

**Agnès Parent-Thirion**, Senior Programme Manager Working Conditions, Working Conditions and Industrial Relations Unit, Eurofound

## Quality of work and employment: current challenges

### Abstract

Several current European policies objectives and commitments focus on work and its quality. . The European Working conditions Survey series (the EWCS) carried out by Eurofound is an important survey which helps us to describe and analyse work and working conditions, ultimately providing information on quality of work and employment.

It is generally agreed that quality of work and employment is multidimensional. But is our understanding of what it is, and how it should be monitored, shared? We will consider two issues in this respect: the basis on which to select key dimensions, and clarification of the multi-level dimension.

First, on the selection of the key dimensions of quality of work and employment: different criteria are possible. A first criterion would be to focus on dimensions of job quality which are associated with higher or lower levels of wellbeing, or which influence (through selection processes) the types of job that one can hold. A range of such dimensions have been identified in the research: according to this criterion, earnings, quality of employment, good working conditions including good skill use and development, good work life balance, a safe physical environment, a trusting social environment, an acceptable level of work demands and absence of adverse social behaviours are the key to quality of work and employment. However, other criteria could be considered such as factors contributing to productivity and performance of companies, gender equality, values embedded in the European social model etc. In these cases, dimensions such as workers representation and participation, gender equality, the status of care (as un/paid activity or as high quality employment) and participation into learning organisations would also be key to quality of work and employment.

Second, we should clarify, when discussing quality of work and employment, which level(s) are we addressing: quality of the job, the quality of the match of the job to the worker, the quality of the labour market, the legal framework and the welfare system. All have an influence on quality of work and employment, Depending on the level(s) are we discussing, there are different implications for which actor(s) and roles should play the part as well as indicator to consider to measure progress .

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The presentation will focus on job quality, covering the following key dimensions: 1) earnings 2) prospects 3) intrinsic job quality :(skill use and discretion, social environment, physical environment and work intensity) and 4) working time quality.

Some groups of workers report a higher level of risks than others. In particular, differences between countries in working conditions are important: For many working conditions, the findings also reveal important differences between workers' characteristics, sectors, occupations and countries. When considered in combination, these additional factors can reinforce risks or disadvantages, and interact to create high-risk groups.

On most indicators, average change at European level has been limited. However, this masks diversity with changes for some indicators having gone in different directions for different groups of workers. This confirms the need to keep on monitoring quality of work and employment in a multidimensional perspective. Choices made today will impact on tomorrow's ability and willingness of workers to engage into paid work.