Does employment status matter for job quality?
Introduction

The standard employment status for workers is full-time, permanent employment. In recent decades, various types of temporary and part-time work, self-employment and other flexible employment arrangements have become more common across the EU. These other types, collectively referred to as non-standard forms of employment, accounted for 33% of the EU workforce in 2015. While non-standard ways of working suit the aspirations and needs of some workers – enabling them to combine work with other activities, such as caring for children, for example – others would prefer full-time, permanent status and are temporary, part-time or self-employed only because they have no alternative. This fact, and the increase in non-standard forms of employment, raises a justified policy concern: does job quality vary according to employment status? More specifically, is job quality poorer in non-standard forms of work?

Improving job quality is a cornerstone of the European project, emblematically expressed in the ‘more and better jobs’ objective of the Lisbon Strategy of 2000. The reduction of inequalities in job quality among and within different employment statuses is also a clear policy goal in the European Pillar of Social Rights.

This policy brief uses the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) data to investigate the job quality associated with different employment statuses in the 28 EU Member States. The overall objective is to assess if one’s employment status truly matters for job quality, or if differences in working conditions arise as a result of other factors such as occupation, sector or the sociodemographic characteristics of workers. The analysis takes in employment status across waged employment. It also looks at forms of self-employment, which sometimes operates in a grey zone blurring the boundary with employment, giving rise to particular policy concerns.
More and better jobs

Active labour market policies designed to address high levels of unemployment often have job creation as their first priority. This policy emphasis may have led to an increase in non-standard forms of employment, deviating from the standard of full-time employment and contracts of indefinite duration, in the 1990s and early 2000s across the EU (Vallas, 1999; Bosch, 2012). Use of fixed-term contracts grew as they provided a solution to employers’ increased demands for flexible work arrangements. Part-time employment also increased substantially in the same period, driven in large part by women’s increased labour market participation in many Member States.

The development of more flexible forms of employment has sometimes had negative consequences for employees’ working conditions and labour rights (Eurofound, 2002; 2015a; 2017b). Therefore, in its strategy to address structural labour market changes, the EU has pursued not only the goal of more jobs but also of better jobs for nearly two decades now. The phrase ‘better jobs’ was first used in the Lisbon Strategy, launched in 2000. Its successor, the Europe 2020 strategy, has both employment growth and job quality as explicit objectives, although with a stronger emphasis on employment and skill levels than on the quality aspect of jobs.

Improving the quality of jobs in non-standard forms of employment has become a priority for the European Commission more recently. The topic of fair working conditions regardless of employment status has been explicitly taken up in the European Pillar of Social Rights, which asserts that ‘leaders of 27 Member States have stressed that economic and social insecurity needs to be addressed as a matter of priority’ (Official Journal of the European Union, 2017, p. 6). The proclamation states that ‘regardless of the type and duration of the employment relationship, workers have the right to fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, access to social protection and training’ and that ‘employment relationships that lead to precarious working conditions shall be prevented’ (Official Journal of the European Union, 2017, p. 13).
Equal treatment of workers

Equal treatment of workers irrespective of their employment status has been on the agenda of stakeholders at EU level for some time. The first attempts to legislate for the comparable treatment and working conditions of employees with non-standard employment contracts (fixed-term and part-time) at EU level date back to the early 1980s. Although these initiatives failed, renewed commitment and momentum to set minimum standards for the protection of non-standard forms of employment came from the 1989 Community Charter of the Fundamental and Social Rights of Workers declared by all Member States with the exception of the United Kingdom. The declaration established the major principles on which the model of European labour law is based and shaped the development of the European social model in the following decade. The principles of the charter were further developed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which became legally binding with the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009.

