



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Annual review of working conditions in the EU: 2003-2004

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This report is available in electronic format only.

This review examines four key dimensions in working conditions and quality of work and employment: career and employment, health and well-being, skills development and work-life balance. The report first outlines relevant legislative and policy developments, before examining trends in the workplace. In terms of career and employment, employment rates are consistently rising for women and older workers, at least in the EU15, but progress is currently too slow to achieve the Lisbon targets. In the area of health and well-being, improvements regarding safety at work are reflected in the significant decline of serious and fatal accidents at work. Looking at skills development, participation rates in lifelong learning have increased, particularly for women. There was a drop in IT-related training. Under work-life balance, progress has been slow, due to a complexity of factors involved in improving reconciliation of working and non-working life, such as work organisation, working time arrangements, or provision of care facilities.

Introduction

This first EU-level annual review for the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO) summarises the main developments at EU level in the area of working conditions and quality of work and employment.

The Foundation paper [Quality of work and employment in Europe: Issues and challenges](#) , identifies four dimensions in promoting quality of work:

- ensuring career and employment security;
- maintaining and promoting the health and well-being of workers;
- developing skills and competences;
- reconciling working and non-working life.

The European strategy for full employment and better jobs for all, as outlined in the [Employment Guidelines 2003 \(pdf file\)](#) , gives a definition of quality in work and employment:

'Quality is a multi-dimensional concept addressing both job characteristics and the wider labour market. It encompasses intrinsic quality at work, skills, lifelong learning and career development, gender equality, health and safety at work, flexibility and security, inclusion and access to the labour market, work organisation and work-life balance, social dialogue and worker involvement, diversity and non-discrimination, and overall work performance.'

Legislative developments

Implementation of the Health and Safety at Work Directives

A Commission Communication (February 2004) on the [practical implementation of the Health and Safety at Work Directives](#) examines how the [Framework Directive](#) of 1989 and five of its individual directives have been transposed into national law and are applied within the Member States. The individual directives concern:

- minimum requirements for the workplace (89/654);
- the use of work equipment (89/655);
- personal protective equipment (89/656);
- manual handling of loads (90/269);
- display screen equipment (90/270).

The report concludes that the EU legislation has had a positive influence on national standards for occupational health and safety, and has contributed towards improved working conditions. At the same time, the report pinpoints flaws in the process which are preventing the implementation of this legislation to its full potential.

The number of accidents and illnesses is still high, though some improvements have been made. The report outlines the gaps in policy and practice, underlining the need for greater attention by the sectors and workers concerned to bring about the necessary changes. It is estimated that the total costs to the economy of accidents at work and

work-related illnesses amount to between 2.6% and 3.8% of gross national product (GNP).

The Communication gives both statistical and subjective data (perceptions of workers and employers) based on the ad hoc module of the 1999 [Labour Force Survey](#) (LFS) and the Foundation's [European working conditions surveys](#). While the statistical data show a decrease in the number and severity of accidents at work, the feeling of the working population is that working conditions in general have not improved. More workers report suffering from back pain or strain due to repetitive movements. These problems are also confirmed in national reports from the Member States.

The Commission report states that work organisation is evidently not in line with the directive requirements to reduce significantly the number of workers suffering from unfavourable working conditions. Regarding particular types of physical strain, such as painful or tiring positions, more workers seem to be affected now than was the case five or 10 years ago. Workers in atypical or precarious employment situations are more vulnerable to such strain.

The perception of the working population indicates that much remains to be done in ensuring that work control and work organisation practices prevent problems such as repetitive work and psychosocial risks. This suggests an insufficient application of some of the general principles of prevention set out in the Framework Directive 89/391 and its first five individual directives.

Member States' national reports state that a full assessment on the costs and benefits to companies is not feasible due to a lack of indicators. However, it is clear that a reduction in accidents at work and worker absenteeism will decrease business costs, and should increase productivity.

One of the most important new developments of EU health and safety legislation was the introduction of risk assessment. The documentation of the results provides the basis of a risk prevention programme including technical and/or organisational measures. Up to now, risk assessment, documentation and supervision have not been universally spread. However, concerns remain about the incomplete and superficial nature of the risk assessment.

The situation among SMEs warrants immediate attention. They report a much higher rate of accidents compared with larger companies. They also report a greater proportion of employers who are not well informed. Specific problems were also highlighted for the public sector and in industrial sectors with a high number of temporary workers or other 'atypical' employment contracts.

Working time

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted the Directive 2003/88/EC concerning [certain aspects of the organisation of working time \(pdf file\)](#) on 4 November 2003.

In February 2004, the European Parliament decided to call on the Commission to revise the 1993 [Working Time Directive \(pdf file\)](#), which limits the working week to a maximum of 48 hours. The central issue is the option for individual workers to [opt out of the 48-hour working week](#). This 'opt-out' offers the possibility for Member States to allow a derogation from the maximum 48-hour average by prior individual consent of the worker. A growing number of countries are proposing the opt-out in certain sectors: for example, France, Germany and the Netherlands in the health sector, and Luxembourg in the hotel and catering sector. The Commission has been called upon to find ways to tackle abuse of the opt-out provision and to strengthen its voluntary nature. The European Parliament adopted an own initiative [report \(pdf file\)](#) on the subject.

The report of the European Parliament also considers the definition of working time in the light of recent Court of Justice rulings on time spent 'on-call' ([Curia - CP0368EN](#) ; [Court of Justice - Case C-303-98](#)). MEPs have asked the Commission to formulate a specific long-term proposal to resolve the question of how to classify time spent on-call at the workplace. The recent [Communication \(pdf file\)](#) from the Commission on working time analyses both the implementation of the opt-out and the impact of recent case law concerning the definition of working time and the qualification of time spent 'on-call' as 'working time' or 'rest time'. ([ECJ rules that on-call working is working time](#) .) This Communication is also considered as the first phase of consultation of the European social partners pursuant to Article 138(2) of the Treaty.

Anna Diamantopoulou, Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs when the consultation was launched,

commented that:

'in practice the measures that the Directive foresees to safeguard the workers' interests when opting out are not properly implemented. We need to find a solution that balances the interests of all concerned. We also need to consider how best to define working time, to avoid what is currently a flexible legislative framework becoming one that creates unnecessary burdens.' ([IP/04/1 - pdf file](#))

The European Parliament report comments that the recent Communication from the Commission on working time does not introduce any firm proposal for dealing with the problems which have arisen.

A further issue raised in the report of the European Parliament is the need to ensure a better balance between work and family life. The report emphasises that the health and safety of workers has priority. A revised directive should also provide flexibility for employers.

The MEPs ask the Commission to:

'produce an additional communication containing a specific and reasoned statement of its attitude regarding all the provisions of the directive that may need to be revised, to examine solutions to re-establish clear obligations of proper working time measurement for employers in the framework of a revision of the directive.'

The report further points to the impact of working time regulations, particularly for women, and draws attention to the worrying trend of women working two part-time jobs in order to earn enough money to live. This often leads to working weeks that exceed the legal limit. The report also underlines that the long-hours culture of higher professions and managerial jobs is an obstacle for the upward mobility of women and reinforces gender segregation.

Temporary agency workers

In June 2003, the Council failed to find political agreement on a [proposal \(pdf file\)](#) for a directive on working conditions for temporary agency workers ([IP/03/796](#)). Work on the dossier will continue with the aim of finding a political compromise on the following points:

- encouraging the integration of unemployed people into the labour market;
- restrictions regarding temporary agency work;
- determining the nature of exemption from the principle of equal treatment and length of the 'qualifying period' <http://ue.eu.int/pressData/en/lisa/75977.pdf>.

Physical agents directives

The [Noise Directive \(pdf file\)](#) protecting workers from risks related to noise was formally adopted by the Council in February 2003. This is the second directive following the splitting up of an original 1993 'physical agents' proposal. (The first deals with mechanical vibration.) The Noise Directive lays down minimum requirements for the protection of workers from risks to their health and safety due to exposure to noise. Where existing EU legislation specifies a limit of 90 decibels (dB), the directive reduces this to 87 dB calculated over a period of one week. Art. 4 of the directive foresees the obligation of the employer to carry out a risk assessment and lists a number of aspects for consideration in that regard. In accordance with the [Framework Directive](#) and the [Community strategy on health and safety at work 2002-2006 \(pdf file\)](#), the directive emphasises the need for prevention. Risks arising from exposure to noise should be eliminated at their source or reduced to a minimum, taking account of technical progress and the availability of measures. If the risks arising from exposure to noise cannot be prevented by other means, appropriate, properly fitting individual hearing protectors shall be provided to the workers and used by them. Final provisions of the directive foresee that the Member States provide a report to the Commission on the practical implementation of the directive, indicating the perspective of both sides of industry. These reports shall contain descriptions of best practice for preventing noise with a harmful effect on health as well as the actions taken by the Member States to promote the better knowledge of such practice.

A common position was reached at the Council meeting in October 2003 on a Directive on [minimum health and safety requirements regarding the exposure of workers to electromagnetic fields and waves \(pdf file\)](#). The directive requires employers to carry out assessments of the risk posed to their employees by electro-magnetic fields and sets

out issues that should be covered in this risk assessment. The directive establishes maximum levels for exposure and levels at which preventive measures must be taken by the employers. On the basis of the risk assessment, the employer is required to devise and implement an action plan comprising technical and/or organisational measures intended to prevent exposure exceeding the limit values.

In February 2004, the European Parliament dealt with the Council common position and proposed amendments. The [European Parliament report \(pdf file\)](#) emphasises that compliance with the exposure limit values will protect workers' health from any known short-term adverse effect. Due to unavailability of scientific data, possible long-term adverse effects of exposure are not taken into account. One of the amendments proposed in the draft recommendation for the second Parliament reading is the insertion of limit values for exposure to static magnetic fields.

This directive is the third in a package of four health and safety directives aimed at the protection of workers from risks arising from exposure to physical agents. It follows the adoption of the directive on noise and the directive on vibrations. A fourth directive, on optical radiation, will be proposed by the Commission in 2004. ([IP/03/1416](#)).

Asbestos Directive

The Directive 2003/18/EC, amending Directive 83/477/EEC, [on the protection of workers from risks related to the exposure to asbestos at work \(pdf file\)](#) sets much stricter rules protecting workers during demolition of buildings, repairs or maintenance where there is a risk of exposure to asbestos, a known carcinogen. Member States have three years to transpose the directive into national law.

Self-employed workers

Self-employed workers are not covered by Community directives on health and safety at work nor by national legislation in certain Member States. The Council Recommendation of 18 February 2003 [concerning the improvement of the protection of the health and safety at work of self-employed workers \(pdf file\)](#) recommends promoting the health and safety of self-employed workers in the context of Member State policies on preventing occupational accidents and diseases, and recommends taking measures accordingly to improve the situation for this section of the labour force.

This recommendation follows a resolution adopted by the European Parliament on [Better health and safety protection for the self-employed](#) and a [Report of the European Parliament \(pdf file\)](#) on a Council Recommendation concerning the application of legislation governing health and safety at work for self-employed workers. As the recommendation is non-binding, the Parliament called on the Commission to propose compulsory measures if the steps taken by national governments do not lead to an adequate standard of protection after four years. The recommendation includes a clause for a review of the effectiveness of existing national measures or measures taken subsequent to its adoption.

Policy developments

Undeclared work

The [Council Resolution on transforming undeclared work into regular employment \(pdf file\)](#) aims at reducing the 'grey' or 'informal' economy and reducing levels of undeclared work. A policy mix of preventive measures and sanctions is proposed.

Undeclared work had been defined in the [Commission Communication on Undeclared Work](#) as:

'any paid activities that are lawful as regards their nature but not declared to the public authorities, taking into account differences in the regulatory system between Member States.'

Studies estimate the size of the informal economy at an average of between 7% and 16% of EU GDP. Issues to be

tackled include the risks to health and safety for undeclared workers, implications for gender equality and for social protection systems. A specific guideline (No. 9) was included in the [Employment Guidelines 2003 \(pdf file\)](#) . Key objectives are strengthening incentives and removing disincentives to declare work.

In their [multiannual work programme \(pdf file\)](#) , the European social partners agreed to hold a seminar on undeclared work in 2005.

Occupational health and safety

A Commission [Recommendation concerning the European schedule of occupational diseases \(pdf file\)](#) updates the existing list of occupational diseases dating from 1990. This updated list takes account of how certain occupational diseases emerge. It is one step towards the prevention focus highlighted in the [Community Strategy on Health and Safety at Work 2002-2006 \(pdf file\)](#) . The recommendation also includes an additional list of diseases suspected of being occupational in origin which should be subject to notification and which may be considered at a later stage for inclusion in the full list.

Corporate social responsibility

In May 2003, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in response to the Commission's [Communication \(pdf file\)](#) on this subject. This followed on from the [Green Paper \(pdf file\)](#) (2001) on *Promoting a European framework for corporate social responsibility*. The resolution emphasises, as does the [report \(pdf file\)](#) of the European Parliament on CSR, that the Communication does not pay sufficient attention to gender policy issues in relation to CSR principles. Active promotion of workforce diversity, work-life balance, and promoting the presence of women in business management are considered as factors that may strengthen companies' sense of social and environmental responsibility. Further, the resolution set out that the European Year of People with Disabilities in 2003 should be used as an opportunity to promote more socially responsible behaviour and equal employment opportunities.

The report by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, [Towards a sustainable corporate social responsibility](#) , highlights CSR initiatives in the area of living and working conditions and the need to focus on internal aspects of CSR, i.e. on issues such as job quality, and health and safety provisions.

