



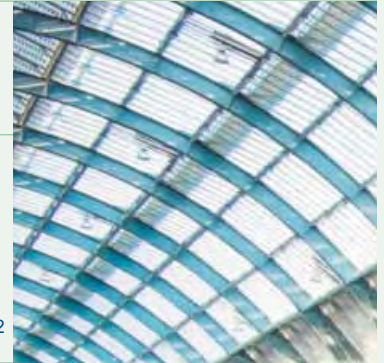
European Foundation for the  
Improvement of Living and  
Working Conditions



# Media and communications: Working conditions and job quality

*'Work plays a significant role in people's lives, in the functioning of companies and in society at large. But what is work? How can we describe it? Is it changing, and if so, is it for better or for worse? Is it fulfilling the numerous and at times conflicting expectations we have of it? How can we take steps to improve work for the well-being of all?'*

Eurofound, *Fifth European Working Conditions Survey: Overview report, 2012*



This report gives an overview of working conditions, job quality, workers' health and job sustainability in the media and communications sector. It is based mostly on the fifth European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), which gathers data on working conditions and the quality of work across 34 European countries. Additional information on the structural characteristics of the sector is derived from Eurostat data. The fifth EWCS contains responses from 822 workers in media and communications. The report compares aspects of work in the media and communications sector with the EU28 as a whole and examines differences across the four subsectors within the sector:

- printing and publishing (NACE 18 and 58): 366 cases;<sup>1</sup>
- audiovisual services (NACE 59 and 60): 121 cases;
- telecommunications (NACE 61): 237 cases)
- information services (NACE 63): 98 cases.<sup>2</sup>

## Structural characteristics

In 2010, 4,657,600 European workers, or 2.1% of the EU28 workforce, worked in media and communications (Eurostat, 2013). The employment breakdown by subsector is as follows: printing and publishing: 2,260,700 workers; audiovisual services: 778,200 workers; telecommunications: 1,273,000 workers; information services: 345,700 workers.

<sup>1</sup> Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne (statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community).

<sup>2</sup> When a breakdown category contains less than 30 cases, no reliable estimates can be calculated. As a consequence, some graphs will have bars missing.

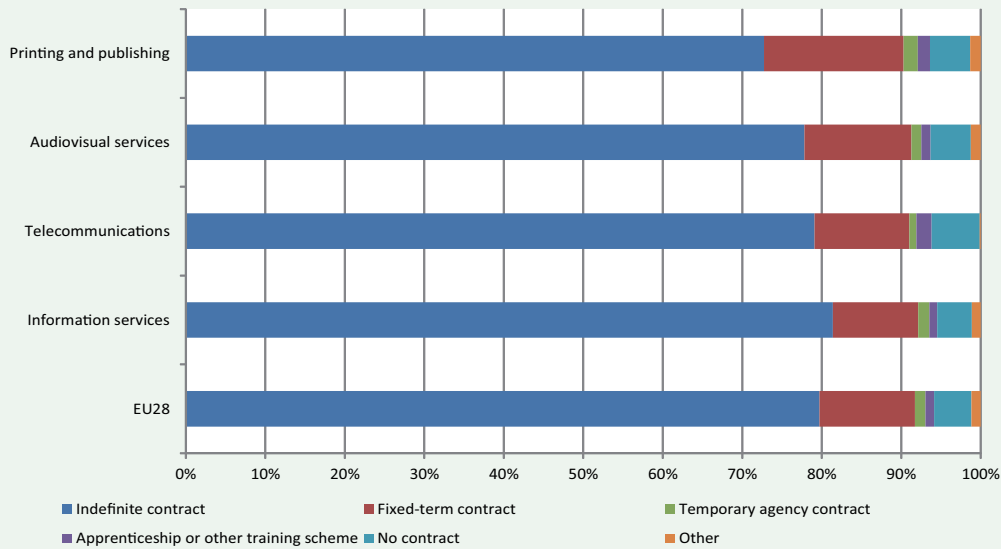
The crisis had a varying impact across the subsectors. Between 2008 and 2010, employment increased in audiovisual services (5.6%) and information services (6.8%), but decreased considerably in printing and publishing (-7.9%) and telecommunications (-11.3%).

A relatively high proportion of workers in media and communications (16%) work in large workplaces (with 250 or more employees), compared to 12% of workers in the EU28. The difference is most pronounced in telecommunications (27%) and information services (26%), less so in audiovisual services (16%), and the reverse is found in printing and publishing (9%). While 55% of the EU28 workforce are men, all four subsectors are male-dominated to a greater extent: 61% of employees in printing and publishing are men; 63% in audiovisual services; 68% in telecommunications; and 58% in information services.