Important milestones were achieved by means of framework agreements drawn up by the European social partners (BusinessEurope (formerly UNICE), CEEP and ETUC) and finally led to the EU legislation on part-time and fixed-term work in 1997 and 1999, respectively (Council Directive 97/81/EC and Council Directive 1999/70/EC). The main purpose of the two directives was essentially to prevent specific problems for workers with non-standard contracts by endorsing the principle of non-discrimination in relation to staff on indefinite full-time contracts. Furthermore, it was the aim of the directive on fixed-term work to ‘prevent abuse of successive fixed-term contracts between the same employer and employee for the same work’ and to ‘support transition towards permanent work’ (Official Journal of the European Communities, 1999, p. 2). The directive on part-time work aimed at facilitating transfers from full-time work to part-time and vice versa and to prohibit dismissals of workers who refused to return to their previous status.

In the Commission’s 2007 proposal for new employment guidelines, which was influenced by discussions around employability and flexicurity, one of the priority areas emphasised was ‘attracting and retaining more people in employment, increasing labour supply and modernising social protection systems’. One of the guidelines explicitly targets fairness and equal opportunities. In addition, the directive on temporary agency work (2008/104/EC) looked to guarantee workers employed through employment agencies equal pay and working conditions as employees of the same business.

More recently, two key initiatives concerning the social protection and working conditions of workers on non-standard contracts were brought forward by the Commission. One is a proposal for a Council recommendation giving workers in non-standard employment and self-employed workers access to social protection (COM(2018)132 final), which they often lack due to their employment status. The other is a proposal for a directive on transparent and predictable working conditions (COM(2017)797 final). This aims to establish a level playing field for all workers regarding certain rights, covering even those workers in the most precarious forms of work. Both initiatives stem from the European Pillar of Social Rights and address the issues of employment and job quality in non-standard employment statuses.
To analyse the job quality of workers of different employment statuses, this study compared the working conditions of five non-standard employment statuses (long-term temporary employee, short-term temporary employee, economically dependent solo self-employed worker, independent solo self-employed worker and employer) to permanent employee status, and compared part-time status to full-time. It also examined differences across the Member States, clustered into five groups: Anglo-Saxon, Northern, Continental, Southern and Central-eastern and Baltic countries (CEEB).

- Throughout Europe, permanent employment remains the most common employment status. However, there is considerable variation in the prevalence of this type of employment across countries, sectors, occupations and sociodemographic groups. For instance, permanent contracts are less common among new entrants to the labour market and more common among workers with higher educational attainment.

- **Temporary employees** as a whole experience less favourable working conditions in many dimensions of job quality. Compared to permanent employees, they are disadvantaged regarding working time and the flexibility to manage it; they also have less job security and poorer prospects for career advancement.

- **Solo self-employed workers** of both types experience less favourable social environments compared to permanent employees. However, they have significantly higher scores as regards use of their skills, access to training and ability to operate autonomously.

- **Employers** have better job quality than permanent employees as regards their career prospects and the scope they have to use their skills and exercise autonomy. However, among all employment statuses, they have the worst scores in terms of their working time quality. This holds true particularly for employers in the Northern group – Denmark, Finland and Sweden – where, compared to permanent employees, they also experience higher levels of work intensity than elsewhere.

- **Part-time** workers experience lower work intensity than full-time workers and have better and more flexible working time arrangements. On the other hand, part-time workers are less likely to be able to act autonomously and use their skills, and overall they experience a poorer social environment at work.
This section presents the results of a study on the implications of employment status for job quality, based on data from the 2015 EWCS. It begins by identifying the different types of employment status and examining changes in the prevalence of each in the EU Member States since 2000. It goes on to explore whether particular employment statuses are more common in specific socioeconomic groups, sectors and occupations. The guiding question for the study is then addressed: does the employment status truly matter for job quality or are other factors at play? Finally, it looks at whether the relationship between employment status and job quality differs depending on Member State.1

Employment statuses across the EU

In this policy brief, employment status refers to the contractual aspect of employment in terms of duration and the number of working hours. The starting point for the study was to identify the different employment statuses to be examined. First, it distinguished between:

