Teamwork and its contribution to High Performance Workplace Organisation: Estonia

This is the Estonian contribution to the topic report on teamwork and its contribution to High Performance Workplace Organisation for the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO).

1. Survey sources

Q.0. Firstly, the correspondents are asked to describe shortly the surveys (dates, coverage, size and response rates, in case of qualitative surveys the leading methodology) used in answering the questions. Correspondents are asked to report on relevant available surveys such as:

Q.0.1 working conditions national representative surveys (quantitative methodology)

To keep this category, the national representativeness is the most important criterion. The population surveyed might be employees, employers, HR specialists, social representatives etc.

Working life barometer (WLB) is the only nationally representative survey in Estonia investigating some aspects of teamwork. WLB is designed to analyse working conditions and quality of working life among Estonian employees and self-employed people. There are two key words in the WLB, quality and transition of working life. The quality of working life refers to all working conditions, from the basic safety to the relationships between employees at work. By monitoring the transition, descriptive information can be obtained about the recent development, present state and future expectations of working life (Antila and Ylöstalo, 2003).

In 1998 and 2002 WLB survey was conducted at the initiative of the Finnish Ministry of Labour, in 2005 Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs initiated the survey. WLB is based on nationally representative sample of around 1,000 individuals. Sample has been formed using the proportional probability sample from the population of working age wage earners and entrepreneurs, the age span in 1998 and in 2005 was 16-64, while in 2002 it was 18-64. The data are collected using a structured face-to-face interview.

As the results of 2005 WLB survey are not available at the time of writing this topic report, this contribution is primarily based on the results of 1998 and 2002 surveys. The publication Working Life Barometer in the Baltic Countries 2002 (10Mb pdf), by Juha Antila and Pekka Ylöstalo (2003) summarises the findings about Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from the abovementioned surveys.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions conducted their European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) in the acceding and candidate countries in 2001. The questionnaire includes one question about teamwork. However, as the data is not presented in as much detail as would be needed for the current report, they are not presented in this report.
**Q.0.2** other establishment of company surveys *(quantitative methodology - e.g. larger sample of employees; structured questionnaire used)*

This category of surveys differs from the previous one by national representativeness. The survey sample is often constituted by employees of one company only.

Statistical Office of Estonia conducts different enterprise surveys, but these do not investigate any aspect of teamwork. Marketing research and consulting company EMOR conducted a working environment survey in March 2000. Survey consisted of two independent parts: 1) companies’ survey, where employer’s assessments to working environment were observed and 2) employees’ survey, where employees evaluated different parameters of their working environment. For further information, see EWCO Estonian survey data report. This survey does not conclude any question about teamwork either.

**Q.0.3** qualitative studies *(at different levels)*

Studies where qualitative methods have been used to understand teamwork and its consequences.

Over the last 15 years the social issues on the organisations context are investigated in Estonia. The phenomenon of organisational culture and related areas are surprisingly well represented among the topics dealt with by Estonian management consultants and scientists. These studies investigate organisational members’ readiness to support tasks and relationships within the organisations. There is a variety of studies about different aspects of organisational culture and its connections to the changes in collectivism, individual values and personality traits, and connections with attitudes (satisfaction with information, satisfaction with leadership, job satisfaction, and perceived benefits of change) towards change.

A huge variety of studies are dedicated to the investigation of collectivism and organisational culture. The collectivism is people’s tendency to think of themselves as part of a collective and subordinate their behaviour to the norms, duties, and obligations imposed by these collectives. Different studies are concentrated at exploring the organisational culture in the light of the hierarchical model of collectivism (Realo et al, 1997, Vadi et al, 2002, Vadi 2003, etc). Authors argue that the persons’ collectivist attitudes towards different social groups may vary due to their socio-demographic background and therefore organisational members hold specific patterns of relationships in relation to organisational culture and collectivistic attitudes. Several studies try to measure the influence of collectivism on organisational culture in different ethnic/cultural background, especially among Estonians and non-Estonians (mainly Russian speaking people) (Vadi et al 2002, Vadi et al 2003, Vadi and Meri 2005, etc.). Authors argue that it is possible that the patterns of relationships between the two constructs are not identical across different cultural groups and their strength and direction of collectivistic attitudes as well as their support to different aspects of organisational culture.

