



Less satisfaction with health services in the ACC

People in the acceding and candidate countries (ACC) are, on average, less satisfied with their health care systems and social services than those in the EU15. Austrians and Finns report the highest satisfaction levels while people in Bulgaria and Turkey are least satisfied. People in Portugal and Greece, however, report similarly low levels of satisfaction, according to *Health and care in an enlarged Europe, a comparative report on health and health care issues across 28 countries.*

The report forms part of a series of Foundation studies on quality of life and is based on Eurobarometer surveys in the EU and the acceding and candidate countries. It examines how Europeans perceive their own health, how easily they can access health services and how satisfied they are with their national health care systems.



Source: Getty Images

Satisfaction with own health

The research found that more than 80% of EU citizens are at least 'fairly satisfied' with their own health, while fewer than 70% of respondents in the ACC report this level of satisfaction. In this context, satisfaction with personal health can be considered a valid indicator of actual health status. As expected, older people are less satisfied than younger people. However, the effect of age on health satisfaction is on average much stronger in the ACC than in EU Member States. Health status was also found to be related to income distribution in both groups of countries. In all countries, those with a higher income report a higher degree of health satisfaction, but the gap between the highest and the lowest income quartile is smaller in the EU. Although women tend to be less satisfied with their health than men, gender inequalities are smaller than income-related differences.

Access to health facilities

The report reveals wide differences among countries in access to health care facilities, such as proximity to a hospital or to a general practitioner. Within the EU, 96% of people interviewed reported needing less than one hour to get to a hospital, and 85% declared they were able to reach a general practitioner's surgery within 20 minutes. In the acceding and candidate countries, the averages are lower: 87% can access hospitals within an hour and 62% can get to their local doctor in under 20 minutes.

Care in an ageing society

The report reveals high levels of informal care provision in both the current EU and in the acceding and candidate countries.

Moderate pay increases across Europe in 2003

The slowdown in average collectively agreed nominal pay increases shows that most EU Member States continue to respect the EU's broad economic guidelines on pay.

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Stable year for industrial relations

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Moderate pay increases across Europe in 2003

The slowdown in average collectively agreed nominal pay increases shows that most EU Member States continue to respect the EU's broad economic guidelines on pay.

The annual update from the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO), which examines wage developments in the current EU Member States, the acceding countries and Norway, reveals a trend towards moderation. It shows that the average collectively agreed nominal wage increases across the EU and Norway were 3.5% in 2002, compared to 3.1% in 2003. Taking account of lower inflation, average real income rose by 0.2% from 2002 to 2003.

In the 10 acceding countries, however, the average nominal pay increases rose to 8.7% in 2003, up from 8.1% in 2002, while on average real pay

increased by 3.9% in 2003, compared to 2.8% in 2002.

Adding productivity into the equation

Some trade unions take the total of the increase in inflation and productivity – the distributive margin – as the target for pay rises and other negotiated improvements in collective bargaining. Comparative data available for 24 countries over the past two-year period, although blurred by methodological and statistical difficulties, show that bargaining outcomes in Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway and Romania exceeded the distributive margin. The biggest shortfalls were noted in Greece, Ireland, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia over the same period.

'The EU's broad economic guidelines on pay, which suggest that nominal wage increases should not exceed

growth in labour productivity, were observed in most EU Member States,' says **Willy Buschak**, the Foundation's Acting Director, in response to the findings. 'The results of the comparative survey suggest a definite trend towards wage moderation across Europe.'

Collective bargaining coverage

While more than two-thirds of workers in the EU Member States have their pay and working conditions set by collective agreements, bargaining coverage in the acceding countries is generally lower, averaging about four out of every 10 workers. In the enlarged Europe of 25 countries, approximately two-thirds of the workforce will be covered by collective bargaining.

The report can be downloaded from www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int/comparativestudies.html

Stable year for industrial relations

A number of new national-level agreements with general pay and employment conditions were concluded last year, according to the new EIRO Comparative overview of industrial relations in Europe 2003. With regard to the scope and coverage of bargaining, the overall picture seems relatively stable in the EU Member States.

The overview examines the key issues covered by collective bargaining – pay, working time, job security, equal opportunities and diversity issues, and training and skills development – as well as legislative developments, the organisation and role of the social partners, industrial action, employee participation, stress at work, undeclared work, and new forms of work.