- employees: workers in dependent employment, employed by an employer or a temporary employment agency
- self-employed: workers who have their own business (with or without employees) or who are partners in a business, and freelancers

Within the category of employees, the study examines:

- permanent employees: those who have a contract of indefinite duration
- short-term temporary employees: those who have fixed-term contracts of less than one year (excluding those employed by a temporary employment agency)
- long-term temporary employees: those who have fixed-term contracts of more than one year (again excluding those employed by a temporary employment agency)

1 This policy brief is based on a Eurofound working paper entitled Employment status and job quality, prepared by C. Vanroelen, J. Gevaert, B. Janssens, S. Gadeyne and D. De Moortel.
Among the self-employed, it examines:

- employers: self-employed workers who have employees
- solo self-employed workers: workers who do not have employees

The solo self-employed group can be subdivided into independent self-employed and economically dependent self-employed workers. While independent self-employed workers have autonomy over their work and operate independently, economically dependent self-employed workers have relationships with their clients, and often only one main client, that resemble employee relationships.

Across all workers, we further distinguished between those who work full-time (35 hours or more per week) and those who work part-time (less than 35 hours per week). While part-time work can be a way for workers to combine employment with care responsibilities, education or other activities, for some it is involuntary – they would prefer a full-time job.

Mapping national profiles and trends

Recent figures from the European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) show that EU labour markets are dynamic when it comes to employment statuses; however, not many countries have seen major transformations in the past 15 years (Figures 1–4). The composition of the workforce in terms of employment status is related to overall levels of employment and unemployment in a country, which have varied a lot since 2000.

Permanent employment

A small decline in permanent contracts is the general picture that emerges, but the decline has only been substantial in a few countries, particularly Poland, Croatia and the Netherlands (Figure 1). In many countries, the share of permanent employment has been remarkably stable – or even increased, for instance in Spain.

Figure 1: Permanent employment in Member States and the EU as percentage of total dependent employment, 2000–2015

Source: EU-LFS, Eurostat
The high overall percentage of dependent employees in permanent employment can be misleading, as it can be much lower when specific subgroups of workers or occupations or sectors are singled out. Permanent contracts are less common among labour market entrants, for instance, who are much more likely to find themselves in non-standard forms of employment (Eurofound, 2017b). While non-standard employment is often seen as a stepping stone into more stable employment, the evidence suggests this is not the case: transition rates from temporary jobs into permanent employment have decreased (Eurofound, 2015b). In addition, transitions from temporary jobs into unemployment have increased (Eurostat, 2018).

Temporary employment

The discussion on whether the permanent contract is being eroded is thus closely related to the prevalence of temporary contracts. Regarding temporary employment, there is also strong national variation, not only in terms of prevalence, but countries also show differences in the relative growth or decline of the incidence of temporary contracts over time (Figure 2). These national variations probably reflect differences in policy initiatives across countries.

Self-employment

The data are less comprehensive for self-employment. Based on the EWCS (2010 and 2015), the rate of self-employment varies greatly between the Member States, and trends over time are diverse. In a number of countries, a clear and consistent growth in the share of self-employment can be seen – for example in Finland, Greece, Italy and Portugal (Figure 3). In contrast, other countries exhibit a declining share of self-employment: Romania and Poland are the clearest examples, but France, Sweden and Denmark (among others) show a similar pattern.

Solo self-employment is particularly prevalent in a number of southern European countries as a percentage of the total labour force, with the highest shares in Greece (27%), Italy (20.5%) and Portugal (19.6%). In each of these countries, the economically dependent self-employed represent a relatively high proportion of solo self-employment. Some
eastern European countries also have relatively large shares of dependent self-employment (such as Romania, where 6.7% of workers are in this category).

One reason for the high prevalence of solo self-employment, according to experts, is the use of ‘bogus self-employment’ by employers, where workers formally supply services to a client, but actually work as dependent employees. This type of arrangement is used by employers to reduce payroll costs and to increase their flexibility to hire and fire. Another driver of solo self-employment is high unemployment, which leads job-seekers to pursue self-employment due to a lack of alternatives.