Official statistics

The new Eurostat publication *Work and health in the EU: A statistical portrait* combines data for the period 1994-2002 from various European statistical data sources on health and safety at work. These include in particular the [Labour Force Survey](#) (LFS), the [European working conditions surveys](#) and the [European Statistics on Accidents at Work](#) . The publication gives a general picture of working life, including characteristics of the European labour force and the overall significance of ill-health due to work-related factors. It covers data on risk factors and outcomes of safety at work, work-related diseases and some psycho-social problems.

In accordance with the intention of the Community Strategy on health and safety at work 2002-2006, the statistical portrait introduces some quantifiable elements relating to work environment factors which are likely to cause problems beyond those occupational accidents and illnesses that are already recognised.

The Eurostat [structural indicators](#) on employment offer a range of key data on employment and working conditions and occupational health and safety.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions extended its [working conditions surveys](#) to cover the 13 acceding and candidate countries in the year 2001. The report [Working conditions in the acceding and candidate countries](#) reflects differences between the EU15 and the then acceding countries with regard to the structure of the workforce, working time, work organisation, gender differences, physical risks, and health and safety. Working hours tend to be longer in the acceding and candidate countries. Unlike in the EU15 where long working hours are predominantly a factor for men, there is only a slight difference in the acceding and candidate countries between the length of the working week for men (45.4 hours) and women (43.3 hours).

Part-time work is less widespread in the acceding and candidate countries, whereas atypical working hours are more common.

Data presented in the [Employment in Europe 2003 \(pdf file\)](#) report (see next chapter) on working time patterns confirm these survey outcomes.

The main features of work organisation in the acceding and candidate countries compared with the EU15 are more centralised and more hierarchical work, less autonomy, fewer responsibilities, far less control over work, and fewer training opportunities.

There is less horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the labour market and a more even distribution of income. As the survey is the first of this kind, it is not yet possible to identify specific trends. Only future surveys will show if the current trends observed in the then acceding and candidate countries are moving in the direction of the EU15 in terms of greater segregation between men and women in the workplace.

Regarding physical risks and health and safety, the conditions in the acceding and candidate countries are worse than in the EU15. More workers are concerned by physical risk factors, particularly by exposure to intense noise, heat and painful positions. Compared with 27% in the EU15, 40% of workers feel that their job endangers their health and safety at work. Self-reported work-related health problems are more widespread, especially general fatigue and musculo-skeletal disorders.

Workplace trends

Quality in work

The concept of 'quality in work' rose to prominence at the [Lisbon Summit](#) in March 2000. Achieving more and better jobs is a central goal of the [Social Policy Agenda \(pdf\)](#). Improving job quality is seen as crucial for raising employment levels.

According to the Communication [Employment and social policies: a framework for investing in quality \(pdf file\)](#), 'quality in work' means 'not only looking at, or taking account of, the existence of paid employment but also looking at the characteristics of that employment. It is a relative and a multi-dimensional concept.'

In a special chapter on 'Flexibility, security and quality in work' the Employment in Europe (EIE) 2003 report analyses in detail some dimensions of quality in work: job satisfaction, education and training, labour market transitions, and working time arrangements. The report assesses the extent of current labour market flexibility and security both for the EU15 and the then acceding countries. ([EU0311NU02](#))

Integrating or reintegrating those on the margins of the labour market into stable employment relationships - particularly the young and low-skilled and people with care responsibility - is regarded as being particularly important:

'This requires the availability of attractive work, offering suitable working time arrangements, possibilities to reconcile work and family life, and opportunities for skills upgrading and career advancement. In addition to financial incentives, career advancement and other quality elements, working time flexibility and job security are for many people key inducements to take up work and to stay in the labour market.'

An increase in labour market flexibility must be in line with the strong demand for high quality employment. Access to training, particularly for low skilled workers, is considered an essential element in the balance between flexibility and security.

The EIE 2003 report builds on the definitions and updates the data in the previous reports [Employment in Europe 2002 \(pdf file\)](#) and [Employment in Europe 2001 \(pdf file\)](#). The recent data on the evolution of job satisfaction and objective job quality do not indicate significant changes in quality in work between 1996 and 2000. The analysis of

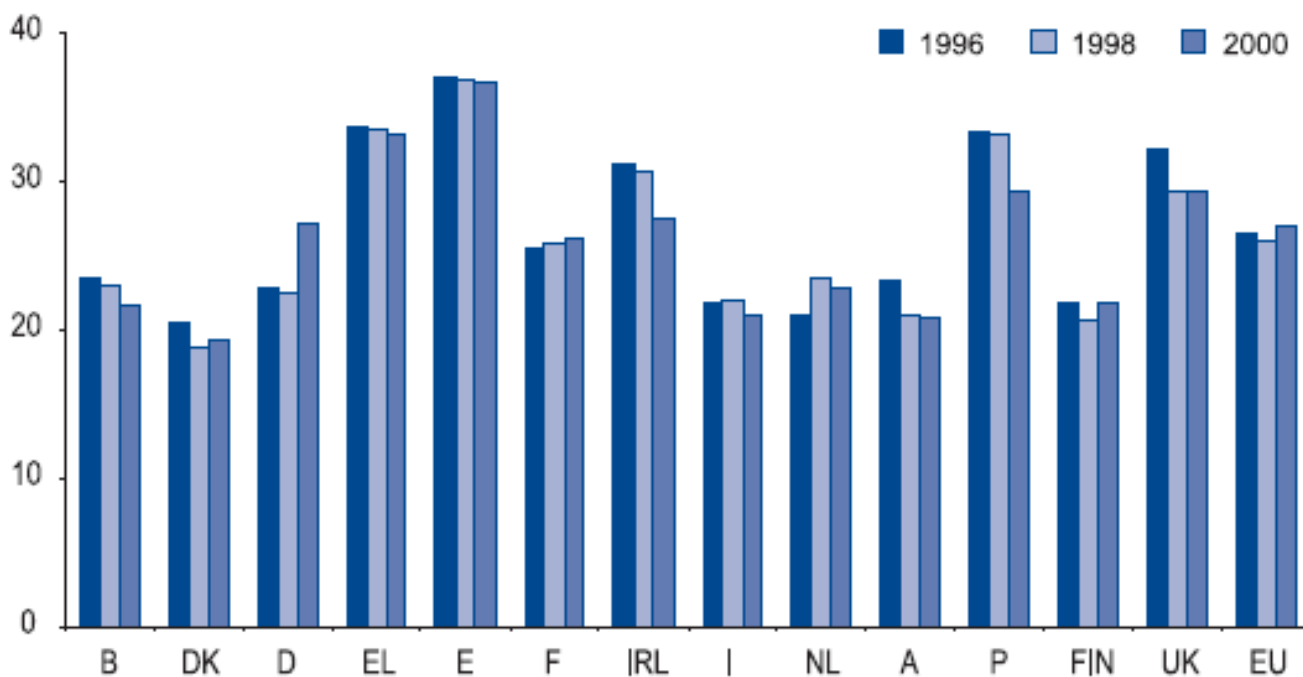
data for the latest report is mainly based on a specific ad hoc module on these issues in the 2001 Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the European Community Household Panel (ECHP).

In assessing objective job quality, the 2003 report uses the classification of jobs suggested in the Employment in Europe 2001 report. Main indicators to identify a 'good' or a 'bad' job are job security, access to training, career development and pay. These factors are chosen with regard to data availability. Further dimensions of job quality, such as working conditions, will be integrated into future analyses. According to the selected factors, four types of jobs are distinguished:

- dead-end jobs;
- low pay/productivity jobs;
- jobs of reasonable quality;
- jobs of good quality.

At EU level, three quarters of all jobs are of good or reasonable quality. Nevertheless, a considerable share of jobs are of relatively low quality, with either low pay, and/or lack of job security, access to training or career development. Differences emerge between countries in the persistence of low quality employment and in transitions between employment, particularly from low to high quality employment and from temporary to permanent employment. For some Member States, little or no significant changes in quality in work can be found.

Figure 1 Job quality in the EU, 1996-2000 Source: *Employment in Europe, 2003*, Chart 81, p. 127



Source: Eurostat, ECHP UDB version June 2003

Notes: no data for Luxembourg and Sweden

The [Communication \(pdf file\) *Improving quality in work - recent review of progress*](#) underlines the positive correlation between quality in work, productivity, employment and social inclusion (EU0402NU03). The purpose of this report is to review the ongoing efforts to improve quality in work and the progress achieved under the [10 indicators \(pdf file\)](#) of quality in work identified by the Commission. The Communication emphasises the positive link between overall employment performance and job quality.

To a certain extent, the analysed trends and performances around the quality dimensions are favourable although considerable improvements are required in order to achieve the targets of the [European Employment Strategy](#). Such improvements include investment in human capital, reducing gender gaps in the labour market, sufficient

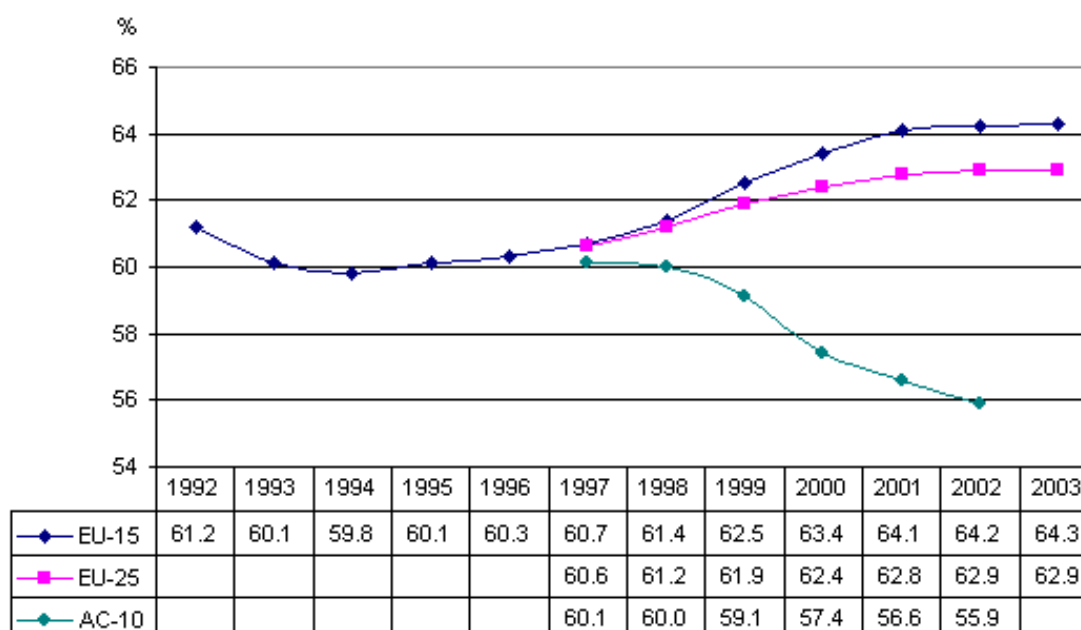
provision of childcare, and promoting a culture of lifelong learning. The new [Community strategy on health and safety at work](#) focuses on the need to consolidate a culture of risk prevention and to combine a variety of policy instruments.

The [Joint Employment Report 2004 \(pdf file\)](#) notes that the link between increasing labour productivity and better quality in work is not well explored in the national action programmes.

Overall employment rate

The [total employment rate \(pdf file\)](#) is slightly higher in the EU15 than in the EU25. Employment rates in the new Member States are considerably lower than in the EU15. The data for this [structural indicator](#) show a slow increase in the total employment rate.

Figure 2 Employment rates in the 15-64 age group



Source: Eurostat structural indicators, EM011-013

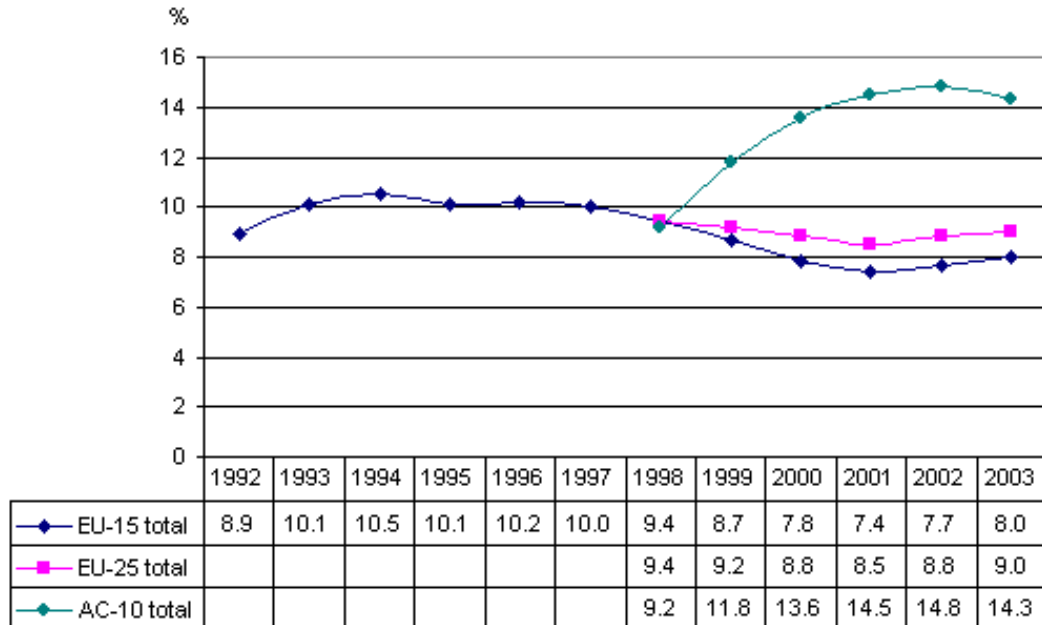
The [Delivering Lisbon report \(pdf file\)](#) from the Commission to the 2004 Spring Council concludes that it will not be possible to achieve the intermediate target of an overall employment rate of 67% in 2005 in the European Union. The target of 70% for 2010 laid down in the [Lisbon strategy](#) is still seen as realistic as long as economic development is favourable. The Joint Employment Report 2004 states that progress towards the targeted employment rate has come to a standstill and 'it is now clear that the EU will miss the intermediate employment rate target for 2005 of 67%.'

