

Advantages of the new LFS questionnaire

There are several dimensions along which the LFS questionnaire has been substantially improved:

- The old questionnaire (the same as used in Serbia) was not consistent even with the *Eurostat* regulations of 2005 (which are currently used by the member states). The new questionnaire is 100% consistent with *Eurostat* recommendations to be applied by the member states for their Labour Force Surveys from 2008Q1 onwards. When necessary, adjustments are made to take into account Montenegro realities (for instance, the fact that there is no compulsory military or community service anymore).
- Analysis of the design of the old questionnaire, statistical and econometric analysis of the data of LFS 2005-2006, as well as comparison of the results with evidence from other sources, has revealed that employment rate has been underestimated and unemployment rate overestimated – partly because of the problems related to the design of the questions and quality of the interviewers' Manual (the same as used in Serbia), partly because of insufficient quality of interviewers' work and extensive use of the reserved (second) list of addresses, especially in the Podgorica region, and partly due to seasonal effect (LFS has been conducted once a year, in October). The new questionnaire addresses all these problems.
- The design of questions has been improved substantially in order to ensure that respondents have no problems in understanding, interpreting, and answering. This should reduce the non-response rate and improve reliability of data.
- All questions are now simple (refer only to one concept) and specific (for instance, refer to specific dates when asking about "reference week" or "four weeks before the reference weeks").
- When relevant and possible, the questions include necessary explanations in order to make the process simpler for the interviewers, but also to reduce the impact of interviewer's performance on the results.
- The key question about the labour status during the reference week illustrates all these improvements: In the old version, there was just one question with four possible answers (1 - worked at least 1 hour, 2 – did not work, but had a job from which was temporary absent, 3 - served military obligation, 4 – did not work). It was up to the interviewer to explain all possible options to the respondent. In many cases this was not done properly, and some options were not even mentioned in the Manual. This was one of the reasons why employment rate was severely underestimated in the LFS results. In the new version, this question is split into 13 simple (Yes-No) questions targeting different types of employment (including starting up a business), with necessary explanations according to the *Eurostat* explanatory notes integrated into the questions. Of course, military service is not mentioned anymore.

- Identifying the target population is one of the prerequisites for a successful survey. The new questionnaire starts with a series of question which make this process explicit (rather than relying on the interviewer), allowing for further reference and check. These questions will also provide valuable information about number and composition of short-term and long-term migrants.
- The sequence of the questions have been optimised in order to reduce the number of filter questions and to make sure that every question is asked only to those respondents which belong to the respective target group. This will save interview time.
- In some cases (duration of temporary job, number of workers in the local unit etc.) open answers have been replaced by a list of intervals, because the analysis of previous years' data revealed high non-response to these open questions.
- While from year 2008 MONSTAT will conduct a continuous LFS, in year 2007 there still will be only one round in October. In order to correct possible seasonal effects, the 2007 questionnaire includes a retrospective section.
- The cover page of the questionnaire now includes the confidentiality guarantee, and the interviewers are instructed to stress this when starting the interview. This should help to capture unregistered employment.
- The cover page now includes not only duration but also starting time of the interview, allowing for more detailed analysis of the interviewer's work and reasons for non-response.
- The following specific items (among many others) have been harmonised with Eurostat specifications and recommendations:
 - (i) Classification of education levels;
 - (ii) A question about the field of education is included;
 - (iii) The description of (actual) marital status;
 - (iv) The classification of household members' relationship to the reference person;
 - (v) The distinction between employed and not employed;
 - (vi) A question about supervisory status of an employee is included;
 - (vii) The treatment of persons with seasonal or occasional jobs;
 - (viii) Questions on reasons for working part-time (or looking for part-time job) are included;
 - (ix) Questions on paid and unpaid overtime are included;
 - (x) A question on the way of finding the current job is included;
 - (xi) Questions about willing to work more hours are included.