Just over 1 in 20 (5%) of the EU labour force are employers. Here, too, Greece (11%) and Italy (8%) have a higher prevalence compared to other EU countries. (No reliable data are available for this category for comparisons over time.)

Part-time employment

According to the EU-LFS, part-time employment is on the rise in almost all EU Member States, with the exception of some eastern European countries, including Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland and Romania (Figure 4). In the Netherlands, almost half of all paid employment is part-time. The steepest increases since 2000 were seen in Germany, Austria, Italy and Poland. Involuntary part-time work rises in periods of high unemployment, which explains the increase in Spain, Greece and Italy, where it accounts for 10% or more of all employment.

Generally speaking, three scenarios describe how part-time employment fits into the employment landscape in Member States:

- it is equally prevalent in both high- and low-skilled jobs (this is more the case in the Netherlands and Sweden)
- it is concentrated in low-paid employment (this is more the case in Germany and the United Kingdom)
- it is irregular and undesirable – and often involuntary (this is more the case in southern and eastern European countries)
Who holds which employment status?

Across the EU, an average of 66% of the workforce hold a permanent contract. However, employment statuses are not evenly distributed over socioeconomic groups, occupations and sectors. Women are overrepresented in the employee categories, while men are more likely to be self-employed. Younger age groups are the most likely to have temporary contracts: the proportion of permanent contracts rises with age before declining among the oldest age group (55 years and over). Self-employment is more common among the older age groups.

Permanent contracts are very much skewed towards the higher educated, while workers with primary educational attainment have a higher probability of being in short-term temporary employment and dependent self-employment. Permanent contracts dominate certain occupations, accounting for around 80% of jobs among clerical support workers and assemblers/plant and machine operators. Yet for other occupations, permanent employment is not the norm – notably agricultural workers (where 21% have permanent jobs) and managers (48% with permanent jobs); conversely, these two occupations are overrepresented in self-employment. Temporary contracts (both long- and short-term) are more common among service and sales workers and in elementary occupations compared to the average.

The economic sector with the highest prevalence of permanent employment is public administration, where 83% of workers have this status. Rates are much lower in the agricultural sector (19%), but also considerably lower in construction (54%), other services (55%), and commerce and hospitality (61%). In agriculture, the lower rate of permanent employment is offset by a higher prevalence of all types of self-employment. In construction and other services, too, all types of self-employment are more prevalent, compared to the average.
Part-time employment, too, is quite polarised along the lines of age, sex and occupation. The rate is much higher for women than for men. It has a U-shaped pattern in relation to age: both the youngest (33%) and the oldest (32%) age categories more often have this status.

Involuntary part-time employment is more prevalent among the younger age groups, and also among workers with lower educational attainment compared to workers in other educational categories. The same holds for elementary occupations and service and sales workers, when compared to other occupational categories.

**Does employment status matter for job quality?**

The analysis above has clearly established that different types of employment status are unevenly distributed across countries, sociodemographic groups, occupations and sectors. It is therefore a justified policy concern to ask whether employment status is related to job quality. To answer this question, we look at how each employment status scores on six dimensions of job quality:

- **physical environment:** the degree to which there are physical risks to workers in the workplace
- **social environment:** the extent to which workers experience both supportive social relationships and adverse social behaviour
- **working time quality:** the duration, scheduling and flexibility of working time arrangements
- **work intensity:** the level of demands (including emotional demands) putting pressure on workers
- **skills and discretion:** the opportunities for workers to exercise autonomy, apply their skills, participate in the organisation and develop professionally
- **prospects:** job security and opportunities to progress in their career

On all dimensions except work intensity, higher scores indicate better job quality; for work intensity, lower scores represent better job quality.

