What is the significance of the "weeks of unemployment" announced by the Manpower Survey?

In accordance with international convention, in the Manpower Survey, weeks of unemployment refers to "total number of weeks from the time the unemployed begin looking for work up the final day of the survey's reference week." If a person has not worked for an extended period, but has not looked for work continuously during that period, calculation of weeks of unemployment will start from the most recent time that person began looking for work.