## Media and communications in a nutshell

- The sector is male-dominated
- Few people in the sector work atypical hours, except for men in audiovisual services
- Work-life balance among women and workers in SMEs needs to be addressed
- A large proportion of workers are over-skilled
- Levels of employer-paid training for women are low
- There is little exposure to physical risks, except for chemical risks in printing and publishing
- High levels of work intensity are compensated for by high levels of job autonomy

Figure 1: Employment status, by subsector



Workers in media and communications tend to be relatively young. Workers over 50 account for 25% of the workforce in printing and publishing, 18% in audiovisual services, 21% in telecommunications and 16% in information services. The equivalent figure for the EU28 is 27% (Eurostat, 2013).

Self-employment is relatively prevalent in printing and publishing and audiovisual services, with 3% and 13% respectively being self-employed with employees, and 20% and 15% self-employed without employees. This compares to the figures of 4% self-employed with employees and 11% self-employed without employees in the EU28. Self-employment is less common in telecommunications (2% with and 6% without employees), and close to the EU28 average in information services (2% with and 11% without

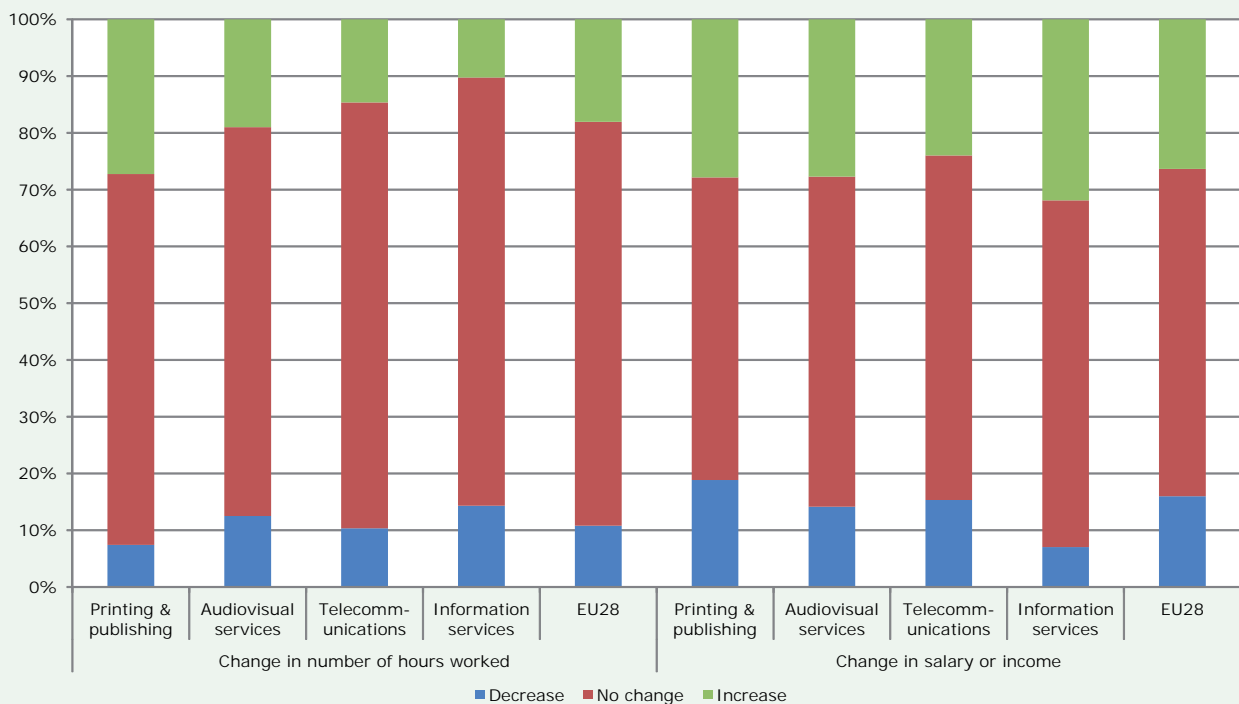
employees). Figure 1 shows that among employees, compared to the EU28 average, fixed-term and temporary agency contracts are more prevalent in printing and publishing and audiovisual services, equally prevalent in telecommunications and less prevalent in information services.

## Working conditions

### Changes since the crisis

As Figure 2 shows, workers in printing and publishing were more likely to have seen an increase in working hours in the previous year than workers in the EU28 as a whole, and compared to workers in audiovisual services, telecommunications and information services. Workers in the latter two subsectors were more likely to report stable working hours.

