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**Should ILO statistical  
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“international  
quantification”?  
Interwar production of,  
and cooperation on,  
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# Should ILO statistical activity be viewed as “international quantification”? Interwar production of, and cooperation on, labour data

Roser Cussó<sup>1</sup>

## Résumé

Cet article développe une ligne de recherche exploratoire que l'auteur a présentée à Berlin, les 25-26 février 2016, lors de l'atelier *L'Organisation internationale du travail en tant que producteur de connaissances statistiques*, sous le titre « Le programme statistique de l'OIT ». Il est fondé sur l'analyse d'une sélection de documents des bibliothèques parisiennes Sainte Geneviève et de Sciences Po ainsi que d'autres documents disponibles sur le site internet du Bureau international du travail. Il s'appuie également sur des sources primaires consultées dans les archives à la Société des Nations et au BIT (Genève). Le principal objectif de l'article est d'analyser l'hypothèse de l'auteur sur les caractéristiques et la portée des activités statistiques de l'OIT pendant l'entre-deux-guerres : cette analyse fait valoir que, bien que l'OIT ait établi une base sérieuse pour un programme statistique international sur les questions du travail, l'Organisation a échoué à établir un processus de « quantification internationale » à part entière. La définition large de « quantification internationale » utilisée fonde ainsi l'idée que cette quantification active est un domaine spécifique qui est le produit de la fusion entre le pouvoir international et les connaissances statistiques, et qui découle de l'analyse de la manière dont les données sont produites par les organisations internationales

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## Abstract

This paper develops an exploratory line of research that the author presented in Berlin, 25-26 February 2016, at the workshop: *The International Labour Organization as a Producer of Statistical Knowledge*, under the title “The ILO’s statistical programme”. It is based on the analysis of selected documents from the Paris libraries of Sainte Geneviève and Sciences Po, and others documents available on the ILO website. It relies as well on primary sources consulted in archives; at the League of Nations (LoN), and at the ILO (Geneva). The paper’s main goal is to analyse the author’s hypothesis on the characteristics and scope of ILO statistical activities during the interwar period: it is argued that, though the ILO did set up a serious basis for an international statistical program on labour issues, the Organization failed to establish a full-fledged “international quantification” process. The broad definition of "international quantification" used thus underpins the idea that active quantification is a specific area which is the product of the merging of international power and statistical knowledge, and which stems from the analysis of how data are produced by international organizations.

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## 1- The relevance of understanding quantification for international policy

This paper develops an exploratory line of research I presented in Berlin, 25-26 February 2016, at the workshop: *The International Labour Organization<sup>2</sup> as a Producer of Statistical Knowledge<sup>3</sup>*, under the title “The ILO’s statistical programme”. It is based on the analysis of selected **documents** from the Paris libraries of Sainte Geneviève and Sciences Po, and others available on the ILO website. I rely as well on **primary sources** consulted in archives; at the League of Nations (LoN), and at the ILO (Geneva)<sup>4</sup>. The paper’s main goal is to analyse our **hypothesis** on the characteristics and scope of ILO statistical activities during the interwar period: I propose that, though the ILO did set up a serious basis for an international statistical program on labour issues, the Organization failed to establish a full-fledged “international quantification” process. This uses a definition of “international quantification” as a specific **domain which merges global power and statistical knowledge**, and it derives from my analysis of how data is produced by international organizations (IOs). Most of my publications have been in this field (Cussó, 2012a)<sup>5</sup>.

Coming from the history and sociology of quantification (Desrosières, 2008), my **approach** is an adaptation of this field to the international sphere. I argue that IO influence and action is linked to its capacity to produce *comprehensive* statistical programs, i.e. with three *sine qua non* activities: standardization of international statistical methods and categories; intergovernmental cooperation and technical assistance, and collection and publication of internationally comparable data by IO. Significantly, the current ILO Bureau of Statistics (former Statistical Section) underlines these very stages, though they do not define them explicitly as “quantification”. They note that the Bureau’s main activity, i.e. “data collection, analysis and dissemination”, “led naturally to the other two, standard setting and technical assistance”<sup>6</sup>. In this context, international quantification cannot be viewed simply as a change in the scale of data production, i.e. from national (State) to international (IO) levels. It is rather a policy- and knowledge-based *process* to be studied with an adapted **theoretical basis**, differing in part from that developed for State data, with **case studies** particular to it alone. Likewise, other (complementary) bases should be sought to analyse statistics produced by the **private sector or NGOs**, such as labour unions or research centres.

What is the **relevance** of analysing whether and to what extent the ILO developed, in our precise sense, an early international quantification on labour? For one thing, it can help to better

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<sup>2</sup> Located at Geneva, Switzerland, the ILO “was created in 1919, as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice. [Its] Constitution [...] was drafted in early 1919 by the Labour Commission [...]. It was composed of representatives from nine countries: Belgium, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Japan, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States. The process resulted in a tripartite organization, the only one of its kind, bringing together representatives of governments, employers and workers in its executive bodies”.

<https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/history/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Organized by Sandrine Kott, University of Geneva, and Theresa Wobbe, University of Potsdam; held in Re:work, University of Humboldt, Berlin, Germany.

[https://www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin01/projects/metamorphosen/160225\\_26\\_Program\\_rework\\_Kott\\_Wobbe.pdf](https://www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin01/projects/metamorphosen/160225_26_Program_rework_Kott_Wobbe.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> For the list of the main ILO publications see “Bureau international du travail: Publications et littérature grise (1879-2011)”, Archives nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, France, 2011.

[https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/rechercheconsultation/consultation/ir/pdfIR.action?irId=FRAN\\_IR\\_052866](https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/rechercheconsultation/consultation/ir/pdfIR.action?irId=FRAN_IR_052866)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.pantheonsorbonne.fr/recherche/page-perso/page/?tx\\_oxcspagepersonnel\\_pi1\[uid\]=rcusso](https://www.pantheonsorbonne.fr/recherche/page-perso/page/?tx_oxcspagepersonnel_pi1[uid]=rcusso)

<sup>6</sup> It is added that “The result of comparing labour statistics between countries therefore underlined the importance of international standards”. Page 3 in “75 Years of International Labour Statistics”.

[https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/WCMS\\_087875/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/WCMS_087875/lang--en/index.htm)

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms\\_087875.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_087875.pdf)

understand the relatively **weak impact of ILO activity** in its specific domain of competence, compared to other IOs in theirs, as for example the OECD case in regard to economic issues (Leterme, 2016). More broadly, this paper aims to further define the role of IOs in cross-country interdependence. This role should moreover be further examined from a **long-run perspective** including: (i) the interwar period, focused on the internationalization of economic liberalism; (ii) the development and plan-oriented policies (1945-1970s); (iii) neo-liberal globalism (1980/90-2000s) and, more recently, (iv) renewed geopolitical and economic polarization (2010-).

This paper is organized into five sections: (i) the paper's aim, my domain of research, and approach –given in this introduction; (ii) a further discussion on the definition of “international quantification” as compared to “international statistics”; (iii) an example of the detailed stages of a comprehensive international statistical program; (iv) the ILO statistical activities (1919-1940) analysed through labour conventions, conferences, published statistics and technical cooperation and assistance; (v) the conclusion.

## **2- International statistics or international quantification?**

As noted in several publications (Clavin & Wessels, 2004; Cussó, 2012b, 2019a), the LoN Economic and Financial Organization (EFO) developed its statistical program early on. The League's Mandates Section also produced some early comparative data derived from the questionnaires sent to the Mandatory Powers (Cussó, 2020). Other LoN sections did not produce official statistics on their domains of competence, as in the case of the Minorities Section (Cussó, 2019b). As regards the ILO, Liebeskind Sauthier & Lespinet-Moret note that there was no stable and comparable international definition of unemployment until 1947: “il faudra attendre 1947 [...] pour qu'une législation internationale en matière de méthodes et nomenclatures soit établie” (Liebeskind Sauthier & Lespinet-Moret, 2008: 9). This is confirmed by Liebeskind Sauthier (2008) as well as by Kevonian: “[...] on sait que la comparabilité des statistiques du chômage est marquée par le problème permanent des sources disponibles” (Kevonian, 2008: 24). He also examines the other domains of competence of the ILO: hours of work, wages, cost of living-retail prices, family living conditions, migration, and industrial accidents. Kevonian underlines “les limites et imperfections de la production statistique dans cette période” though he attributes to the ILO the capacity to reinforce “la conception qui fonde l'usage de l'outil statistique et les objectifs qui lui sont assignés”. Yet, if the ILO won a “légitimité incontestable dans le domaine de l'expertise sociale”, was this Organization able to effectively support its “paradigme de justice sociale” with a robust quantification?

The ILO only produced one recommendation and one convention regarding statistics between 1919 and 1940. Issued in 1922, the recommendation was related to migration statistics while the convention, which concerned labour statistics (wages and hours of work), only came up at the end of the 1930s, following the work of the Fifth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) (1937). Yet, the ILO published early on a significant number of propositions and discussions on statistical methods in the *International Labour Review* (1921-present) and in the *Studies and Reports* (1920-present), not always related to the activity of the ICLS –Kevonian, 2008. The ILO Statistical Section also rapidly issued its collected data through different publications. While the first *ILO Yearbook of Labour Statistics* was published only in 1935, it is to be noted that labour data was available in other forms such as, for example, the *International Labour Review*. But did ILO activity on method standardization imply effective statistical assistance and cooperation? Was its published data internationally comparable?