The [OECD Employment Outlook 2003](#) estimates a slowing down of annual growth of the workforce in its 30 member countries from an average 1.3% over the past 30 years to 0.3% over the next 30 years, unless action is taken to encourage more people into employment and remove existing barriers to job creation.

According to the Commission's Communication in 2002, [Improving quality in work: a review of recent progress \(pdf file\)](#), 4.4% of the EU population of working age were [inactive](#) and declared that they wanted to work. Long-term unemployment fell slightly but still affected around 3% of the EU labour force. Long-term unemployment rates are higher for women than for men. Youth unemployment remained around twice as high as 'that of adults' and reached more than 15% in the EU15.

The level and the trend in the [total unemployment rate](#) differs between the EU15 and the new Member States.

Figure 3 Unemployment rates in the active population



Source: Eurostat structural indicators, EM071-073

The Commission Communication [‘Progress on the implementation of the Joint Assessment Papers on employment policies in candidate countries’ \(pdf file\)](#) (JAP I) emphasises the impact of economic restructuring and adjustment of the labour markets that results in an increase in unemployment. In these countries, the low employment rates are mainly accounted for by low male employment rates. The correlation between educational attainment level and employment rates of workers is even stronger than in the EU15.

The [second report \(pdf file\)](#) (JAP II), analysing the progress of the Joint Assessment Papers on employment policies in the then acceding countries outlines that, despite strong real economic growth of 2.4% in 2002 for the AC10, compared with 1.3% in the EU15, no noticeable change in employment patterns is visible. Long-term unemployment increased in the acceding countries from 6.5% in 1997 to 8.1% in 2002.

Female labour market participation

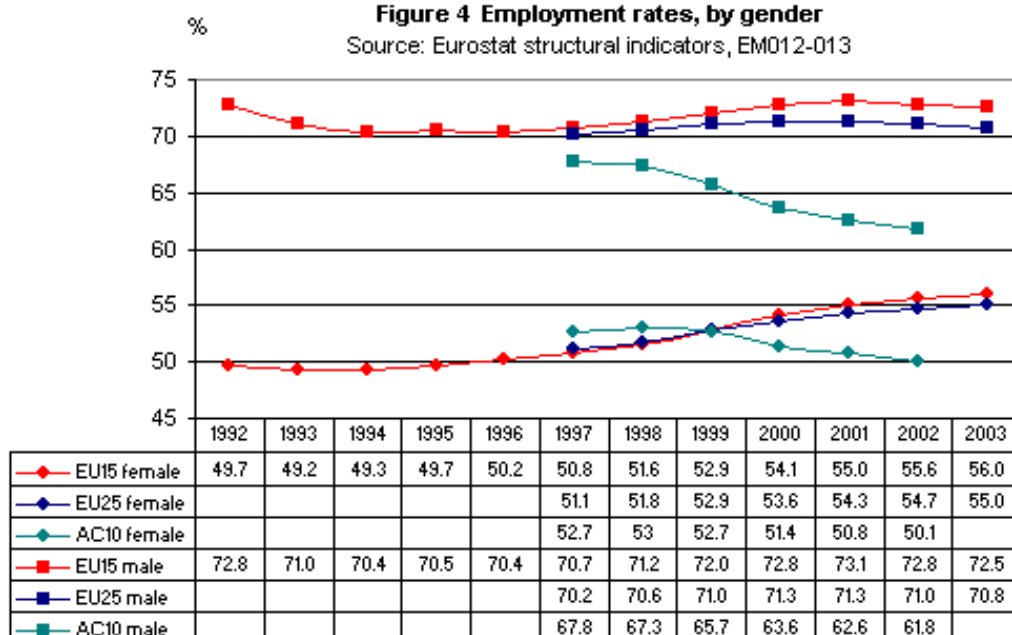
The Lisbon strategy calls for an employment rate of more than 60% for women by 2010, and 57% by 2005.

Employment rates for women increased considerably during the last decade within the EU15 whereas the rate decreased in the new Member States during the last years. However, the rise in employment rates in the EU15 is currently at a much slower pace than in preceding years.

The gender gap in employment rates is smaller in the new Member States. In the EU15, the gap narrowed from 23.1 percentage points to 17.2 percentage points. The decline in the gender gap is partially a result of the decreasing employment rates of men.

Figure 4 Employment rates, by gender

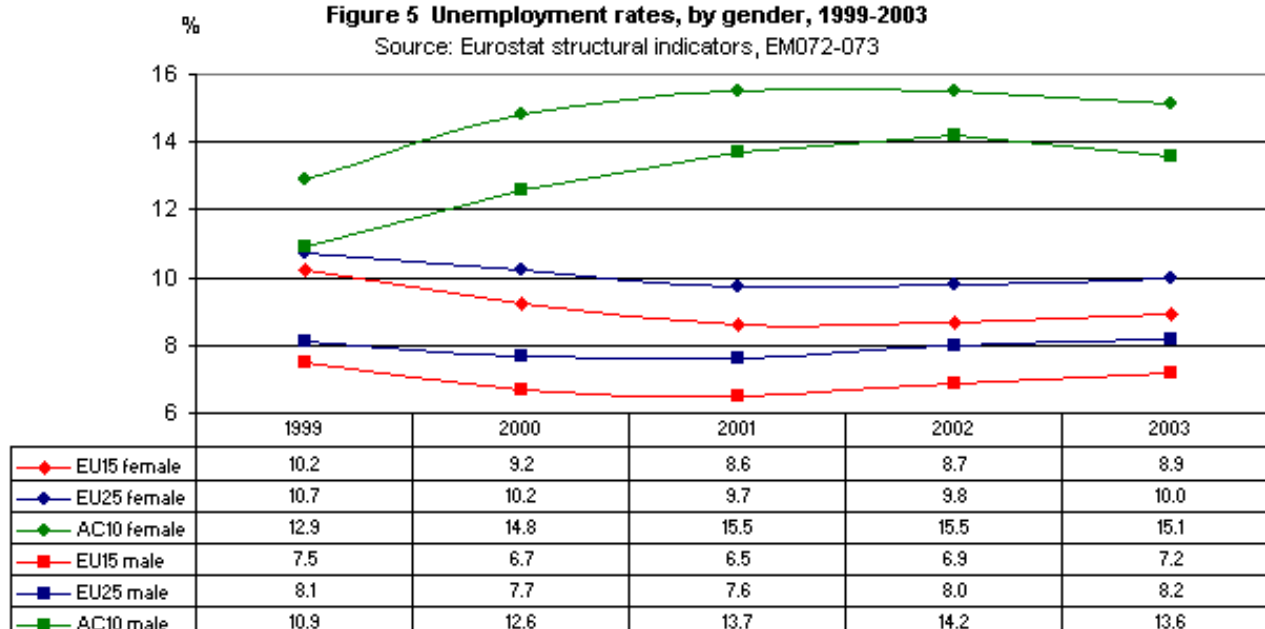
Source: Eurostat structural indicators, EM012-013



Women are still more vulnerable to unemployment and economic inactivity than men, particularly women with a low level of education, and older women. The Joint Employment Report 2003/2004 emphasises that the potential of female participation is still largely untapped. In the EU15, 6.4 million women of working age are not in paid employment, yet would like to work, and 6.6 million are unemployed.

Figure 5 Unemployment rates, by gender, 1999-2003

Source: Eurostat structural indicators, EM072-073



The [report on equality between women and men 2004 \(pdf file\)](#) concludes that positive trends are evident, such as the narrowing gaps between women and men in employment, education and research, and an increase in numbers of women in managerial and professional jobs. However, it also emphasises that major barriers to achieving

equality between women and men remain. Besides the still considerable gap in overall employment rates between women and men, it has been noted that women with low levels of education and older women continue to show lower employment rates. The same applies to women with small children. Women with children work 12 hours less than men with children in the EU15 and 11 hours less in the EU25. In view of this impact of parenthood on employment for women, the issue of childcare is of particular importance.

More women than men work part time: 34% of women in the EU15 and 30% in the EU25 in 2002. The corresponding figures for men were 7% both in the EU15 and in the then acceding countries.

Despite progress in employment rates, fundamental differences remain between women and men in the labour market with regard to the gender pay gap and persistent horizontal and vertical gender segregation.

One of the Eurostat structural indicators is the [gender pay gap](#). This indicator shows almost no progress between 1994 and 2001. The gap remained at a 16% average throughout the EU.

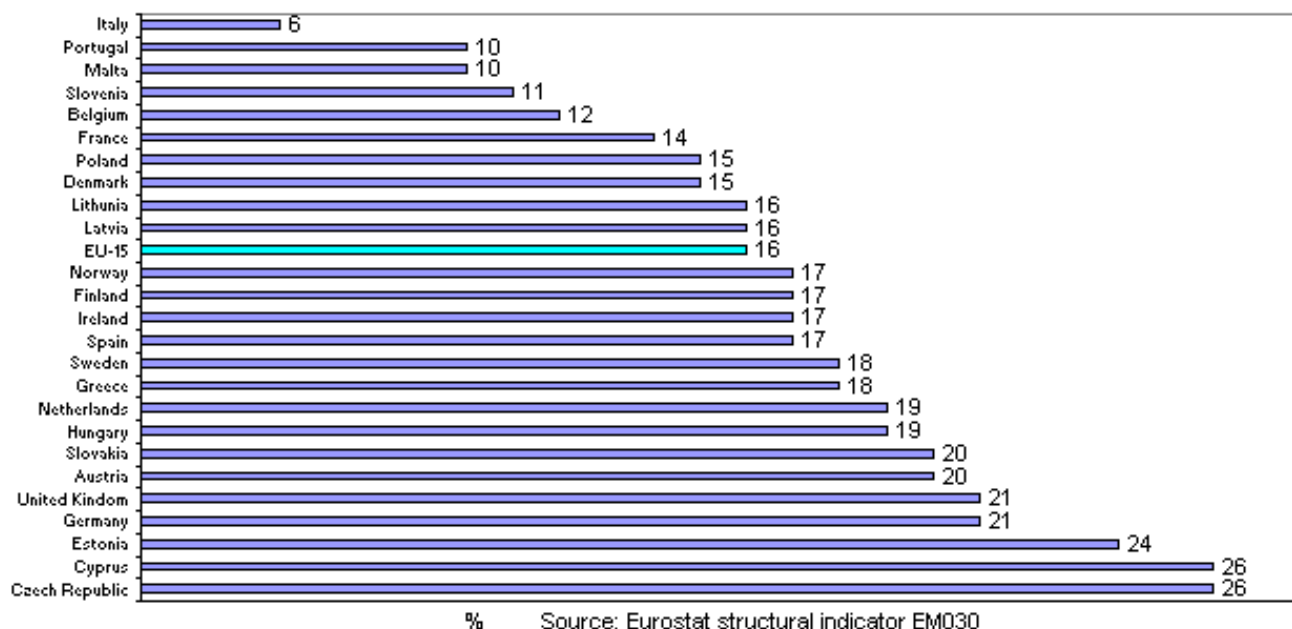
Table 1 Gender pay gap in average gross hourly earnings (for employees working 15+ hours) in the EU15

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
16	17	16	16	16	15	16	16

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicator EM030

The pay gap is significantly higher in the private sector (21%) than in the public sector (12%). (Joint Employment Report, 2004). It differs considerably across countries, ranging from 6% in Italy to 26% in Cyprus and the Czech Republic.

Figure 6 Gender pay gap in Member States, 2001



The Lisbon Strategy emphasised the importance of reducing structural imbalances in the labour market, particularly the gender pay gap, as a precondition for achieving the overall objectives. A Commission Staff Working Paper, [Gender pay gaps in European labour markets \(pdf file\)](#), investigates measurement, analysis and policy implications with the aim of improving the monitoring tools.

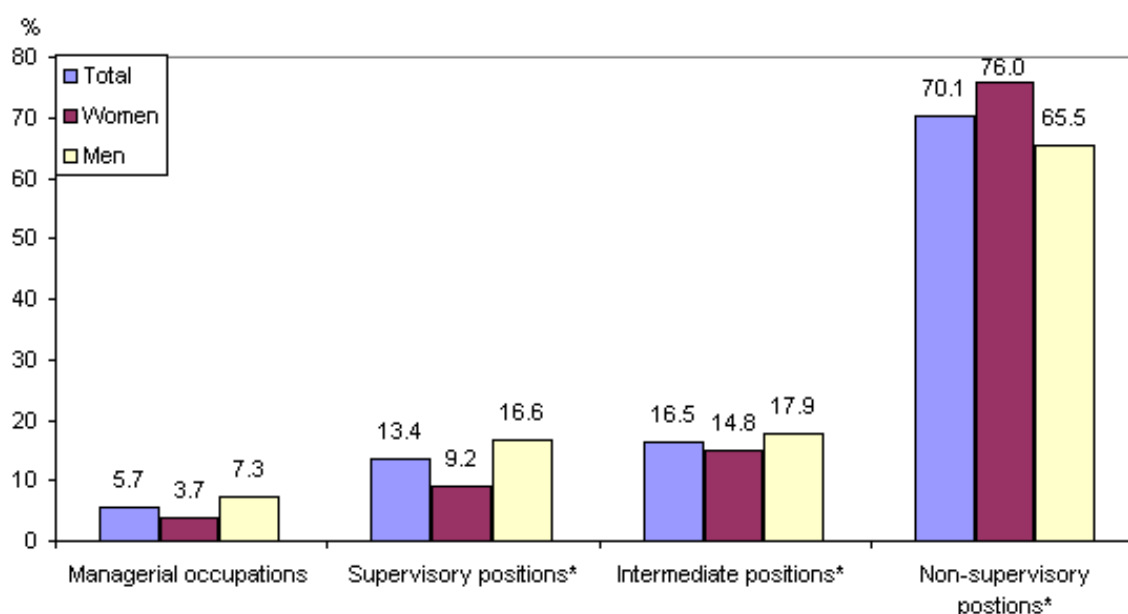
The Report on equality between women and men (2004) shows that, in recent years, the gender pay gap has taken

on a higher profile within the Member States. A significant step is recognising the link between labour market segregation and the gender pay gap.

