Are statistical standards fit for purpose to measure changing labour markets

Session 1

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Existing key statistical standards

- Three interrelated statistical standards adopted since 2013
- 19th ICLS (2013) – forms of work framework, new definitions of employment and unemployment, additional indicators of underutilization
  - Responded to concerns that existing definitions and indicators did not reflect employment policy needs, track changes in the labour market well enough or provide visibilty of unpaid work (macro level concerns)
- 20th ICLS (2018) – work relationships and ICSE-18
  - Responded to concerns that the evolving (or existing) labour market was not adequately described – themes of control/decision making and remuneration
- 21st ICLS (2023) – informal economy
  - Responding to the need for more harmonised and meaningful data on informality – themes of recognition and social protection

What do these standards promote?

- Detailed information on participation and time spent in paid and unpaid work (not primarily an issue of new forms of employment but can certainly be impacted)

- Detailed indicators on employment from several dimensions
  - Authority
  - Remuneration
  - Informal employment and the informal sector, plus partly informal activities
  - A wide indicator framework and cross cutting variables (homeworkers etc)

Does this track changes in employment?

- How is employment changing?
  - Control within working relationships (central to ICSE-18 but also of high relevance in digital platform work)
  - The role of technology (digital platform work will address partially but is this adequate)
  - Remote or intermediated working relationships (remote work guidelines do exist but low consistency, important in ICSE-18 and digital platform work)
  - How else?

Statistical standards – work in progress (1)

- Longer view – standards are evolving from a strongly economic perspective (labour input to production) to a more dual purpose to fill both social and economic data needs – 19th ICLS resolution was foundational in this shift

- 20th ICLS standards in particular try to address an inherent bias towards 'traditional' employment in standards and measurement

- The standards glass is half full?

- Need to also reflect this in measurement approaches (often also biased to traditional work modalities)

Statistical standards – work in progress (2)

- Standards will only have value when applied and data are disseminated

  - Despite significant progress implementation and dissemination are lagging behind standards development (global perspective)

- Policy linkages also often weak

- How do we effectively follow through the good work done on standard setting?

- Is the measurement and use glass half full?

For the future

- Wide implementation and dissemination based on latest standards and guidance would be transformative

- Further standards needed on key topics (care work, digital platform work etc)

- Need to recognise the interrelations between topics and themes
  - Why do we exclude informality from consideration?
  - Are we driven by trends in interest? Is this a bad thing?
  - Can we have enough vision to identify the dimensions employment will change on in the future and see what we are missing?

Thank you

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