

Summary of Changes in the Economically Active Population Survey (EPAS) in 2021

The entry into force of REGULATION (EU) 2019/1700 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 10 October 2019, which establishes a common framework for household surveys, and the IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) 2019/2240 of December 16, 2019 as well as other Delegated and Implementing Regulations establishing the variables to be analysed, the definitions to be used and the periodicities for each of the variables of the European Labour Force Survey (LFS) have an impact of the information to be provided from the first quarter of 2021 onwards.

Since that the Economically Active Population Survey (EPAS) is the operation that collects the information necessary for the variables required in the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the necessary adaptations have been made to respond to the new 2021 information requirements.

It must be said that many of the requirements that the new European regulation imposes on a mandatory basis as of 2021 have already been fulfilled in the Economically Active Population Survey (EPAS) for some time. Notable examples include the homogeneous distribution of the quarterly sample both by reference months and weeks and by territories, the use of electronic questionnaires, the general technique used in the question flow to determine the relationship with the activity, and the deadlines for providing the information (ten weeks after the end of the reference period, while in the EPAS, results are obtained after 4 weeks).

A summary of the changes that have been made to the survey in 2021 is shown below.

Definition of Households

Starting in 2021, the LFS will use the common definition for all European surveys targeting the population. Household is determined not only by common residence but also by the sharing of general expenses and budget.

As of 2021, it will thus be possible to find more than one household in the same home, using the EPAS. However, survey design continues to be based on the selection of homes -surveying all people from the same place of residence- though information is structured according to the households detected, and the family relationships per household are calculated.

Expanded information for the population of 15 year olds.

While the EPAS provides general information for the entire population residing in main family households, the survey's primary content refers to the working age population, whose minimum age is established at 16 in our country's labour legislation. In contrast, in the European statistical field, the minimum age threshold is set at 15 years.

In the EPAS we will continue to collect questions about the relationship with employment activity for people aged 16 and over, considering the population of those 15 years old as outside the labour market (inactive) and studying (they are of compulsory school age). However, as of 2021, in order to provide the information required in the LFS, this group will be asked about the sections on education and other relevant sections of an annual, biennial or multi-annual frequency (for example, health status or reasons for migrating, if applicable).

Obtaining certain information directly by survey

All questions aimed at determining the activity situation of the interviewees (employment, unemployment, inactivity) must be obtained by direct interview. The possibility of using administrative information for this purpose is thus eliminated.

Processing of total lack of response is also affected by this requirement. In the case of the EPAS, this obliges us to dispense with the processing we had previously used: therefore, if we did not obtain the information from a household, but we had information collected directly by an interview from the previous quarter, this information was used to impute the response for the current quarter.

This change does cause any variation in the main variable series. In fact, in the final weeks of the first quarter -due to the situation created by the pandemic-, this process was not applied.

New precision criteria

New precision criteria are established for the estimates of the unemployment and employment rates of the population aged 15 to 74 years and for the unemployment rate of the same population by NUTS 2 (autonomous communities in the case of Spain).

As a result, we have decided to gradually restructure the design of the EPAS to cover a greater number of census sections, reducing the number of households surveyed per section.

The change of sections will be extended gradually over three years, starting in the first quarter of 2021.

In 2020, the number of sections in the EPA sample was 3,822 with an average of 22 theoretical dwellings to be surveyed per section. Once the change in sectioning is fully concluded (in the first quarter of 2024) we will have 5,298 sections with 13 dwellings to be surveyed by section.

Calculation of elevation factors

As of 2021, all household members must have the same elevation factor. Until 2020, people aged 16 and over in the household had the same factor in the EPAS, but not those under 16.

On the other hand, when the population of 15-year-olds is added to the EFT variables, the age groups must be adapted to accommodate this population in its natural five-year group.

The results of applying the old and new calculation of the elevation factors are not significantly different.

Harmonisation of sample design elements with the rest of the INE household surveys

The stratification and directory of dwellings to be used is harmonised with the rest of the INE household surveys.

More specifically, seven strata are defined per province, instead of the current nine, and the Georeferenced Address Framework is used as a directory for sample extraction. Due to Covid-19, this directory has been in use since the second quarter of 2020.

Conducting of telephone interviews on first visit and introduction of the CAWI channel

Once the pandemic is under control, the first interviews will be carried out by telephone, personally visiting the homes without a telephone or for which telephone contact has not been possible. In addition, the CAWI channel will be used on a residual basis, for households that requesting this type of completion. Since March 2020, due to Covid-19, all interviews are by telephone, using CAWI in the cases described.

