INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE



Department of Statistics

# The challenges of analysing Non-Standard Employment

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## Abstract

Non-standard employment (NSE) has been increasing in Europe during the past few decades. The development has been driven by different forces such as demographic shifts, globalisation and technological changes. In many countries labour laws and social protection systems are built around the idea that work is continuous, full time and that there is a clear and defined relationship between employees and employers. The increase in NSE puts this notion under pressure

NSE as a statistical conceptual framework is not defined within any international statistical standards. In 2015 there was an ILO Meeting of Experts on Non-Standard Employment. The conclusions from the meeting were used as a starting point in the ILO publication *Non-Standard Employment around the World* (2016). The publication outlines a conceptual framework of NSE, where standard employment is defined as "work that is full time, indefinite, as well as part of a subordinate relationship between an employee and an employer." (ILO 2016a; p.xxi).

NSE can be defined as all forms of employment that do not qualify as being standard employment and can be categorised into four different types of NSE depending on the characteristic of the employment relationship.

- Temporary employment
- *Part-time employment*
- Multi-party employment relationship
- Disguised employment/dependent self-employment.

When applying this conceptual framework to European countries it becomes clear that NSE does have a relevance also in Europe. The shares of part-time workers and temporary workers are substantial in some of the European countries and have been increasing in most European countries during the last 10 years.

Labour Force Surveys (LFS) are an important source to generate data on NSE. However there are crucial aspects of NSE that are typically not covered by LFS. Disguised employment/dependent self-employment that that is workers that are on the boundary between being employees and own-account workers are an example of an important group that is typically not covered. This situation is partly due to that NSE has not been integrated in any statistical framework.

The need to have access to better data regarding NSE is one important driver behind the ongoing revision of the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE). The introduction of a new category of *dependent contractors*, and the sub-categorisation of employees in the draft proposal for the revised ICSE, is a way to strengthen the knowledge about these forms of employment and will contribute to better internationally comparable data.

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## Introduction

Non-standard employment (NSE) has been increasing in Europe during the past few decades. The development has been driven by different forces such as demographic shifts, globalisation and technological changes. In many countries labour laws and social protection systems are built around the idea that work is continuous, full time and that there is a clear and defined relationship between employees and employers. The increase in NSE puts this notion under pressure.

There is an ongoing debate of how to best address these challenges and there is a strong need for a more evidence based discussion. Labour Force Surveys (LFS) are an important source for data on NSE, however crucial aspects of NSE is not currently covered by LFS. Some aspects of NSE can also be difficult to conceptually define and measure and do not always fit within the established statistical frameworks. Status in employment (defined in ICSE-93) is an example of a statistical framework that is challenged by NSE.

To work part-time, on-call, with temporary agency work or as a dependent self-employed worker might be a personal choice that brings autonomy over the work and a high degree of flexibility, but it might also be a situation characterised by economic insecurity, lower degree of social protection and bad working conditions. That workers in NSE have a higher risk of being in a vulnerable employment situation makes it important to measure, identify and analyse the characteristics and the development of these groups.

This paper will address this issue by outlining the conceptual framework of NSE and discuss how LFS can be used as a statistical source to measure different aspects of NSE and point at the different data gaps. The paper will also highlight the problems that occurs when ICSE-93 is used in relation to NSE and discuss how NSE is integrated in the ongoing work on revising ICSE-93.

# The statistical framework of NSE

NSE as a statistical conceptual framework is not defined within any international statistical standards. There are no international agreed recommendations or guidelines that statistically define the different dimensions of NSE. In 2015 there was an ILO Meeting of Experts on Non-Standard Employment (ILO2015). The conclusions from the meeting were recognised by the governing body of ILO and used as a starting point in the ILO publication *Non-Standard Employment around the World* (2016a). The publication outlines a conceptual framework of NSE that can be used to analytically address the different dimensions of NSE.

In order to understand NSE it is natural to start with defining what standard employment is. Standard employment can be defined as *"work that is full time, indefinite, as well as part of a subordinate relationship between an employee and an employer."* (ILO 2016a; xxi). Standard employment is rather a normative concept than a standard, understood as the most frequent form of employment. Especially in developing countries non-standard employment might be the most frequent form of employment.

