Gender mainstreaming in surveys: Estonia

This is the Estonian contribution to the comparative analytical report on gender mainstreaming in surveys, coordinated via questionnaire by Anne-Marie Nicot from ANACT, France, and Irene Houtman from TNO, the Netherlands, for the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO). This report has not been subjected to the standard Foundation editorial procedures.

Introduction by national correspondent

The general theme that this questionnaire addresses is: Are data reflecting quality of work and employment in the national survey(s) becoming more gender sensitive in your country?

In order to give answers to the following questions, the national surveys that deal with quality of work and employment should first be defined. The regular quarterly survey on the labour market in Estonia is the Labour Force Survey (LFS), conducted by the Statistical Office of Estonia. There are no other regular surveys by the Statistical Office of Estonia or the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs on working conditions and working life.

Occasional specifically designed surveys have studied some aspects of working life and working conditions. For instance, the Working Environment Survey, carried out by EMOR in 2000, was commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Furthermore, in 1998 and 2002, two waves of the Working Life Barometer (WLB) in the Baltic Countries, conducted by AS SaarPoll, were commissioned and presented by the Finnish Ministry of Labour. As the current comparative analytical report mainly considers national surveys and changes in national surveys and presentation of data, the focus in this national contribution will be on the Labour Force Surveys and the Statistical Office of Estonia.

The Statistical Office of Estonia has other surveys besides the LFS in which the gender dimension is highly relevant, for example, the Household Budget Surveys and the survey on Time Use. The Statistical Office of Estonia has had a special project for generating gender statistics from existing surveys. The outcome of the project was a publication presenting statistics of households, education, the labour market, income, health, crime and violence, and participation in decisions from a gender perspective (Statistical Office of Estonia, 2001).

Nevertheless, the LFS is the main source for employment and working quality assessments. Thus, the following answers are confined to the issue of working conditions, working and employment quality. The other aspects in which gender mainstreaming is crucially important but which fall outside the area of working life are not discussed.
National surveys are administered in Estonia by the Statistical Office of Estonia. The regular quarterly survey on the labour market is the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Before 2000, it was a yearly survey, and it has been conducted since 1995. In 1995, it had a retrospective part to cover 1989–1995. The second survey was conducted in 1997 and had a retrospective part for 1995–1997. Between 1997 and 2000, the survey was conducted each year in the spring and, since mid-2000, the survey takes place on a quarterly basis. The LFS covers the usual topics: labour market status, working conditions and background (contracts, tenure, pay, working time, economic sector, size of company, ownership of company), education and background data.

In different years, there have been different supplements in the LFS. In 2003 it included health and working conditions, in 2002 health and work ability, living place and changes of living place. As the LFS has a relatively long tradition, it is possible to follow the changes of the questionnaires and presentation of data.

The Statistical Office of Estonia also has special projects for gender statistics, but this has not had an impact on the design or presentation of the LFS results.

The occasional surveys on aspects of working life, which were indicated in the introduction, are closely connected with the departments for labour market, working life and for the analysis of employment policy of the Ministry of Social Affairs. These departments are responsible for designing and analysing employment and working life policies. There is also a department for gender equality. This is a relatively new department and its aim is to promote gender mainstreaming and analyse gender equality in different fields of life and policymaking. There has not been special focus on gender mainstreaming in statistics yet. There are no special surveys regarding working life commissioned on the side of gender equality department. The surveys, which they have commissioned, have been with the focus of general attitudes towards genders, trafficking with women and similar.

Q2. In what way has the national survey(s) or questionnaire(s) on quality of working life (and health or employment) changed over the last decade(s)?

Which questions have been added, and which have been deleted in order to make the surveys more gender sensitive, and have any questions or topics changed (if so, in what way)?

Do you think that the survey(s) or questionnaire(s) have become more gender sensitive due to these changes?

The designers of the LFS indicate that there have not been specific changes in the design of the survey or questionnaire in order to make the survey more gender sensitive. In this respect, the design of the survey can be considered gender neutral, meaning that no special attention is given to either sex. Thus, if men’s jobs are used as a model and questions are designed according to these, certain aspects of women’s working life can be underestimated and vice versa.

