

## Question in Project:

European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (English Version)

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## Question Topic:

Job and career/ Job situation & professional activity

## Construct:

Type of employment

## General Information:

**\*Note: The item was tested both in English and German.\***

Online Probing & Cognitive Interviews

## Question Text:

English version: Are you working as an employee or are you self-employed?

German version: Sind Sie angestellt oder sind Sie selbstständig?

## Answer Categories:

English version:

Employee

Self-employed

*Don't know*

*Refusal*

German version:

Angestellt

Selbstständig

*Weiß nicht*

*Verweigert*

## Cognitive Techniques:

Confidence Rating. (OP)

General/Elaborative Probing, Specific Probing, Difficulty Probing. (CI)

## Findings for Question:

### Online Probing:

According to the quotas set about half of the respondents in each country say they work as an employee and with the exception of two Polish participants (R112PL, R430PL), no one selects the "Don't know" (DK) answer option. The intention of the Confidence Rating was to check the difficulty and the accuracy of this job question.

Of the two participants who answered "Don't know", R112PL rated the question as "rather easy" to answer and hence did not receive a follow-up probe asking her to explain this answer further. R430PL found it "rather difficult" to answer the question because he "frankly did not understand both terms". In response to question 8a (see page 13), both respondents say they receive a salary or wage by an employer, and thus should ideally select "employee" here. Unfortunately, the reasons for not doing so remain unclear on the basis of the current data.

Across all three countries, most participants (96%) rate question 7 as "rather easy" or "very easy" to answer, while only 4% of the respondents find it "rather difficult" or "very difficult". There are no noteworthy differences in these ratings between employees and the self-employed.

Among those who rate question 7 as difficult, five participants provide a meaningful explanation for their rating:

- "Because I work both part-time as an employee and I am also self-employed." (R71DE; answer to Q7: self-employed)
- "I am both employed as a nanny and also a waged worker and self-employed." (R593PL; answer to Q7: self-employed)
- "The question offers only two options and I would suggest to additionally including 'workers' or 'marginally employed.'" (R51DE; answer to Q7: employed)
- "The question wording is strange if you are a waged worker/short-time worker." (R152PL; answer to Q7: employed)
- "I am a co-founder of a pre-start organisation which does not know the formation we will choose." (R202UK; answer to Q7: employed)

The answers of R71DE and R593PL suggest that it might be worth considering to allow respondents to select more than one answer category (or to include a third category such as "both employee and self-employed") to correctly capture this type of employment.

The answers of R51DE and R152PL suggest that for respondents who are waged workers (instead of salary earners/employees), it is sometimes unclear whether they fall under

the answer category "employee" or not. Hence, it might be worth considering to explicitly mention this employment type in the answer options.

### **Cognitive Interviews:**

The question asks the respondent to declare whether they are employed or self-employed. Respondents should refer this single-choice question to their main paid job only. However, as the question text does not specifically state this, probing seeks to discover whether respondents in multi-activity are still referring to their main paid job, and whether respondents who are both employed and self-employed correctly answer this question. In addition, probing should show whether respondents in atypical working situations can identify as employed or self-employed, or whether another category is necessary.

In Germany, all respondents report that this question was simple for them to answer. However, several respondents in multi-activity specifically ask whether the question refers to all of their jobs (DE02, DE14, DE16), but eventually choose the employment status of their main paid job. DE13 shortly ponders the wording: "Hard to say, more like self-employed". She then correctly chooses self-employed, and explains that her hesitation was due to the fact that there are different ways of being self-employed, such as free-lancing or having one's own company, and she had to consider for a moment whether her self-employment is also meant.

Among the Polish respondents, 11 respondents found the question easy to answer, even though three of them had difficulties in understanding the notion of "employee/hired worker" (PL07, PL10, PL16). One respondent (PL11) found the question moderately difficult, while three respondents (PL04, PL05, PL12) stated that the question was difficult to answer. All of them faced difficulties with the phrase "employee/hired worker". Three respondents demonstrate negative reactions to the phrase "employee/hired worker" and do not want to identify with it (PL04, PL05, PL11). PL04 indicates that this phrase scared her and refuses to answer this question. She further explains that the term deprived a working person of human dignity. PL11 initially associated the term of "employee/hired worker" with temporary employment and later on with a "slave". She admitted that she would prefer not to answer this question. PL10 also understood "hired person" as a person on a short term contract.