Some EU Member States, and almost all the acceding countries, are reported to be in the process of implementing the EU Directive on information and consultation (no. 2002/14/EC). In addition, the acceding countries have been busy transposing the various pieces of EU legislation relating to employee involvement and participation. The EIRO overview indicates that some countries experienced a relatively high level of industrial action in 2003.

Challenges ahead

The overview also provides an outlook of the main challenges for European industrial relations in 2004. It looks at changes taking place in the labour market in many EU Member States, among them, the transitional arrangements implemented in the

majority of countries in the lead-up to the opening of borders to workers from the 10 new EU Member States on 1 May 2004. Pension reform is another major issue in many countries, as governments and social partners grapple with the problems of an ageing population and falling birth rates. Following on from 2003, pension reform will feature high on the agendas in Austria, Finland, France, Italy, Latvia, Malta and Sweden. Finally, there is likely to be considerable activity in terms of collective bargaining at national and intersectoral levels especially in Belgium, Finland, Greece and Spain.

The *Comparative overview of industrial relations in Europe 2003* can be downloaded from www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int/comparativestudies.html

Advisor bids farewell to the Foundation

After 27 years spent promoting better living and working conditions in Europe, Foundation advisor Wendy O’Conghaile is retiring. Her plans for the future include devoting time and energy to projects in her local Dublin community.

When Wendy O’Conghaile came to the Foundation in 1977, she was on leave of absence from the European Commission, where she had been working on information systems related to the social aspects of agriculture. Little did she know that she was to remain for almost three decades and was destined to play a pivotal role in shaping the work programmes and operations of the EU’s oldest decentralised agency.

Initially, her work involved research into working conditions. She then moved on to tackle issues of unemployment and social cohesion. In latter years, as highly-regarded advisor to the Directorate, Wendy O’Conghaile put her considerable talents and experience to the task of developing the Foundation’s four-year rolling programmes and annual programmes of work. She was also responsible for executing and overseeing the first external evaluation of the Foundation in 2001-2.

Putting the Foundation on the map

The improvement of living and working conditions is not a new concept in the European arena, according to Wendy O’Conghaile, since this goal was a founding aim of the European Community, enshrined

in the 1957 Treaty of Rome. However, the Foundation plays a special role in the building of a social Europe, not by being directly involved in the EU decision-making process but rather as a provider of essential information and a promoter of new ideas.



‘The Foundation has played an increasingly important role over the past three decades in drawing attention to the problems faced by EU citizens, workers and companies, and in highlighting opportunities for the social actors to improve quality of life and work,’ says **Wendy O’Conghaile**. ‘Without the skills and strong commitment of the people at the Foundation, it would not be possible to carry out this complex and fascinating task. I am happy to have been part of the good work we have done and continue to do here.’

Working in tandem with the European Social Agenda

Wendy O’Conghaile asserts that while the Foundation’s regulation has

remained unchanged since its inception, the scope of its work, its networks and activities have altered radically. The social partners have always played a central role in the work of the Foundation and, together with the Commission and the Member State governments, they have given it a greater capacity to achieve its mandate. With the knowledge, experience and contact networks accumulated over time, the Foundation’s reputation has increasingly broadened its target audiences. The establishment of the EMCC in 2001, for example, brought on a stronger company dimension and a more direct link to the actual workplace. ‘The Foundation has turned from a being a research body to a knowledge centre, where research is a key tool enabling the Foundation to monitor, analyse and anticipate change,’ says Wendy O’Conghaile. ‘The result is a more timely, more interactive, more relevant response to current issues and future challenges facing an enlarging Europe.’

A challenging working environment

‘It has been a privilege to work, with the ongoing support of my colleagues in the staff, the Administrative Board and the research community, on issues and goals that are close to one’s own personal values,’ concludes Wendy O’Conghaile. ‘I will miss the Foundation’s cross-cultural environment, and the feeling of being part of a movement that can make a difference.’

Overall satisfaction with health services across 28 countries

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On average, 25% of respondents in the ACC and 21% of those in the EU provide continuous care to someone with a long-term illness or disability.

When asked to think about the best care solution for their own parents

when they become dependent, respondents expressed a clear preference for domestic care over residential care and for family support solutions over formal help.

High level of family support

The report reveals a remarkable degree of inter-generational empathy and little self-interest among

Europeans when it comes to considering the best ways of paying for care. In the ACC and EU alike, older citizens express a desire to shift the financial burden to the elderly rather than have younger people pay.