**Clear differences in job quality**

Overall, job quality is most favourable for the majority group of employees with permanent contracts. They fare above average in four of the six job quality dimensions examined (Figure 5). At the same time, they tend to experience higher work intensity than average.

Temporary workers – and more specifically those on short-term contracts – fare less well on a number of job quality dimensions. Their scores are poorer than average in four areas, of which prospects and skills and discretion are most problematic. However, as regards the social environment, they have a slightly higher score than the average.

For workers on longer-term temporary contracts, the pattern is similar, but it is safe to say that their job quality scores are closer to the average worker. Still, they score lower on prospects and skills and discretion than average. In addition, longer-term temporary employees find themselves in less favourable social environments compared to the average.

The picture is mixed for the self-employed, in part because they are a heterogeneous group. Employers have the most favourable job quality, with scores above average in four areas: physical environment, social environment, prospects, and skills and discretion. They have, however, slightly higher work intensity and score poorest in working time quality.

Both independent and economically dependent solo self-employed workers experience equally poor social environments. At the same time, work intensity is lower for them than for employees with other statuses. There are also marked differences between the two categories: while economically dependent self-employed workers have above average working time quality and below average skills and discretion scores, it is the other way around for the independent self-employed. Both, though, fare below average as regards their career and employment prospects.
A comparison of full-time and part-time workers, illustrated by Figure 6, shows better scores for the latter on their physical working conditions, their work intensity (which is lower) and working time quality. On the other hand, part-timers fare worse regarding skills and discretion (they have less access to training and less decision latitude in their jobs) and in their career prospects. A further distinction between voluntary and involuntary...

Figure 5: Job quality scores by employment status, EU, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Physical environment</th>
<th>Social environment</th>
<th>Working time quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term temporary</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term temporary</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically dependent self-employed</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent self-employed</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scores on the job quality dimensions range from 0 (low) to 100 (high).
Source: EWCS, 2015

Figure 6: Job quality scores of full-time and part-time workers, EU, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Involuntary part-time</th>
<th>Voluntary part-time</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills and discretion</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prospects</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working time quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work intensity</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EWCS, 2015
part-timers shows that the involuntary group has poorer job quality in all areas, but particularly with reference to skills and discretion and prospects.

Is the effect of employment status real?

Do such job quality differences truly depend on employment status or are other factors at play here? It is well-known that certain worker characteristics (such as lower educational attainment, being new to the labour market or having a manual or low-skilled job) are associated with poorer job quality on average; so are specific sectors (such as agriculture and construction). Therefore, differences in job quality between employment statuses might be compositional – a consequence of how each status is composed according to worker characteristics, occupation or sector.

For instance, age could be an important factor to explain take-up of training: older people may be less willing to take training courses. Simultaneously, older people are more likely to be in part-time jobs. But in this case, age would be more likely to explain the difference in uptake of training than employment status.

Such confounding influences need to be controlled in order to say, for instance, that there is a statistically significant relationship between part-time employment and the likelihood of taking up training. If the association of employment status with job quality is purely compositional, it should disappear when controlling for other characteristics. Otherwise, it can be safely assumed that employment status matters – for instance, temporary workers have fewer opportunities for career advancement and professional development.

The rest of the analyses in this section control for individual characteristics (sex, age and education) and socioeconomic characteristics (income and household type) as well as sector and occupation. The results show the differences in job quality for temporary employees and self-employed workers when compared to permanent employees, and for part-time workers when compared to full-time workers.

After controlling for other factors, it is striking that temporary contracts – and especially short-term temporary contracts – continue to show suboptimal results for many areas of job quality, illustrated in Figure 7 by the red shading. In particular, working time quality,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical environment</th>
<th>Work intensity</th>
<th>Working time quality</th>
<th>Social environment</th>
<th>Prospects</th>
<th>Skills and discretion</th>
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<td>Short-term temporary</td>
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<td>Long-term temporary</td>
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<td>Economically dependent self-employed</td>
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<td>Independent self-employed</td>
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<td>Employer</td>
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<td>Part time</td>
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Note: The colours represent statistically significant relationships. Green represents a positive relationship and red represents a negative – the darker the shade, the stronger the relationship.