Together with the change from an annual to a quarterly frequency, the design of the questionnaire has changed. However, regarding the wording of questions in relation to gender sensitivity, there have not been major changes.
Despite the fact that there were no specially designed questions in order to make the survey more gender sensitive, there are some small changes worth noting. For example, in the 1995 questionnaire, the answers for questions such as ‘Why did you stop working?’ or ‘Why do you work part time?’ did not differentiate between childcare leave and pregnancy leave. However, these answers are differentiated in later surveys. Also in the 1995 survey, the answers to the question ‘Why did you stop working?’ included only ‘health reasons’ but later surveys made it possible to differentiate between the respondent’s own health and the need to take care of children or other family members or dependants. Women usually take care of children and other dependants more often than men and therefore these answers highlight different gender aspects in the labour market.

In the 1995 survey, some questions were addressed only to women. This was part of the ‘future developments’ section and included questions like ‘Do you plan to have more children?’, ‘How many and when do you plan do have them?’ This part was only in the 1995 survey and was removed in subsequent years. It is obvious that this kind of targeting of questions does not allow a balanced analysis of the data as men might also have plans to have children.

Thus, there have been some changes that enhance the possibility of analysing gender aspects of the labour market. At the same time, it has not been a major issue in changing the design of the survey and presentation of the data according to sex is the primary consideration in this context.

Q3. Please outline the way gender statistics are being produced and mainstreamed.

Who are the ‘users’ (e.g. policymakers or ministries, research institutions, gender issues advocates, etc)?

How are they involved in the production process of gender statistics? Are their needs collected in a systematic way?

There is no special process for producing gender statistics in the field of working and employment quality and therefore there is no process to gather the needs of the users.

Are there any guidelines on how to produce engendered statistics?

No.

Are there any formal procedures to assess statistics produced with a gender perspective?

No.

Are there specific publications dealing with gender that present and interpret topical data on women and men in a form suitable for a wide range of non-technical users?

From the viewpoint of working and employment quality, there has not been much research. A publication by the Statistical Office of Estonia (2001) presents statistical data from the gender perspective. Based on LFS data, the gender wage gap has been assessed and theoretical reasons behind it explained and described for a wider public (see Kallaste and Rõõm, 2004).

Is there a publication on working conditions or quality of work and employment issues that takes into account gender issues?

The general publication of the LFS presents data according to sex. The publication presents the main labour market data in relation to employment, unemployment and inactivity by education, region, economic sector, etc. All data are presented separately for men and women. There is no special report or publication dealing with gender in working life and employment.
Are statistics on individuals collected and presented or reported by gender?
Yes, most of the data are presented according to gender.

What strategies have been put in place in order to produce, present and disseminate gender sensitive statistics?
There is no publicly distributed strategy concerning engendered statistics.

Q4. What development(s) or causes may have been responsible for these changes in national statistics on quality of work and health in employment?
You are asked to comment briefly on major driving forces related to: 1) demographic changes, ageing of the work force; 2) the economy, such as recession; 3) legislative changes (acts or regulations that came into force); or 4) technical developments that have raised awareness of gender sensitive issues in your country.

As described above, no major changes have been made in the surveys that would indicate essentially more attention on gender issues.

However, there have been some important milestones in promoting gender mainstreaming in general. The most important has been widely debated acceptance of the law on gender equality. The law prescribes that all institutions must promote gender equality in all aspects of their activities. Local and national government must promote gender equality systematically and continuously and change the conditions that impede its achievement. Employers are obliged to collect data concerning the work according to sex. The data must enable an assessment of whether the principles of equality have been followed. The list of data required and method of collection were to be specified by a government bill. The law was passed on 7 April 2004.

Q5. Can you provide (quantitative) information on gender sensitive indicators and their effects/outcomes?
You are asked to indicate which gender sensitive indicators are implemented in the national survey(s), and to provide this quantitative information for the workforce as a whole, as well as for both men and women.

