

## Multi-Item Scale for Project:

European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (English Version)

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### Question Text:

English version: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your job?

German version: In welchem Maß stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen im Zusammenhang mit Ihrer Arbeit zu oder nicht zu?

### Answer Categories:

English version:

Strongly agree

Tend to agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Tend to disagree

Strongly disagree

*Not applicable*

*Don't know*

*Refusal*

German version:

Stimme voll und ganz zu

Stimme eher zu

Stimme weder zu noch nicht zu

Stimme eher nicht zu

Stimme überhaupt nicht zu

*Trifft nicht zu*

*Weiß nicht*

*Verweigert*

### Findings for Multi-Item Scale:

#### Online Probing:

In question 21a, Item B and Item G were probed to get a better understanding of how respondents interpret the terms "good prospects" and "career advancements" (Item B); and to examine the reasons why respondents chose their respective answers to Item G.

#### Cognitive Interviews:

Items G and H were tested. German respondents showed a more confident answering behaviour than Polish respondents. They were less likely to indicate that they might lose their job and more likely to believe they could easily find a comparable one if they did.

### **Recommendations for Multi-Item Scale:**

Question: Items G and H were tested. German respondents showed a more confident answering behaviour than Polish respondents. They were less likely to indicate that they might lose their job and more likely to believe they could easily find a comparable one if they did.

Answer categories: No changes recommended.

### **Cognitive Techniques:**

Specific Probing. (OP)

Category Selection Probing, General/Elaborative Probing. (CI)

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### **All Items for Question(Question Text):**

English version: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your job?

German version: In welchem Maß stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen im Zusammenhang mit Ihrer Arbeit zu oder nicht zu?

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-> Tested Items:

### **Item Text:**

English version:

B. My job offers good prospects for career advancement

German version.

B. Meine Arbeit bietet gute Karrierechancen

### **Recommendations:**

No changes recommended.

## Findings:

### Online Probing:

In the UK, almost half of the employees (45%) and a quarter (23%) of the self-employed (strongly/tend to) agree with this statement. In Germany, one third of the employees and of the self-employed respondents state that they agree with this statement, respectively. In contrast, the proportion of self-employed people in Poland who (strongly/tend to) agree with this statement is significantly higher with 57%. The proportion of employees that agree (43%) is comparable with the other two countries.

A look at the frequency distribution of the answer option "not applicable" shows a similar pattern: In Germany and the UK, self-employed are more likely than employed to answer that the statement "My job offers good prospects for career advancement" does not apply to them (UK: 30% self-employed vs. 5% employed; DE: 22% self-employed vs. 13% employed). In Germany, self-employed are also more likely to choose the middle category (30% vs. 19%). In contrast, in Poland, self-employed neither answer that this statement does not apply to them more often than employees, nor are they more likely to choose the middle category.

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As a follow-up question, we examined respondents' understanding of the term "good prospects" across countries and employment status. Divergent themes would indicate interpretation differences between the respondents across groups of employment status or countries. As respondents could mention several themes, multiple coding applied. The results are shown in Table 3.

Good prospects are described in terms of general advancement, promotion or moving up to a higher position with more responsibility by the vast majority of respondents. The second large thematic complex is the financial aspect, so having a high or higher salary. The third thematic complex is learning or doing new things as part of the job:

- "Chance to get a better position." (R236DE)
- "Salary increase." (R358UK)
- "To train in specialist areas. (R218UK)

Self-employed are likely to name advancing their business as having good prospects, which is sometimes associated with delivering good work and building a larger customer base, but at other times with the economy. Also, a large number of self-employed say that the question does not apply to them.

- "To increase production and attract more sales." (R181UK)
- "Given that I am self-employed, this question is invalid." (R42DE)

### **Respondents understanding of the term "good prospects"**

Topics such as job security and appreciation are also mentioned occasionally. Surprisingly, respondents from Poland mention most frequently that they do not have any prospects and less frequently that "career prospects" do not apply to them because of their self-employment. Besides that, there are no large differences in the understanding of "career prospects" between countries. A total of 5% of respondents does not respond to the probe question or provide non-evaluable information:

- "Long-term job, personal development." (R27PL)
- "There aren't any prospects on my farm, because it is too small." (R50PL)