The report is available at www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF03107.htm

NEWS IN BRIEF

Future challenges for European competitiveness

The first EMCC annual conference will take place in Brussels on 28-29 April 2004, bringing together about 100 representatives from companies, social partner organisations, EU institutions and regional authorities. The conference, 'Developing Europe's capacity for change', will include a round table at which invited experts will take a critical look at the European quest for flexible companies and an adaptable workforce.

The conference will provide the Foundation with an opportunity to showcase the contribution EMCC has made since its creation in 2001 to the understanding, anticipation and management of industrial change.

More information is available at www.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/content/source/tn04002a.html

71st Administrative Board meeting

The Foundation's annual report for 2003 was adopted at the 71st Administrative Board meeting on 26 March 2004. The meeting also marked the start of the budgetary procedure for 2005, with the Administrative Board's approval of the Foundation's budget proposal of EUR 20 million. This proposal is now being transmitted to the European Commission and will be included in the budget discussions for the operation of all EU institutions involving the European Parliament and the Council.

The annual report is available for download at www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0429.htm

Living to work – working to live

The second high-level bi-annual Foundation Forum will take place in Dublin on 3-4 November 2004, focusing on challenges and future issues for work-life balance in Europe. The Forum, which provides a platform for frank and open debate among high-level actors and thinkers in the social and economic policy fields, aims to broaden its scope, with participants and speakers from Europe and the United States. The event will include forward-looking workshops on how to reconcile work-life issues, work and life in the city, and how to care for the next generation. The event will include contributions from experts dealing with work-life balance issues at the level of small- and medium-sized enterprises, industry, trade unions, employer organisations, government and academia.

For more information, contact Elisabeth Lagerlöf, Head of Information and Communication, at email: elf@eurofound.eu.int or telephone +353-1-204 31 96

Public access to Foundation documents

Internal Foundation documents will now be publicly available, in accordance with EU regulation no. 049/2001 on public access to documents. Any person can make an application to access internal documents subject to the principles, conditions and limits defined in the regulation. A register of documents will shortly be published on the Foundation's website with a guide explaining how to formulate an application.

EVENTS

Work-life and EU enlargement concluding conference

26-27 April 2004, Stockholm, Sweden
Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen (AMS)

EMCC annual conference

28-29 April 2004, Brussels, Belgium
Foundation event

Families, change and social policy in Europe

13-14 May 2004, Dublin, Ireland
Joint Irish EU-Presidency conference (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs), the United Nations.

Living conditions in rural Europe

31 May-1 June 2004, Westport, Ireland
Irish EU Presidency event (Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs)

PUBLICATIONS

EIRObserver no 2/04

EN: www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0458.htm

EMCC Company restructuring (info sheet)

www.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/erm/

EMCC Anticipating change (info sheet)

www.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/content/source/eu04011a.html

EMCC Exchange events (info sheet)

www.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/content/source/tn04001a.html

Financial markets as drivers of change at company level: Five case studies

EN: www.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/content/source/EU04007a.html

Part-time work in Europe (report)

EN: www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0441.htm

Social dialogue and conflict resolution (report)

EN: www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0421.htm

Social dialogue and conflict resolution: national reports for the 10 acceding countries

EN: www.eurofound.eu.int/industrial/industrial.htm

Industrial relations and enlargement (info sheet)

EN: www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0443.htm

Work environment statistics in Sweden

EN: www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0418.htm

Quality of life in Europe series

Perceptions of living conditions in an enlarged Europe (main report)

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF03113.htm

Perceptions of living conditions in an enlarged Europe (résumé)

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF03114.htm

Fertility and family issues in an enlarged Europe

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF03104.htm

Health and care in an enlarged Europe

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF03107.htm

Life satisfaction in an enlarged Europe

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF03108.htm

Low income and deprivation in an enlarged Europe

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF03105.htm

Migration trends in an enlarged Europe

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF03109.htm

Perceptions of social integration and exclusion in an enlarged Europe

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF03106.htm

Free publications can be downloaded directly from the website and priced publications can be ordered online (www.eurofound.eu.int). They can also be ordered from bookshops or from one of the sales agents of the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities (addresses available at www.eur-op.eu.int).