Similarly to the pay gap, gender segregation in the labour market has changed little in the last few years. It remains at around 25% for occupational segregation and 18% for sectoral segregation. (Report on equality between women and men, 2004)

Based on women's increased qualifications, more women entered high-level professional and managerial jobs during the 1990s in 10 out of the 15 Member States. Nevertheless, men are still twice as likely as women to have access to managerial positions and over three times as likely to become senior managers. (Report on equality between women and men, 2004)

Figure 7 Vertical employment segregation according to gender 2002



Source: SEC(2003) 937, Table A7, p. 30. * = Eurostat estimate

The [Employment Guidelines 2002 \(pdf file\)](#) emphasise that, in order to eliminate gender gaps in the labour market, an integrated gender mainstreaming approach is required, alongside specific policy actions to create the conditions for women and men to enter, re-enter, and remain in the labour market. Guideline 6 highlights the need to tackle the underlying factors of gender gaps in the labour market and to give attention to reconciling work and private life, notably through the provision of care services for children and other dependants, encouraging the sharing of family and professional responsibilities, and facilitating return to work after a period of absence.

The [Report of the Employment Taskforce \(pdf file\)](#) emphasises that tapping the potential of female participation is both an issue of gender equality and a matter of economic effectiveness. The Taskforce urges the Member States and social partners to:

- remove financial disincentives to the participation of women, notably in relation to wages and taxation, including gender pay gaps;
- increase the availability, affordability and quality of childcare and eldercare;
- improve working arrangements, with measures to boost the attractiveness of part-time work and facilitate career breaks and flexible working;
- tailor measures to the specific needs of disadvantaged women '!

Ageing workforce

The Joint Employment Report 2004 emphasises that reaching the 70% overall employment rate target depends

crucially on significantly increasing the employment rate of older workers and on extending the average exit age from the labour market.

'Without urgent and drastic measures to reverse current trends, there is no chance of getting near, let alone reaching, the European targets for increasing the employment rate of older workers and raising average exit ages from the labour market.' (Joint Employment Report, 2004)

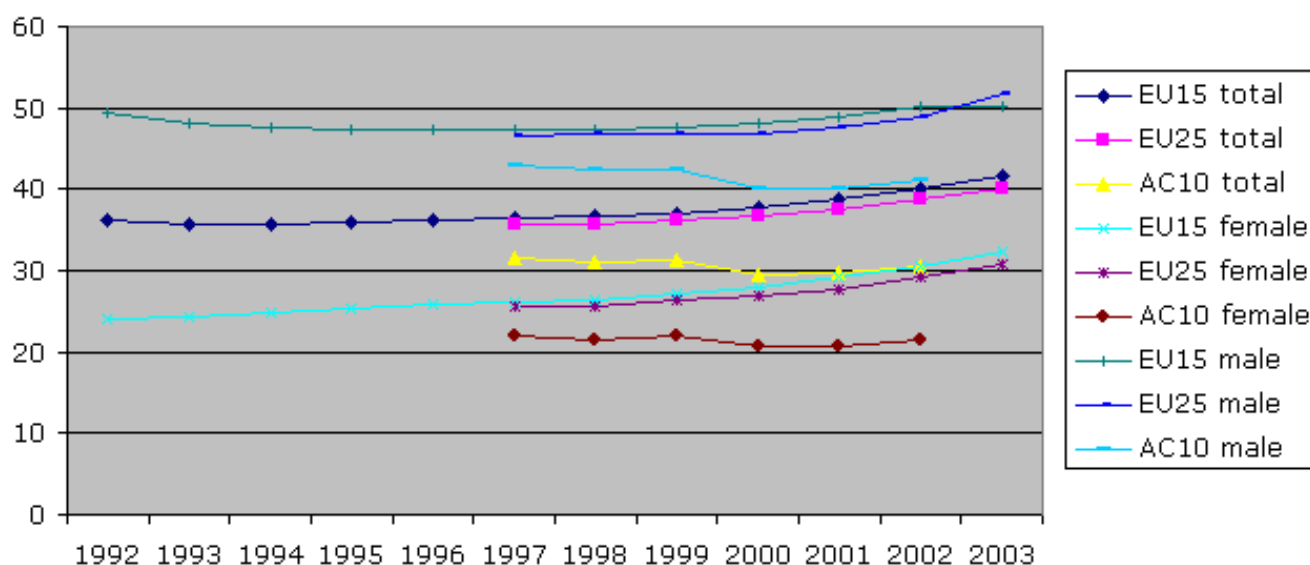
Targets

The issue of increasing employment of older workers and raising the exit age are considered in the [Commission staff working paper \(pdf file\)](#) dealing with the Barcelona and Stockholm targets and in a specific chapter in the Employment in Europe 2003 report. These targets are complementary and are monitored by two [structural indicators](#).

The [Stockholm target](#) aims at increasing the level of employment of those aged 55-64. The target is monitored by the [employment rate](#) and can be achieved by reductions in both [unemployment](#) and [inactivity](#) rates. The [Barcelona target](#) seeks to delay the age at which workers withdraw from the labour force into inactivity. This is monitored by changes in the [activity rate](#), which looks only at those who are active in the labour market.

The overall trend in employment rates of older workers over the last decade in the EU15 and the EU25 shows a modest increase up to the late 1990s and stronger growth between 1999 and 2002. The greatest increase in employment rates is evident for female workers in the EU15. In contrast, the employment rates of male workers in the acceding countries declined significantly between 1997 and 2002.

Figure 8 Employment rates of older workers, 55-64 years (%)



Source: Eurostat structural indicators, EM014-016

Participation rates

In the [Delivering Lisbon report \(pdf file\)](#), the low participation rate of older workers is considered as a key obstacle in raising overall employment rates. The level of participation of older workers is considerably lower in the acceding countries than in the EU15.

Table 2 Participation of workers aged 55-64, 2002 (%)

-	Total	Women	Men

EU15	42.8	32.5	53.4
EU 25	41.4	31.1	52.3
AC 10	33.1	23.0	45.0
AC 12	34.0	25.0	44.6
Source: Employment in Europe, 2003			

In 2001, among the 55-64 age group in the EU15, 38.2% were employed, 2.8% were unemployed but actively seeking work and immediately available, 55.7% were inactive and did not want to work, and 3.3% were inactive but wanted to work. If inactive and unemployed older workers who would like to have work were added to the labour force today, the activity rate of older workers would increase by six percentage points. This equates to half of the increase needed between 2001 and 2010 to reach the 50% employment rate target for older workers by the end of the decade. (EIE 2003, p. 162)

Exit age

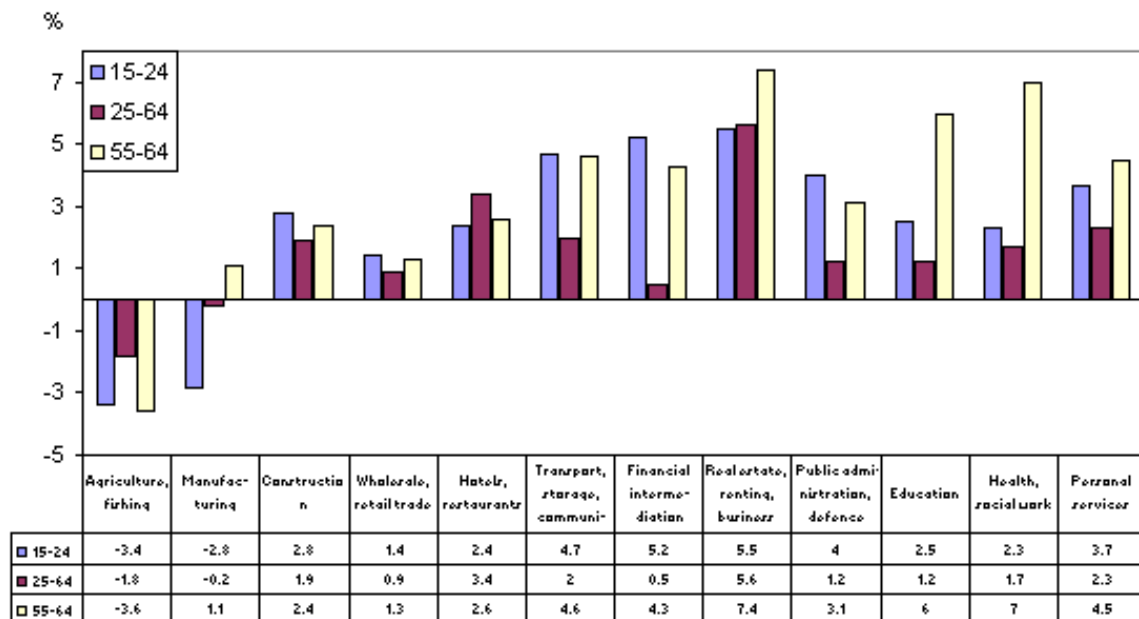
The Delivering Lisbon report highlights the growing concern regarding the average age at which people leave the labour market, particularly in the new Member States. The average [exit age](#) from the labour force has increased slightly but is still far from the target of 65 years. In the EU15, the age rate rose from 60.4 years in 2001 to 60.8 years in 2002. In the acceding countries, the figures are 57.8 years for 2001 and 58.2 years for 2002.

Table 3 Average exit age, weighted by the probability of withdrawal from the labour market

-	2001	2002
Total	-	-
EU15	60.4	60.8 (e)
EU + ACC	60.0 (e)	60.4 (e)
ACC	57.8 (e)	58.2 (e)
Women	-	-
EU15	60.0	60.5 (e)
EU + ACC	59.4 (e)	60.0 (e)
ACC	56.6 (e)	57.2 (e)
Men	-	-
EU15	60.8	61.0 (e)
EU + ACC	60.6 (e)	60.8 (e)
ACC	59.2 (e)	59.4 (e)
Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators EM021-023 (e) = estimate		

Looking at developments in the economy, older workers are not clustered around declining sectors. Changes in age specific sectoral employment structures and absolute growth rates over the past few years show a parallel development for older and prime age workers. (COM (2004) 146, p. 8)

Figure 9 Annual employment growth by sector and age in the EU 15, 1998-2002



Source: COM(2004) 146, based on Eurostat LFS

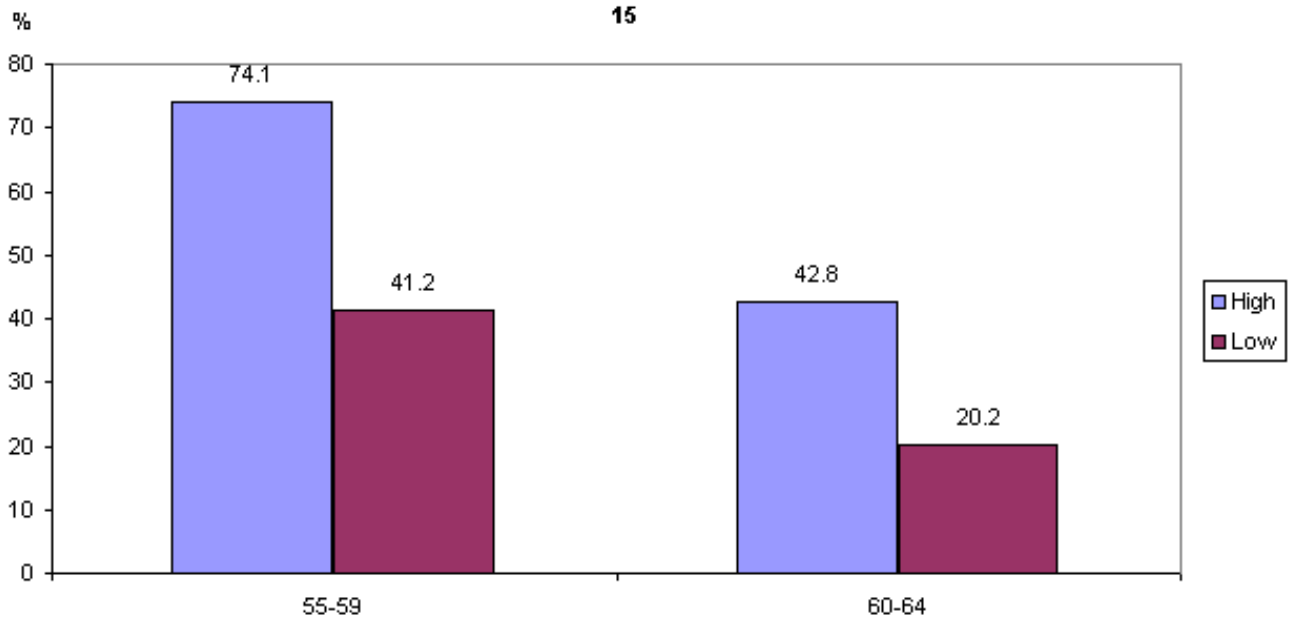
Quality in work

The Commission's Communication [Increasing the employment of older workers and delaying the exit from the labour market \(pdf file\)](#) emphasises the significance of quality in work for employment levels and retaining people in jobs. (EU0406NU05) Ageing affects not just older people but all generations. A long-term policy perspective covering all age groups over the lifecycle, rather than specific target group measures, is more likely to ensure high employment and participation rates in the long run. The Joint Employment Report 2004 outlines that the 'challenge is not only to ensure that a higher share of those currently aged 55-64 stay in work; but also to enhance the employability of those currently in their 40s and 50s.'