Standard employment as a normative concept does have high relevance for countries, also for countries were this form of employment is not widespread. Countries do typically have social insurance systems and national labour laws that are based upon the idea of standard employment. E.g. a pension system in a country might have been built around the assumption that workers do work full time for the major part of their lives. NSE can constitute a challenge to these structures and might place workers in a more vulnerable situation.

Once standard employment has been defined then NSE can be defined as all forms of employment that do not qualify as being standard employment. NSE can be categorised into four different types of NSE depending on the characteristic of the employment relationship.

- Temporary employment
- Part-time employment
- Multi-party employment relationship
- Disguised employment/dependent self-employment.

The four different types or categories are not mutually exclusive. A person can have an employment relationship that is characterised by being temporary as well as part-time and so on (ILO2016a).

## Temporary employment

Temporary employment is employment where the worker is hired for a specific period of time. This also includes workers with project or task-based contracts, seasonal workers as well as casual workers. Casual workers are workers that are employed for a very short period of time and would include for example day-workers (ILO2016a). Temporary employment, including seasonal work, task based contracts and casual work is typically measured in European LFS.

The share of temporary employment do differ substantially between different European countries. Poland is the country with the highest share of temporary employees (28 pct. in 2015) while Romania has the lowest share (1.4 pct.). There has been an increase in the share of temporary employees in a majority of countries during the years 2005-2015. For some countries the trend has been reversed, most notably Spain experienced a significant decrease in the share of temporary employees during the economic crises.



#### Figure 1.

Source: Eurostat database

### Part-time and on-call employment

The definition of part-time employment may differ between countries and legal thresholds that define part-time work might also exist. Statistically part-time work is typically defined as persons usually working less than 35 or 30 hours per week (ILO 2016a; p8), but it can also be based on a self-perceived question. The dimension of part-time is typically covered in LFS. In the European LFS part-time can be derived either from a self-perceived variable or from usual working hours.

The share of part-time employees have been increasing in most European countries in the period 2005-20015. The share of part-time employees do however vary a lot between countries. From half of all employees in the Netherlands to only 2 pct. in Bulgaria. In general the share of part-time employees are lower in eastern European countries.



#### Figure 2.

Source: Eurostat database

On-call work and so called zero-hours contracts are less frequently measured in LFS. Persons with zero shours contract are employees who are not guaranteed to work a minimum amount of hours. They do have a contract of employment but the employer will typically contact the employee when the employee is required to work. (ILO 2016a). There are countries e.g. Finland and UK that do identify persons with zero-hours contracts. According to Eurofound this form of employment has emerged or increased during the last decade in Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and UK (Eurofond 2015, p46). In UK the share of employees on zero hours contract have increased from being 0.4 pct. of all employed persons in 20014 to 2.8 pct. in the 4 quarter 2016. (ONS 2017)

On-call work is typically not regularly measured in European LFS. The measurement of on-call work was part of the European ad-hoc module 2004. The share of employees with on-call work ranged from 5 pct. in the Netherlands to statistically insignificant in Cyprus. It is unsure how on-call work have developed over time in Europe.





#### Multi-party employment relationship

Workers that do not have a direct subordinate relationship to the unit for which they provide their services can be regarded as being in a multi-party relationship. The worker would typically be in a triangular working relationship when there is a contract of employment between the worker and for example an agency, while the relationship between the worker and the user of the services (user firm) is regulated by a commercial contract between the user firm and the agency (ILO 2016a). The user firm pays a fee to the agency based on the commercial contract and the agency pays a wage or salary to the worker based on the employment contract. A typical example of this would be temporary agency work. Multi-party relationships can also include subcontracting which makes the category relevant for self-employed as well. It is also conceptually possible to expand the concept further and include all situations where there is an intermediary between the user firm and the provider of the services.

The European LFS do cover the characteristic of temporary agency work among employees. Aspects as subcontracting and other forms of triangular or multi-party relationships are typically not covered.

The share of temporary agency workers in most countries is relatively low. Figures from 2008 show that in most countries (that have available data), the share of temporary agency workers were below 2 pct. of the total employment. Slovenia had in 2008 the highest share of temporary agency workers were almost 6 pct. of all persons in employment were temporary agency workers.





