked questions on the 2010 ad hoc module on reconciliation between work and family life

IMPUTATION OF SOME VARIABLES

**Question:** As already specified during the last task force meeting on the preparation of the 2010 AHM, the 2005 experience suggests us that disabled people not to be asked about ad hoc module questionnaire as this could be annoying for them. Explanatory notes clarify that coding '4' could be assigned automatically for REGCARE, but there aren’t indications for the other variables.

**Answer:**

**REGCARE:** It could automatically be coded ‘4’ if it is obvious that the person would not be able to care for others (this is what is stated in the explanatory notes).

**CHILDCAR:** there is no direct link to disability - even if a person is disabled, childcare services might be used for the child (this might even be more relevant than for persons for whom it is easier to care for their own children), so this question should be answered as the results should give a general overview of the use of childcare services.

**IMPFACIL:** if the disability is serious enough that it is clear that the (non-) participation in the labour market is due to the disability, an automatic coding of ‘4’ could be possible.

**REDWORK, STOPWORK:** we consider only persons with a current job or a job around childbirth, so it is clear that the person is able to work or was working during the relevant reference period. If possible, the questions should be answered in these cases (the disability might have occurred only after the relevant reference period ...).

**PARLEAVE:** if parental leave is linked to employment the same comment as for REDWORK and STOPWORK would apply here.

**Question:** When an interviewee is in maternity/paternity leave of the youngest child, could variables REDWORK, STOPWORK, PARLEAVE and NOPLREAS be coded automatically?

**Answer:** The automatic coding is possible, giving REDWORK=2, STOPWORK=1, PARLEAVE=1 and NOPLREAS=08 (which should include paternity leave). Additionally the core variable NOWKREAS should also be equal to 05.
C197. REGCARE:

**Question:** does spouse include a (civil) partner? Someone who is not married but cohabiting?

**Answer:** See general note on page 3 of the explanatory notes: "many of the following variables refer to own/spouse’s children, either in the description, the filter or the categories. For all such cases, spouse has to be understood as spouse or cohabiting partner as in the core variables HHLINK and HHSPOU, i.e. the variables refer to the actual and not the legal situation in the household".

**Question:** Grandchildren, nephews... and in general other children up to 14 (other than own/spouse's children living in the household) who are living in the household should be considered when answering REGCARE?

**Answer:** Yes. All children up to 14 (other than own/spouse's children living in the household) no matter where they live should be considered when answering this variable.

**Question:** Does code 1 of REGCARE (Yes, of other children, up to 14) also apply if e.g. 20 years old brother regularly takes care of his 12 years old sister?

**Answer:** Yes. On the contrary in variable CHILDCAR if a child (sister/brother) aged more than 14 takes care of the children up to 14, then no childcare services are used and the coding should be 6.

C198. CHILDCAR:

**Question:** In a national context children may start attending kindergarten school at the age of 3. This is free for state schools. However this level of education is not compulsory but is still part of the formal education setup. Are such cases to be considered as unpaid childcare services?

**Answer:** yes, the kindergarten school should be considered as childcare services (no matter whether they are paid or unpaid).

Summarising the explanatory notes:

**Included** in CHILDCAR:
1. paid childminders
2. crèche
3. pre-school (including free pre-school)
4. day care centre
5. organised family care (e.g. family crèches, home-based care by childminders affiliated to a child minding service)
6. after school centre / afternoon school services, paid carers.
Childcare services subsidised by state/employers are included.

**Excluded** from CHILDCAR:
1. compulsory school
2. partners/relatives/neighbours/friends doing (unpaid) care for the child
3. children up to 14 who always take care of themselves/each other
4. person who works at home/cares for the child at the work place
5. sports clubs (or sports activities) and language course
**Question:** Can the youngest child be the only child? So if someone/couple has only one child, this is the child we are referring to? 

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** CHILDCAR/IMPFACIL - the filter states "Everybody aged 15 to 64 with at least one/own spouse's child up to 14 living in the household", does this include adopted and/or foster children as well?

**Answer:** The comment made on page 5 for REGCARE: *Adopted children should be considered as own children, foster children as other children* is a general one applicable to all variables.