Education and training

A strong correlation can be seen between the level of employment rates and skills. A general conclusion is that the higher the educational level, the higher the employment and participation rate.

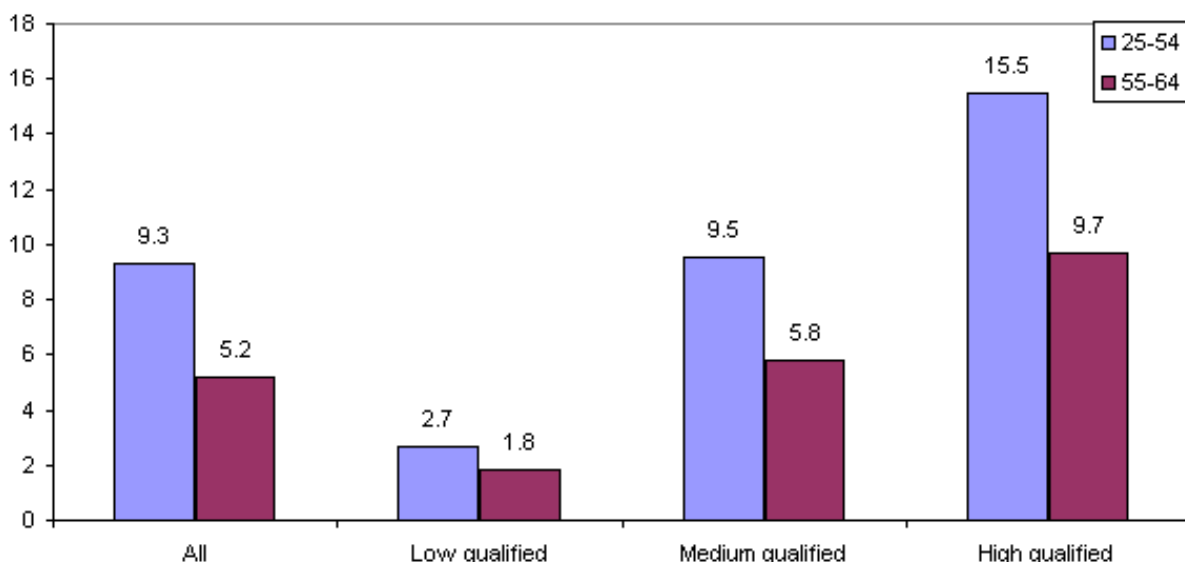
Figure 10 Employment rate of high and low skilled older workers in 2001, by age group, EU



Source: Commission Staff Working Paper, SEC(2003) 429

Besides the importance of education for labour market participation, specific skills training is essential to adapt to new demand patterns. Empirical evidence points to significantly lower training levels (5%) among older workers than among prime-age workers. (EIE 2003, p. 173) Older high-skilled workers receive more training than older low-skilled workers.

Figure 11 % of older and prime-age workers in training, by education level, EU, 2001



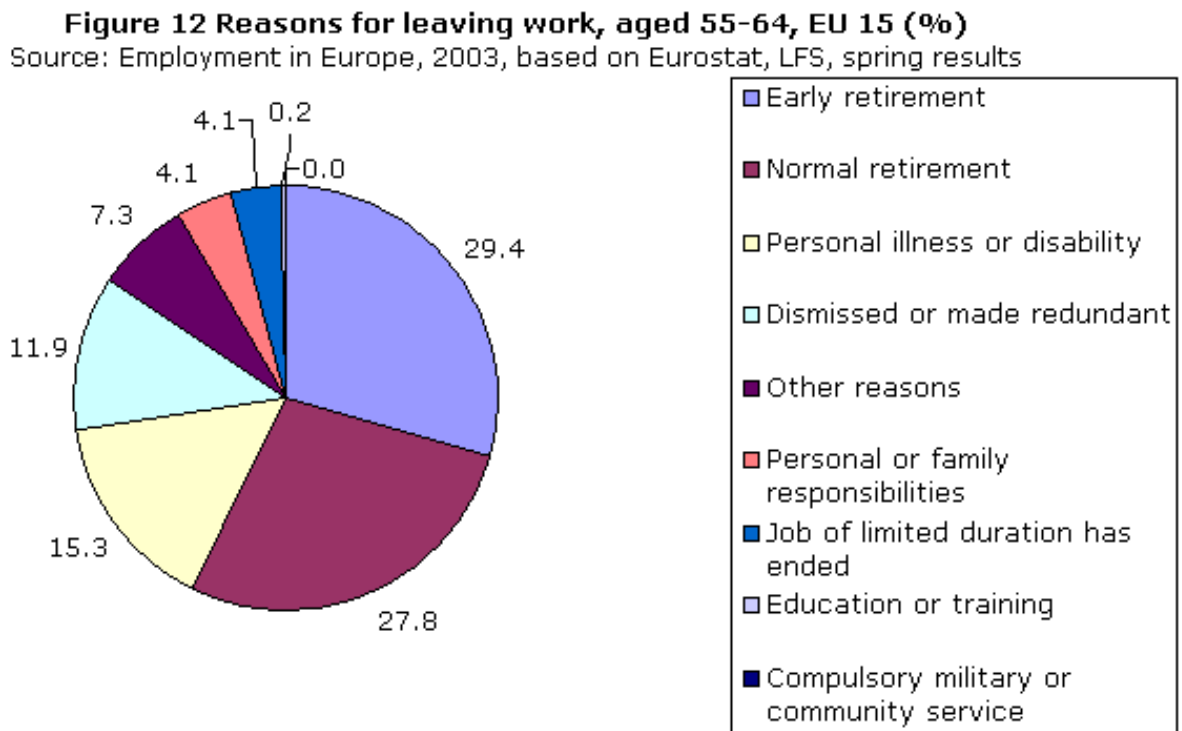
Source: EIE 2003, based on Eurostat LFS spring results

The percentage of employees participating in education and training declines with age. This trend starts early in the working life. In a comprehensive ageing strategy, 'it is therefore essential to reverse this declining trend from an early stage in the life-cycle: only life-long learning can guarantee future cohorts of older workers the necessary

skills to adapt to changes in the labour market.' (COM(2004) 146, p. 11)

Health and safety

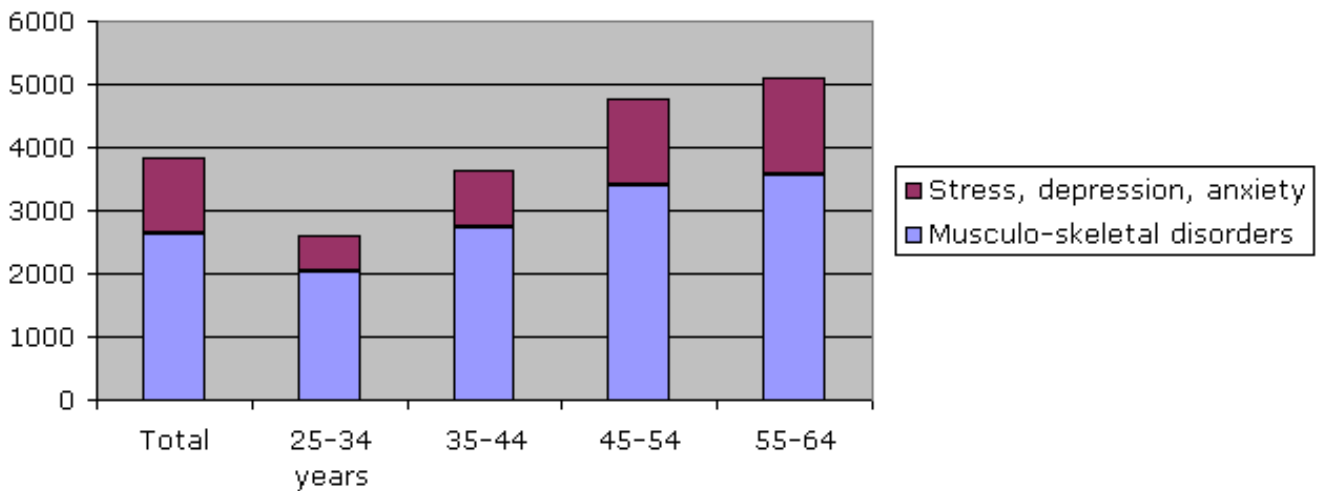
Long-term illness or disability is the third most common reason cited - after normal and early retirement - by older workers for leaving their last job or business.



Health and safety is a crucial aspect of quality in work and of efforts to raise employment and participation rates. According to the Eurostat report [Work and health in the EU](#), the correlation between age and accidents at work shows opposite patterns for non-fatal and fatal accidents between 1996 and 2001. The incidence rate of non-fatal accidents is remarkably higher among the younger age groups, but the situation is reversed in the case of fatal accidents. The incidence rate increases over the course of the working life.

The prevalence rate of work-related health problems clearly increases with age.

Figure 13 Standardised rate of work-related health problems for the two most prevalent diagnoses, by age groups, 1999



Source: Eurostat, *Accidents at work and work-related health problems*, Data 1994-2000; LFS 1999 ad hoc module

The EIE 2003 report confirms the tendency for the two most prevalent diagnoses of pulmonary and musculo-skeletal disorders. The report emphasises the impact of work organisation and working time flexibility on the prevalence of work-related health problems. Musculo-skeletal disorders mostly concern service workers and elementary occupations, while the incidence of stress-related health problems is more predominant for high-skilled, non-manual occupations. (EIE 2003, p. 173).

The Employment Guidelines 2003 underline the need to foster working conditions conducive to job retention and to recognise the special importance of health and safety at work, and innovative and flexible forms of work organisation. The Delivering Lisbon report (p. 25) highlights actions in three areas in line with the recommendations made by the European Employment Task Force:

- discouraging early retirement;
- stimulating lifelong learning to avoid skills becoming obsolete, i.e. promote access to training, particularly for older workers who are underrepresented in training;
- improving quality in work to provide an attractive, safe and adaptable work environment and maintaining overall health status throughout working life.

The Joint Employment Report 2004 highlights that measures in the national action programmes need to give more attention to improving working capacity through better access to training and adapting to working conditions. Their measures already have perhaps too strong a focus on pension reform solely, including seeking to increase standard retirement age and discouraging early retirement, while favouring flexible retirement.

It is estimated for the EU15 that achieving the Lisbon target of a 50% employment rate in 2010 for the 55-64 age group will require seven million more older people to be employed between 2002 and 2010 (900,000 a year) due to the strong projected increase in population. The increase in employment for this age group amounted to about 250,000 a year between 1997 and 2001. About half of these jobs were part time. (EIE 2003, p. 178)

Diversification of employment status

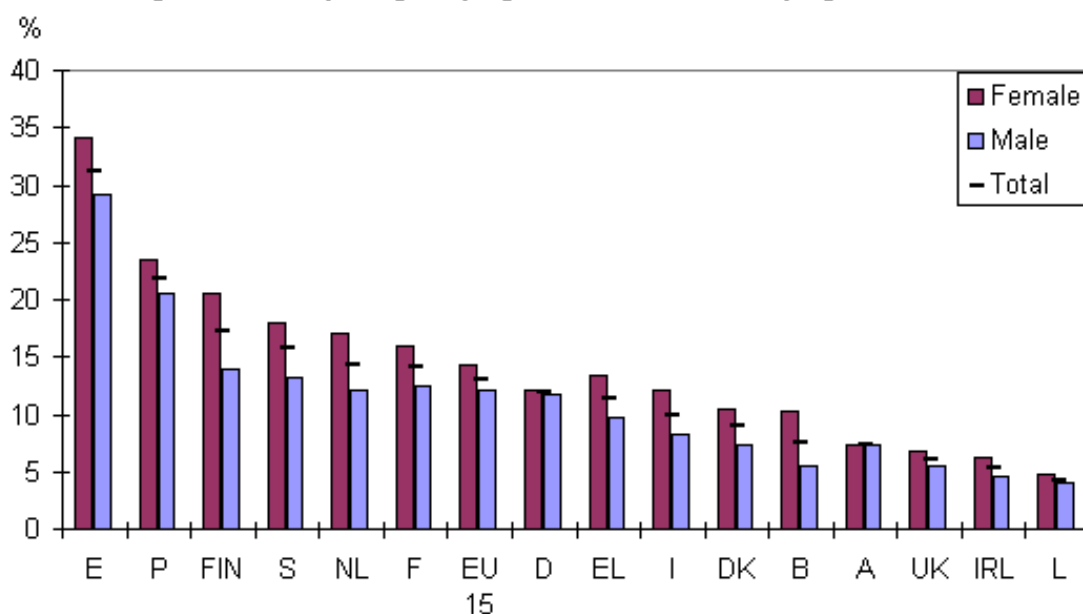
Temporary employment / Fixed-term contracts

In the EIE 2003 report, the analysis of temporary employment is restricted to fixed- or short-term contracts and

excludes temporary agency work. Temporary agency work is seen as of particular relevance in the analysis of the evolution of quality in work, as job security and employment stability are key determinants of both job satisfaction and job quality. In the EU as a whole, more than half of all employees on temporary contracts would have preferred a permanent job but could not find one. This corresponds to 7% of all employees.

In the EU15, the share of workers on temporary employment contracts varies widely between countries. The highest share is in Spain and the lowest in Luxembourg. More women than men work under these employment contracts.