Source: Eurostat database

#### Disguised employment/Dependent self-employment

The growing gig-economy or on-demand economy driven by technological developments, have drawn attention to workers that are on the border between being employees and self-employed. There is an increasing demand from policymakers to measure and address this type of worker. This type of worker is however not a new group. Home-based subcontractors, manufacturing some parts for a client or a contractor and that receives the raw materials from the same unit is an example of workers with the characteristics of being between employees and self-employed. Such arrangements have been around for a long while, especially in developing countries.

Conceptually this category consists of two different groups. One that can be characterised as disguised employment, constitutes persons that have employment relationships with characteristics very similar to the characteristics of employees but with the important difference that the 'employers' do not have the same responsibilities as if they had been recognised as being employees. The person would in this case not have a contract of employment but rather some type of commercial contract. The second type, dependent self-employed, consists of self-employed persons that do rely on one single client or on one dominant client and where the income and work organisation is dependent on that client or were the access to market is limited by the client(s) or an intermediary. (ILO 2016a). In practice it would be difficult to separate between the two and it can easily be argued that the same case could be described as disguised employment as well as dependent self-employment.

A hairdresser "renting" a chair in a hairdressing salon could be an example of a type of job that could fall in to this category. In this case it might be the salon owner rather than the hairdresser that sets the price of the services, decides on which products to use and the opening hours. It might also be the owner that distributes the clients. The hairdresser that rents a chair would not receive a wage or

profit but would typically keep a part of the payment from the customer. The hairdresser would in this case share characteristics with employees but would be responsible, for example, for deduction of income tax and contributions to social insurance. The contract between the hairdresser and the owner would rather have the characteristics of a commercial contract than an employment contract.

The Uber driver could be another example that could fall within this category. The Uber driver has the authority to decide his or her working hours. The price and access to clients are however controlled by Uber. The Uber driver will not receive a wage or salary but get paid per client through Uber that in its turn keeps a part of the fee paid by the client.

The difference between disguised employment and dependent self-employment is not easy to establish. It can easily be argued that one and the same group (e.g. Uber driver or hairdresser) could be viewed as disguised employment as well as dependent self-employment. However thes types of employment do have that in common that they have a similar economic risk as traditional entrepreneurs but do not have the same authority over the activities of the economic unit.

This type of employment is rarely measured, and there is currently no clear international statistical definition for this type of employment. There have been some attempts to try to measure this group and the focus have mainly been on dependent self-employment. The European ad hoc module 2017 includes question that aims at identifying dependent self-employment by establishing whether the self-employed have one single client or one dominant client that accounts for at least 75 pct. of the revenue and where the dominant client do have control over the organization of the work activities. (EUROSTAT 2017).

There are a few set of countries that do include questions that aims at identifying this group. Argentina, Australia, Italy, Mexico, UK and the Slovak Republic are examples of countries that do include questions in the LFS that captures different aspects of dependency. (Kirsty Leslie 2015).

Eurofound have also measured dependent self-employment in the European Working Conditions Survey (EWSC).<sup>1</sup> Figures from EWSC 2010 for countries with available data show that the share that meets the Eurofond criteria for being dependent self-employed, ranges from 5 pct. of all dependent workers<sup>2</sup> in Greece, to statistically negligible in the Scandinavian countries.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Eurofond defined dependent self-employment as own-account workers for which at least two of following conditions hold: They have only one employer/client

i. They cannot hire employees even in the case of heavy workload

ii. Cannot autonomously take the most important decisions to run their business.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Dependent workers are defined as employees and dependent self-employed





Source: OECD based on Eurofound (2010), "5th European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)" \*Dependent workers are the sum of employees and dependent self-employed

The dependent self-employed in the EWCS and in the European ad-hoc 2017 module are solely based on the group of people that have identified themselves as being self-employed. Persons that have identified themselves as being employees will per definition not be included, which might lead to an underestimation. It has not yet been tested what the impact would be of also identifying this group among those that perceives themselves as being employees.