Source: EWCS, 2015
prospects, and skills and discretion remain problematic. On the other hand, temporary employees with longer-term contracts experience lower work intensity (though the effect is weak) than permanent employees, while the social environment is slightly better for workers on short-term temporary contracts.

As regards self-employment, the findings basically confirm what was seen already. Being an employer is linked to higher scores on social environment, skills and discretion, and prospects, and lower work intensity compared with being a permanent employee. The working time quality of this group, however, is clearly poorer, maybe reflecting higher work pressure and the burden of economic responsibility on these self-employed workers.

Both independent and economically dependent self-employment is clearly associated with lower work intensity and better opportunity to exercise one’s skills and discretion. But working time quality is substantially worse, and these workers have less favourable social environments compared with employees who have permanent contracts.

Finally, the analysis for the most part confirms the earlier findings on part-time workers: they experience less work intensity, better working time quality but a worse social environment and less opportunity to use their skills and discretion than full-time workers.

Looking deeper
The six dimensions of job quality are designed to give a broad representation of the work environment. Each is compiled from more specific items of information; these items can be examined individually to look at job quality in more detail. Six items were chosen for closer examination:

- access to training
- job security
- being called to work at short notice
- having difficulty arranging time off
- regularity of working hours
- high job strain (combination of high work intensity and low job autonomy)

As Figure 8 shows, compared to workers with permanent jobs, temporary workers are consistently disadvantaged across these items. They are less likely to participate in training, have more difficulty taking time off and are more likely to be called in to work at short notice. Those with short-term contracts are especially disadvantaged, having lower job security and higher job strain.

Figure 8: Effects of employment status on different aspects of job quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Job security</th>
<th>Training received</th>
<th>Difficulties in taking time off</th>
<th>Called to work at short notice</th>
<th>Working hours regularity</th>
<th>High strain</th>
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<td>Short-term temporary</td>
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<td>Part time</td>
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Note: Red shading indicates negative effects, while blue shading indicates positive effects.
Source: EWCS, 2015
Unsurprisingly, taking time off is less of an issue for the self-employed. However, they are more likely to be called in to work at short notice and have a lower regularity as regards their time schedule, particularly employers and the independent self-employed. The group least likely to receive training compared to permanent employees is the economically dependent self-employed workers, but the other two types of self-employed workers are also less likely to participate in training. On the other hand, all self-employed workers are less likely to experience high levels of job strain compared to permanent employees.

Part-time workers fare less well than full-time workers on these items. They are less likely to receive training, more likely to be called in to work at short notice and have less regularity in their time schedule than full-time employees. Furthermore, they are more likely to have high job strain than their full-time counterparts.

What role do country regimes play?

So far, the policy brief has dealt with the link between job quality and employment statuses in the EU without taking account of the distinctive role that institutional features can play in this relationship. However, labour markets are shaped not only by macroeconomic and historical developments, but especially by institutions and policy measures and reforms at national level. It may be revealing to explore the role of such elements to see if the links between employment status and job quality as identified above are the same across all types of countries. To this end, a typology (developed by Gallie, 2007) was used to classify EU Member States into five country types reflecting specific institutional characteristics shared by these groups: 2

- **Anglo-Saxon countries**: Ireland and the United Kingdom
- **Northern countries**: Denmark, Finland and Sweden
- **Continental coordinated countries**: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Slovenia
- **Southern state-coordinated countries**: Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain
- **Central-eastern and Baltic countries (CEEB)**: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia

The results are shown in Figure 9, and highlight that temporary employees face disadvantages across Europe compared to those with permanent contracts, as indicated by the red cells. However, there are some notable differences between the country regimes. Short-term contracts are negatively linked to skills and discretion in all country groups, but most strongly in the Anglo-Saxon group and least strongly in the Continental group (not illustrated in the figure). Both long- and short-term temporary workers have poorer career prospects in several regimes – for those on short-term contracts, the exceptions are the Anglo-Saxon and CEEB groups, while for those on longer-term contracts, only the Anglo-Saxon group is an exception. Both types of temporary workers in the CEEB group report significantly poorer working time quality.