The analysis of technical introductions, statistical tables and footnotes of selected ILO publications is a starting-point for checking to what extent international data on labour was standardized. If data is seen to be comparative, this may be taken to mean that technical assistance and cross-country cooperation were certainly previously developed, explaining such data comparability. Indeed, the latter depends on the taking of methodological decisions in the international arena including ICLS, and on their being collectively discussed and effectively implemented by national statistical services when preparing data for transmission to the ILO. By promulgating international methods and definitions, technical cooperation not only helps to produce global data but it also stimulates country acceptance of related global objectives. International quantification *implies* country political “mise en discipline” through common technical practice. The expression “international statistics” is less accurate at describing such a process, since it can also refer to data not previously harmonized through cooperation.

I argue that IO quantification should include the following actors and stages: (i) the producer of statistics (the secretariat) which is relatively autonomous (in agenda setting, for instance) though all the while under intergovernmental oversight and approval –in the context of the ILO this includes the representatives of workers; (ii) the statistical program, monitored by the secretariat and special commissions, which engages Member States –the latter are explicitly required to actively and officially contribute to the production of data; (iii) a cross-country cooperation process, including discussion and adoption of common methods, nomenclatures and classifications; (iv) such cooperation has to be consequential enough to involve reform and/or adaptation of the national statistical services involved, in order to respond to IO requests for standardized data; (v) the process results in official IO publications assembling cross-country, internationally comparable data –indeed, such comparability is always in progress.

When this process is well developed, global data may reflect internationally agreed goals. That is to say, the quantified knowledge may effectively support global power and action. In the context of the LoN, the EFO was able to (start to) compare trade by country through the standardization of merchandise nomenclatures, trade definitions and value measurements. The EFO could thus also (start to) measure the customs tariffs implemented in the participating countries. By issuing common data, the EFO both showed the characteristics of World Trade and spurred a positive perception of freedom of trade, as established by the League Covenant (1919) through the expression “equitable treatment for the commerce of all Members”<sup>7</sup>.

### **3- The stages of international quantification: an example**

The statistical program developed by UNESCO, as described in Cussó & D’Amico (2005), can be viewed as a good illustration of the technical actions necessary to produce cross-country comparable data. Its analysis may help to better understand both my definition of “international quantification” and the analysis developed in section 4 as regards the ILO.

In the first place, UNESCO’s statistical program is founded<sup>8</sup> on the definition of common objectives, discussed and approved by Member States in the relevant international assemblies (see Scheme 1 below). These objectives are perceived as “universal goals” and become

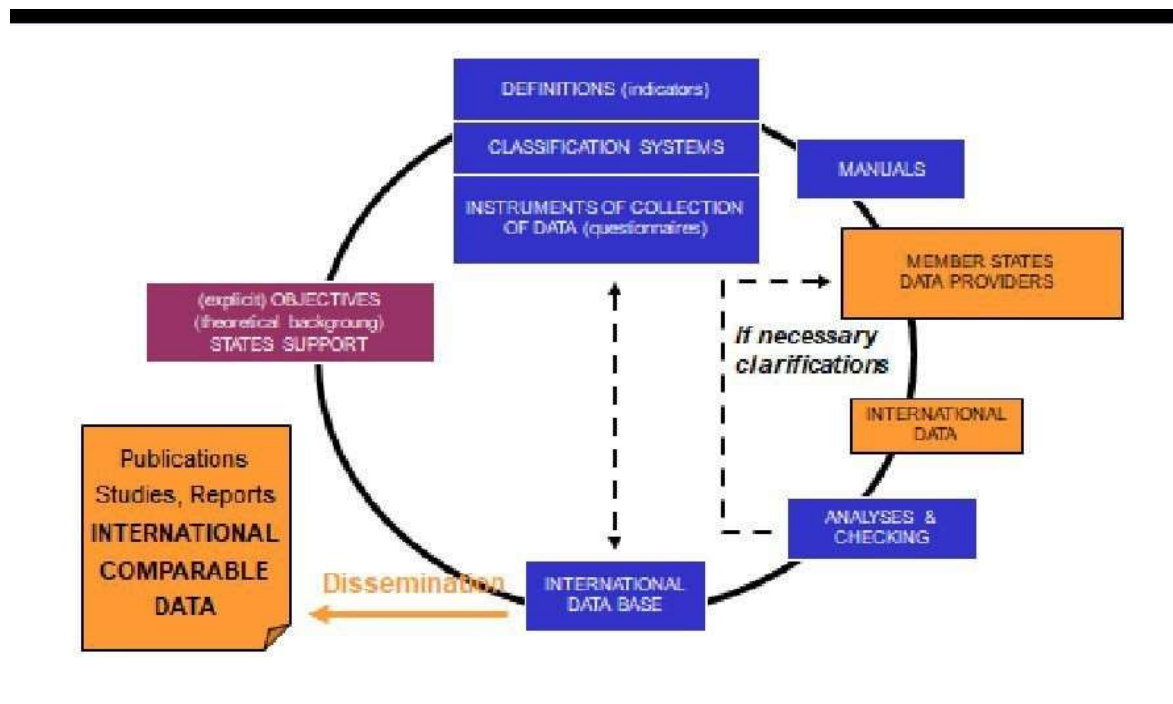
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<sup>7</sup> See Article 23(e) which notes that “the Member of the League will make provision to secure and maintain freedom of communications and of transit and equitable treatment for the commerce of all Members of the League. In this connection, the special necessities of the regions devastated during the war of 1914-1918 shall be borne in mind” in <http://digital.library.northwestern.edu/league/le000003.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> I will use the present tense to explain UNESCO’s program here, although it is in reference to the period 1950-1990, before the restructuring of UNESCO statistical services (Cussó, 2006).

integrated into UNESCO missions. Secondly, the UNESCO Secretariat establishes international nomenclatures, methods and questionnaires in order to allow classification and compilation of national data as required internationally. Nomenclatures, methods and questionnaires are meant to interpret the issues addressed by the common objectives as a question of specific and comparable information. Gender equality in all school levels being one of these goals, comparable enrolment data by age and sex have then to be collected to measure it. The same process may be applied to the ILO and the right to employment. Comparable data on unemployment (once a common definition of unemployment is established, with a common method to measure it and a common instrument to collect it) is necessary in order to single out efforts that can be made to achieve such rights.

*Scheme 1. UNESCO international statistical programme*



Source: Cussó & D'Amico, 2005.

Thirdly, Member States fill in the questionnaires by adapting their data to the international framework and send them back to UNESCO. To do so, technical cooperation and assistance are developed; international meetings, workshops, expert missions, and availability of manuals facilitate the adaptation of national data to the international requirements. Indeed, new definitions and methods have to be well understood by country officials in order to be implemented. National statistical services may have to modify/reform their data collection, or, at least adopt new terminology and produce new tables and arrangements in order to fill in the questionnaires; the services thereby learn to perceive the quantity measured, i.e. pupils by gender (or unemployment), in a new light. They are *in fine* acculturated to international goals, which they see as being normal shared references, to be used in discussions regarding the pertinent domain (education, employment).

The fourth step concerns the reception of the questionnaires at the IO, and the ensuing treatment and analysis of data by its Secretariat. At UNESCO, data treatment and analysis essentially consists in checking the coherence of time series and of key-indicators. Problems in data scope and consistency may then rise. Further information from national officials may be needed. This step is crucial since statistical comparability depends on data completeness as well as on correctness of its classification as regards common definitions, methods and questionnaires. International officials can also proceed to directly correct the data and submit their adjusted

and/or estimated figures to the relevant countries for their approval. When data is judged to be consistent, further treatment is done to calculate all related indicators. Metadata (technical “footnotes”) is attached to them when necessary. If data is not considered consistent and cannot be revised, it is not published. Though this production is done by hand at the beginning, all these activities of revision and calculation are processed using a modern database. The latter is based on variables included in the questionnaires. During the whole process, micro-decisions made by officials remain crucial (Cussó, 2016).

The last step, dissemination of data, is fundamental to evaluating or, at least, to illustrating to what extent the international goals are attained. Comparable data manifest the common perception of a number of social, economic and political issues. Its publication also confirms that part of national sovereignty is effectively transferred to the IO, since the latter carries a share of power by producing its own quantification. Comparing achievements of countries is a specificity of international quantification: it implies country alignment and emulation. The latter have become more explicit with the introduction of country ranking and benchmarking.

One of the implications of this analysis/definition is that data which is internationally standardized by international non-governmental organizations (INGO) and data which is compiled by an IO but which is not standardized, should not be treated as “international quantification”, i.e. they do not carry the full effects of creating both cross-country cooperation and comparable data. First, INGO may well spur some form of technical cooperation, but the methods proposed are, in general, not approved by an intergovernmental assembly, they do not result in an official transfer of sovereignty, and they are not often followed by (official) reform of national statistical services and by the consequent political acculturation to INGO goals. Second, if IO statistics turn out not to be comparable, this may signify that cooperation and technical assistance did not develop successfully. Without comparability, cross-country emulation is weakened as are IO recommendations. Nevertheless, both INGO statistics and IO non-comparable data may well be instruments of some institutional power and influence that do deserve scrutiny.