# NSE and ICSE-93

NSE is not directly addressed in the current International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93). ICSE-93 defines five different status in employment categories and one category *other*. The different status in employment categories are:

- Employees
- Employers
- Own-account workers
- Contributing family workers
- Members of producers cooperatives
- Other

In addition to status in employment so called 'particular groups' are also identified within ICSE-93. Four of these groups are defined as *precarious workers* that is *casual workers*, *short-term workers*, *seasonal workers* and workers *whose contract of employment will allow the employing enterprise or person to terminate the contract at short notice and/or at will*. The first three categories do to some extent overlap with the dimension of *temporary employment* in NSE. The dimensions of *part-time employment* and *multi-party employment relationship* are not addressed in ICSE-93.

ICSE-93 does refer to the situation of *contractors* which is a category that is described in similar terms as the NSE concept of *disguised employment/dependent self-employment*. The recommendation in ICSE-93 is that this group, that is workers that are on the borderline between

being paid employees and self-employed "may be classified as in a 'self-employment' job (cf. paragraph 7) or as in a 'paid employment' job (cf. paragraph 6) according to national circumstances." (ICSE-93, IV, (i)). It is thereby up to countries to define this group, or in practice up to the respondent to define his/her status. This recommendation do not allow an identification and measurement of the category and until recently few countries have attempted to measure this group.

ICSE-93 does not, from the perspective of NSE, provide sufficient information in order to be able to compile the different dimensions of NSE. This becomes even more problematic due to the increased focus on NSE and especially on the disguised employment/dependent self-employment. The weak connection between ICSE-93 and NSE has been one of the two most important drivers behind the revision of ICSE-93. The other important driver, which is outside the scope of this paper, is the adoption of the 19th ICLS Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization and the recognition of the five different forms of work.

## NSE and ICSE-18

ILO was encouraged at the 19th ICLS in 2013, to revise ICSE-93 and to present a new proposal at the 20th ICLS in 2018. ILO has established a working group that so far has had three face-to-face meetings. The working group have developed a draft proposal for a new framework called the International Classification of Status of Worker (ICSW-18). The proposal integrates the different forms of work as defined in the 19'th ICLS as well as addressing the need for a stronger connection between NSE and status in employment.

The idea behind ICSW-18 is to have a framework that enables the identification of categories/statuses within all the different forms of work based on the two dimensions *type of authority* and *type of economic risk*. The aim is not that the different statuses for all forms of work, should be collected within one single statistical source. ICSW-18 is rather a conceptual framework with mutually exclusive categories that can be used when measuring the different forms of work. In a survey measuring, for example, volunteer work the categories relating to volunteer work should be used. In a LFS the focus would typically be on measuring employment and the categories of relevance would be the categories related to employment. Employment as a form of work constitutes the core in ICSW-18 and this is explicitly reflected in the proposed International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-18), which comprises a subset of the categories in the ICSW.

ICSE-18 is a classification that built around the categories that are relevant to employment. The same categories can be hierarchically arranged by type of authority (ICSE-18A) as well as by type of economic risk (ICSE-18R) depending on the purpose. The hierarchies have three different levels of categories.

#### ICSE-18A

#### I Independent workers

#### 1 Employers

- 11 Owner-managers of corporations with employees
- 12 Employers in household market enterprises

#### 2 Own-account workers

- 21 Operators of corporations without employees
- 22 Own-account workers in household market enterprises

#### D Dependent workers

- **3 Dependent contractors**
- 30 Dependent contractors
- 4 Employees
- 41 Permanent employees
- 42 Fixed-term and seasonal employees
- 43 Casual and short-term employees
- 5 Contributing family workers
- 51 Contributing family workers

The first level, in the hierarchy based on authority, separates between *independent* and *dependent workers*. *Independent workers* are employed workers that do control the activities of the economic units in which they work, either entirely or in partnership with others, while *dependent workers* do not have complete authority or control over the economic unit for which they work.

Independent workers can then be further divided into *employers* and *own account workers* depending on the characteristics. There is also a third level of sub-categorisation depending on whether the business is incorporated or not. *Dependent workers* includes the second level

categories of *employees, contributing family workers* and a new proposed category of *dependent contractors.* ILO (2016b)

The introduction of *dependent contractors* and the three different sub-classification categories of *employees* contributes to the identification of NSE among employed persons.

Dependent contractors is a category that aims to statistically define and measure the workers that are on the borderline between being *employees* and *contributing family workers*, which to a large extent corresponds to the group of workers that in the NSE framework are labelled as dependent self-employed and disguised employment.