**NEW question:** Are the following two cases included in CHILDCAR:
1. A person working as a paid child carer and cleaner at a household, but stays at another household
2. A person working as a paid child carer at a household, and stays in this household?

**Answer:** The interpretation is correct. The fact of living or not in the household does not affect the interpretation. Another possibility could be added: a person, paid as a cleaner who, at the same time, cares for the child in the household, this should also be considered as childcare.

**NEW question:** How do we treat lunch breaks at compulsory school when the child stays at the school?

**Answer:** As a general rule lunch breaks during compulsory education spend in the premises of the school should not be considered childcare, even if somebody belonging to the school organisation (e.g. canteen) cares for the children.

**C199. IMPFACIL:**

**Question:** CHILDCAR/IMPFACIL - the filter states "Everybody aged 15 to 64 with at least one/own spouse's child up to 14 living in the household", does this include adopted and/or foster children as well?

**Answer:** The comment made on page 5 of the explanatory notes for REGCARE: *Adopted children should be considered as own children, foster children as other children* is a general one applicable to all variables.

**Question:** The filter connected to this column excludes interviewed persons that in the ordinary LFS have given 'Looking after children or incapacitated adults' as a reason for working part-time or not working. But the other interviewed persons are to be asked if their reasons for working part-time or not working are that 'Suitable care services for children are not available or affordable.' The problem is that the same persons, for example a student, has already given information about this in the former questions (col 198. CHILDCAR) and might have stated that his/her child uses childcare about 30 hours. Then the "suitable..." question seems odd. How should we cope with this? 

**Answer:** IMPFACIL is an extension of NEEDCARE in the core, which defines the possible categories. As it is stated in the explanatory notes (Implementation rule - first note), this does not define the actual questions used. Depending on the household
situation it might indeed be reasonable to ask only for care facilities for ill, disabled or elderly (in case REGCARE shows that this might be relevant), so different questions or answer options could be applied depending on the answer to CHILDCAR. Countries should decide on the best way of implementing the ad hoc module.

C202. VARHOURS:

**Question:** The variable VARHOURS will be derived from two questions:

1) Who fixes start and end of a working day?
   - The employer
   - The employee

If it is fixed by the employee then...

2) What kind of schedule fits your work?
   - Flexitime/working time banking
   - Daily number of hours fixed, but some flexibility within the day
   - Determines own work schedule without formal boundaries
   - Other
   - Doesn't know

By introducing the "Doesn't know" there will be a lack of partial response to the variable VARHOURS because it would be known that the schedule is fixed by the employee but not the exact type of schedule. There are three transcoding possibilities:

a) Transcoding option "Doesn't know" to option "Other" and thereby eliminate the lack of partial response.

b) Keeping the option "Doesn't know" and thus continue with the lack of partial response.

c) Creating a new code to reflect that option, so it can be exploited later

What is the Eurostat preference?

**Answer:** The best option is c). The new code would read 6. 'Schedule decided by employee, concrete arrangement unknown'.

Option a) is clearly defined as NOT 1-4, whereas option b) suppresses available information.

**Question:** How should we code persons working in the public sector (a quite significant group of employees). In most cases, persons working in public sector have to work a fixed number of hours every day but there is a flexibility in the start and the end of the working time: a typical example is the case where a person can start working any time between 7.30 – 8.00 and then stop after completing 8 hours. Should code 3 (daily number of hours fixed, but some flexibility within the day) be used here?

**Answer:** Yes

**NEW question:** We have a different view than the one in the previous question. In the public sector of my country, a person can start work between 7:30 – 8:00 and finish work between 2:30-3:00. This IS decided by the employer and cannot be changed by the employee. The employee then just has to come and leave between these times; it is NOT the employee who determines the work schedule. So we cannot code them as 3 as you say. What do you think?