Possibility of reducing the response burden on certain population groups

As of 2021 (Implementing Regulation 2019/2240, Annex II, paragraph 18), it will be possible to simplify the collection of information in successive interviews for people aged 70 or over who are inactive, for those over 89 years of age, and for people with long-term health problems.

In order to reduce the response burden in the 2021 questionnaire, this capacity has been used as much as possible.

New processing of certain employment absences

In 2021, people absent from their job due to parental leave to care for children will be considered employed as long as they receive income due to their employment relationship. Otherwise, the criterion for the total duration of the absence will be applied. If this is longer than three months they are considered to be unemployed, and if the duration is up to three months they are employed.

Seasonal workers outside of the activity period will be considered employed if they continue to perform tasks associated with their activity to maintain business in the off-season. Merely administrative tasks are not considered among these activities.

Employment absences due to job-related training¹ are considered employment.

For other reasons of complete absence from employment during the survey reference week, the duration criterion is generally applied: they are considered employed if the total duration of the absence is at most three months or unemployed if it is more three months.

Family Assistance

The 2013 ILO resolution on *Labour Statistics, Employment and Underutilization of the Labour Force*, eliminates the requirement that the person who works as family helper live with the business owner (paragraph 30-fi- ii of said resolution).

Characterization of the active job search

In the 2005-2020 period, active job search is derived from the combination of search methods used by the informant. To this end, the LFS required a list of 13 possible search methods, both active and non-active, hence the 'active job search'. In principle, this approach would make it possible to compare the forms of job search most used in the different countries, but in practice, the way of asking about them in the different national LFS prevented a harmonized comparison of these methods.

On the other hand, the aforementioned 2013 ILO resolution establishes the express relationship of active job search methods (paragraph 47.bi-vii).

Starting in 2021, the LFS thus focuses on harmonizing active search through the active methods expressly mentioned in the ILO resolution, by means of a closed question; and setting aside any attempt to obtain harmonized information on search methods.

In the case of the EPAS, the job search questions created in 2005-2020 had to be adapted to the new requirements.

In order to maintain some continuity with the series of existing search methods, in the EPAS we have chosen to ask up to three search methods, answered affirmatively, following a random placement of the appearance of the search methods during the interview.

According to the pilot study carried out during thirteen consecutive weeks between the second and third quarters of 2020, the characterization of active search is not affected and, as such, neither is the characterization of unemployment. There will be breaks in the series in the specific job search methods used.

Changes in the content of the survey

A-New variables.

1. Information on the immigration background and parents' nationality

¹ This training must meet at least one of the following conditions: a) it must be required by the employer, b) it must be carried out within normal working hours, c) It is related to the work performed and/or paid by the employer or the employee continues to receive compensation from the employer.

- Previous Country of residence
- Father's country of birth
- Mother's place of birth
- Main reason for migration (biennial periodicity odd-numbered years)
- 2. Explicit measurement of time of partial absence from employment in the reference week, in order to improve the harmonization of the measurement of effective working time in the reference week.
 - Days absent due to vacations, leave or holidays
 - Days of absence due to illness
 - Days of absence for other reasons.
- 3. Details of the professional experience required to achieve the level of studies
 - Professional experience required in the workplace by educational level
- 4. Education and training variables in the last year (biennial periodicity, even years).
 - Pursued regulated studies in the last year
 - Level of regulated studies completed in the last year
 - Unregulated training in the last year
- 5. Variable to determine the link with the employment of seasonal workers.
 - Has performed off-season activities related to seasonal employment.
- 6. Variables on working conditions and characterization of dependent contractors.
 - Number and importance of clients in the main job
 - Decision regarding the beginning and end of the working day
- 7. Efficiency of the efforts to find a job.
 - Most effective method to find current job
- 8. Additional information on working time in the second job.
 - Usual hours in the second job (or the most important of the additional jobs in the case of having more than one)
- 9. Variables of the European health module (biennial periodicity, even years)
 - General state of health
 - Limitation of activities due to health problems

B-Adaptation of existing variables and/or change of periodicity

1. ANORE quarterly variable years of residence in Spain. The target population of the variable is extended to the entire population (not only to those of foreign nationality).
2. OBFORM objective variable for unregulated training in the last four weeks. This used to be an annual variable but it is now quarterly, as it is necessary to identify the new LFS categories of 'non-formal employment or non-employment related training'.
3. Adaptation of the FORBUxx quarterly variables that collect job search methods according to the 2021 categories.