Despite the huge variety of studies, there are no specific studies dedicated to the teamwork and how it influences working conditions and quality of working life.

**2. Survey questions and main findings**

**Q.1** National correspondents are asked to give question wordings and figures which deal with the incidence of teamwork in their countries.

*Example:*
“Do you work in permanent work group or team that has common tasks and possibility to plan its work?”

- Does your job involve, or not…? “Doing all or part of your work in a team”
- Does your job involve, or not…? “Rotating tasks between yourself and colleagues”
- “At my work I have opportunity to be in touch with my colleagues by means of team work”

**Question wordings (Q.1a)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National representative surveys and quantitative case studies: We are interested how national representative surveys and quantitative case studies cover incidence of teamwork in the country or in particular company. Correspondents are asked to give relevant existing question wordings to this issue.</th>
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</table>

Among other things WLB asks one direct question about teamwork and also about changes in the workplace organisation. There are slight differences in the wording of questions in different WLBs. Questionnaire used in 1998 and 2002 asked the following question:

**WLB Q89:** ‘Have following matter happened at your workplace? (Yes/No/Do not know)
- Work is done in teams or groups,
- Units have been broken into smaller units, such as result groups, within the last 12 months,
- Units have been enlarged within the last 12 months,
- Ordinary employees’ responsibility and their opportunities to influence their own work have been increased.’

Wording in the questionnaire used in 2005 was as follows:

**WLB Q52:** ‘Has the following occurs at your current job? (Yes/No/Not applicable to respondent/Hard to say)
- Work is performed in teams or groups,
- Level of responsibility of ordinary employees and their opportunities to have an influence on their work have been increased,
- There have been structural changes in the company or institution in the last 12 months.’

WLB 2005 had one more indirect question, investigating whether there is cooperation between employees and whether working tasks, goals and activities are discussed together at the job.

**WLB Q53:** ‘Please say whether you agree completely, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree completely that working tasks, goals and how to achieve them, are discussed together at the job.’
Correspondents are asked to give figures on the issue of **extent of teamwork** from national representative quantitative surveys. Please give figures broken down by gender, occupation, sector, company size (0-49; 50-249, 250 and more employees), educational attainment, type of ownership. If trend is available please give the trend data with a brief commentary.

In 2002, almost half of the questioned workers (49%) did their work in group or work teams. Group work or teamwork was more common in private sector (50% of the workers said that teamwork was done at their workplace) than in public sector (46%). People were also asked about organisational changes. A minority of the workers had seen work units at their workplace being chopped up into smaller work units (13%) or enlarged into bigger ones during the year preceding the survey (13%).

Correspondents are asked to give the main findings emerging from the most recent case studies on the issue of **the extent of teamwork** (the summary and expert reflexion of existing case studies on that issue is required).

No information available about the extent of teamwork from the case studies or other qualitative research.

**Q.2 Do in the national representative surveys or other surveys exist questions dealing with form and organisation of the team?**

**Example:**

- If you have opportunity to work in team, what is its usual form?

  Flexible teams build up to solve particular project or problem.

  Teamwork in a simple form of job rotation without having opportunity to decide about methods of work or task.

Please include also data if available about incidence of different types of teamwork such as: **quality circles** (exmp. „Do in your company exist so called QUALITY CIRCLES, where the room to express your ideas to particular work issues is given to employees?”, **virtual teams** („Do you use computers or other electronic devices to organize group work or for consultation of your work tasks.”), **cross functional teams** (“Do you cooperate with other departments within interdisciplinary work on particular projects or work tasks?”)

**Question wordings (Q.2.a)**

**National representative surveys and quantitative case studies:** We are interested how national representative surveys and quantitative case studies cover **form and organization of the team**. Correspondents are asked to give relevant existing question wordings to this issue.

No questions dealing with form and organisation of the team do exist in the national representative surveys.
Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.2.b)

Correspondents are asked to give figures on the issue of form and organization of the team from national representative quantitative surveys. What is the incidence of different types of teamwork? Which types of teamwork are characteristic for different occupations, sectors, company size or type of ownership?

No information available.