**Answer:** In the implementation rule of code 3, the explanatory notes say: "This code covers the concept of staggered working hours, a situation where workers may start earlier and finish later outside a range of hours according to regulation or collective
agreement when presence is compulsory... Banded start/end, for instance working from 10am-6pm rather than 9am-5pm, is one special example of staggered working hours...This code also includes cases where the daily working hours can be considered as fixed, but in practice some flexibility regarding the daily working hours is given, and it is not controlled whether a person works exactly the daily number of hours”. The working time conditions in the public sector of your country totally fit within this definition. Code 1 should be left for those jobs where the employee does not have any flexibility at all (e.g. sales workers or cashiers who should be at the place of work when the shop opens, shift workers ...)

**NEW question:** In codes 2 and 3, is the existence of a formal scheme essential or should it be more important to code according to the degree of flexibility of the person's working time arrangements? For example, if a person can arrange his working hours relatively freely within some boundaries (e.g. most client contacts are possible during office hours so part of the work has to be done then) and in exchange for working late he can go in later or finish earlier on another day, but there's no formal system for monitoring the accumulating hours, how should this be coded? And what about code 4, should it include only cases where there are absolutely no boundaries (the person can work at any hours of the day or night and no matter how many hours) or also cases like the one described above?

**Answer:** As a general rule the actual (and not the contractual) situation should be taken into account. That means that informal arrangements should be considered in the same way as formal ones - it matters what happens, not what is written in contracts.

Code 3 is for rather standardised schemes, mainly described by standard contractual hours per day plus no possibility to take time off for compensation reasons. The second paragraph of the explanatory notes relaxes this a little bit, but only to a small extent (not to move every kind of minor flexibility to code 2...). As usual, overtime is of course accepted by the employer...

Code 2 is characterised by the possibility of accumulation and settlement of hours. There is no need of formal approval by the superior, as this would be in contradiction to the message that we want the actual situation. It might be an informal approval, e.g. employee's behaviour regarding working time arrangements is tacitly accepted. So if the behaviour you are describing (go in later / finish earlier) is more reflected by the idea of compensation, e.g. there are serious differences in the hours worked per day, this code should be used.

Code 4 is for a very high degree of independence. Therefore, if someone has (formal or informal) compensation options, but should for instance still be in the office for some hours if working, it would be code 2 and not 4.
C203. POSSTEND:

**Question:** POSSTEND and POSORGWT refer to "family reasons". Are the following categories family reasons?
- in case of an emergency (e.g. accident of a family member)
- "standard" family constrains (ex: medical visit, administrative obligations, ...)
- take care of the child because the childcare facility is not available (e.g. strike, bad weather, ...).

**Answer:** yes, the three categories should be included. They describe quite well what it is intended to measure. The variables are derived from the respective 2005 ones. It is recommended to make the variable as comparable as possible to the 2005 one, taking the new explanatory notes into account.

C204. POSORGWT:

**Question:** POSSTEND and POSORGWT refer to "family reasons". Are the following categories family reasons?
- in case of an emergency (e.g. accident of a family member)
- "standard" family constrains (ex: medical visit, administrative obligations …)
- take care of the child because the childcare facility is not available (e.g. strike, bad weather …).

**Answer:** yes, the three categories should be included. They describe quite well what it is intended to measure. The variables are derived from the respective 2005 ones, although dropping the restriction "without taking special leave" to make it easier this time. It is recommended to make the variable as comparable as possible to the 2005 one, taking the new explanatory notes into account.

**Question:** Is there any precise rule to use code 1 (take days off is generally possible) or code 2 (take days off is rarely possible)?

**Answer:** The aim of the question is to know whether employees can take days off in case a 'family' emergency occurs and it is up to them to decide and not to the employer. If the leave the employee can use covers standard situations such as marriages or death of a relative, code 2 (rarely) should be used. Code 1 is meant to cover other more "frequent" situations like care for children (including for instance that the school is closed for strike, bad weather, …) or relatives, and whether it is up to the employee (and not to the employer) to decide. A similar approach should be applied in variable 203. POSTEND.

**NEW question:** In the previous answer we read that and it is “up to the employee to decide and not to the employer”. What exactly do we mean by this? For example, even normal holidays are up to the employer-in the sense that the employer can determine when you can take holidays. In other words: If it depends on the employer if I can get an extra free day (and sometimes I can get the day, while sometimes I can’t) what is the answer in POSORGWT? Rarely or Not possible?