Compared to permanent employees, independent self-employed workers are particularly worse off in the Anglo-Saxon countries. While they have better skills and discretion scores than permanent employees

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2 The names of the country groups have been changed.
in all other regimes, this is not the case in the Anglo-Saxon group. Their physical working environment is also poorer in this group as well as in the CEEB group. They have better working time quality than permanent employees only in the CEEB group.

The results are mixed for the economically dependent self-employed. They have lower work intensity in all country groups except the Anglo-Saxon group. Their working time quality (compared to permanent employees) is poorer in the Northern group, and they have poorer social environments in the Southern and CEEB groups. However, in the latter, they score higher on skills and discretion than permanent employees.

Working time quality is worse for employers across all country groups compared to permanent employees, but is especially poor in the Northern countries (not illustrated in the figure). However, employers in the Northern group have lower work intensity and report better prospects (together with those in the Anglo-Saxon and CEEB groups) than elsewhere. As regards prospects, there are no specific advantages for employers in the Continental coordinated and Southern state-coordinated groups. However, in the Continental group, employers work in more favourable social environments (again compared to permanent employees).
Summary

Permanent employment is still the most prevalent employment status throughout the EU, accounting for 66% of employment. Some countries, however, have seen clear deviations from this norm over recent decades. Increasing global competition, high unemployment rates and employers looking for more flexibility have contributed to an increase of temporary contracts and other forms of non-standard employment, especially among labour market entrants. Solo self-employment has grown especially in southern European countries. Of these solo self-employed workers, a significant share is economically dependent on their clients, making their status more like that of an employee. Part-time work has increased substantially in most countries, particularly in Austria, Germany, Italy and Poland, mostly due to the increase of women in the labour force.

However, in some eastern European countries – most notably Romania – part-time employment has fallen.

It is clear that employment status matters for job quality. Temporary employee (particularly with a short-term contract) is the most disadvantaged status: workers with this status have poorer career prospects and less scope to exercise their skills and discretion in the workplace. However, part-time workers, and especially involuntary part-timers, also experience lower job quality regarding, for example, access to training and the social environment at work.

Job quality is also below par for the solo self-employed. While they have more autonomy at work, they also work in poorer social environments, their working time quality suffers, and they are less likely to take up training. The independent self-employed fare particularly poorly in the Anglo-Saxon group of countries.
Focus on job quality

- The results of the study show that some employment statuses are linked to poorer quality jobs. However, as set out in the Europe 2020 strategy and confirmed by the European Pillar of Social Rights, it is not only employment levels that matter, but also the quality of jobs and the specific working conditions that workers experience. Labour market policies aimed at addressing global economic competitiveness and combating high unemployment rates hence need to consider the potential effects for job quality.

Ensure equal treatment

- Holders of temporary contracts are particularly likely to have poorer job quality with regard to access to training, scope to act autonomously, job security and prospects for career advancement. Workers with short-term temporary contracts especially are worse off in all dimensions but work intensity. Specific policy instruments to tackle these issues could include public funding of training to equip temporary workers with the skills that the labour market demands, as well as state-backed measures to enhance their career prospects and facilitate their transition into permanent jobs. The latter could be incorporated into regional or local-level active labour market policies. To this end, public employment services might extend their portfolio of at-risk employment statuses to include temporary employees, and design customised development plans and career profiles for this group.