#### **4- The ILO’s statistical activities**

The ILO statistical program (1919-1940) is analysed here by surveying (i) references to statistics in the ILO Constitution and ILO Conventions and Recommendations; (ii) the scope of ICLS recommendations and resolutions on standardised methods and definitions; (iii) the comparability of ILO statistics in a publication issued in 1926 and in the *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* of 1940; (iv) the role of technical cooperation and assistance. With these four sources we can begin to analyze to what extent Member States were integrated into the ILO statistical programme and, accordingly, to what extent they were “mis en discipline” with respect to the ILO “paradigme de justice sociale”.

##### *4.1- Statistics in the ILO Constitution, Conventions and Recommendations*

The ILO Constitution –Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles (1919)– does not include the terms “statistics” or “data”. Defining the functions of the Organisation, Article 10.1 states that they “shall include the collection and distribution of *information* on all subjects relating to the international adjustment of conditions of industrial life and labour, and particularly the examination of subjects which it is proposed to bring before the Conference with a view to the conclusion of international Conventions, and the conduct of such special *investigations* as may



be ordered by the Conference or by the Governing Body”<sup>9</sup> –the emphasis is ours throughout the section. The relationship between information, its examination, the establishment of conventions, and approval by Member States and workers representatives is explicitly recognized. Yet, neither data collection nor data standardization are directly evoked.

According to Article 10.2, the Organisation shall, “(a) prepare the documents on the various items of the agenda for the meetings of the Conference” as well as “(b) accord to governments at their request all appropriate assistance within its power in connection with the framing of laws and regulations on the basis of the decisions of the Conference and the improvement of administrative practices and systems of inspection”. The technical assistance needed to improve the national statistical services is not specified. The accent is put on the “effective observance of Conventions” but not on the quantification required for such an observance. Article 22 confirms this point with a nuance. It states that “Each of the Members agrees to make an annual report to the [ILO] on the measures which it has taken to give effect to the provisions of Conventions to which it is a party. These reports shall be made in such form and shall contain such particulars as the Governing Body may request”. Statistics are not evoked explicitly here, but this article gives some leeway for the possibility of requesting them. Being involved in enforcement of the convention, the information called for could certainly include data.

I have examined the sixty-seven conventions proposed by the ILO between 1919 and 1940, i.e. sixty-six technical conventions and one fundamental convention –see Annex. Eight conventions have been abrogated since then and seven have been withdrawn. I have focused on the other fifty-two, which are digitally available on the ILO site. For them, I have checked for occurrences of six selected key-words (*data, statistics, information, definition, category, communicate*). Thirty-three out of fifty-two conventions do not include, in explicit form, any statistical element in the support or supervision of their implementation, while the remaining nineteen do evoke such a provision of statistics or of similar specific information.

I will elaborate now on the latter. According to Article 1 of Convention 2 (C002 – Unemployment Convention, 1919), “Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall communicate to the [ILO] *all available information, statistical or otherwise, concerning unemployment*”<sup>10</sup>. In the same vein, according to Article 6 in Convention 62 (C062 - Safety Provisions (Building) Convention, 1937), “Each Member which ratifies this Convention undertakes to communicate annually to the [ILO] *the latest statistical information relating to the number and classification of accidents* occurring to persons occupied on work within the scope of this Convention”<sup>11</sup>. The Convention 13 (C013 - White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921), in its Article 7, notes that “*Statistics* with regard to lead poisoning among working painters shall be obtained-- (a) as to *morbidity*--by notification and certification of all cases of lead poisoning; (b) as to *mortality*--by a method approved by the official statistical authority in each country”<sup>12</sup>. Fourteen other conventions follow a similar scheme –No. 9, 14, 22, 26, 27, 30, 32, 33, 34, 39, 40, 44, 57, 59, see Annex. Among them, only conventions No. 22, 44, and 57 evoke some degree of previous and common standardization of data. Thus, for instance, Article 2 of Convention 57 (C057 - Hours of Work and Manning (Sea) Convention, 1936) notes that “*hours of work means* time during which a member of the crew is required by the

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[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:62:0::NO:62:P62\\_LIST\\_ENTRIE\\_ID:2453907:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:62:0::NO:62:P62_LIST_ENTRIE_ID:2453907:NO)

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312147:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312147:NO)

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312207:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312207:NO)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312158:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312158:NO)



orders of a superior to do any work on account of the vessel or the owner, or to be at the disposal of a superior outside the crew's quarters"<sup>13</sup>. Yet, despite this common definition, the related information appears mainly to be destined for national use.

None of these seventeen conventions refer to (existing) comprehensive methodologies or detailed nomenclatures. Some specific definitions are given but they are often meant to be adapted to "national laws and regulations". For instance, Article 1 of Convention 30 (C030 - Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1930) states that "The competent authority in each country shall define the line which separates commercial and trading establishments, and establishments in which the persons employed are mainly engaged in office work, from industrial and agricultural establishments"<sup>14</sup>. As an exception, an "international" definition of the age-limit as regards dependency of children (14 years) is given in Convention 39 (C039-Survivors' Insurance (Industry, etc.) Convention, 1933). Its Article 19.2 states that "National laws or regulations" "shall define" "the age until which a child shall be considered dependent upon a widow or shall be entitled to an orphan's pension: Provided that this age shall in no case be less than fourteen"<sup>15</sup>. Yet, no data seem to have been collected on this (see sub-section 4.4).

Before analyzing Convention 63, the only convention entirely devoted to statistics, it is to be noted that the fundamental convention on forced labour (C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930) included several detailed statistical considerations, with specific data requirements. Its Article 22 notes that "The [Members'] annual reports [...] *shall contain as full information as possible*, in respect of each territory concerned, regarding the extent to which recourse has been had to forced or compulsory labour in that territory, the purposes for which it has been employed, *the sickness and death rates, hours of work, methods of payment of wages and rates of wages, and any other relevant information*"<sup>16</sup>.

Approved at the end of the 1930s, Convention 63 (C063 - Convention concerning Statistics of Wages and Hours of Work, 1938), in its Article 4, notes that Member States "*make enquiries* relating either to all, or to a representative part, of the wage earners concerned, *in order to obtain the information required*". Article 5.3 details how data is to be presented: "The statistics of *average earnings* and of *hours actually worked* shall-- (a) give *separate figures for each of the principal industries*; and (b) indicate briefly *the scope of the industries or branches of industry for which figures are given*. Article 6 gives a detailed definition of average earnings<sup>17</sup>. Likewise, Article 7 observes the opportunity of adding the figures on, or calculating estimates for, "allowances in kind". Articles 9 and 10 determine the units of time to calculate the average earnings and the frequency of data compilation. Point 10.2 asks for "*separate figures for each sex and for adults and juveniles*". The calculation of "*Index numbers* showing the general movement of earnings per hour and where possible per day, week or other customary period" is detailed in Article 12.1. Article 12.3 asks for "indications" on the *methods employed* in [the index] construction". The latter seems to indicate the prevailing diversity in national methods.

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<sup>13</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312202:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312202:NO)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312175:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312175:NO)

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312184:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312184:NO)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312174:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312174:NO)

<sup>17</sup> Average earnings "[...] *shall include--* (a) all cash payments and bonuses received from the employer by the persons employed; (b) contributions such as social insurance contributions payable by the employed persons and deducted by the employer; and (c) taxes payable by the employed persons to a public authority and deducted by the employer".

[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312208:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312208:NO)

In Part III of Convention 63, Article 14.1 notes that statistics of time rates of wages and of normal hours of work “shall show the rates and hours-- (a) *fixed by or in pursuance of laws or regulations, collective agreements or arbitral awards*; (b) ascertained from organisations of employers and workers”. Point 2 establishes that these statistics “shall indicate *the nature and source of the information from which they have been compiled*”. In general, it is required to specify the scope, the groupings, the time units, the different categories used and the components of the term “wages” (family allowances, overtime, allowances in kind...). Index numbers on wages are also required as well as the “*methods employed in their construction*”. While the diversity in national methods is thus confirmed, the question of technical cooperation does finally appear in Article 24 (Part V. Miscellaneous Provisions), which I analyse in subsection 4.4. As far as the conventions alone are concerned, it is the one most relevant to promoting adaptation of national statistical services to international requirements.

Lastly, Recommendation 19 (R019 - Migration Statistics Recommendation, 1922), concerns the communication to the ILO of “Statistical and Other Information regarding Emigration, Immigration and the Repatriation and Transit of Emigrants”. It is a classical “Request for [unified] information”, relevant for labour issues, though mainly concerned with demography-based methods and data<sup>18</sup>. In Article 2, “The General Conference recommends that each Member of the [ILO] should make every effort to communicate [...] *the total figures of emigrants and immigrants*, showing separately nationals and aliens and specifying particularly, for nationals, and, as far as possible, for aliens: (1) sex; (2) age; (3) occupation; (4) nationality; (5) country of last residence; (6) country of proposed residence”. In Article 3, the Conference “recommends that each Member [...] should, if possible, make agreements with other Members providing for: (a) *the adoption of a uniform definition of the term emigrant*; (b) the determination of *uniform particulars* to be entered on the identity papers issued to emigrants and immigrants by the competent authorities of Members who are parties to such agreements; (c) *the use of a uniform method of recording statistical information regarding emigration and immigration*”<sup>19</sup>.