**Answer:** POSORGWT does not deal with "normal holidays". As you write, in most cases the "normal holiday" should be approved by the employer. The condition "up to the employee to decide and not to the employer" was meant to give hints on how to distinguish between codes 1 and 2, and it is up to the employee to decide whether the situation is such that he/she can/should take a day off (still in accordance with the
employer of course - as you see it is quite difficult to define...). The distinction between code 2 "Rarely possible" and 3 "Not possible" should be based on other conditions. When it comes to "Not possible", the situation should be quite clear: there is no real option to organise the working time in a way allowing taking days off. For instance, teachers (example mentioned in the implementation rules) should answer 3 because they need in principle to be replaced, what is not foreseen as a normal option to take days off.

**NEW question:** What do we mean by “holidays”? Is it correct to interpret “holidays” as any official recognized paid leave from work? If that is the case, what should we do with a special “parental leave” that we have in my country that allows persons with children going to school to have 5 extra days a year (paid leave): should we include them in “holidays” or should we include them in POSORGWT?

**Answer:** In principle those days fit with the implementation rule for code 1 (explanatory notes, page 14): "the person can generally organise the working time in order to take whole days off for family reasons (outside particular periods of urgent work …; even if a limit for the number of days exists)". However the final interpretation depends on the practical situation in your country: are those days always taken by the employees not matter whether a problem or emergency has happened? Are they considered as standard holidays or should there be a reason linked to childcare to be allowed to take the days off? If the five days can be considered just as an extension of the standard holidays code 1 should not be directly applied, especially if this might lead to a coding of 1 for all people with children (if this "special parental leave" is available for all parents...).

**C205. REDWORK:**

**Question:** Filter for the variables REDWORK, STOPWORK and PARLEAVE: a child is excluded as soon as he/she is 8?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** It can be difficult for those with more than one child to only consider the youngest, partly because parental leave days can be drawn from those allotted to an older child although the actual purpose is to care for the younger or even both children. How should one answer if one has already reduced their working hours to care for older children?

**Answer:** Code 1 (yes) should be used in REDWORK: there is a reduction partly or totally caused by the youngest child.
NEW question: In my country a person can stay at home continuously with her two or more children using unpaid holiday from her employer (child care leave with remuneration) and can go back to that workplace. Though they stopped working to take care of the youngest child, they do that with their first child some years before the second/third child’s birth. We would consider them in the ad hoc survey as a person who stopped working to take care of the youngest child, but we can’t apply the filter: (EXISTPR = 1 and REFYEAR-YEARPR <= age of the youngest child + 1). Is this interpretation correct?

Answer: The person did not stop working to take care of the youngest child, thus STOPWORK should be filled in with 9 (Not applicable). In fact the career break was caused by the older child.

C206. STOPWORK:

Question: Filter for the variables REDWORK, STOPWORK and PARLEAVE: a child is excluded as soon as he/she is 8?

Answer: Yes.

NEW question: Is it correct to say that (in the case of persons with work experience) the answers in STOPWORK and PARLEAVE “overlap”? That is, if a person answers that has taken parental leave then the same person should have an answer different than 1 in STOPWORK?

Answer: The "Purpose of variable STOPWORK" reads (page 17 of the explanatory notes): "The variable STOPWORK aims at providing information on career breaks after the birth of the youngest child. The reference period is any period of at least one month after the paternity or maternity leave. It covers all arrangements chosen by the employee, both paid and unpaid. STOPWORK is not restricted to parental leave only (which is the objective of PARLEAVE below) since many other arrangements are possible and respondents do not always know about parental leave provisions". In fact, for respondents without second job, when PARLEAVE=2-5 then STOPWORK should always be >= PARLEAVE (for instance PARLEAVE=5 means STOPWORK=5 or 6); moreover if STOPWORK=1, PARLEAVE can not be >=2. Of course these rules only concern the population answering STOPWORK, which is smaller than that answering PARLEAVE.

Question: What should be done when a person stopped working to take care of the youngest child but he/she continues working more or less infrequently? For example journalists can continue writing articles every now and then, or nurses can do a few weekend shifts.