Figure 14 Temporary employees as % of total employees, EU 15, 2002



Source: LFS 2002

For [data](#) on temporary agency work, the EIE 2003 report refers the reader to the Foundation report [Temporary agency work in the European Union](#). This report and the [report](#) by the International Federation of Private Employment Agencies (CIETT) reveal that 2.2 million people in the EU were working in this category in 1998.

Regarding quality in work, temporary employment is ambivalent. It can potentially be a stepping-stone into longer employment relationships of higher quality, but often it has significant disadvantages in terms of job security, remuneration and training. [Data](#) from the third European working conditions survey show that, in the EU15, 9.9% of employees were on fixed-term and 2.2% on temporary agency contracts. The 1995/6 and 2000 surveys revealed a [correlation](#) between temporary agency work and poor working conditions. Temporary workers are more likely to be exposed to physical hazards, to be affected by a higher level of work intensity and pace, and to have fewer training opportunities than permanent workers.

According to the [Working conditions in the acceding and candidate countries survey](#) in 2001/2, 8.2% of employees were on fixed-term contract and 1.9% on temporary contracts in the ACC 12.

Employment and social integration of people with disabilities

In July 2003, the Council adopted a resolution on [promoting the employment and social integration of people with disabilities \(pdf file\)](#) (2003/C175/01). This resolution and the [action plan for people with disabilities \(pdf file\)](#) adopted in October 2003 pay particular attention to the integration of people with disabilities into the mainstream labour market, in the perspective of the overarching objectives of the European Employment Strategy. The [Employment Guidelines 2003](#) provide for promoting integration, and combating discrimination against people with disabilities.

Data based on the ad hoc module of the Spring 2002 Labour Force Survey ([Statistics in focus 26/2003](#)) reveal that, in all EU and ACC countries, 15.7% of the working age population reported having longstanding health problems or disability. Of those who are severely disabled aged 16-64, 78% are outside the labour force, compared with 27% for those without such health problems. The more severe the degree of disability, the lower the participation rate in the labour force. The rate is only 20% for severely disabled people, compared with 68% for those without longstanding health problems. The unemployment rate among severely disabled people is nearly twice as high as for non-disabled. Of those who face work restrictions, only 16% are provided with some assistance to work.

There is little difference in the prevalence of disability between women and men, but the prevalence of longstanding health problems or disability strongly increases with age. The percentage among those aged 16-24 is 6.9%, compared with 30.7% in the 60-64 age group. A lower level of education is more common among people who are disabled.

The cause of disability is work-related for 18.4% of people with long-term health problems or disability. Significantly higher rates of men than women report work as the cause of disability. In the EU15, the rates of work-related diseases and accidents as cause for disability are higher than in the acceding countries.

Table 4 Causes of disabilities, by gender, 2001 (%)

Cause of illness/ disability	EU15	ACC	Women	Men	All
Born with it or birth injury	17.9	10.8	16.5	17.3	16.9
Work-related diseases	13.3	12.8	10.8	15.6	13.2
Work-related accident or injury, incl. traffic accidents at work	5.6	3.5	2.8	7.7	5.2
Traffic accident or injury (outside of work)	3.3	2.4	2.7	3.7	3.2
Household, leisure and sports accident or injury	3.5	3.6	3.1	3.9	3.5
Non-work-related diseases	50.2	56.6	55.8	44.8	50.3
Don't know	6.1	10.4	8.4	7.1	7.7

Source: Dupré and Karjalainen, Employment of disabled people in Europe in 2002, 2003

Labour market transitions and quality dynamics

The Employment in Europe 2003 report shows that there is strong evidence that national differences in employment performance, and the employment rate in particular, are linked to differences in quality in work and labour market dynamics. It also emphasises that the standard measure of employment performance - the employment rate - can hide very different labour market transition patterns over time.

The report re-examines the role of quality in work for longer-term labour market transitions: from low quality employment into high quality employment, and from low quality employment into [unemployment](#) or [inactivity](#) .

As an EU average, transition rates from low to high quality employment increased slightly from 24.5% in 1995 to 25.5% in 2000. In the same period, transition rates from low quality employment into unemployment decreased from 8.5% to 7.1%.

Transition patterns vary considerably across EU Member States over the period 1995-2000. In countries like France, Germany, Spain and the UK, transition out of unemployment or inactivity into employment predominantly translated into the take-up of low quality jobs. However, there is a positive development in Ireland, Austria and Denmark, where a majority of people taking up a job move into permanent, high quality jobs.

In most of the EU Member States, more than half of temporary employees succeeded in moving to more stable contractual employment arrangements. However, significant shares of temporary employees in 1995 were no longer in employment five years later. In Spain and in Germany, 10% of those in temporary employment in 1995 became unemployed and a further 10% became inactive.

In the UK, favourable transitions from temporary to permanent employment were by and large not accompanied by improved job quality. Only one third of those in low quality jobs improved the quality of their job, while more than 40% stayed in a job of low quality.

Skills development and lifelong learning

Considerable efforts are required to achieve the [participation rate in lifelong learning](#) of 12.5% of the adult working population by 2010 adopted by the Council on 5 May 2003 and set out in the 2003 Employment Guidelines.

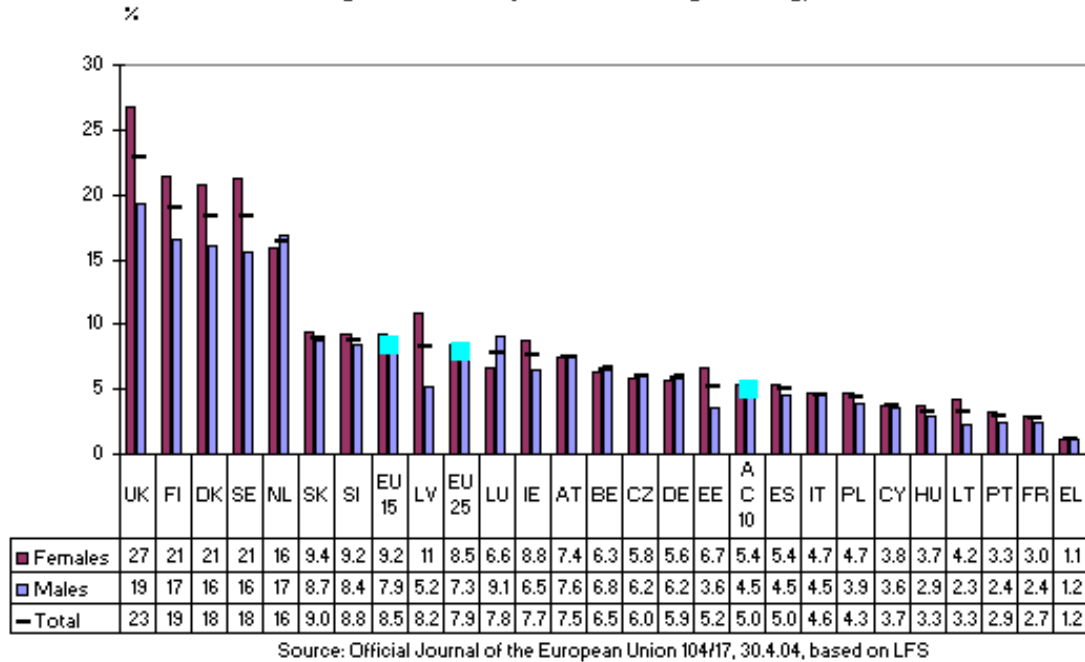
Table 5 Lifelong learning (% of adults participating in education and training over the previous four weeks)

-	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Total	-	-	-	-	-
EU15	8.2 (e)	8.5 (e)	8.4 (e)	8.5	9.6 (b)
EU 25	-	-	7.9 (e)	8.0	8.9 (b)
AC 10	-	-	4.5 (e)	5.0	5.6 (e)
Female	-	-	-	-	-
EU15	8.6 (e)	8.9 (e)	9.0 (e)	9.2	10.3 (b)
EU 25	-	-	8.5 (e)	8.6	9.6 (b)
AC 10	-	-	5.2 (e)	5.4	6.2(e)
Male	-	-	-	-	-
EU15	7.9 (e)	8.0 (e)	7.9 (e)	7.9	8.8 (b)
EU 25	-	-	7.4 (e)	7.4	8.2 (b)
AC 10	-	-	3.9 (e)	4.5	5.0 (e)

Source: EUROSTAT, Structural indicators EM051-053. (e) Estimated value (b) Break in series

Participation rates in lifelong learning vary considerably across the countries. Women tend to have stronger participation rates.

Figure 15 Participation in lifelong learning, 2002



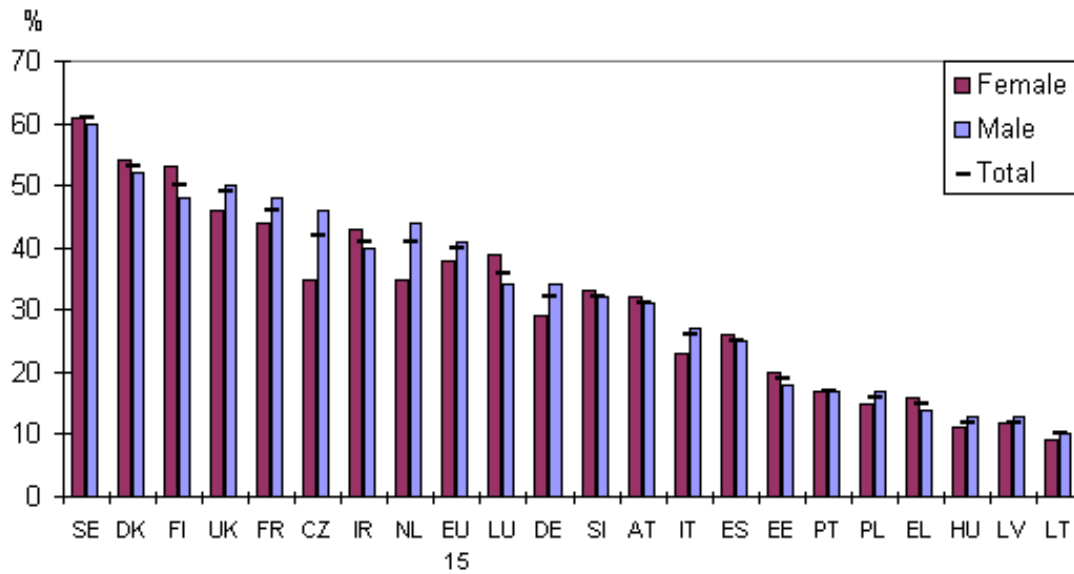
Source: Official Journal of the European Union 104/17, 30.4.04, based on LFS

The Joint Employment Report 2004 points out that participation rates in education and training vary widely by age group and educational level.

'Groups most in need are the least likely to receive training. Those aged between 25 and 34 are nearly five times more likely to take part in education and training than those aged between 55 and 64. The low skilled are four times less likely to participate in training than the high skilled - reinforcing the skills divide.'

According to the report *Improving quality in work*, consistent improvements are being achieved in terms of education and skills. Since 1998, there has been a significant increase in adults participation in education and training. However, more than half of employees in the EU still have no access to training at the workplace nor participation in any training programme.

Figure 16 Participants in CVT courses as % of employees in all companies, by gender, 1999

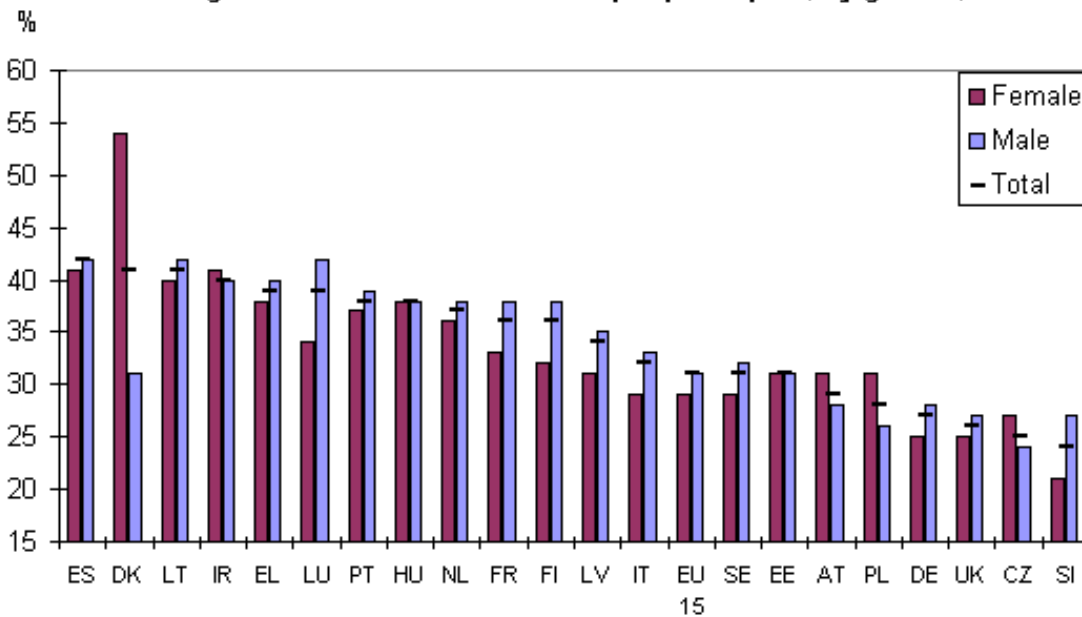


Source: Education across Europe 2003, based on Eurostat CVTS2

An [analysis](#) of working time spent on continuing vocational training (CVT) in companies across Europe emphasises that developing abilities and skills through CVT is an essential part of lifelong learning and also reflects the role companies play in this context.

The number of hours spent in CVT courses varies significantly, though there is no apparent difference between genders.