In conclusion, if data is evoked in some parts of the technical conventions, no international methods and classifications are subsequently underlined or mentioned, nor is the cooperation necessary to implement them noted. Only Convention 63 (1938) raises the question of both producing comparative data on labour through comparative methods and promoting development of technical assistance. The appearance early on of Recommendation 19 could be seen as a precursor since it proposes the use of “*a uniform method of recording statistical information*”. Yet, the latter mainly refers to demographic techniques. Conventions are focused on ensuring that national laws and regulations reflect international norms rather than on evaluating their implementation in a comparative and quantified manner. Countries are asked to provide information on “*methods employed*” since this metadata helped develop *a posteriori* statistical standardization by the ILO, as analysed in point 4.3 below. In brief, until 1938, the link between the adoption of labour norms and the adoption of common labour statistical methods is not explicitly underlined. Yet, an intensive effort on such unified methods did exist in the ILO’s work.

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<sup>18</sup> The conference on migration statistics (1932) is evoked by Kevonian (2008: 98) as an International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). Yet this conference does not appear in the ILO website on the ICLS.

<https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/lang-en/index.htm>

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312357:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312357:NO)

#### 4.2- The ICLS: gradual and voluntarist resolutions on standardised methods and definitions

The ILO Governing Body (1923) was unequivocal, in its 18th Session, on the crucial importance given to statistical comparability, as can be seen in the minutes: “The attention of the Office has on several occasions been drawn to the interest which would attach to a meeting at Geneva of a certain number of public labour statisticians. [...] It would [...] enable the statisticians of the various States to confer with a view to introducing a certain degree of uniformity into statistical methods. Though labour statistics deal with subjects that are often international in character, they are drawn up primarily from a purely national point of view. The scientific study of labour problems would be greatly facilitated if these statistics could be rendered to a certain extent internationally comparable”<sup>20</sup>.

Uniformity of methods was to be produced through statistical meetings and discussions. It was the function of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) which met five times during the interwar period –see table 1 below. Several outputs (minutes, reports, classifications) of the conferences of 1923, 1925, 1926, and 1931 are accessible on the ILO website<sup>21</sup>. The Fifth ICLS (1937) can be consulted only in the paper version.

Table 1. International Conference of Labour Statisticians

ICLS	Issues considered
1st ICLS – 29 October to 2 November 1923 <sup>22</sup> Report of the Conference <i>Studies and Reports</i> , Series N (Statistics) No. 1-4	- Classification of industries (and occupations) - Statistics of wages and hours of labour - Statistics of industrial accidents
2nd ICLS – 20 to 25 April 1925 <sup>23</sup> consumer price indices and statistics of strikes and lockouts Report of the Conference <i>Studies and Reports</i> , Series N (Statistics) No. 5-9	- Classification of industries - Cost-of-living index numbers - Unemployment statistics - International comparisons of real wages
3rd ICLS – 18 to 23 October 1926 <sup>24</sup> Report of the Conference <i>Studies and Reports</i> , Series N (Statistics) No. 10-14	- Classification of industries - Family budget surveys - Statistics of collective agreements - Statistics of strikes and lockouts
4th ICLS – May 1931 <sup>25</sup>	- International Comparisons of real wages
5 <sup>th</sup> ICLS – September-October 1937	- Statistics of wages and hours of work

The agenda of each ICLS was approved by the ILO Governing Body. This included the recommendations of earlier ICLS meetings as well as topics identified by the Statistical Section as a result of its work in a particular field or through other ILO programs. Thirty-three Member

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of the 18th Session of the Governing Body of the ILO (1923).

<sup>21</sup> <https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/methods/icls/icls-documents/>

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS\\_221512/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_221512/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS\\_221511/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_221511/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS\\_221510/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_221510/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS\\_221509/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/meetings-and-events/international-conference-of-labour-statisticians/WCMS_221509/lang-en/index.htm)

States sent delegates to the first ICLS, which assembled 52 participants. The second conference (1926) assembled 41 participants from 24 Member States, the third, 38 participants from 24 Member States, and the fourth (1931), 40 participants from 23 Member States, plus a representative of the United States (USA)<sup>26</sup>.

The 1923 ICLS essentially raised awareness of problems inherent to standardization. It clearly stated the need for method standardization: “it soon became evident that before any international comparisons could be made, the countries must endeavour to agree on standard methods of compiling and publishing statistics of labour”. Yet, the conference noted “that national statistics are primarily and fundamentally for the purpose of throwing light on national conditions and that international uniformity must always be subordinate to national clarity”. Country voluntarism was certainly expected: the conference’s goal “would be the laying down of general principles, in the hope that the various official statistical authorities in making changes or developments in their national systems would endeavor as far as practicable to move in the direction of some agreed international standard”<sup>27</sup>.

Given the problems of classification and definition of the different topics analysed, the reach of the resolutions of the conference was limited. As regards wage statistics, the relevant committee proposed resolutions on “the nature of wage statistics, their scope and frequency” but “did not deal with methods of wage statistics in the scientific sense, nor with the difficult question of the comparison of wages between countries”<sup>28</sup>. As regards industrial accidents, the committee’s “proposals were limited to the existing statistics of industrial accidents as published by each country, without attempting to define an ‘industrial accident’ for international purposes; and in its approval of the ‘severity rate’ as a necessary complement to the generally accepted ‘frequency rate’ it led the way to a greater comparability of industrial accident statistics”<sup>29</sup>.

In fact, it was a first conference devoted to general principles: “As was inevitable at a first conference, the resolutions dealt only with general principles, and statistical methods properly so called were not touched on except in the question of the best methods of calculating accident frequency and severity rates. Purely statistical questions, such as the definition of an average wage or of full-time earnings and the best methods of collecting accurate statistics, were not dealt with”. The resolutions were to be implemented counting on the willingness of each participant: “[...] the resolutions do not bind anybody – neither the members nor the governments they represented – and it is for the Governing Body of the International Labour Office to take any decisions as to the action to be taken thereon. Their real value will be seen in the future by the actions to which they give rise and the achievements which ultimately result from them”<sup>30</sup>.

As regards the ICLS held in 1925, its resolutions remained general and voluntarist though the exchange of information was more clearly underlined. Two kinds of resolutions were adopted:

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<sup>26</sup> The 1937 ICLS is not analysed in detail in this pre-print. It will be further studied when the sanitary conditions allow the consultation of the relevant documents.

<sup>27</sup> “The International Conference of Labour Statisticians”, *International Labour Review*, Vol. IX, No 1, January 1924, pp3-30. Page 4, [https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602\(1924-9-1\)3-30.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602(1924-9-1)3-30.pdf)

See full discussions in *Studies and Reports*, Series N (Statistics) No. 4.

[https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/ILO-SR/ILO-SR\\_N4\\_engl.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/ILO-SR/ILO-SR_N4_engl.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Page 17, [https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602\(1924-9-1\)3-30.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602(1924-9-1)3-30.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Page 24, [https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602\(1924-9-1\)3-30.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602(1924-9-1)3-30.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Pages 25-26, [https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602\(1924-9-1\)3-30.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602(1924-9-1)3-30.pdf)

“One group consists of requests and instructions to the [ILO]; it includes the resolution dealing with the continuation of the comparative investigation of real wages begun by the Office, and that recommending the compilation of a list of the most important industries”. The other group of resolutions were addressed “rather to the governments with proposals for rendering statistical methods more uniform; such are the resolutions on cost-of-living index numbers and on unemployment statistics. These recommendations however, are in the main couched in very general terms and avoid detailed rules. The special needs and traditions of each country, which affect even the choice of statistical methods, are left undisturbed, and no obstacle is placed in the way of progressive development of new methods”.

Sharing detailed information on specificities was thus seen as crucial: “it is absolutely essential that the fullest and most detailed information on the methods used and the meaning of the statistical data should be given [by Member States]”. In other words: “As the report on index numbers presented to the Conference by Mr. Huber justly remarks, ‘it is hardly possible that exactly the same methods will be applied everywhere and always, but it is essential that in every case an exact explanation should be given of what has been done’”. This shared explanation was to have positive consequences: “Investigations of this kind will have the further effect that statisticians, knowing that their choice of methods is subject to international criticism, will consider all the problems involved in the choice of methods. Only if statisticians perpetually test their methods and co-operate intelligently with their colleagues in other countries can they hope to achieve the twofold object — improvement of methods and increasing uniformity in all countries”<sup>31</sup>. The “mise en discipline” albeit implicit, of cooperation processes, was clearly evoked there.