Answer: There is not a general rule to apply here. The answer should be left to the respondents. If they consider that they stopped working, the small jobs should not be treated as an interruption of the job break. A similar approach should be applied in variable 207. PARLEAVE.
**Question:** As regards to STOPWORK (col.206) and PARLEAVE (col.207), the explanatory notes state for these two variables the option of coding, in case of several interruptions of more than one month, both the length of the longest interruption and the total duration of the spells of the kind indicated. What are the cases in which the respondent would better opt for the former or the latter codification?

**Answer:** For STOPWORK and PARLEAVE we tried to give some hints how to deal with all possible situations which might occur. Therefore we mention also several interruptions. The text in the explanatory notes states:

In case several interruptions of more than one month exist, in general the length of the longest interruption should be provided as an indicator for the degree of job attachment. However, if the respondent considers the total duration of all spells of this kind as giving a clearer picture of his/her situation, the total duration of all spells can be provided alternatively. This should be an exceptional case and only be used if the respondent is actively expressing his/her doubts whether the length of the longest interruption is an appropriate indicator.

We tried to make clear that the standard question should ask just for the length of the LONGEST interruption. ONLY IF the respondent is ACTIVELY saying that he thinks the total duration of all spells is more appropriate, this can be accepted as well. The interviewer should always ask for the former, the latter being only an exceptional case triggered by the respondent.

**C207. PARLEAVE:**

**Question:** Filter for the variables REDWORK, STOPWORK and PARLEAVE: a child is excluded as soon as he/she is 8?

**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** In most cases, any extra "Parental leave" would be taken upon the completion of maternity leave, but if there are situations where a parent has gone back to work after their maternity entitlement, but then after a period of time, decided to take time off from work to look after their children (whether this be because of illness to the child, lack of care services or because they wanted to), can this be included as "Parental leave" as well?

**Answer:** Yes, if the scheme used falls under the definition of parental leave in a country.

**Question:** Am I right in assuming that "Parental leave" can only be used as a term if the parent is guaranteed to have their job back as well. If they have decided to give up work to look after their children, this is not classed as "Parental leave"?

**Answer:** Yes, cp on page 19: "For workers: at the end of parental leave, workers shall have the right to return to the same job or, if that is not possible, to an equivalent or similar job consistent with their employment contract or employment relationship". If they give up their job after having taken parental leave, the periods should of course be distinguished.
**Question:** How to code PARLEAVE when a person was working part-time and takes parental leave exactly for this working time (let's say 20 or 30 hours)?

**Answer:** If the reduction of working time to zero is completely organised by parental leave, then for the purpose of this variable it is justified considering this as full-time parental leave.

**Question:** How to code PARLEAVE when the person stops working to care of their children full-time, but still only uses three days of the week with paid parental leave, the other two as away from work without pay. The reason is often to be vacant for a longer time to take care of the child (but then, of course, with a lower income from parental benefits per week / month).

**Answer:** The answer is somehow already given on page 21 of the explanatory notes: "...the codes 2 to 6 would cover persons who took at least one month, combining full-time parental leave with other arrangements, e.g. standard holidays or flexitime systems (balance of overtime), as it might be difficult for the respondent to distinguish all different concepts and periods exactly".

In this case codes 2 to 6 would cover a combination of full-time parental leave (here: for 3 days per week) with other arrangements (unpaid leave). It would be similar to the case where, e.g., 3 weeks full-time parental leave and, after, 2 weeks of unpaid leave are taken - it is simply another distribution across the same period. In conclusion the whole period should be coded, as long as "full-time" parental leave is included in some way.

**Question:** As regards to STOPWORK (col.206) and PARLEAVE (col.207), the explanatory notes state for these two variables the option of coding, in case of several interruptions of more than one month, both the length of the longest interruption and the total duration of the spells of the kind indicated. What are the cases in which the respondent would better opt for the former or the latter codification?

**Answer:** See the answer to the same question in STOPWORK.

**NEW question:** Is it correct to say that (in the case of persons with work experience) the answers in STOPWORK and PARLEAVE “overlap”? That is, if a person answers that has taken parental leave then the same person should have an answer different than 1 in STOPWORK?

**Answer:** See the answer to the same question in STOPWORK.