Additionally, three respondents stated problems with understanding the term "hired worker" (PL07, PL11, PL16). PL16 believes that a hired worker is someone from a labor agency. He chooses "self-employment", although he has a full-time employment contract, and argues that he found a job himself without any help of an agency. PL07 also indicates that he missed a definition of the term. Overall, five respondents wish a replacement of the term "employee/hired worker" and suggest "employed person".

Both PL05 and PL14 chose "employed" by excluding the other option. PL05 further explains that this answer was chosen by rejecting other options and was not an affirmative choice.

Two respondent who works based on order contracts chooses the option "employed" (PL02, PL12), another working on order contract identified as "self-employed" (PL13), showing that respondents have immense difficulties assigning common forms of employment using the current answer options.

**Polish Labor Market:**

Work contracts in Poland can run under two different legal frameworks. The first is the Labor Code. It regulates employment and employee rights including social benefits. The second is the Civil Code. It provides much less regulations between the employer and employee. People working under the Civil Code cannot be categorized as employed or self-employed in a strict sense.

The Polish term **"Umowa o pracę"** (job contract) refers only to contracts that run under the Labor Code. They can be permanent or terminated. They can be full-time or part-time, though full-time is much more common. This is why many Polish respondents are likely to say "full-time employment" when they mean a permanent contract under "umowa o pracę". Only people with a "umowa o pracę" are entitled to all classical employee rights and securities, such as paid vacation, maternity leave, sickness leave, retirement contributions.

All other contracts are settled according to the **Civil Code**. Formally they concern commissioning the specific work to be done. There are two kinds of such contracts: "umowa zlecenie" (order contract) and "umowa o dzieło" (contract for a specific work).

**"Umowa zlecenie"** (order contract) are currently the most popular legal form of employment in Poland, as they are very attractive for employers. They may resemble an employed working situation in that a worker under an order contract may be working in a company 40 hours a week over a long period of time. However, they do not have this status in terms of the Labor Code. Employers working with order contracts are not obliged to pay social contributions under most conditions, or if they do, then they reduce the agreed wage by the amount of social contributions. There is no automatic right to paid vacation.

**"Umowa o dzieło"** (contract for a specific work) are characterized by being project-related. The contract does not include any form of employee rights, and wage is only diminished by the income tax, with all other contributions being optional and to be paid on behalf of the employee. They are highly popular among white-collar professionals, artists, and scientists who produce intellectual goods in form of reports, analysis, translations, or artistic work.

Polish law does not regulate an hourly limit of work per week. A Polish worker may sign as many contracts and different types of contracts as he/she feels capable of delivering.

**Recommendations:**

Question: In the current question form, instructions should be included that respondents should only refer to their main paid job. These instructions should only be read out if the respondent is in multi-activity, which needs to be assessed beforehand.

However, we recommend a revision of the questionnaire structure at this point, so that respondents in multi-activity can state this first, and then state for each job whether it is employed and self-employed.

Answer categories: The answer categories pose issues for respondents in atypical working situations.

The term self-employed leads to uncertainty as to what to include. In Germany, self-employed respondents are uncertain whether both entrepreneurs (founders and bosses of their own companies, often with employees of their own) are meant, and also freelancers who work independently and on commission. In Poland, the in-between status of respondents working under the Civil Code causes additional problems of classification.

We recommend either taking up additional categories, such as freelance as order contracts, or including these working situations in the existing answer categories.

In Polish, the phrase "pracownik najemny" for being employed leads to negative associations with some respondents, and causes confusion for others. It does not clearly encompass all forms of being an employee. An alternative wording could be: "osoba zatrudniona" [employed person].