Content and main findings – company surveys, case studies or other qualitative research (Q.2.c)

Correspondents are asked to give the main findings emerging from the case studies or qualitative research on the issue of form and organization of the team. What is the incidence of different types of teamwork? Which types of teamwork are characteristic for different occupations, sectors, company size or type of ownership? (summary and expert reflexion of existing case studies on that issue is required).

No information available about forms and organisation of the teams from the case studies or other qualitative research.

Q.3 Does teamwork increase autonomy of employees in decision making about their work? Which degrees of self-regulation can be distinguished?

Example:
- The teams are responsible for the preparing and supporting activities of their own work.
- The group can self set the targets for its work.
- The members of my team are responsible for determining the methods, procedures, and schedules with which the work gets done.
- Team is responsible for the results but the team is under the external control.
- Members of team do not have particular responsibility for results and group is managed from external sources as a unit.

Please give also figures showing association between teamwork and individual worker’s autonomy. In this respect crosstabs of autonomy (YES/NO) and teamwork (YES/NO) are required.

Question wordings (Q.3.a)

National representative surveys and quantitative case studies: We are interested how national representative surveys and quantitative case studies cover autonomy of members in a team (See examples above). Correspondents are asked to give relevant question wordings to this issue.

In 1998 and 2002 there was one indirect questions about decision making and task autonomy at work.
WLB Q24-26: ‘Who (employees him/herself/employees together/foreman/management/do not know) normally performs following tasks at your workplace?’

- daily planning of own work,
- weekly planning of own work,
- quality control.’

In 2005 the question was reworded and was as following:

WLB Q51: ‘Who usually plans your day or working week? (employee him/herself/employees together/direct supervisor/director or management/other (more than one response is acceptable))’

Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.3.b)

Correspondents are asked to give figures on the issue of autonomy in a team eventually autonomy at work from national representative quantitative surveys (crosstabs are preferred, correlations, other reported associations).

Antila and Ylöstalo (2003) calculated a separate index to measure the (de)centralisation of power of decision. The reason for this aspect of the survey was the idea that not only the workers’ productivity but also their competence and job satisfaction increase if the individuals are allowed to participate in the decision-making concerning themselves. Workers understand and feel the responsibility related to these decisions and commit themselves more to the activities.

For calculating the responsibility index Antila and Ylöstalo used the abovementioned questions: Who normally executes the following work tasks at your workplace? 1) daily planning of own work, 2) weekly planning of own work, 3) quality control. The answering options and their rating were: employee him/herself (2 points), employees together (1 point), foreman (-1 point) and management or someone else (-2 points). If the person interviewed could not answer, he/she was recorded as “data missing”. The points were added up to give the index, the maximum being 6 and the minimum -6. Antila and Ylöstalo argue that such a simple indicator as the responsibility index gives a fairly good forecast of the company’s success in the long run.

In 1998 the responsibility index for Estonia was -1.03 and for 2002 -0.75 (these figures are the arithmetic mean of the index). The mean value figures show that the wage earners’ possibilities of exerting influence in the planning and quality control of their own work have increased during recent years. An examination of the percentages at the extreme ends of the variation scale (values -6 and +6) revealed that 13% of the wage earners said that all three of the aspects connected with the employee’s work were decided on by the management alone (i.e. that the employee him/herself had no say in the matter and the decision-making power had been removed as far from the workers as possible). At the other end of the responsibility index scale – full empowerment of the employees – only 7% of the workers reported that they decided entirely by themselves concerning the daily and weekly planning of their tasks, as well as personally controlling the quality of their own work. (Antila and Ylöstalo, 2003, pp180-181)

WLB investigates, whether workers can make suggestions for improvement of their work. In Estonia, a little over half of the workers (54%) had made one or more suggestions during the year prior to the survey, with the aim of improving working conditions, working methods or the quality of services. There is no differences in private and public sectors. The respondents were also asked about the aspects, they can influence at their workplace. Most often, the development activities were connected with the introduction of technical equipment (42%), or with new ways of working (41%). Slightly seldom, the measures have been concerned with the launching of new
Content and main findings – case studies or other qualitative research (Q.3.c)

Correspondents are asked to give the main findings emerging from case studies or qualitative research on the issue of teamwork and autonomy. We are interested in to what extent the growth in autonomy within the team results in better group performance and higher job satisfaction (the summary and expert reflexion of existing case studies on that issue is required).