- In addition to measures such as running preventive awareness-raising campaigns and increasing fines for abusive use of temporary contracts, Member States should strive to close the gap between permanent and temporary workers as regards career opportunities, training and so on. While part-time work can help workers to balance working and private life (offering good working time quality), it also has potentially negative consequences for their career prospects and access to training. These disadvantages are more pronounced for involuntary part-timers. Both policymakers and employers need to address differences
Does employment status matter for job quality?

in job quality between part-time and full-time workers. In light of the principle of non-discrimination set out in the Part-time Work Directive, any obstacles that might hinder equal opportunities need to be eliminated. Stocktaking and identification of good practices on what works well for both employers and workers is urgently needed. Transposition of existing EU legislation needs to be enforced more effectively at the Member State level to this end, as currently a number of countries have done little to implement the non-discrimination aim of the directive. At EU level, efforts should continue to stimulate transparency of employment protection legislation concerning part-time work, so that the implications are clear to both the employee and employer. At company level, managers need to develop strategies focusing on equal treatment and improvement of job quality where part-time workers are at risk of being disadvantaged.

Employers need to address potential discrimination against temporary and part-time workers in terms of job quality as part of their business strategy and be clear about career prospects and training opportunities during recruitment of workers to these statuses. Employer organisations can play a crucial role in developing guidelines and communicating best practices in order to promote best outcomes for both employers and workers.

Support the self-employed

Self-employment offers advantages in many job quality dimensions for those who start businesses and employ staff. Support measures need to target people with the characteristics and skills to take the risk of setting up their own business. Likewise, policy measures should include ways to prepare and support future self-employed workers to cope with the difficulties of entrepreneurship. Access to publicly funded parental-leave schemes or sabbaticals are concrete measures to address poor working time quality and work–life balance issues experienced by those who are self-employed. Entrepreneurship policy also needs to address the risks of solo self-employment through measures such as awareness-raising campaigns, especially in countries where this group has been proven to be particularly disadvantaged, such as Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Bogus self-employment (where workers are formally employed on a service contract basis but actually work as dependent employees) needs to be combated resolutely. In particular, the ambiguity that arises from the blurring of boundaries between self-employment and employment needs to be reduced, starting with the legal categorisation of economic dependence at national level. Managers and workers’ representatives are key agents in contributing to the detection and prevention of fraud, whereby enforcement of employer obligations and workers’ rights ultimately increases overall job quality.

Close the social protection gap

Non-standard forms of work, such as solo self-employment, put workers at risk of having insufficient access to social protection, career opportunities and good-quality jobs in general. The Proposal for a Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed (SWD(2018)70) explicitly recognises that mandatory social protection for workers of non-standard statuses and the self-employed is urgently needed. It is now up to the Member States in cooperation with the social partners at EU and national levels to develop specific instruments (in terms of legislation or policy recommendations) to ensure that effective schemes for all types of workers can be implemented.
Promote collective representation

- Trade unions should engage more actively with temporary workers. Workers on fixed-term contracts may decline to join unions, either because of individual barriers or because their job insecurity weakens their contractual power. This creates a vicious circle, whereby they lack the means to claim stabilisation of employment.

- Solo self-employed workers (and particularly economically dependent self-employed workers) who fall in-between the categories of self-employed and employee are poorly accommodated by the traditional system of trade union interest representation. A focus needs to be put on the promotion of collective representation in combination with other measures such as welfare provision, business support and training initiatives. Ideally, the social partners should take the lead in this endeavour together with governments.
Resources


Eurofound (2015a), New forms of employment, available at http://eurofound.link/ef1461


Two-thirds of the EU labour force are in permanent, full-time employment; the remaining one-third has a non-standard employment status, meaning temporary or part-time employment or self-employment. Given the variety of employment statuses, it is worth asking whether working conditions differ across them. This policy brief uses data from the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey to investigate the job quality associated with different employment statuses in the 28 EU Member States. It finds that temporary and part-time workers as well as self-employed workers without employees are more likely to experience poorer job quality than permanent employees.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies. Eurofound was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75 to contribute to the planning and design of better living and working conditions in Europe.