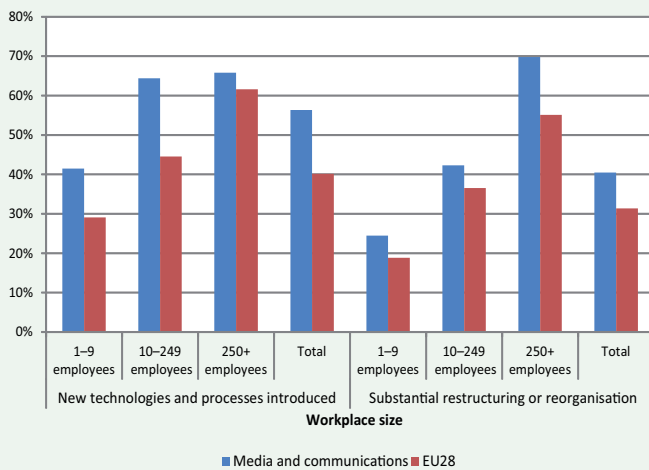
Figure 2: Percentage of employees reporting changes in number of hours worked and salary or income in past year, by subsector



In both the media and communications sector and in the EU28 in general, workers reported changes in salary or income more frequently than changes in hours worked in the year prior to the survey; and the subsectors in media and communications differed little from each other or from the EU28.

Workers in media and communications were somewhat more affected than workers in the EU28 on average by restructuring and the introduction of new technologies (Figure 3). The sector follows the same pattern as the EU28 – the proportion of employees reporting restructuring or reorganisation, or the introduction of new production processes and technologies, increases with workplace size – but media and communications shows higher levels of reported changes across all workplace sizes.

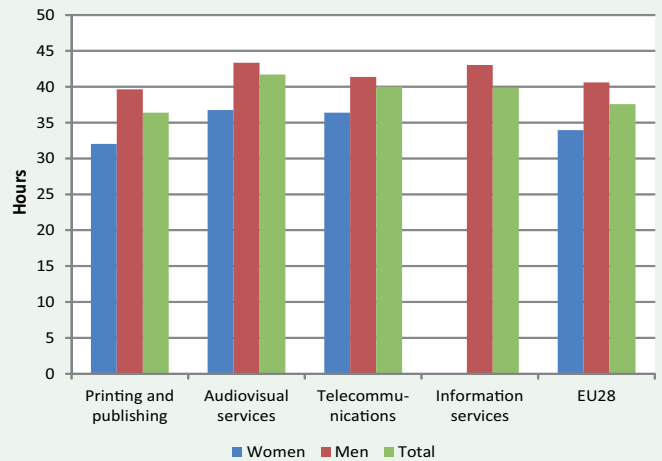
Figure 3: Restructuring and introduction of new technologies in past three years, by workplace size



### Working time and work–life balance

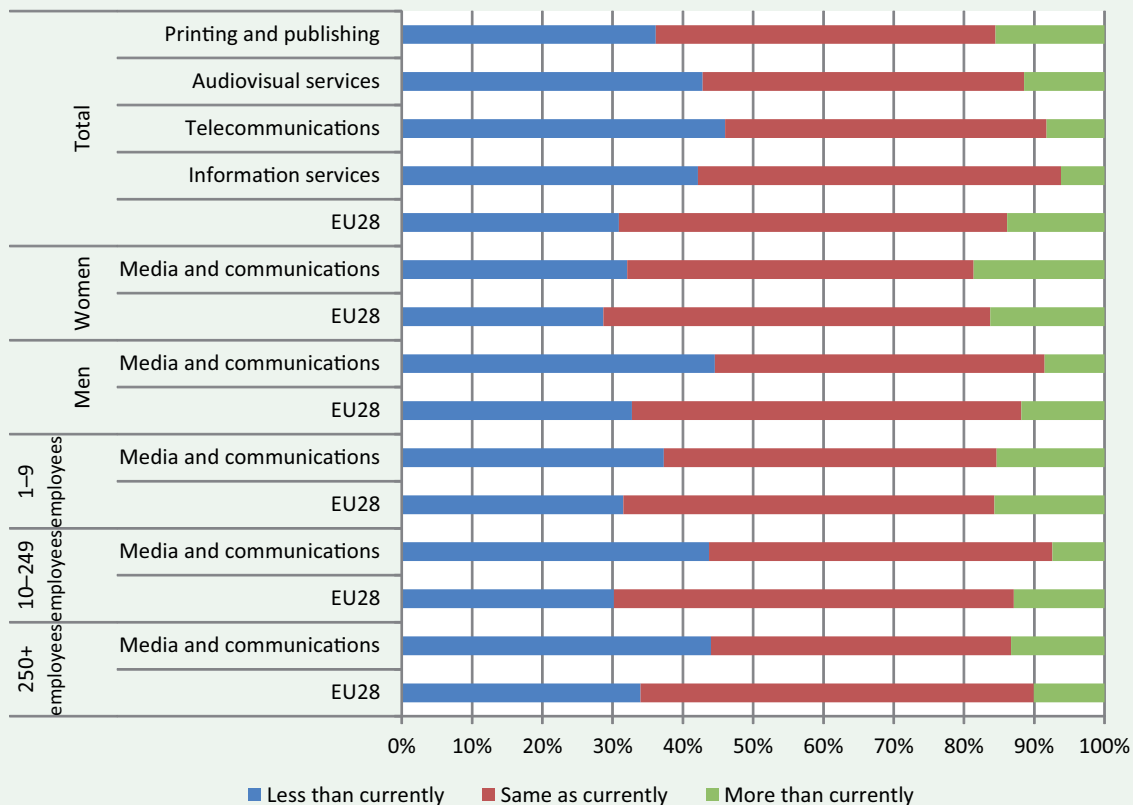
Workers in media and communications, like workers in the EU28 as a whole, work 38 hours on average per week. As in the EU28, men tend to work more hours than women in all subsectors (Figure 4). Among men, workers in audiovisual services and information services work the most hours. Among women, printing and publishing stands out for the relatively low average number of working hours.