In the last four weeks, in order to find a job,

1. Have you placed or answered any job advertisements?
 2. Have you studied job advertisements?
 3. Have you posted or updated your CV on the Internet?
 4. Have you contacted companies or employers directly?
 5. Have you asked family or friends?
 6. Have you contacted a public employment office?
 7. Have you contacted a private employment office?
 8. Have you taken a test, interview or participated in a selection process?
 9. Have you made arrangements to start your own business?
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4. Adaptation of the RZNOTB quarterly variable. In the case of absence from employment in the reference week due to job-related training, the time devoted to this training is considered working time and therefore this category disappears from the reasons for not working during the reference week.
 5. Greater detail of the OCUP quarterly variable that, from 2021 onwards, will collect the occupancy code according to CNO2011, to the level of the fourth digit. This will allow for the level of detail to be increased when calculating occupational groupings (cultural employment, employment in tourism occupations, ICT occupations, etc.)
 6. NUMTRA annual variable of number of workers in the workplace. The modality that in 2005-2020 was 11-19 workers as of 2021 becomes 10-19 workers.
 7. DUCON3 variable 'type of temporary contract. The 'Apprenticeship, training or internship' modality is broken down into 'Training or apprenticeship' and 'Internship (scholarship students, internships, research assistants, etc.)'.
 8. MOTEMP annual variable 'reason for the temporary contract. We must add the modality 'employment is only available as temporary employment'.
 9. CONTPB variable: the filter is extended to all employed persons (previously it affected wage earners)
 10. In the PARCO2 quarterly variables 'Reason for working part-time', NBUSCA 'Reason for not seeking employment' and RZNDIS 'Reason for not being available to work in two weeks' the 'other family or personal obligations' modality is broken down into two.
 11. HORASP variable 'agreed-upon hours'. The modality 'hours not fixed by contract' must be considered separately.
 12. TRAPLU variable 'existence of second job'. Detail must be given as to if two jobs are held, or three or more.
 13. RZULT annual variable 'reason you left your last job'. Becomes quarterly.
 14. Adaptation of the question to diverse employment situations (self-declared situation) to identify the main employment situation. In the 2005-2020

period, up to three modalities were admitted. Starting in 2021, we first ask about the main employment situation, and then about additional employment up to a maximum of two.

15. The variables of the section of atypical hours SAT, SUN, AFTERNOON, NIGHT, SHIFTS, which were annual in 2005-2020, become biennial (odd year) in the new LFS. Due to the pandemic, in 2021 all quarters will, temporarily, continue to be surveyed. The annual DOMICI variable will also be surveyed quarterly in 2021.
16. Additional information on the annual ETT variable 'in the current job, has been hired through a temporary employment agency,' to determine whether or not work continues with ETT.
17. Restructuring of the modalities of the CADDIS variables 'availability of dependent adult care services', and CNINOS 'availability of child care services' and extension of this information for persons who are not available for work, or cannot work more (the latter in the case of employed persons who wish to work longer hours) due to 'responsibilities of caring for children or other family members'.

C-Relationship of variables that disappear

In order to accommodate the new 2021 variables and keep the response load at reasonable levels, EFT no longer requires a set of variables. The EPAS will thus no longer obtain the following:

1. MASHOR3 variable 'mode in which more hours would be worked'
2. RZDIFH Variable 'main reason for the difference in actual and usual hours during the reference week'. The new variables on work time and days of absence in the reference week make it redundant.
3. CONPAR variable 'continuous working day or split-shift'.
4. Variables RZBUS1, RZBUS2 and RZBUS3 on the reasons why another job is being sought.
5. SECTR Variable 'sector of studies for the regulated studies completed'
6. NCURNR variable 'level of studies of the non-formal training undertaken'
7. SECTNR variable 'sector of studies of the non-formal training undertaken'
8. HCURNR variables 'total hours of unregulated studies in the last four weeks'
9. ASALA variable 'the job you are looking for or have found is as a salaried employee'
10. EMBUS variable 'type of working day in the job sought or found'
11. ANTBUS variable 'situation you were in before looking for a job or having found one'
12. The breakdown of the methods to establish oneself as a freelancer or independent contractor (seek means, seek financing) disappears; these are considered as a whole from 2021 onwards. Information on non-active job search methods disappears (wait for results from previous applications, prepare for competitive examinations, wait for the call from the public employment office, other non-active search methods).
13. The variables on the situation a year ago disappear (place of residence, employment situation, activity of the establishment for those employed, professional situation for those employed).

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