The ICLS of 1926 was marked by a realist perception of the difficulty of its tasks, viewing method standardization as a gradual activity. The conference certainly emphasised the importance of data comparability, considering that its decisions constituted “a serious and systematic attempt to create a basis for uniform international methods of compiling the chief branches of labour statistics”. Yet, Corrado Gini, then “the President of the new Italian Statistical Institute”, raised “the question of what practical results had so far been obtained from these efforts [of uniforming methods] of the [ILO]”. In his opinion “only very few governments had considered themselves bound to adapt their statistical methods to international requirements”. He pointed out that the “chief reason for this was that the process of adjustment was hindered by administrative, financial, and even psychological factors, although the scientific value of the principles recommended by the Conferences was unquestioned”. Gini then proposed “a different procedure for the preparation of these Conferences. Before a subject was placed on the agenda the governments should be asked what programme they considered immediately feasible”<sup>32</sup>.

Such propositions were received with reticence: “Mr. Maurette, replying to this suggestion on behalf of the [ILO] during the closing session of the Conference, expressed the fear that the adoption of such a system would expose the drafting of a suitable agenda to difficulty and delay”. If it was “useless to blind one’s eyes” to the fact that “progress towards uniformity of official statistics can only be very slow”, and this “in spite of the readiness of labour

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<sup>31</sup> “The International Conference of Labour Statisticians”, *International Labour Review*, Vol XII, No. 1. July 1925, pp1-22. Page 18, [https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602\(1925-12-1\)1-22.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602(1925-12-1)1-22.pdf)

See full discussions in *Studies and Reports*, Series N (Statistics) No. 8.

[https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/ILO-SR/ILO-SR\\_N8\\_engl.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/ILO-SR/ILO-SR_N8_engl.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> “The International Conference of Labour Statisticians”, *International Labour Review*, Vol. XV, No. 1. January 1927, pp1-23. Pages 16-17, [https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602\(1927-15-1\)1-23.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602(1927-15-1)1-23.pdf)



statisticians to work together for the improvement and perfection of their methods”, the discussions should nevertheless go on and treat all the relevant issues even when “some government or other believes that it will not be able to carry out proposals for reform within a reasonable period”. A gradual principle-based approach was thus defended: “the principles on which labour statistics are to be based should be co-ordinated by degrees [...]”. This demand was seen as particularly wise since “often the various branches of labour statistics are not compiled in the same office or department, and [...], as is shown over and over again by the discussions on the classification of industries, there are numerous links between labour statistics and other branches of official statistics”. In the agenda for the ICLS “equal consideration should therefore, as far as possible, be given to the claims of all branches of labour statistics”<sup>33</sup>. Similarly, another conference participant insisted on the need to discuss all labour issues while also underlining their undefined deadlines: “Mr. JULIN appealed to the spirit of international co-operation of the Committee. If no national differences existed, there would be no need for international conferences”<sup>34</sup>.

While the ICLS of 1931 “did not give guidance on all the problems submitted to it”, it “drew the attention of the different national statistical authorities to the importance of collecting comprehensive wage statistics, and to the difficulties encountered by all who wish to compare them internationally, unless they are accurately defined and accompanied by all explanations as to scope and significance”. The conference emphasised “once more” that “the term ‘wages’ by itself is almost meaningless”. Participants considered that the “type of wage data, their source, scope, and the different items included or excluded, must be indicated before the figures can be used”. Thus, for instance, the “method of comparing purchasing power by means of data based on family budgets and of figures as to retail prices of the goods and services commonly bought by the workers was [...] approved, though certain developments were recommended provided the necessary information could be obtained”. The conference also insisted on data production: “those countries (and they are many) which have made no family budget enquiries in the last ten years were urged to undertake them at the earliest opportunity”<sup>35</sup>.

Data collection and explanation of national methods certainly were *sine quoi non* conditions to start some cross-country comparisons. Yet, “Perhaps the most significant result of the Conference was the recognition of the fact that there is no single ‘authoritative index number of real wages’ for one country compared with another”. Actually, “Different indices should be given depending on different points of view and different hypotheses”. Fresh research and further developments were needed: the latter “however, will depend on the collaboration of the statistical authorities of the different countries”. The establishment of a committee of experts was recommended. It was first stated that the ILO “cannot make direct enquiries on the spot by its own officials, and, as an official organisation, it must rely on the cooperation and goodwill of the different countries”. In addition, “a great number of problems arise as to selection of items, definition and scope of data, which can only be satisfactorily treated by statistical experts”. In conclusion “a standing committee of experts should be set up to assist the Office in developing its wage statistics and prepare the ground for a possible International Convention”. Such recommendations implied “the creation of a new organ of co-operation between the Office and the [national] statistical authorities”. This, which can be considered an

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<sup>33</sup> “The International Conference of Labour Statisticians”... 1927, pages 16-17.

<sup>34</sup> Page 54, *Studies and Reports*, Series N (Statistics) No. 12.

[https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/ILO-SR/ILO-SR\\_N12\\_engl.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/ILO-SR/ILO-SR_N12_engl.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> “The International Conference of Labour Statisticians”, *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1. July 1931, pp1-23. Pages 16-17, [https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602\(1931-24-1\)1-23.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602(1931-24-1)1-23.pdf)



enlargement of technical cooperation, was then seen as a new “field for continuous and gradual improvement as the material available increases in scope and value”<sup>36</sup>.

The ICLS reports illustrate that conference participants supported the necessary steps to start to produce “international quantification”, i.e. internationally approved common methods, technical cooperation, and provision of standardized data. They were also aware of the underlying difficulties: methods and definitions depended on different objectives and uses of data; technical problems at the national level were also noted. In view of these considerations, a gradual and voluntarist approach was adopted, although with criticisms from some representatives. To start to “evaluate” the capacity of such an approach to transform national data into internationally comparable figures, I analyse two ILO documents in the following section.

#### 4.3- Published labour indicators and data

The analysis of a sample of ILO data and indicators points to two interrelated phenomena: (i) international comparability of data was, in general, weak during the period considered; (ii) the ILO employed an *a posteriori* data standardisation process which was much more concerned with time series; i.e. inter-period comparability for each country series, and much less concerned with cross-country comparability.

The ILO’s capacity to collect, process and issue data depended, from the outset, on the development of an internal statistical branch. According to the current ILO Statistical Bureau, the Statistical Section before 1940 “numbered about eleven officials on average” with several European nationalities represented<sup>37</sup>. This number is particularly small given that “All the data collected [...] were processed manually up to 1980”<sup>38</sup>. As regards the directorate of the Section, the Austrian “Karl Pribram est arrivé en juin 1921 à la tête de la section” (Kevonian, 2008: 89). Pribram was an “expert on economic statistics” who had connections to the liberal Austrian School (Wasserman, 2019)<sup>39</sup>. “Il quitte le poste en 1928 [...]. James Nixon (1888-1985) vient de la section des statistiques du ministère anglais du Travail. Il est recruté en avril 1920 par le BIT. Il succède à Pribram à la tête de la section et y reste jusqu’à la guerre” (Kevonian, 2008: 89).

The Statistical Section “began collecting labour statistics in the early 1920s with national figures of prices and unemployment”<sup>40</sup>. They appeared in the *International Labour Review*, as of the first issue in 1921. “Data on employment were soon added, and over the years the subjects covered gradually expanded to include wages, hours of work, industrial disputes and collective agreements”<sup>41</sup>. The first *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* was issued in 1935,

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<sup>36</sup> “The International Conference of Labour Statisticians”... 1931, pages 16-17.

<sup>37</sup> Page 9 in “75 Years of International Labour Statistics”.

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms\\_087875.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_087875.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Page 10 in “75 Years of International Labour Statistics”.

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms\\_087875.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_087875.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Wasserman, Janek (2019) *The Marginal Revolutionaries: How Austrian Economists Fought the War of Ideas*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press.

<sup>40</sup> Page 6 in “75 Years of International Labour Statistics”.

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms\\_087875.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_087875.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Page 6 in “75 Years of International Labour Statistics”. *Ibid.*

“containing time series on each of these topics”<sup>42</sup>. Before that, “Monthly or quarterly updates of the series published in the Year Book were first issued in the International Labour Review and its statistical supplement”<sup>43</sup>. They then “followed essentially the same procedures since the 1920s to collect the data [they publish]. Since 1924, questionnaires have been sent out to ministries of labour or national statistical services to collect information for the October Inquiry [...] and, since 1935, for the [ILO] Year Book”<sup>44</sup>. Since 1924 the Statistical Section has also conducted a survey on “wages and food prices in 16 capital cities”. Its goal was “to compare differences in the levels of real wages in the various countries”<sup>45</sup>.

Labour statistics were also presented in the *League of Nations Statistical Yearbook* as of the first issue, which covers 1926, and was published in 1927. The diversity of definitions of unemployment, in table 2 below, is evident. For Canada the calculation is based on unionized workers, while the data given for Belgium is for unemployment insurance registration.