In addition, respondents were asked what the term "career advancement" means to them. 28 respondents did not provide a response to the probe question (8%). All other 337 respondents gave a substantive probe answer. Respondents' answers were assigned to multiple thematic codes. The answers are very similar to the answers in the previous probe asking for "good prospects". Respondents are mostly thinking of promotion or advancement, earning more money, growing companies or expanding their (own) business, more responsibility in their job and more interesting fields of work and to educate themselves professionally and personally. The main difference between the group of employees and the group of self-employed was that employees think more of promotion and advancement on the career ladder, while self-employed people also think of the expansion of the company and its further development:

- "Senior position, higher salary." (R61DE, employee)
- "Taking my business to the next level and earning more money from it." (R253UK, self-employed)

A closer look at the self-employed shows that only respondents in the UK and in Germany state that they do not have career prospects because they own their own business. Self-employed in these two countries also think more often of promotion and professional advancement than respondents in Poland (DE: 35%, UK: 41% and PL: 24%). Polish participants more often mention aspects such as further training (development; DE: 0%, UK: 5% and PL: 18%) and expanding business (DE: 15%, UK: 15%, PL: 25%). However, one has to keep in mind that the proportion of respondents being the sole director of their own business was significantly higher in the UK (43%) and in Germany (35%) than in Poland (11%).

### **Question Topic:**

Job and career/ Evaluations & appraisals

## **Construct:**

Job prospects

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## **Item Text:**

English version:

G. I might lose my job in the next 6 months

German version:

G. Ich könnte meinen Job in den nächsten 6 Monaten verlieren

## **Recommendations:**

Self-employed respondents find a homogenous understanding of the item. If this is in the intention of the question, no changes are necessary. However, it could be considered re-wording the question to fit more precisely to a self-employed situation, i.e. "I might run out of business in the next six months"

## **Findings:**

### **Online Probing:**

This statement also shows a different pattern of understanding between both employees and self-employed and between countries. In the UK, self-employed are much more likely than employees to indicate that this statement does not apply to them (43% self-employed vs. 8% employed). In Germany, employees and self-employed are equally likely to indicate that this statement does not apply to them, and both groups are quite likely to feel this way (43% for both employees and self-employed). In Poland, as in Germany, self-employed and employed demonstrate approximately the same answer behaviour. However, in Poland only one in five respondents indicates that the statement does not apply (16% employed, 23% self-employed). In addition, self-employed in Poland more frequently state that they might lose their job in the next six month (16%) than self-employed in the UK (7%) and Germany (5%).

Next, we examined why respondents chose their respective answers and we did so for employees and self-employed separately. We first look at those who selected "does not apply". Here, it is particularly noticeable that employees in Germany very often select this answer option (27 respondents). The reasons given are that they are civil servants or perceive their own job as safe (33%). Civil servants may not terminate or be dismissed because there is no contractual employment relationship.

Equally often the answer is explained by the fact that there is a shortage of skilled workers and that they are therefore irreplaceable in their current job. The last reason that

is frequently mentioned is that they do not have reason to assume that they might lose their jobs (15%).

■ "There are too few cooks out there." (R103DE)

■ "It is very unlikely, because my work is indispensable." (R108DE)

One respondent explains that she will not lose her job because it is a family business in which she will not be dismissed. In the UK, 5 respondents chose "does not apply" to answer Item G. The reasons given are the same as with German respondents: they cannot lose their jobs or have a secure employment.

These results show that respondents who have a secure job, for instance as civil servants, do not use the answer categories "tend to/strongly disagree" to say that this statement is not true for them, but instead use the answer category "does not apply". This response pattern is not observable among the Polish participants.

Among the self-employed, 26 respondents in the UK and Germany, respectively, and three respondents in Poland select "does not apply" when answering Item G. The most common reason given is that they cannot be dismissed as self-employed (67%). Another 18 percent say that this cannot happen to them as freelancers. Four percent answer that they have enough orders/work and that they have no reason to assume that they might lose their jobs.

■ "Because I am a freelancer." (R46DE)

■ "As I work for myself this does not apply." (R225UK)

Next, we analysed those self-employed who gave a substantive response option instead of selecting "does not apply". It is striking that the response distributions in Germany and the UK are relatively similar, while the Polish respondents more often "agree" with the statement in Item G.

Table 4 contains the codes that summarize the reasons respondents provided to the general probe. Only self-employed are taken into account in the table. The data are reported in absolute frequencies.

Self-employed respondents that "disagree" with the statement explain their response selection most frequently with their status which makes it impossible to lose the job. In the UK and Germany, respondents also state that there is a shortage of specialists in their field and that they generally have enough work or orders for the next months.