The proposed definition of *dependent contractors* is "workers employed for profit who are dependent on another economic unit that directly benefits from the work performed by the contractor, for access to the market, raw materials or capital items. They do not:

- I. Have a contract of employment (neither formal, informal, nor implicit) with that entity
- II. Employ one or more other persons to work for them during the reference as an employee
- III. Operate an incorporated enterprise

Their actual working arrangements or conditions may closely resemble those of employees". (ILO 2016b, p)

The proposed definition acknowledge that there might be similarities between the working arrangements and conditions between *employees* and *dependent contractors* but *dependent contractors* but *dependent contractors* do not have a contract of employment but rather a commercial contract or agreement.

Dependent contractors are also per definition not *employers* and not *own account workers* with an incorporated enterprise. What separates *own-account workers* in an unincorporated business and *dependent contractors* is the dependency on another economic unit for e.g. access to market, raw materials or capital items.

In order to identify *dependent contractors* in a LFS it would be necessary to create two sets of boundaries one between *own-account workers* and *dependent contractors* and one between *employees* and *dependent contractors*. The proposal for measuring *dependent contractors* therefore follows a two track approach: one track for those respondents that have identified themselves as being employees and another track for those that have identified themselves as being self-employed (ILO 2017). (See flow chart in Appendix 1 for a more detailed overview).

For those respondents that are self-identified as employees it would become necessary to establish:

- I. Type of remuneration
- II. Responsibility for contribution to social insurance or deduction of income tax<sup>3</sup>.

If the respondent does not receive a wage or salary and the relationship is not characterised by an employment contract/agreement then the respondent would be defined as a *dependent contractor*. The proposal is to operationalise the type of relationship (employment or commercial) by establishing which party has the responsibility that typically would be placed on the employer, e.g. contribution of social insurances or deduction of income tax. If it is a responsibility of the respondent, that has identified him- herself as being an employee, then it would be an indication of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> There is also a second option for countries characterised by low social security coverage or low share of income tax contributions. In these cases the country instead can use a combination of actual contribution to social security in compensation with place of work.

that the person does not have an agreement/contract of employment, which would define the respondent as being a *dependent contractor*. This would create a boundary between dependent contractors and employees paid by other means than a wage or salary. (ILO 2017).

The other track targets those respondents that have self-identified as being own-account workers (or similar). For this group it would be necessary to establish:

- I. Whether the establishment is incorporated
- II. Whether the person has limited access to the market

If the respondent has an unincorporated establishment with no employees and limited access to market then the respondent would be classified as a *dependent contractor*. (ILO 2017)

Limited access to the market however needs to be further operationalised and there are still different proposals for how this best could be achieved. The most promising operationalization, at least from a conceptual point of view, is whether the respondent has *control over setting the price for goods or services produced*. If the respondent has some flexibility to decide the price for the services or goods that he/she produces then the respondent does have (at least to some extent) the degree of authority that characterises an independent worker. However if the prices are set by a third party or by the client(s) then there is dependency on that other party. Other possibilities for operationalization are; *sharing of profit with a third party, if a client or intermediary provides the material input* and *exercise of operational authority over the work by one single separate entity*. The different possibilities of operationalization need to be further tested to establish the approach or approaches that may be most feasible from a conceptual as well as from a practical point of view. (ILO 2017).

The inclusion of dependent contractors in ICSE-18 is a response to the increasing need to address and measure NSE. The sub-categorisation of *employees* is another response to the same need.

The second level category of *employees* has three different sub-categories. The first one, *permanent employees*, is for employees that do have a guaranteed minimum amount of hours and have an open ended employment arrangement or contract. This category comes close to the concept of standard employment.

The second sub-category *fixed term and seasonal employees* consists of employees with a minimum guaranteed amount of hours but with a fixed term employment arrangement contract with a duration of 4 weeks or more.

The third sub-category *casual and short term employees* are employees that either have fixed term arrangements with a duration of less than 4 weeks or are not guaranteed a minimum amount of hours. (ILO 2016b)

The two categories *fixed-term and seasonal employees* and *casual and short-term employees* overlap with the NSE dimensions of temporary employment and zero-hours contracts. The subcategorisation of employees does thereby have a strong connection to NSE.