Table 2. LoN Statistical Yearbook 1926 (1927)<sup>46</sup>

		Tableau 5. STATISTIQUE DU CHOMAGE : NOMBRE DES CHOMEURS ET LEUR POURCENTAGE PARMI LES OUVRIERS SYNDIQUÉS.										
		Table 5. STATISTICS OF UNEMPLOYMENT : NUMBER OF WORKERS UNEMPLOYED AND THEIR PERCENTAGE AMONG TRADE UNIONISTS.										
Fin de mois End of month		AMÉRIQUE — AMERICA		EUROPE								
		Canada		Allemagne <sup>1</sup> — Germany <sup>1</sup>				Autriche Austria	Belgique — Belgium			
		Ouvriers syndiqués Trade Unionists		Ouvriers syndiqués — Trade Unionists				Nombre d'assurés secours Number in receipt of benefit	Caisses d'assurance contre le chômage Unemployment Insurance Societies			
				Chômeurs complets Wholly unemployed		Chômeurs partiels Partially unemployed			Chômeurs complets Wholly unemployed		Chômeurs partiels Partially unemployed	
		Nombre Number	%	Nombre Number	%	Nombre Number	%	Nombre Number	%	Nombre Number	%	
1920	VI . . . .		2.5	209,735	4.0							
	XII . . . .	27,953	13.4	225,581	4.1							
1921	VI . . . .	23,866	13.2	170,612	3.0		7.2	11,035	66,408	9.9	86,823	13.0
	XII . . . .	24,311	15.1	97,687	1.6		1.5	16,713	49,851	6.6	36,232	4.8
1922	VI . . . .	8,032	5.3	36,350	0.6		0.6	33,355	19,068	2.6	23,817	3.3
	XII . . . .	9,920	6.4	182,955	2.8	492,711	8.7	117,144	11,743	1.7	14,312	2.1
1923	VI . . . .	5,299	3.4	235,556	4.1	794,821	15.3	92,789	5,605	0.8	11,653	1.8
	XII . . . .	11,686	7.2	1,304,973	28.2	1,691,309	42.0	98,050	11,017	1.7	12,550	1.9
1924	VI . . . .	9,250	5.8	340,774	10.4	610,849	19.4	63,556	6,659	1.0	15,269	2.3
	XII . . . .	18,373	11.6	282,645	8.1	193,280	6.5	154,491	9,344	1.5	23,410	3.7
1925	VI . . . .	9,578	6.1	130,116	3.5	163,461	5.2	118,366	6,483	1.1	29,108	4.8
	XII . . . .	11,716	7.9	706,189	19.4	695,949	19.8	207,834	16,897	2.8	27,494	4.6
1926	VI . . . .	5,965	4.1	627,287	18.1	596,973	17.2	150,981	5,200	0.9	13,148	2.2
	XII . . . .	9,349	5.9	572,653	16.7	249,628	7.3	205,350	15,804	2.6	17,889	3.0

Total des ouvriers servant de base aux pourcentages de décembre 1926.  
Number of workers on which the percentages for December 1926 are based.

I have furthermore analysed the technical introductions, tables and footnotes of the 1926 *Rapport sur les niveaux de vie des ouvriers dans différents pays* as well as of the *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* of 1940. I abbreviate the former as REP1926 while the latter is referred to as YBK1940. While differing in content and scope, these two publications are representative of ILO work. They help in starting to capture the nature of the evolution of labour statistics over the interwar period.

According to REP1926, the ILO developed an international survey on the cost of living (in selected towns) based on a common protocol and form (questionnaire) but retaining the different associated methodologies of the countries involved, at least in part. The survey was inspired by one that the British Ministry of Labour had initiated a few years earlier<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Page 6 in “75 Years of International Labour Statistics”. *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Page 6 in “75 Years of International Labour Statistics”. *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Page 6 in “75 Years of International Labour Statistics”. *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Page 7 in “75 Years of International Labour Statistics”. *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> <https://wayback.archive-it.org/6321/20160901163315/http://digital.library.northwestern.edu/league/stat.html>

<sup>47</sup> Page 7 in “75 Years of International Labour Statistics”.

On the one hand, the survey was meant to ensure sound cross-country comparability. The protocol established some common basic definitions of time (at work), wages, supplies and methods for their measurement: “On détermine [...] le salaire moyen d’une semaine de 48 heures de travail en temps. L’unité de mesure à laquelle on rapporte ce salaire moyen est constituée par un ‘panier de provisions’, comprenant, en des quantités définies, les denrées alimentaires d’usage courant dans la consommation des ouvriers. Il s’agit de savoir combien de fois le salaire hebdomadaire ainsi établi peut, dans chaque ville, acheter le panier de provisions. Ce chiffre dépend évidemment du prix des denrées, variable dans le temps et dans l’espace”. As regards the form, it had to be filled in by “les administrations des différents pays” on a monthly basis in order to provide “les données nécessaires”. The same calculation of real wages was to be applied in the different towns: “La division du salaire par le prix du panier donne le nombre de paniers que le salaire peut acheter, c’est à dire le ‘salaire réel’” (REP1926, p.27).

On the other hand, several factors weakened (cross-country) data comparability of the survey. The year used and the sample structure of the survey varied greatly; in some countries the number of households surveyed is very small: “Le nombre de budgets sur lesquels ont porté les enquêtes est “[...] très variable [...]: Esthonie, Narva: 11, Tallim: 176; Pays-Bas, 23 (1910-1911) et 76 (1923-1924); Suisse: 323 (1921) [...]; Suède: 1.400 (1923)” (REP1926, p44). As regards the classification of the expenditures, “on observe des divergences parfois importantes de classement. C’est ainsi que les spiritueux et le tabac, englobés en Suède sous la rubrique ‘Alimentation’, sont compris aux Etats-Unis [...] et en Esthonie sous la rubrique ‘Divers’, la rubrique ‘Logement’ comprend au Japon et en Belgique, par exemple, le mobilier, et en Suisse [...] les frais de déménagement, tandis que dans la plupart des pays elle ne se rapporte qu’au loyer, etc.” (REP1926, p44-45). The household units varied as well: “Il convient de noter aussi des différences dans les unités prises [...] tantôt une famille d’une composition donnée, tantôt une unité de consommation telle que le *quet*<sup>48</sup>” (REP1926, p45). As noted in the conclusion of the report, there were two kinds of statistical “comparisons”. While for the first (time series for the same country) data seemed truly comparable –“1° sur la répartition des dépenses selon les différentes catégories de revenus *dans le même pays* et à la même époque”–, for the second (cross-country comparison), data harmonization was seriously undermined by the methodological differences observed, especially as regards classifications, “2° sur la répartition moyenne des dépenses *dans les différents pays* après la guerre” (the emphasis is ours, REP1926, p45). International comparability was definitely not attained.

Fourteen years later, the Yearbook of 1940 explicitly noted the limits of international comparability of its data. As regards cost of living (section 5), it is noted that “[...] many variations [...] are found in the methods of computing cost-of-living index numbers (for example, in regard to geographical scope, the groups of expenditures represented in the general index and the items included in each group, the date, scope, and representative character of the statistical base for the determination of the weights, the method of calculating average prices, group indexes, and the general index, etc.)” (YBK1940, p.137). Such indexes “are far from being equally reliable and representative of price movements”. They “can be used only to *measure fluctuations* in time of the cost-of-living in a given country, and *not to compare the*

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[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms\\_087875.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_087875.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> “A unit [related to the measurement of household expenditure] that [Ernst Engel] labelled ‘quet’ in honour of his master, the Belgian statistician Adolphe Quetelet” (Segura & Rodriguez, 2004: 71).

*levels* of the cost-of-living in a given country, and not to compare the *levels* of the cost-of-living in different countries at any given time” (YBK1940, p.137).

The Yearbook of 1940 actually confirmed the weakness of international comparability of the data in virtually every domain<sup>49</sup>. The key-factor explaining such weaknesses was, again, the limited implementation of internationally harmonized methodologies. As can be read in the preface of the Yearbook, part of the data was “taken from [national] official publications” (YBK1940, preface, p. iv) so, seemingly, they were first collected and published in national contexts for national goals. For instance, while “All data by *industry* or *occupation* in the sections on *employment*, *unemployment*, *hours of work*, and *wages* are given [in the YBK] in a uniform order in accordance with the list [of industrial branches] on page vii [...], [t]he categories correspond to the classification adopted in the statistics of each country, the original terminology having been respected as far as possible, with the result that *there are many differences in scope from one country to another*” (YBK1940, preface, p. iv-v)<sup>50</sup>. The authors insisted: “Despite the various precautions, the diversity of method of the statistics assembled here renders international comparisons possible only with substantial reservations” (YBK1940, preface, p. v).

In section 2 on employment and unemployment, it was noted that the ILO tried to calculate indexes on these issues “to show different aspects of fluctuations in employment”. (YBK1940, p.17). This confirms the idea of showing comparable internal national fluctuations of employment or unemployment in time rather than their cross-country comparison. Actually, the ILO made considerable efforts to attempt *a posteriori* national comparability through calculation of indexes, averages or estimates. In section 3 on hours of work, the calculation of estimates was underlined: “In some countries approximate data have been calculated by the [ILO] with the help of statistics showing the distribution of workers according to the number of hours worked [...]. For this purpose two estimates have been made giving two limits between which the actual average number of hours will probably be found” (YBK1940, p.59).