Figure 17 Hours in CVT courses per participant, by gender, 1999

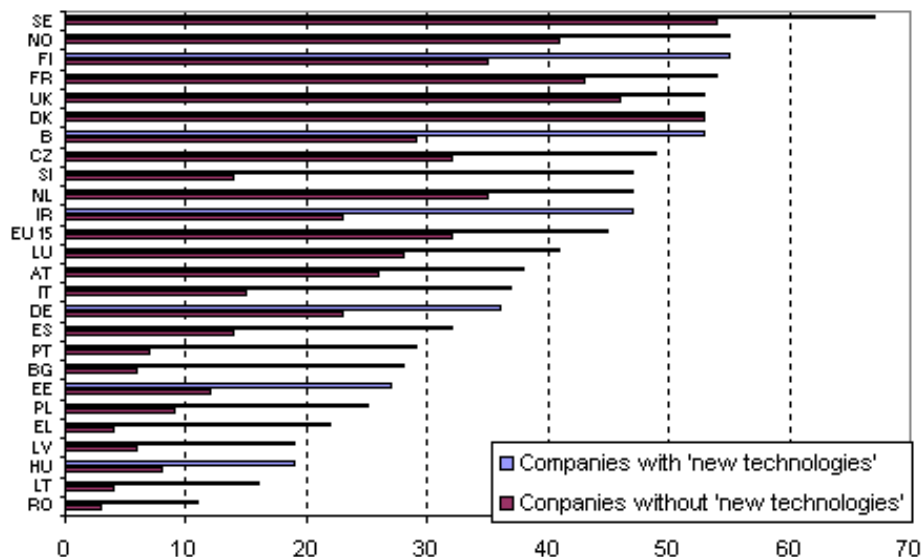


Source: Education across Europe 2003, based on Eurostat, CVTS2

Data provided by the [Education across Europe 2003](#) report based on the Continuing vocational training survey

(CVTS2) show a correlation between participation in continuing vocational training (CVT) and use of 'new technologies'. In all countries covered by the survey, the participation rates in CVT courses were higher in companies with new technologies than in those without. The only exception is Denmark.

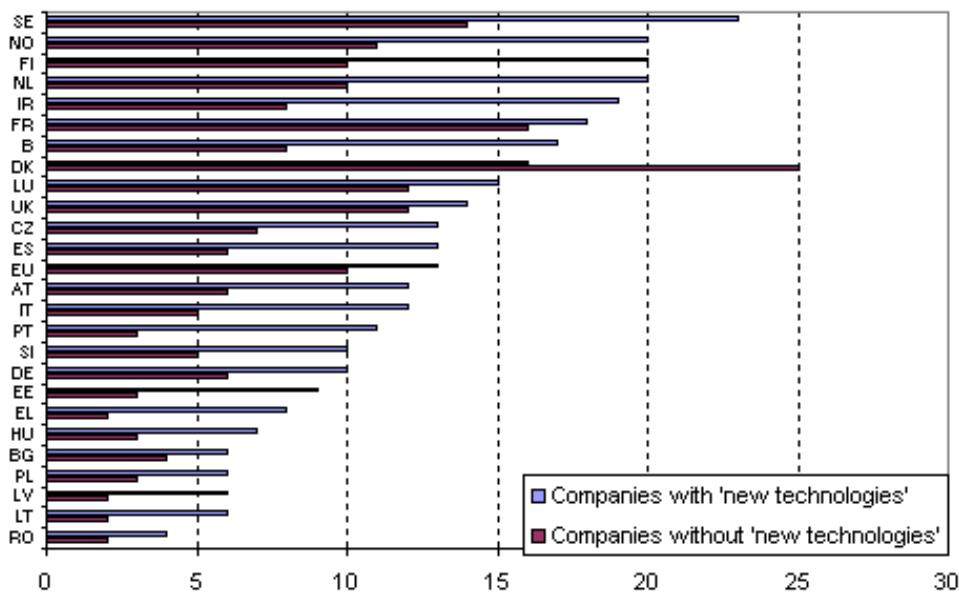
Figure 18 Participation in CVT courses as % of employees in companies with and without 'new technologies', 1999



Source: Education across Europe 2003, based on Eurostat CVTS2

The number of employee hours spent on CVT courses was also higher in companies with new technologies, again excepting Denmark where the number of CVT training hours is higher in companies without new technologies.

Figure 19 Hours in CVT courses per employee



Source: Education across Europe 2003, based on Eurostat CVTS2

Technological change and its consequences

The [eEurope 2002 Final Report \(pdf file\)](#) states that, concerning digital literacy of the labour force, the proportion of the working population receiving computer training increased from 23% in 2000 to 29% in 2001 but this rise did not continue in 2002.

'The need for more computer training is underlined by the fact that, in all Member States, the proportion of the working population using computers at work is far higher than the proportion being trained.'

The Commission Staff Working Paper [Building the knowledge society: Social and human capital interactions \(pdf file\)](#), developed with the support of the high level group [Employment and social dimension of the information society \(ESDIS\)](#), emphasises that the current level of digital training and the conditions of introducing information and communication technologies (ICT) still appear to fall short of their full potential. A Eurobarometer survey on 'ICT and work' confirms widespread ICT use in working life. One EU worker out of every two uses a computer for work. There has been a 34% increase in computer use for manual workers during 2000-2002, though the average use of computers for work has not substantially increased in the period.

The Staff Working Paper discusses the context of introducing ICT, training measures and the impacts on working life. The data show an improvement in the context of introducing ICT. However, appropriate technical training that meets actual needs and leads to improved job quality and a more efficient organisation is reported by only 50% of European workers.

'One weak aspect of introducing ICT in European organisations is the lack of training for new roles: provided to only one worker out of three. This kind of training is essential for working in the knowledge society, where 'soft skills' are even more important than technical training.'

Computer users at work recognise the importance of new technologies for the job although this percentage has fallen from 92% to 82%. A high percentage of the workforce underline the importance of ICT in their work. It is also judged to be important for getting and keeping a job.

The [Council Resolution on building social and human capital in the knowledge society: learning, work, social cohesion and gender \(pdf file\)](#), concluded in June 2003, emphasises the need to address current gender gaps in access to ICT-related education, jobs and the use of ICT; and to exploit the potential offered by ICT for the creation of new job opportunities, especially through e-working. A further resolution at the November 2003 Competitive Council meeting, [Equal access to and participation of women and men in the knowledge society for growth and innovation \(pdf file\)](#), emphasises the need to provide the workforce with the key skills required for a knowledge-based economy. It also underlines the need for increasing efforts towards policies and initiatives addressing the current gender gap and providing equal access to training. The resolution encourages Member States to develop, collect and publish gender-disaggregated statistics.

New forms of work organisation

Guideline 3 of the Employment Guidelines 2003 states that one of its policy measures is 'the design and dissemination of innovative and sustainable forms of work organisation, which support labour productivity and quality at work'.

New forms of work organisation and potential innovations in the sense of the [Green Paper](#) were rarely addressed in the EU documents during the course of the past year. One exception is the [report](#) of the Employment Taskforce which calls for fostering adaptability through work organisation. Modernised work organisation, notably in relation to the effective use of ICT, is seen as a means of boosting quality, flexibility and productivity, and the outcome of training measures. Emphasis is placed on vocational training and the success of workers' involvement. The report mentions two examples of nation-wide programmes to foster new forms of work organisation, which could serve as examples for other countries: the [National Centre for Partnership and Performance \(NCP\)](#) in Ireland and the Workplace development programme for the improvement of productivity and quality of working life (TYKES) in Finland.

Work organisation and flexibility

In the context of work organisation and work-life balance, data (*Improving quality in work* report) show that

parenthood has a negative effect on women's employment rates. In 2002, the average employment rate for women aged between 20 and 50 with a child younger than six years was 12.7 percentage points lower than for women without children. In contrast, the employment rate of men with children was 9.5 percentage points higher than the rate of men without children. Challenges to achieving work-life balance include a significant lack of appropriate flexible work arrangements and adequate facilities for childcare and care for other dependants. (*Improving quality in work* report)

The [Barcelona European Council](#) agreed that, by 2010, Member States should provide childcare for at least 90% of children between three years old and the mandatory school age, and for at least 33% of children under three years of age.

The Joint Employment Report 2004 (p. 21) observed a trend towards more flexibility in working time patterns. In the majority of Member States, extended reference periods for working time accounts or new options for career breaks led to a better balance between work and private life.

'Some Member States have improved opportunities to work part time. Some still consider reconciliation to be a women's issue, whereas others recognise the role of men in care and family responsibilities (mainly by encouraging take-up or improving paternity leave schemes).' (Joint Employment Report 2004, p. 29) ''

A recent Foundation report on [Part-time work in Europe](#) outlines higher levels of general satisfaction with working hours among part-time workers and better opportunities to achieve a positive work-life balance.

Working hours and working time arrangements

Working hours and working time arrangements are important elements of quality in work. Notably, night work, overtime work and very long working hours may conflict with the aim of improving quality in work. The Employment in Europe 2003 report discusses working hours and working time arrangements in the EU and the then acceding countries, based on a specific ad hoc module to the 2001 Labour Force Survey (LFS).

Average usual working hours and overtime hours

Collectively agreed normal weekly working hours remained significantly below the statutory maximum in all countries except Belgium. The average collectively agreed number of hours worked by full-time employees in the EU was 40 hours weekly.

Usual working hours vary more than collectively agreed hours. In the acceding countries, usual working hours are one to four hours above the EU average. Similar results were found in the [Working conditions in acceding and candidate countries](#) survey.

More than 13% of female full-time employees work overtime compared with almost 18% of male full-time employees in the EU15. Overtime accounts for almost 3% of total hours worked by female employees and 4% of total hours worked by male employees. ([Working times](#)) Overtime is far less prevalent in the acceding countries. (EIE, 2003)

There is a varying incidence of unpaid overtime. Less than half of all employees working overtime in the EU15 are paid for their time. Only one third of female full-time employees and half of male full-time employees receive pay for overtime. ([Working times](#))

Significant differences can be seen in the extent of part-time work between the EU (18% share) and the acceding countries (less than 10%). In all countries, more women than men work part time. This contributes to the considerably higher number of average usual weekly working hours for men in the old Member States. The differences in average working times between men and women are significantly smaller in the new Member States.

In some countries, gender differences also exist in the working time of full-time employees. In Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Poland and the UK, full-time employed women work, on average, 5-10% fewer hours per week than men.

Actual working times and work outside core hours

A considerable proportion of European employees work shifts or work outside core working hours, particularly in the evening or at weekends. In the new Member States, shift work is more common than in the EU15. More than 25% of employees are usually or sometimes on shift work in these countries. There are no gender-specific differences in the share of employees doing shift work in the new Member States but it is more common among men in the EU15.

In Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK, a third or more of all employees work outside core hours. It is generally more common in manual or low-skilled services sector activities.

10-20% of all employed people work at least sometimes during the night in all 25 EU Member States.

In the EU15, work-on-call is a reality for 1.4% of employees. Work-on-call means that there is no guarantee of a fixed number of working hours, and employees may be called into work by the employer and must report to work at short notice. More women than men tend to work under this system. ([Working times](#))

Working time distribution

Remarkable differences can be observed in the distribution of working hours among full-time employees. In the EU15, the average distribution of working time ranges from 38 to 44 hours for all full-time employees, from 39 to 45 hours for men, and from 36 to 41 hours for women.

The new Member States show two major differences compared with the EU. There are no significant numbers of full-time employees working less than 40 hours per week. The proportion of employees working very long hours - i.e. 48 hours or more a week - is significantly higher.

Flexible working hours and working time arrangements

Flexibility in working hours is generally higher in the EU15. 75-90% of full-time employees work in one of the two most frequent arrangements, compared with 60-80% in the new Member States.

There are significant differences in flexibility of working time arrangements, both across the EU15 and between the EU15 and the new Member States. Fixed start and end times remain the predominant working time arrangement, covering more than three quarters of all employees. In Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain, less than 10% of all employees have some form of working time flexibility from either working time banking or other mutual agreements. In contrast, half or more of all employees benefit from flexible working time arrangements in France, Germany, Ireland and the UK. In the latter two countries, more than 20% of all employees declare that they can determine their actual working time themselves.

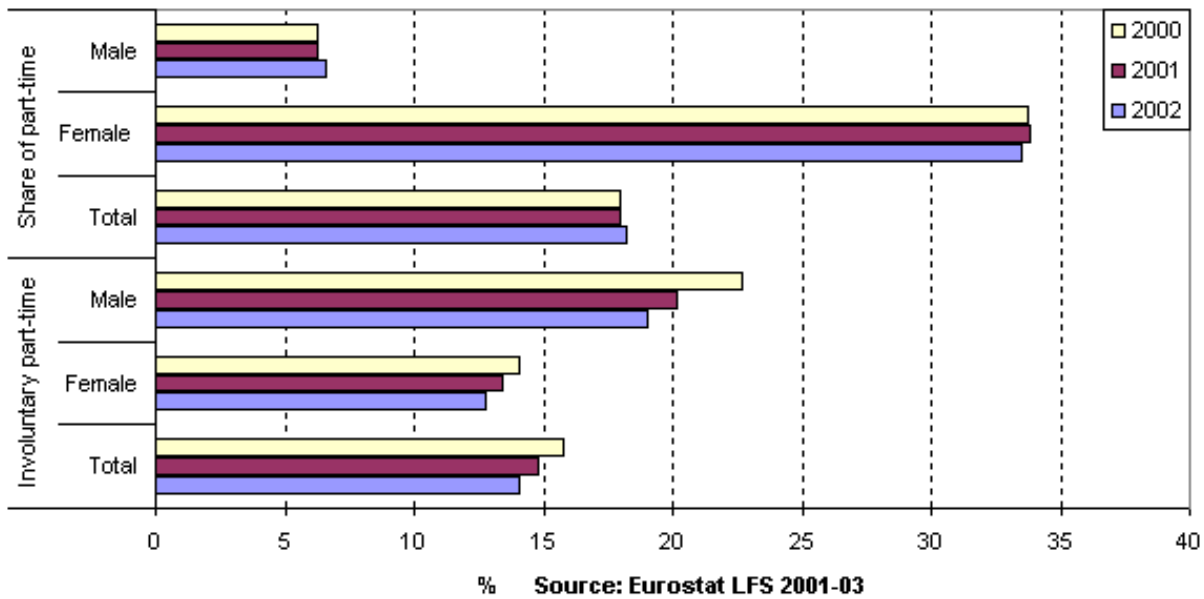
Although more women than men work part time, flexible working arrangements are less common for women than for men. They are also less common among low-skilled and manual occupations.