Areas which these indicators may refer to are:
- gender specific working conditions, or gender specific ‘female’ or ‘male’ job characteristics (aesthetic, emotional demands) as identified by horizontal segregation, and/or female/health conditions, discrimination issues;

As the LFS does not cover such detailed categories, there is no readily available indicator. At the same time, some additional parts in the surveys can provide this information but these are not reported in the standard publication of the results of the LFS. Some of the requested information can be assessed from the ‘Working Environment Survey’ (EMOR 2000), but it was an occasional survey so does not allow the possibility of following trends and developments. In addition, some information can be sourced from the WLB, but this cannot be considered a national survey as it is conducted by the Finnish Ministry of Labour.
- gender pay gap;

This is a regularly reported indicator, based on the ESO ‘Wage survey’. In 2001, the proportion of women’s average hourly gross wages in relation to men’s wages was 75.7%. The survey of wages is a regular representative survey of companies.
- gender specific time preferences, working times or working time arrangements;

Based on the LFS, working time and working time arrangements (such as working part time, working on holidays, at night time and at home) are regularly reported according to sex.

### Table 1: Working time arrangements, according to sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average number of hours usually worked per week</td>
<td>42.94</td>
<td>41.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time workers (% of total workers)</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under-employed workers (people who would like to work more if possible) (% of total workers)</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often work in the evenings (at 18-24) (% of all working people)</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often work often at night (after 24) (% of all working people)</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often work from home (% of all working people)</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- care, work–family balance/work home interference, based on family information, caring responsibilities of workers and, possibly, availability of care infrastructure;

These data are not gathered in the LFS so these indicators are not reported regularly. However, it is possible to see some results in the survey of time use, which was conducted by the ESO in 1999–2000. Information on the availability of a care infrastructure and use of it is not regularly monitored in any survey. A representative survey investigating childcare in families and also problems of integrating work and family life in this context was ordered by the Estonian Minister of Population Affairs in 2004.

- or more generally unpaid work, and different attitudes/roles for men and women towards work and/or preferences;

As noted above, the LFS does not give such data, and they are not regularly published. The data in Table 2 are from the ESO time use survey.

### Table 2: Average use of time by working people, according to sex, 1999-2000 (in minutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usual time spent on work per day</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household chores</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free time</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ESO Unpaid work in Estonia 2003, p. 7

- other (complex) indicators that may be present.

No complex indicators on gender are presented in Estonia.

Comment on gaps you identify in the survey(s) concerning its gender sensitivity.

In general, the necessary data for analysing gender dimensions of working life can be gathered from different data sources. There is no special analysis or presentation of indicators, however, on
gender issues. As the Ministry of Social Affairs plans to make the WLB the regular survey of working conditions and environment in Estonia, the survey design should consider gender aspects from the outset as a specific area for which data must be provided.

**Q6. Can you, in a more qualitative way, reflect on the quality of employment of men and women, and the political, societal or other discussion on the degree of, or need for gender mainstreaming in general in your country.**

*Is it an issue at all, or maybe even a topical issue?*

Gender issues and gender mainstreaming is a topical issue in Estonia as it is a relatively new issue and it finds much resistance in society as a ‘feminist’ matter, although its importance is gradually being realised. Interest partly arises due to the need to provide an adequate labour force as the population is ageing and women could reinforce the labour supply, for instance by taking shorter parental leave. Furthermore, the issue has also gained importance from the promotion of gender mainstreaming, which has been led by the Department of Equal Opportunities at the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Gender issues received particularly widespread attention while the law on equal opportunities was being enacted. It is probable that the main driving force for accepting the law was the move to join the EU and accept its relevance in the EU policy agenda. Originally, this law was to be passed in 2002, but it had not succeeded because of differing opinions.

*Do the potential users of the gender statistics show any interest in learning about gender issues relating to quality of working life and employment, and are needs formulated on this topic? If so, what are these needs?*

There are no publicly declared needs on assessing gender issues in relation to quality of working life and employment. At the same time, as gender studies is a relatively new and developing field, research is being carried out on different gender issues, such as participation in decision making, gender in educational text books etc. Therefore, in a matter of time, the focus of gender mainstreaming will turn to this aspect.

*If relevant, do you think the topic of gender mainstreaming is approached somewhat differently in your country, using different concepts?*

Gender mainstreaming is a new concept in Estonia and is probably unfamiliar to most people. Thus, there cannot be a generally different attitude to the issue. As the issue is promoted by the Ministry of Social Affairs, its principles follow the EU and, therefore, if the concept becomes widely accepted, it will probably be in line with EU principles.

**Q7. Can any lessons be learned from the gender mainstreaming in surveys within your country for European level?**

As the issue is new and not consciously developed in Estonia, there are no good lessons to highlight.