Section 4 on wages explicitly noted that “In view of the great difference in the nature, scope and methods of compilation and of classification of the statistics, the data should be used rather for comparing the relative situation of workers in different industries or occupations within a country or during years rather than making direct international comparisons” (YBK1940, p.88). As already noted, the Yearbook used a questionnaire to collect some data. This was the case for Table XV on “*hourly wages in October 1939* (or a near date) for *adult males in 30 different occupations* in a certain number of cities”. Data presented was “obtained by the [ILO] each year with the assistance of the statistical authorities of various countries by means of a questionnaire whose object is to collect data as far as possible comparable among themselves” (YBK1940, p.88). Convention 63, issued in 1938 and regarding statistics of hours of work, could have helped to get better data on this topic, yet, further analysis is needed to establish to what extent such data would be internationally comparable.

As regards section 6 on family living studies, “enquêtes” in French, it reads: “Family living studies vary in scope, in methods of compilation and classification, and in the periods of time covered. They relate mainly to working class families, and in some cases also to non-annual

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<sup>49</sup> The Yearbook is divided into eight parts. After the preface, we find the sections devoted to (i) population and gainfully occupied population; (ii) employment and unemployment; (iii) hours of work; (iv) wages; (v) cost of living and retail prices; (vi) family living studies; (vii) migration; (viii) industrial accidents.

<sup>50</sup> In the French version: “les catégories indiquées sont celles des classifications de chaque pays et les terminologies originales ont été respectées”.

workers' families and are not necessarily representative of the wage-earning classes as a whole. The tables, while *not strictly comparable internationally*, illustrate certain general characteristics of family living. The principle problems of these statistics are examined in other publications of the Office"<sup>51</sup> (YBK1940, p.149).

Section 8 was devoted to industrial accidents. It states that Table XXIV would be "a first presentation of an international table of industrial accident statistics", it "gives accident frequency rates for three industrial groups [mining, industry, railways]" (YBK1940, p.165). Yet, while "The accident frequency rate is computed in most cases as the number of employees killed or injured per thousand man-years, [...] in a few countries [such rates are computed] per thousand employees"<sup>52</sup>. The ILO preferred "the method utilizing the number of man-years of employment [...] since it takes into account the annual duration of employment" (YBK1940, p165). Finally, the rates as published mainly referred to "fatal accidents" since "[s]tatistics of non-fatal accidents are relatively of little value for purposes of international comparisons, owing to the great differences in definition, in particular in regard to the inclusion of accidents of short duration"<sup>53</sup> (YBK1940, p.165).

#### 4.4- *Limits of technical cooperation?*

As already mentioned, only one convention was entirely devoted to labour statistics, Convention 63, approved at the end of the studied period, in 1938. It is also the only convention where the technical assistance is clearly underlined. Article 24.1 noted that "The Governing Body of the [ILO] may [...] communicate to the Members of the Organisation *proposals for improving and amplifying the statistics* compiled in pursuance of this Convention or for promoting their comparability". Point 2 says further that "Each Member ratifying this Convention undertakes that it will-- (a) submit for the consideration of its competent statistical authority any such proposals communicated to it by the Governing Body; (b) indicate in its annual report upon the application of the Convention the extent to which it has given effect to such proposals"<sup>54</sup>.

While recommending the creation of a committee of experts, the ICLS of 1931 implicitly noted the need for the development of technical assistance: "Hence the extremely valuable recommendation that a standing committee of experts should be set up to assist the Office in developing its wage statistics and prepare the ground for a possible International Convention. This recommendation, if approved by the Governing Body, will mean the creation of *a new organ of co-operation between the Office and the statistical authorities of the different countries*, and will open up the field for continuous and gradual improvement as the material available increases in scope and value"<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> International Survey of Recent Family Living Studies, *International Labour Review*, vol. XXXIX, n°5 and 6, May and June 1939; ILO, Methods of Conducting Family Living Studies, *Studies and Reports*, Series N, n°23, Geneva, 1940.

<sup>52</sup> In French: "Le taux de fréquence des accidents est calculé dans la plupart des cas sous forme du nombre de personnes tuées ou blessées pour mille années-ouvrier ou, dans quelques pays, par mille personnes employées. Du point de vue des comparaisons internationales, la méthode qui se sert du nombre des années-ouvrier est plus satisfaisante, car tient compte de la durée effective de l'emploi" (YBK1940, p.165).

<sup>53</sup> ILO, Industrial Accident Statistics, *Studies and Reports*, Series N, n°22, Geneva.

<sup>54</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312208:NO](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312208:NO)

<sup>55</sup> "The Fourth International Conference of Labour Statisticians", *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1. July 1931, p1-23. Page 17, [https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602\(1931-24-1\)1-23.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09602/09602(1931-24-1)1-23.pdf)



The current ILO Bureau of statistics confirms that “Initially, the Bureau’s technical assistance activities were limited to the dissemination of the international standards contained in the resolutions adopted by the ICLS”. It is only “Towards the end of the 1930s [that] the Bureau’s experts in particular subjects began to visit countries at their request, to advise them on specific topics”<sup>56</sup>. The weakness of international comparability, as underlined in the preceding section, seems ultimately to be linked to a limited development of technical cooperation. The quantification process described in Scheme 1, in section 3, was not completely followed by the ILO. What (political, technical) reasons were behind this?

## 5- Conclusions

Serious work has been done by the ILO as regards methodological standardization and *a posteriori* statistical treatment, yet international comparability of data remained weak throughout the interwar period. This attests, in part, to the limited development of the international technical assistance necessary to translate methodological standardization into effective comparability. It also confirms that, though the ILO did centralize labour statistics from different countries, and did encourage discussions and propositions on common statistical methods, the Organization did not succeed in producing a comprehensive “international quantification”. In other words, the ILO established their recognition and expertise through published data and specialized articles, as well as their reports and conferences, but not completely enough to benefit from the power associated to production of quantification, i.e. the capacity to incite political change through (internationally based) technical reform of national statistical programs.

Different factors may explain the “incompleteness” of the quantification process at the ILO. Some observers consider that it was more difficult to implement a statistical program on labour than on other internationally measured topics. Labour indicators are considered to be particularly complex to elaborate and labour information is thought as being a particularly sensitive domain. It directly reflects government policy on worker rights. Measurement of unemployment, for instance, reveals the coverage granted under unemployment insurance. Yet, despite facing similar difficulties, the LoN’s EFO developed a more comprehensive statistical program. Indeed, the production of economic and financial statistics was also politically sensitive and constrained by technical challenges – trade data comparison “evaluated” country trade openness while the choice of units of measure for the volume of goods, for instance, was still at issue in the 1920s.

I suggest an alternative hypothesis: the ILO focused on political norms to influence Member States policies rather than on intense technical activity as the EFO did. For Sandrine Kott, “Durant l’entre-deux-guerres, et tout particulièrement durant les années 1920, l’activité principale de l’OIT réside dans l’élaboration et la diffusion, en Europe essentiellement, d’un ensemble de conventions et de recommandations qui se fixent pour mission la régulation des conditions du travail industriel et agricole [...]” (Kott, 2008: p29). This is confirmed by our analysis of the conventions produced in the interwar period, essentially focused on the norms, and much less on their measurable and comparative “evaluation”.

This ILO priority, based on political norms, can be related to the influence of social reformers, while the use of statistics (their implicit political norm) was more often developed by liberals. Take the case of the British EFO’s official, Alexandre Loveday. His remark, in 1922, on the ILO’s lack of “statistical vision” is significant. Loveday noted the absence of a clear link, in

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<sup>56</sup> “75 Years of International Labour Statistics” *Op. Cit.*



several tables prepared by the ILO, between what was to be measured and why it was measured: “I disagree with a number of the figures prepared by the B.I.T. [...]. My criticism is that I cannot find in either [table], a single definition of anything at all”. More important, “I do not know [...] what the tables are intended to prove”<sup>57</sup>.

Further analysis is needed in order to better understand the characteristics and development of the ILO’s statistical program. The reduced number of officials working in the ILO’s Statistical Service is significant. The study of this Section, particularly their micro-decisions available in internal memos and correspondence, should help to understand the nature of the interactions between the ILO and its Member States and thus to better identify the political ambition given (or not) to labour statistics.

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<sup>57</sup> Page 1 in Loveday’s memorandum to McKinnon Wood, May 24, 1922; LoN’s Archives, Box P.133, “Archives of Mr. Loveday”.