■ "As a self-employed person I do not intend to go bankrupt or close the business." (R257UK)

■ "Been there a long time and we have lots of work." (R47DE)

Interestingly, the status of a freelancer is interpreted very differently, which is also reflected in the answers referring to Item G. While respondents in all three countries state that they can lose their job because this can always happen as a freelancer, respondents in Poland and Germany also mention this as a reason for disagreeing with the statement. This argumentation can be traced back to the fact that they consider it unlikely,

but that freelancers always face a certain risk because their work is bound to particular projects.

Generally, the reasons given by Polish respondents who (strongly/tend to) agree with the statement do often not correspond to the answers given. Those respondents who say that they might lose their jobs explain, for instance, that it is a secure job ("I am certain of my position", R68PL), that they are not employed and cannot lose their job ("I will not lose this job because it is my business and a future-oriented industry.", R330PL; "I have my own business", R293PL), that it is unlikely because they are a freelancer or that they do not have a reason to assume that they might lose their job ("I don't think I'll lose my job.", R663PL). It remains unclear why those respondents give conflicting answers. It seems likely that some respondents have interpreted the answer scale the other way around.

### **Cognitive Interviews:**

In Germany, with the exception of two respondents (DE11, DE15), all respondents disagreed that they might lose their job in the next six months. In contrast, in Poland, six respondents agreed (PL01, PL06, PL08, PL10, PL12, PL14).

Employees and self-employed show comparable comprehension of the terms "job" and "security", interpreting them in the adequate sense to match their working situations. For employees, their job obviously refers to their employment. Security is based on how likely they consider being fired. This is dependent on the general economy, their job market, their personal achievements and their employer's typical behavior:

- "I think my employer has more reason to worry that I'll quit than I have reason to worry I'll get fired" (DE04, "strongly disagree")
- "I just signed a permanent contract, so I don't think this is likely" (DE12, "strongly disagree")
- "Fact is, you never know what's going to happen, so you can't exclude it. That's why I didn't take 'absolutely disagree'. But that you can't plan everything shouldn't be the basis for the answer. I'm just being careful, so I took 'tend to disagree'" (DE14, "tend to disagree")
- "The company is well managed, it develops quickly and I am a committed employee" (PL03, "tend to disagree")
- "The unit where I work is growing. [...] I have a fairly well established professional position [...] I do not feel threatened in any way" (PL05, "strongly disagree")
- "I have a new boss, and she has a different idea of how things should be done than I do; so this means, I could lose my job. Especially, as I'm sick at the moment. We'll see" (DE11, "tend to agree")
- "I have a contract for a trial period which is for three months, so I cannot say if I continue working here afterwards" (PL06, "tend to agree")

- "Sports instructor is a seasonal job in Poland so the season will end in 2 weeks and I will not have a chance to do this job afterwards" (PL08, "strongly agree")

One respondent chooses the middle category, because she while she doesn't assume she will lose the job, may for other reasons no longer be able to carry it out:

- "I don't think I can lose my job, I may not have it but not lose it. These are two different things. My health condition may not let me do my job" (PL02, "neither agree nor disagree")

Only one respondent gives an answer which is inconsistent to his actual opinion, stating that he might lose his job although circumstances give him no reason to believe this:

- "Well, yes, I have a permanent contract, but there are always things you can do that lead to immediate job loss. I could attack my superior or the priest, I could steal money or something the-like." [Interviewer: "And how likely is it that you will do this?"] "Well, of course that won't happen. But the question is whether there is the possibility. And yes, there absolutely is, so I totally agree" (DE15, "strongly agree")

Self-employed respondents emphasize that there isn't a job to lose as such. Nevertheless, they easily find an answer and consistently apply the question to mean that their business goes bankrupt, they give up their business, or giving up working in general.