Promoting EU-level social policy

The first Foundation Seminar series will bring together social actors in an effort to raise knowledge and understanding of EU-level social policy issues and their implementation at national level.

The European Commission has called on the Foundation to come up with suggestions as to how to raise awareness and increase understanding of EU-level social policy in the EU Member States, a problem identified by the High Level Group on Industrial relations and change in the European Union. The answer is the *Foundation Seminar series*, which consists of participatory

knowledge exchange seminars, aimed at actors at national level working to bring their countries' labour markets in line with the Lisbon criteria.

Sharing knowledge and experiences

With its tripartite structure, the Foundation is well placed to explain EU-level social policy issues. Banking on the Foundation as a forum for frank and open exchange, the formula is to let participants share experiences and debate how to implement them at national levels. The Foundation will add its wealth of knowledge from all core research areas, aided by experts from the European employers' and workers'

organisations, and the European Commission.

Focus on age and work

The theme, 'Age and work: connecting the generations', provides the main focus for the seminars. Specifically, the emphasis will be on the challenges to the European labour market arising from demographic trends, as well as the opportunities offered by combining the skills and competences of various generations at the workplace. One Foundation seminar is planned for 2004 which will take place in two parts: 9-11 June in Dublin and 11-13 September in Bonn.

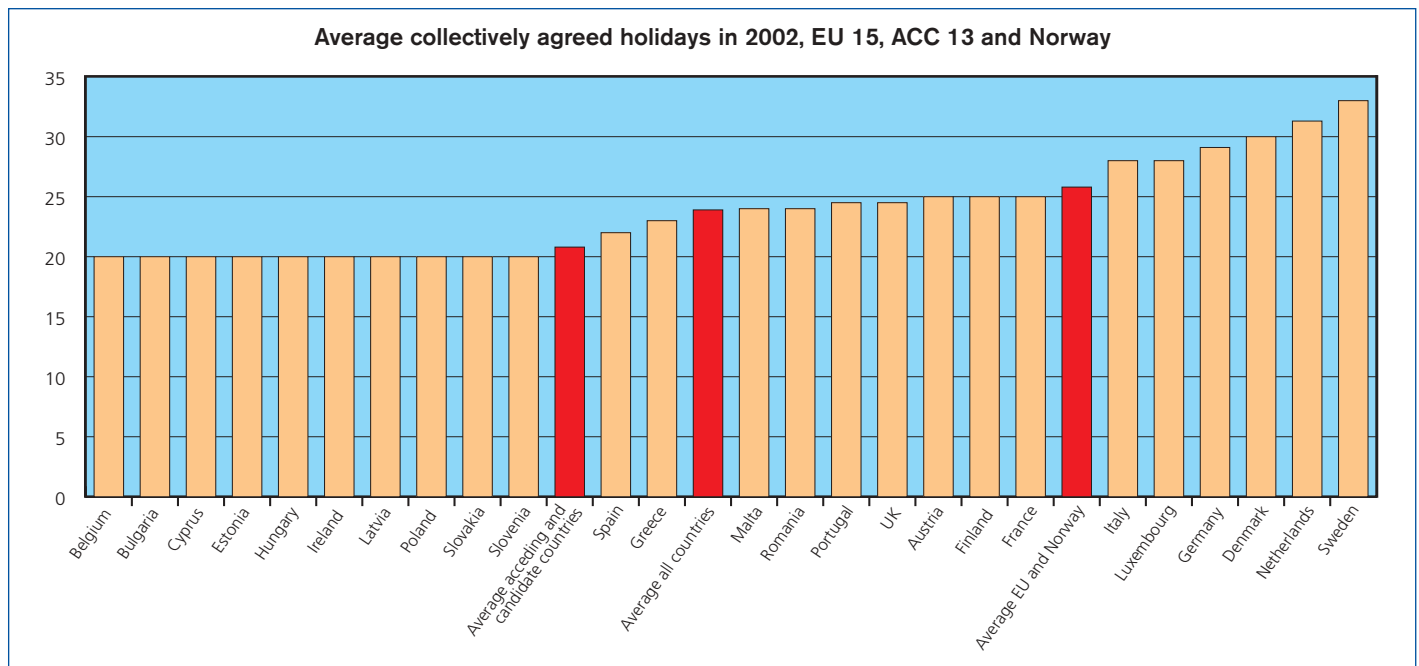
RESEARCH IN FIGURES

Major differences in collectively agreed holidays across Europe

Workers in Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden enjoy the longest collectively-agreed holidays in Europe. Workers in Belgium, Estonia and Ireland have the shortest

holidays. The Foundation report, *Working time developments in Europe 2003*, shows no significant general working time reductions, continuing the trend since 2000.