Part-time work

A report by the European Commission ([European Commission, 2003](#)) analyses the implementation of the [EU Directive \(97/81/EC\) on part-time work](#) .

According to the Labour Force Survey, 18.2% of the total working population in the EU15 work part time. The proportion of women in part-time work was 33.5%, compared with 6.6% of men. The proportion of part-timers remained almost on the same level between 2000 and 2002 though there was a decline in involuntary part-time work as a percentage of total part-time employment.

Figure 20 Share of part-time work and of involuntary part-time work, EU 15, 2000-2002



In the EU15, 10% of female and 8% of male part-time employees work overtime. The relative frequency of paid overtime is similar for female and male part-time workers. ([Working times](#))

Health and safety and well-being

[Serious accidents at work](#) and [fatal accidents at work](#) are monitored by structural indicators. The number of serious accidents has decreased overall, though the trend is ambiguous for female workers in the EU15. In 2000, there was an increase to 103 index points and the level varies in the period 1994-2001.

Table 6 Index of the number of serious accidents at work per 100,000 persons in employment (1998=100)

-	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EU15	111	104	103	100	100	100	98	94 p
EU 25	-	-	-	-	100	100	99	94 p
ACC	-	-	-	-	100	95	94	87
Women	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EU15	102	99	102	99	100	101	103	100 p
EU 25	-	-	-	-	100	101	103	100 p
ACC	-	-	-	-	100	97	95	95
Men	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EU15	113	105	104	100	100	100	98	93 p
EU 25	-	-	-	-	100	100	98	93 p
ACC	-	-	-	-	100	94	92	90

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators EM0611-EM613 (p: provisional value)

The number of fatal accidents at work declined significantly, in the EU15 from 115 percentage points in 1994 to 79 in 2001 and from 100 to 90 percentage points in the new Member States.

Table 7 Index of the number of fatal accidents at work per 100,000 persons in employment (1998=100)

-	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
EU15	115	109	106	100	100	85	82	79 p
EU 25	-	-	-	-	100	85	83	80 p
ACC	-	-	-	-	100	87	88	90

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicator EM062 (p: provisional value)

Serious accidents at work decreased by 15% and fatal accidents by 31% between 1994 and 2001. ([STAT/04/55 - pdf file](#))

The *Improving quality in work* report emphasises that, with five million accidents in 2000 resulting in more than three days of absences from work, the number is still very high. In 2000, a total of 158 million days' work were lost. This corresponds to an average of 20 days per accident. Around 350,000 workers were obliged to change their job as a consequence of an accident. Almost 300,000 workers are affected by various degrees of permanent disabilities and 15,000 are entirely excluded from the labour market. Costs related to the loss of working days and health expenditure are estimated at €20 billion annually.

In the EU15, 2.3 million workers consider themselves as having a longstanding disability due to an accident at work. (*Work and health in the EU* , p. 47)

The prevalence rate of work-related diseases is based on the number of work-related health complaints suffered over the past 12 months per 100,000 persons in employment. In 1999, the rate was 5,372 according to the EU Labour Force Survey ad hoc module. Annually, 350 million days are lost because of work-related diseases. A similar estimate was calculated for self-reported sick leave from the results of the [European working conditions survey](#) . In the EU15, 5.5 million workers consider themselves as having a longstanding disability due to a work-related disease. (*Work and health in the EU* , pp. 51 and 71)

New forms of occupational disorders and diseases are developing. Occupational diseases and work-related illnesses are among the most significant consequences of poor health and safety conditions at work. The *Improving quality in work* report notes that, according to the 1999 ad hoc module on work-related health problems of the [Labour Force Survey](#) and also according to the [European working conditions survey](#) , an increasing number of workers suffer from musculo-skeletal disorders such as back pain and disorders caused by repetitive movements (52%), from stress, depression and anxiety (18%) as well as general fatigue, hearing disorders and cardiovascular diseases.

The new [Community strategy on health and safety at work \(pdf file\)](#) focuses on the need to consolidate a culture of risk prevention and to combine a variety of policy instruments. In the analysis of the national action programmes, the Joint Employment Report 2004 states that the improvement of working conditions, and the reduction of accidents at work and occupational diseases are important priorities for almost all Member States. Five countries have set targets for the reduction of accidents (Denmark, France, Greece, Portugal, UK). The focus is on prevention through better information and counselling, and stricter monitoring.

A study report [Gender issues in safety and health at work](#) by the [European Agency for Safety and Health at Work](#) highlights the importance of gender research in occupational health and safety as underlined in the Community strategy on health and safety at work 2002-2006 . The report emphasises that gender differences in working conditions have to be taken into account in order to assess real occupational health risks and work-related accidents, and to develop strategies towards effective prevention. ([EU0404NU04](#))

The [TUTB](#) report [The gender workplace health gap in Europe](#) also emphasises that omission of women's health issues in the workplace constitutes a barrier to effective policies on occupational health and gender equality. The report discusses the impact of 'gender neutrality' on policy approaches and directives in the field of occupational

health and safety, illustrates an unequal access to preventive measures, and points to discrimination of women in the compensation and recognition of occupational illnesses.

Working and employment conditions in specific sectors

Based on findings of the third European working conditions survey, the report [Sectoral profiles of working conditions](#) investigated trends in the quality of working life across different sectors from 1995-2000.

Working and employment conditions in two specific sectors have been investigated by the Foundation, based on national reports for the EU15 Member States. These country studies analysed sector and employment structures, physical risks, working hours, employment conditions, work organisation, health and well-being, and future developments. The consolidated reports on the [road freight transport](#) and [hotel and restaurants](#) sectors in the EU analyse the results of the 15 country reports.

Migration

Migration and the potential contribution of immigration to increasing labour supply was examined in a specific chapter of the Employment in Europe 2003 report. The report highlights that, among non-EU nationals, women and older workers are particularly falling behind. Even high-skilled non-EU nationals are exposed to disadvantages. The skills of non-EU nationals on arrival have little influence in their finding work compared with experience acquired in the host country. In general, there is a need for comprehensive integration policies and a forward-looking approach to immigration. This is also the focus of a Communication on [immigration, integration and employment \(pdf file\)](#).

A Foundation analysis of [Migration trends in an enlarged Europe](#), based on Eurobarometer data collected for the European Commission, investigates migration from the new Member States to the old Member States. Migration is estimated at about 1% of the population of the new Member States over the next five years. This equates to approximately 222,000 persons each year.

A Eurostat overview of [Women and men migrating to and from the European Union](#) shows evidence of net inward migration of 0.2% a year compared to the resident population in the EU15. Non-EU nationals migrating into the Union are likely to be young, and have lower education levels on average.

The report [Migrants, minorities and employment \(pdf file\)](#) by the [European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia](#) looks at exclusion, discrimination and anti-discrimination in 15 Member States of the EU. It describes incidents and types of employment discrimination across the EU and provides an insight into the process of exclusion. According to the data, not all migrants and minorities are equally exposed to racism and discrimination in employment. On the other hand, migrant women tend to be exposed to the risk of dual discrimination.

Quality of work and employment and the social partners

In March 2003, the [first Tripartite Social Summit \(pdf file\)](#) took place. The focus was on the contributions of the European social partners to achieving the goal of the Lisbon strategy. At the [Tripartite Social Summit](#) that preceded the Spring Council in March 2004, the social partners presented two joint reports. The [first report](#) deals with the actions of the social partners in Member States to implement employment guidelines. In accordance with the monitoring clause in the [Framework of actions for the lifelong developments of competencies and qualifications](#), the social partners presented their [follow-up report 2004](#).

In their joint declaration for the European year of people with disabilities, the European social partners announced endeavours to promote equal opportunities and access to employment for disabled persons.

In their joint [multiannual work programme \(pdf file\)](#), the European social partners deal with a number of issues relevant to working conditions. Their work schedule for 2003 encompasses the following areas of work:

- lifelong learning: follow-up of the Framework of actions and an evaluation report;

- stress at work: seminar to negotiate a voluntary agreement;
- disability: update of the joint declaration of 1999;
- telework: monitoring of follow-up to framework agreement;
- action plan on skills and mobility: seminar to identify areas where joint actions by the social partners at EU level could help to address obstacles to mobility.

The European social partners have taken up negotiations on stress at work. ([New European negotiations on work-related stress \(press, 12/05/03\)](#)) In Autumn 2003, the European Commission asked the European social partners to formulate a plan to combat stress at the workplace ([Social Partners to work out a European Stress Code](#)). In its Communication on the [Community strategy on health and safety at work 2002-2006 \(pdf file\)](#), the Commission announced that it would open consultations with the social partners on stress and its effects on health and safety at work. In the [EU social partner consultation on stress \(pdf file\)](#), the Commission states that Community action in this area is possible under Article 137 of the EC Treaty. At present, there are no legal provisions specifically aiming at work-related stress, and action at Community level is seen as necessary to ensure a minimum level of protection for workers against work-related stress. European directives specifically address work-related stress and its prevention. In a general sense, provisions of the [Council Directive 89/391/EEC](#) are considered to include work-related stress and its causes.

In the [joint statement](#) to the Tripartite Social Summit on 11 December 2003, the European social partners announced that they would proceed with the negotiations; further talks took place in January 2004. So far, it has not been possible to reach consensus on the definition and understanding of stress at work, on the approach to tackling stress at work, and the appropriate measures that should be taken. (ETUC/SC86/MHA/rb-03/02/2004)

Further initiatives declared by the European social partners in the [joint statement](#) to the Tripartite Social Summit on 11 December 2003 are the preparation of a framework of action on gender equality and a decision to investigate possible joint action relating to the ageing workforce.

A [Seminar with the social partners \(pdf file\)](#) on the Commission's action plan for skills and mobility took place in February 2003.

The Employment in Europe 2003 report emphasises the crucial role of social dialogue for improving quality in work and productivity of low quality jobs. This is reflected in the considerable differences in the provision of training in firms with and without negotiated agreements. Negotiated agreements between the social partners are an important means of correcting the present bias of access to training towards younger and high-skilled employees in larger firms, both with regard to training incidence and the average time spent in training. In companies with agreements, 48% of employees in small firms and 54% of employees in large firms benefited from continuing vocational training (CVT) and spent 19 hours (small firms) or 20 hours (large firms) in CVT in 1999. In companies without agreements, 20% of employees in small firms receive CVT (six hours, on average), while 45% of employees in large firms spend on average 11 hours in training.

The Joint Employment Report 2004 found that national social partners are increasingly involved in the design and delivery of adult education and training policies, with increasing evidence of collective or contractual agreements covering training.

A [report \(pdf file\)](#) from the Commission on the implementation of the [Framework agreement on parental leave](#) concluded by the European social partners gives an overview of its implementation either by legislation or collective agreement. The report is based on a short questionnaire on parental leave to the Member States and on consultations with the social partners and the network of independent legal experts on equality.

The report reflects the variety of implementation in the Member States which mostly conform with the directive. In respect of several single provisions of the framework agreement, the Commission launched infringement proceedings against Greece and Luxembourg. Some countries have responded to infringement proceedings launched by the Commission (Ireland, UK).

Commentary

The many developments give a diverse picture regarding the different dimensions of working and employment

conditions and progress within these dimensions.

Regarding the employment targets in the context of the Lisbon strategy, there is a danger that the goals will be missed in the year 2005 and possibly in the year 2010, despite overall improvement and a strong employment performance in some Member States. As the structural indicators highlight, progress has slowed. This applies to overall employment rates as well as rates for women and for older workers.

Progress has been slow in diminishing gender gaps in the labour market and, in particular, the persistent gender pay inequity and gender segregation. The Joint Employment Report 2004 discusses the policy measures required in the Member States to tackle these gender gaps. The report suggests that the national action programmes focus too much on reconciliation, and considers that they neglect to actively address gender gaps. The high qualification levels of female employees and their participation in lifelong learning do not translate into corresponding occupational and income positions, which shows that focused and comprehensive policies are required.

In the legislative developments regarding employment and working conditions and, in particular, minimum standards of health and well-being of workers, improvements (e.g. noise directive) and setbacks (e.g. temporary agency workers) can be observed. In this context, the aim of the Social Policy Agenda to achieve more and better jobs should be the benchmark.

The 'design and dissemination of innovative and sustainable forms of work organisation, which supports labour productivity and quality of work' is a political goal stressed in Guideline 3 of the Employment Guidelines 2003. However, work organisation is not an issue - beyond the organisation of working time - in the EU policy documents, such as the Employment in Europe 2003 report, the Joint Employment Report 2004, Delivering Lisbon report or any other specific document.

The overall impression of an analysis of EU documents is that quality in work is not effectively mainstreamed in policy approaches. In an enlarged European Union, quality in work gives Europe a social dimension but also has the potential, as yet untapped, to improve working conditions and productivity of work.

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