The inclusion of *dependent contractors* and the sub-categorisation of *employees* in the ICSE-18 makes NSE well integrate within the proposed framework. The dimensions that are not directly integrated in the classifications are part-time work and multi-party relationships. These two dimensions are cross-cutting dimensions in the sense that they concern more than one status in employment. The proposal is therefore to include these dimensions as cross-cutting variables. The

dimension of part-time will probably be covered by the inclusion of usual working hours as a crosscutting variable, while multi-party relationship will be a cross-cutting variable in itself.

ICSE-93 and its five different status in employment categories do not sufficiently allow countries to monitor the changes in employment arrangements that are currently taking place in many countries. Neither does it provide sufficient information to monitor the development of NSE. There is a strong need to improve this situation and to enable the production of relevant indicators that can shed light on this development. The proposed changes in ICSE-18 will create a statistical framework including definitions, and guidelines on the measurement of these forms of employment. This would significantly improve the possibilities for analysing and understanding Non-Standard Employment.

## Conclusions

NSE is an important conceptual framework in order to identify workers that have a high risk of being in a more vulnerable position at the labourer market. There are no international statistical standards of NSE but there is an outline of a conceptual framework that has been agreed upon at the Meeting of Experts on Non-Standard Forms of Employment. That framework has been used in the ILO publication Non-Standard Employment around the world.

When applying this analytical conceptual framework to European countries it becomes clear that NSE does have relevance in Europe. The shares of part-time workers and temporary workers are substantial in some of the European countries and have been increasing in most European countries during the last 10 years.

There is an increasing public debate regarding NSE especially concerning the group of workers that are on the boundary between being employees and own-account workers. This group challenges the way in which the labour market has traditionally been organised with clear divisions between employers and employees. This category has always been around but the importance and size of this group is expected to increase due to a change in work organisation driven by globalisation and the emerging gig-economy.

There have been attempts to measure and quantify this group. The results indicates that the group is still relative marginal in Europe. However the measurement of this group has mainly focused on those who identify themselves as self-employed and has not aimed at also identifying dependent contractors among the group of workers that have identifies themselves as being employees. The figures might therefore be underestimated.

The current standards on status in employment do to some extent acknowledge NSE by identifying a group of precarious workers. There is some overlap between NSE and the concept of precarious workers but it does not provide sufficient information about NSE. NSE does have dimensions that go beyond the concept of precarious workers. Maybe most importantly ICSE-93 does not enable an identification of the group of workers that are on the border between being employees and own-account workers. The current recommendation is that it is up to the country to decide how this group should be defined. In reality this means that it is the respondent that decides whether he or she is an employee or an own-account worker and further treatment of this group is not possible.

LFS are an important source for measuring some of the dimensions of NSE, but they do not currently meet the analytical need from users and policymakers to have access to coherent, comparable and reliable data on NSE. This situation is partly due to the fact that NSE has not been integrated into any statistical framework.

NSE is one important driver behind the ongoing revision of ICSE. NSE have a central place within the current proposal. The introduction of a new category of *dependent contractors* addresses the need to identify this group of workers. Boundaries are defined between this group and own-account workers as well as employees. The introduction of a sub-categorisation of employees will create a stronger connection between status in employment and NSE.

The operationalization and measurement of this group in a LFS is challenging. The two track approach is however a logical starting point that builds upon the current practice of measuring ICSE-93 and aims at minimise the respondent burden. It is crucial that this approach is tested by as many countries as possible in order to further develop and refine the method. The sub-categorisation of employees is also to a large extent built around the concepts of NSE. The proposed categorisation in ICSE-18 is complemented with cross-cutting variables that among other things include those dimensions (e.g. usual working hours, multi-party employment relationships) that are relevant to different status in employment categories.

ICSE-18, as it is currently drafted, is not only an adjustment due to the adoption of the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS. It is a framework that also includes statistical definitions and recommendations for the measurement of NSE. The introduction of dependent contractors, sub-categorisation of employees and essential cross-cutting variables will significantly improve the measurement of NSE among countries and increase the possibilities for international comparisons and analyses.

# Appendix

Flow chart over measurement approach<sup>4</sup>



Dependent contractor



Casual and short-term employees

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