Working time was not a major issue in collective bargaining in 2003. Flexibility, in various forms, now appears to be the main topic in negotiations on working time.



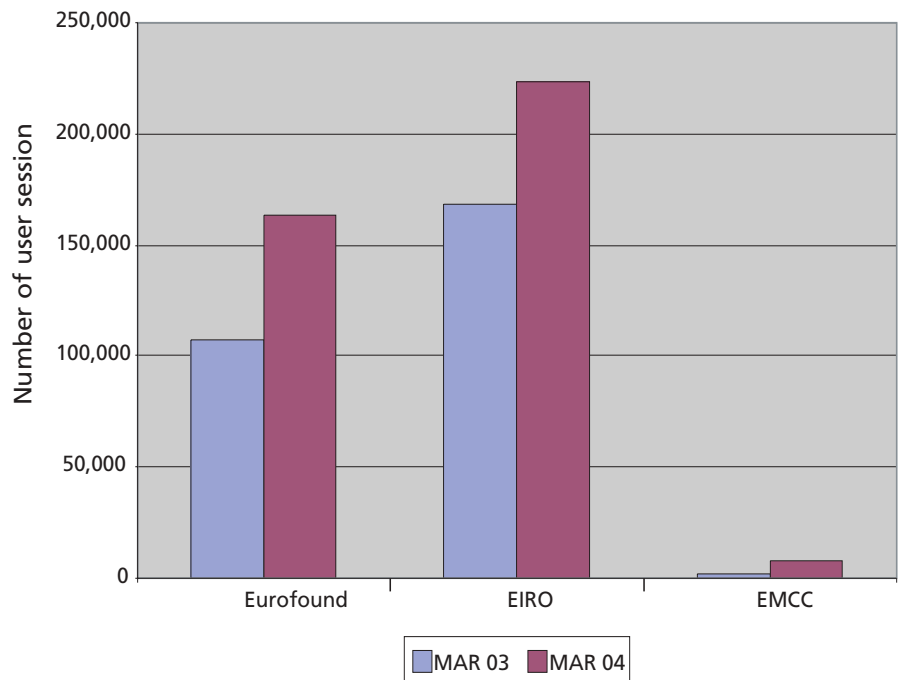
INSIDE THE FOUNDATION

Increase in number of web users

The number of web users on Eurofound during the month of March is up 34% compared to the same period last year. Some 163,366 people visited the site in March, spending an average of 17 minutes online during each visit.

The website of the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) recorded 223,006 users during the same period, an increase of 25% over the same period one year ago. The average stay online when visiting EIRO is 21 minutes.

The newest of Foundation websites, the European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC) portal, has seen a boost in the number of user sessions over the same period, from 2,266 in March 2002 to 8,089 in March 2003, representing a 72% increase.



Staff changes

Eberhard Köhler has been appointed Advisor to the Directorate from 1 April 2004.

Arrivals

Sylvie Seigné-Monks to secretariat of the Directorate – 2 February 2004.

Javier Bernier to Living Conditions area – 16 February 2004.

Gema María Castro Martín to the Finance unit – 15 March 2004.

May-Britt Billfalk to Information and Communication – 15 March 2004.

Departures

Philippe Bronchain resigned on 20 January 2004.

Antonella Pirami resigned on 31 January 2004.

Ann McDonald retired on 1 March 2004 after 27 years of service.

Wendy O’Conghaile retired on 1 April 2004 after 27 years of service.

Vacancies

The Foundation will shortly be recruiting for the following posts:

EF 03/05 – Computer Technician

EF 04/01 – Research Manager

EF 04/02 – Secretary (from acceding countries)

EF 04/05 – Conference and Travel Officer

Further information is available from:

email: recruit@eurofound.eu.int or

fax: + 353 1 2822530.

Latest online publications

Between 1-31 March, more than 30 Foundation publications were published online. Many of them were produced in relation to the current information campaign ‘Paving the road to enlargement’.

Information about this campaign may be found on the enlargement web page at www.eurofound.eu.int/enlargement

communiqué

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