No information available about the issues of teamwork and autonomy from the case studies or other qualitative research.

Q.4. To what extent are workers satisfied with team based way of working? Can you also report on association between overall job satisfaction and teamwork presence? Does teamwork increase overall job satisfaction?

Example: - Are you generally satisfied with team based way of working
    - How satisfied are you with your job?

Question wordings (Q.4.a)

National representative surveys and quantitative case studies: We are interested how national representative surveys and quantitative case studies cover satisfaction with teamwork. Correspondents are asked to give relevant question wordings to this issue.

In WLB there are only indirect questions which can highlight relations in the groups and between workers. In 1998 and 2002 WLB surveys there was a question investigating conflicts between groups of workers:
WLB Q17 ‘To what extent conflicts between groups of employees occur at your workplace? (A lot/quite a lot/to some extent/not at all/do not know)’

In 2005 survey questionnaire, the question was revised and it asked among other types of conflicts about conflicts between structural units at the enterprise.

In 1998 and 2002 survey respondents were asked to evaluate their relations with colleagues:
WLB Q87-89: ‘The next few statements concern your own job. Please assess on a 5 point scale (1 – totally agree to 5 – totally disagree) to what extent you agree with them, give one point in case of a total agreement and 5 points in case of total disagreement:

- I can trust my colleagues
- There is a pleasant atmosphere and a spirit of solidarity
- My colleagues think only about themselves, their job, not considering others?’

In 2005 WLB survey this question was missing.
Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.4.b)

If direct question on satisfaction with teamwork is available, please give the figures. Correspondents are also asked to give figures on the issue of teamwork (YES/NO) and job satisfaction (SATISFIED/NOT SATISFIED) from national representative quantitative surveys (crosstabs are preferred, correlations, other reported associations).

Conflicts within a workplace were investigated and several aspects were highlighted: conflicts between superiors and employees, rivalry, internal competition, with clients, between employees, between groups of employees, threat of physical or mental violence. In Estonia, practically no change has taken place: figures are similar in 1998 and 2002. Conflicts between groups of employees (a lot or quite a lot) were mentioned by 6% of respondents and conflicts between employees by 11% of respondents, rivalry, and internal competition by 13%. When conflicts are examined according to gender and sector in Estonia, it becomes apparent that gender had no practical significance to the conflict issue. The sector however is significant: all the conflicts under study are more common in the public than the private sector.

Relations between workers constitute an important factor associated with job satisfaction. The abovementioned questions are aimed to find out the extent to which trust and solidarity exists between colleagues at workplaces. Majority of people considered that they could trust their work colleagues at least to some extent (around two-third felt trust towards their colleagues and the situation has been stable over the years). Both, the men and women in the public as well as the private sector, have trust in their work colleagues to an equal extent. The youngest respondents are more trusting than the others. Linked to trust is solidarity or selfishness among colleagues. 55% of respondents disagreed with the statement that their colleagues are self-centered. This figure has also been stable over the years and it is not connected either with sector, gender or age.

Content and main findings – case studies or other qualitative research (Q.4.c)

Correspondents are asked to give the main findings emerging from the most recent case studies or qualitative research on the issue of teamwork and job satisfaction (the summary and expert reflexion of existing case studies on that issue is required).

No information available about the issues of teamwork and job satisfaction from the case studies or other qualitative research.

Q.5 Does in your country exist any evidence about interconnection between teamwork presence and higher work intensity and probable work overload?

Please report on the results from any available sources (both of qualitative and quantitative nature).

Example of direct questions related to that issue:

- “Working in group is much more demanding than working individually”
- “Work pressure becomes evenly distributed in the group”
- “Nearly all the members of my team contribute equally to the work”
- “The number of people in my team is too small for the work to be accomplished.”
Question wordings (Q.5.a)

**National representative surveys and quantitative case studies**: We are interested how national representative surveys and quantitative case studies cover the problems of interconnection between teamwork introduction and higher work intensity and higher stress exposure. Correspondents are asked to give relevant question wordings to this issue.

No questions dealing with interactions of teamwork presence and work intensity do exist in the national surveys.

Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.5.b)

Correspondents are asked to give figures on the issue of interconnection between teamwork introduction and higher work intensity and higher stress exposure from national representative quantitative surveys. Please use both figures from direct questions and also figures from higher level analysis e.g. teamwork (YES/NO), higher risk of stress occurrence (YES/NO) (crosstabs are preferred, correlations, other reported associations).

No information available.

Content and main findings – case studies or other qualitative research (Q.5.c)

Correspondents are asked to give the main findings emerging from case studies or qualitative research on the issue of teamwork and higher exposure to overload and stress. Is the work intensity or paste of work higher within organisations which have introduced the work in teams? (the summary and expert reflexion of existing case studies on that issue is required)

No information available about the issues of teamwork and work intensity from the case studies or other qualitative research.

**Q.6. What is the impact of teamwork on learning environment in organization?**

In this question we are following the assumption that teamwork is creating environment for shared responsibility, knowledge and both continuous professional and personal development. We are interested in learning and professional growth opportunities of employees working in team in comparison to the other workers.

When answering this question you should also focus on the job enrichment and job enlargement phenomenon of working life.

Question wordings (Q.6.a)

**National representative surveys and quantitative case studies**: We are interested how national representative surveys and quantitative case studies cover the problems mentioned above. Correspondents are asked to give relevant question wordings to this issue.

No questions dealing with interaction between teamwork and learning environment do exist in
national surveys.

Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.6.b)

Correspondents are asked to give figures on the issue of interconnection of teamwork and learning opportunities from national representative quantitative surveys. Do team members use the opportunity to enhance their professional skills in workplace training more than other employees working in different organizational structures? (crosstabs are preferred, correlations, other reported associations).

No information available.

Content and main findings – case studies or other qualitative research (Q.6.c)

Correspondents are asked to give the main findings emerging from case studies or other qualitative research on the issue of teamwork and learning. We are interested in what is the extent of sharing the knowledge within the team. Do employees working in teams have better opportunities to learn new things in the job than other workers? ” “Is learning environment within team more stimulating?” (the summary and expert reflexion of existing case studies on that issue is required)

No information available about the issues of team work and learning from the case studies or other qualitative research.

(Q.6.d)

It is assumed that teamwork contributes positively to job enrichment and job enlargement (for definition and concept see page n. 8 ). As these two job characteristics consists of different attributes of work and cannot be measured directly, they must be operationalised. Can you find in your national studies (both quantitative and qualitative) any reported association between teamwork, job enrichment and job enlargement?

No information available about the issues of team work and its influence to job enrichment or job enlargement from the quantitative or other qualitative research.

Q.7. Team effectiveness subjectively perceived

It is probable that when answering this question you will be very limited and there will be no question wordings in representative surveys. For all that we can find at least some evidence how workers asses productivity of company or particular department after being involved in the teamwork (See an example).

Example:
- How well the following statements describe your group work? Productiveness of work improves in group work.

**Question wordings (Q.7.a)**

**National representative surveys and quantitative case studies:** We are interested how national representative surveys and quantitative case studies cover the problems what is the impact of teamwork introduction on team effectiveness (from the subjective point of view). Correspondents are asked to give relevant question wordings to this issue.

No questions dealing with effectiveness of teamwork do exist in the national surveys.

**Content and main findings – national representative surveys (Q.7.b)**

Correspondents are asked to give figures on the issue what is the impact of teamwork introduction on team effectiveness subjectively perceived (crosstabs are preferred, correlations, other reported associations).

No information available.

**Content and main findings – case studies or other qualitative research (Q.7.c)**

Correspondents are asked to give the main findings emerging from case studies or other qualitative research on the issue of team effectiveness subjectively perceived (the summary and expert reflexion of existing case studies on that issue is required).

No information available about the effectiveness of team work from the case studies or other qualitative research.

**Q.8 Please reflect briefly on the existing governmental documents, policies, programs or social partners agreements discussing implementation of new work organization forms with emphasis on teamwork at national level.**

This topic is not treated in governmental documents, policies and programs, and also social partners do not have discussions about teamwork at national level. The government and social partners have discussions about labour market flexibility and the main issues raised in this context are in majority employment protection (regulations concerning dismissals, labour taxes, etc.) issues. Issues dealing with different types of work and work organisation have not been under discussions.

**3. References**


Vadi, M., Meri, R., *Estonian culture in the framework of Hofstede's model (case of hotel indu*