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## Annex. ILO Conventions, 1919-1939

<b>Technical conventions</b> <sup>58</sup>	Key-words: data, statistics, information, definition, category, communicate
C001 - Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919	--
C002 – Unemployment Convention, 1919	Article 1. Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall communicate to the International Labour Office, at intervals as short as possible and not exceeding three months, all available information, <b>statistical or otherwise, concerning unemployment, including reports on measures taken or contemplated to combat unemployment.</b> Whenever practicable, the information shall be made available for such communication not later than three months after the end of the period to which it relates.
C003 - Maternity Protection Convention, 1919	--
C004 - Night Work (Women) Convention, 1919	Abrogated by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 106th Session (2017)]
C005 - Minimum Age (Industry) Convention, 1919	--
C006 - Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1919	--
C007 - Minimum Age (Sea) Convention, 1920	--
C008 - Unemployment Indemnity (Shipwreck) Convention, 1920	--
C009 - Placing of Seamen Convention, 1920	Article 10.1. Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall communicate to the [ILO] all available information, <b>statistical or otherwise, concerning unemployment among seamen and concerning the work of its seamen's employment agencies.</b>
C010 - Minimum Age (Agriculture) Convention, 1921	--
C011 - Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921	--
C012 - Workmen's Compensation (Agriculture) Convention, 1921	--
C013 - White Lead (Painting) Convention, 1921	Article 7. Statistics with regard to lead poisoning among working painters shall be obtained-- (a) as to morbidity--by notification and certification of all cases of lead poisoning; (b) as to mortality-- <b>by a method approved by the official statistical authority in each country.</b>
C014 - Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921	Article 1.1. For the purpose of this Convention, the term industrial undertaking includes— (a) mines, [...] 2. This definition shall be subject to the special national exceptions contained in the Washington Convention limiting the hours of work in industrial undertakings to eight in the day and forty-eight in the week, so far as such exceptions are applicable to the present Convention. 3. Where necessary, in addition to the above enumeration, <b>each Member may define the line of division which separates industry from commerce and agriculture.</b>
C015 - Minimum Age (Trimmers and Stokers) Convention, 1921	Abrogated by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 106th Session (2017)
C016 - Medical Examination of Young Persons (Sea) Convention, 1921	--

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12000:::NO::>

C017 - Workmen's Compensation (Accidents) Convention, 1925	--
C018 - Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention, 1925	--
C019 - Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention, 1925	--
C020 - Night Work (Bakeries) Convention, 1925	--
C021 - Inspection of Emigrants Convention, 1926	Abrogated by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 107th Session (2018)
C022 - Seamen's Articles of Agreement Convention, 1926	Article 8. In order that the seaman may satisfy himself as to the nature and extent of his rights and obligations, national law shall lay down the measures to be taken to enable clear information to be obtained on board as to the conditions of employment, either by posting the conditions of the agreement in a place easily accessible from the crew's quarters, or by some other appropriate means.
C023 - Repatriation of Seamen Convention, 1926	--
C024 - Sickness Insurance (Industry) Convention, 1927	--
C025 - Sickness Insurance (Agriculture) Convention, 1927	--
C026 - Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention, 1928	Article 5. Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall communicate annually to the [ILO] a general statement giving a list of the trades or parts of trades in which the minimum wage-fixing machinery has been applied, indicating the methods as well as the results of the application of the machinery and, in summary form, the approximate numbers of workers covered, the minimum rates of wages fixed, and the more important of the other conditions, if any, established relevant to the minimum rates.
C027 - Marking of Weight (Packages Transported by Vessels) Convention, 1929 (No. 27) <b>No information on the "unit"</b>	Article 1.2. In exceptional cases where it is difficult to determine the exact weight, national laws or regulations may allow an approximate weight to be marked.
C028 - Protection against Accidents (Dockers) Convention, 1929 (No. 28)	Withdrawn by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 106th Session (2017)
C030 - Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1930 (No. 30)	Article 1. [...] <b>The competent authority in each country shall define</b> the line which separates commercial and trading establishments, and establishments in which the persons employed are mainly engaged in office work, from industrial and agricultural establishments.
C031 - Hours of Work (Coal Mines) Convention, 1931 (No. 31)	Withdrawn by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 88th Session (2000)
C032 - Protection against Accidents (Dockers) Convention (Revised), 1932	Article 9.1. Appropriate measures shall be prescribed to ensure that no hoisting machine, or gear, whether fixed or loose, used in connection therewith, is employed in the processes on shore or on board ship unless it is in a safe working condition. 2. In particular, (1) before being taken into use, the said machines, fixed gear on board ship accessory thereto <b>as defined by national laws or regulations, [...]</b> .
C033 - Minimum Age (Non-Industrial Employment) Convention, 1932 (No. 33)	Article 1. [...] <b>The competent authority in each country shall, after consultation with the principal organisations of employers and workers concerned, define the line of division which separates the employments covered by this Convention from those dealt with in the three aforesaid Conventions.</b>

C034 - Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention, 1933 (No. 34)	Article 7. There shall be included in the annual reports to be submitted under Article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation all necessary information concerning the exceptions allowed under Article 3. Article 3.2. Exceptions may only be allowed in virtue of this Article for agencies catering for categories of workers exactly <b>defined by national laws or regulations</b> and belonging to occupations placing for which is carried on under special conditions justifying such an exception.
C035 - Old-Age Insurance (Industry, etc.) Convention, 1933 (No. 35)	--
C036 - Old-Age Insurance (Agriculture) Convention, 1933 (No. 36)	--
C037 - Invalidity Insurance (Industry, etc.) Convention, 1933 (No. 37)	--
C038 - Invalidity Insurance (Agriculture) Convention, 1933	--
C039 - Survivors' Insurance (Industry, etc.) Convention, 1933 (No. 39)	Article 19.2. National laws or regulations <b>shall define--</b> (a) the cases in which a child other than a legitimate child shall be deemed to be the child of a widow for the purpose of entitling her to a pension; (b) the age until which a child shall be considered dependent upon a widow or shall be entitled to an orphan's pension: <b>Provided that this age shall in no case be less than fourteen.</b>
C040 - Survivors' Insurance (Agriculture) Convention, 1933	Idem C039
C041 - Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1934	Abrogated by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 106th Session (2017)
C042 - Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention (Revised), 1934	--
C043 - Sheet-Glass Works Convention, 1934	--
C044 - Unemployment Provision Convention, 1934	Article 2.4. This Convention does not apply to seamen, sea fishermen, or agricultural workers as <b>these categories may be defined by national laws or regulations.</b>
C045 - Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935 (No. 45)	--
C046 - Hours of Work (Coal Mines) Convention (Revised), 1935 (No. 46)	Withdrawn by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 88th Session (2000)
C047 - Forty-Hour Week Convention, 1935 (No. 47)	--
C048 - Maintenance of Migrants' Pension Rights Convention, 1935	--
C049 - Reduction of Hours of Work (Glass-Bottle Works) Convention, 1935	--
C050 - Recruiting of Indigenous Workers Convention, 1936	Abrogated by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 107th Session (2018)
C051 - Reduction of Hours of Work (Public Works) Convention, 1936	Withdrawn by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 88th Session (2000)
C052 - Holidays with Pay Convention, 1936	--
C053 - Officers' Competency Certificates Convention, 1936	--
C054 - Holidays with Pay (Sea) Convention, 1936	--
C055 - Shipowners' Liability (Sick and Injured Seamen) Convention, 1936	--

C056 - Sickness Insurance (Sea) Convention, 1936	--
C057 - Hours of Work and Manning (Sea) Convention, 1936	Article 2. (d) hours of work means time during which a member of the crew is required by the orders of a superior to do any work on account of the vessel or the owner, or to be at the disposal of a superior outside the crew's quarters.
C058 - Minimum Age (Sea) Convention (Revised), 1936	--
C059 - Minimum Age (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1937	Article 5.2. The annual reports to be submitted under Article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation shall include <b>full information concerning the age or ages prescribed by national laws</b> in pursuance of subparagraph (a) of the preceding paragraph or concerning the action taken by the appropriate authority in exercise of the powers conferred upon it in pursuance of subparagraph (b) of the preceding paragraph, as the case may be.
C060 - Minimum Age (Non-Industrial Employment) Convention (Revised), 1937	Withdrawn by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 106th Session (2017)]
C061 - Reduction of Hours of Work (Textiles) Convention, 1937	Withdrawn by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 88th Session (2000)
C062 - Safety Provisions (Building) Convention, 1937	Article 6. Each Member which ratifies this Convention undertakes to communicate annually to the International Labour Office <b>the latest statistical information relating to the number and classification of accidents</b> occurring to persons occupied on work within the scope of this Convention.
C063 - Convention concerning Statistics of Wages and Hours of Work, 1938 Convention concerning Statistics of Wages and Hours of Work in the Principal Mining and Manufacturing Industries, Including Building and Construction, and in Agriculture	Article 24.1. The Governing Body of the International Labour Office may, after taking such technical advice as it may deem appropriate, communicate to the Members of the Organisation <b>proposals for improving and amplifying the statistics compiled in pursuance of this Convention or for promoting their comparability.</b> 2. Each Member ratifying this Convention undertakes that it will-- (a) submit for the consideration of its competent statistical authority any such proposals communicated to it by the Governing Body; (b) <b>indicate in its annual report upon the application of the Convention the extent to which it has given effect to such proposals.</b>
C064 - Contracts of Employment (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939	Abrogated by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 107th Session (2018)
C065 - Penal Sanctions (Indigenous Workers) Convention, 1939	Abrogated by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 107th Session (2018)
C066 - Migration for Employment Convention, 1939	Withdrawn by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 88th Session (2000)
C067 - Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Convention, 1939	Abrogated by decision of the International Labour Conference at its 106th Session (2017)
<b>Fundamental convention</b>	
C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930	Article 22. The annual reports that Members [...] <b>shall contain as full information as possible</b> , in respect of each territory concerned, regarding the extent to which recourse has been had to forced or compulsory labour in that territory, the purposes for which it has been employed, <b>the sickness and death rates, hours of work, methods of payment of wages and rates of wages, and any other relevant information.</b>