- "Well, I decide for myself whether I stop working in this job, so it's in my own hands, and I think it's unlikely that something will happen. Still, I thought it would be arrogant to say 'absolutely disagree', because something can always happen that causes me to stop" (DE02)
- "As I said, I'm self-employed. It is my choice whether or not I stop working. I can't lose my job in the meaning that someone fires me" (DE08)
- "For that, I would have to lose my clients. And for that again to happen, something would have to happen on the market for my clients to not wish to work with me anymore. That hasn't happened in 25 years, so I'm not worried about it" (DE09)
- "I have my own practice. It's really unlikely that we'll go out of business" (DE10)
- "A carpenter's job involves use of machines and this means high risk of injuries. If I have an accident at work, I may lose it, it means more the possibility of doing it than the job itself. [...] Poor market situations, or an unreliable client who does not pay on time" (PL01, "agree")
- "I have a lot of work at present, many people call, so I don't think it will be gone in half a year" (PL07, "tend to disagree")

A German respondent in multi-activity said that she has two terminated contracts and referred this question to the one that runs shorter (DE16), again demonstrating that



respondents don't consistently apply the main paid job to all questions, but use the job that best fits the question in their view. A Polish respondent in multi-activity (PL03) refers this question to his main paid job only, which has a permanent contract. We therefore recommend reminding respondents which job to refer the questions to.

## **Question Topic:**

Job and career/ Evaluations & appraisals

## **Construct:**

Job prospects

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## **Item Text:**

English version:

H. If I were to lose or quit my current job, it would be easy for me to find a job of similar salary.

German version:

H. Wenn ich meinen jetzigen Job verlieren oder kündigen würde, wäre es für mich einfach, einen Job mit ähnlichem Gehalt zu finden.

## **Recommendations:**

No changes recommended.

## **Findings:**

### **Cognitive Interviews:**

Employees answer this question in clear relation to their qualification for the work they carry out now, and how well they can judge the situation on the job market:

- "I am excellently qualified, and there are many employers I am attractive to" (DE01, "strongly agree")
- "I think I know by now, which areas I would have to look into, and know how to sell my profile. So with some thought and conscious applications, that should work" (DE07, "tend to agree")
- "I am not qualified, so I don't have a certificate, in the job I work at. I taught myself this job, and I earn quite well at it. So I don't believe another employer would accept my salary as it is" (DE05, "tend to disagree")

- "Actually, I am not 100% sure how good my qualification is for the work I do. I am very ambivalent about it" (DE06, "neither agree nor disagree")

Self-employed respondents have higher cognitive burden establishing situations that relate to the question, but they all find coherent answers.

- A self-employed artist relates the idea of starting over with an employment that is different from the self-employed work she does:  
"If I really lost everything and didn't have the chance to start over again in my job – that's hard to imagine, but fine, let's assume it. I don't see how I should start over, I'm 53 years old. I don't see real changes there" (DE02, "tend to disagree")
- A self-employed lawyer considers working employed in a firm again:  
"So, if I said, I'm done with being self-employed, and look for a job as an employed lawyer in a firm, that should work sooner or later" (DE08, "strongly agree")
- A doctor imagines starting a new practice as self-employed or joining a practice as an employed doctor:  
"That's difficult, if you try to open a new practice altogether, you have to establish a new set of clients. Or, if I joined a practice, and had to prove myself. I think that wouldn't be easy" (DE10, "strongly disagree")
- "I have not recently done any labour market research and I am not aware of the salaries for such a job" (PL01, "neither agree nor disagree")
- "If I lost the chance of running my business, I guess I would easily find a job as an architect. Considering my experience from my full time employment, and the income there, if I looked for a job with similar money, I would certainly find it." (PL10, "tend to agree")

## Question Topic:

Job and career/ Evaluations & appraisals

## Construct:

Job prospects

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-> Not Tested Items:

## Item Text:

English version:

A. Considering all my efforts and achievements in my job, I feel I get paid appropriately

German version:

A. In Anbetracht meines Engagements und meiner Leistungen habe ich das Gefühl, dass ich angemessen entlohnt werde

**Question Topic:**

Job and career/ Evaluations & appraisals

**Construct:**

Job prospects

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**Item Text:**

English version:

C. I receive the recognition I deserve for my work

German version:

C. Ich erhalte die Anerkennung, die ich für meine Arbeit verdiene

**Question Topic:**

Job and career/ Evaluations & appraisals

**Construct:**

Job prospects

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**Item Text:**

English version:

D. I generally get on well with my work colleagues

German version:

Ich verstehe mich im Allgemeinen gut mit meinen Arbeitskollegen

**Question Topic:**

Job and career/ Evaluations & appraisals

**Construct:**

Job prospects

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**Item Text:**

English version:

E. The organisation I work for motivates me to give my best job performance

German version:

E. Die Organisation, für die ich arbeite, motiviert mich, meine beste Arbeitsleistung zu erbringen

**Question Topic:**

Job and career/ Evaluations & appraisals

**Construct:**

Job prospects