Figure 4: Average working hours, by gender and subsector



Workers in media and communications more frequently than workers in the EU28 as a whole state that they would prefer to work fewer hours than currently (Figure 5), and they indicate less often that they would like to work more hours.

Figure 5: Working time preference, by subsector, gender and workplace size



In the EU28, women are more likely than men to want to work more hours and less likely to want to work fewer hours, and these differences are more pronounced in media and communications. Workers in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs, with 10–249 employees) are more likely to want to work fewer hours and less likely to want to work more hours than workers in micro-workplaces (1–9 employees) and large workplaces (250+ employees).

Figure 6: Index of working atypical hours (EU28=100), by subsector and gender

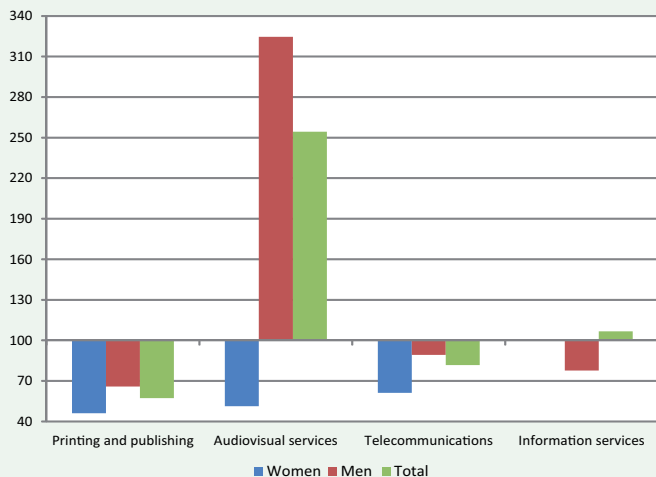
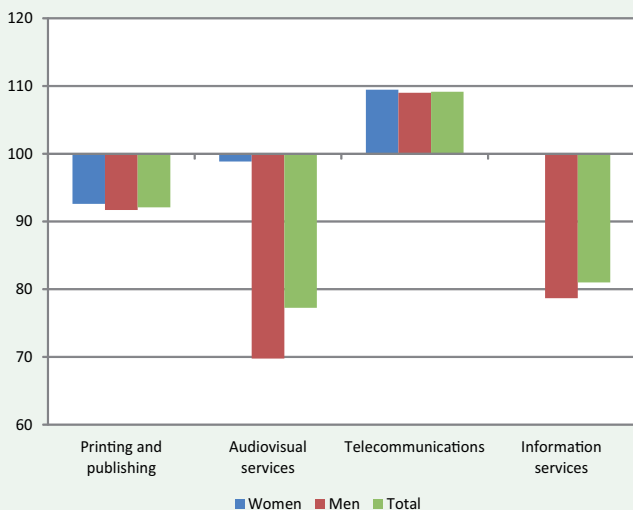


Figure 6 shows that working atypical hours (weekends, evenings or nights) is much less prevalent in media and communications than in the EU28 as a whole, except for men in audiovisual services, who are much more likely to report atypical hours. Overall, women report working atypical hours less frequently than men.

Although working time in media and communications does not tend to be atypical, it is often much less regular ('regular' meaning working the same hours every day, the same days every week) than in the EU28 (Figure 7). In this regard, telecommunications is the exception: in this subsector working time for both men and women is more regular than in the EU28 as a whole.

Figure 7: Index of regularity of working time (EU28=100), by gender and subsector

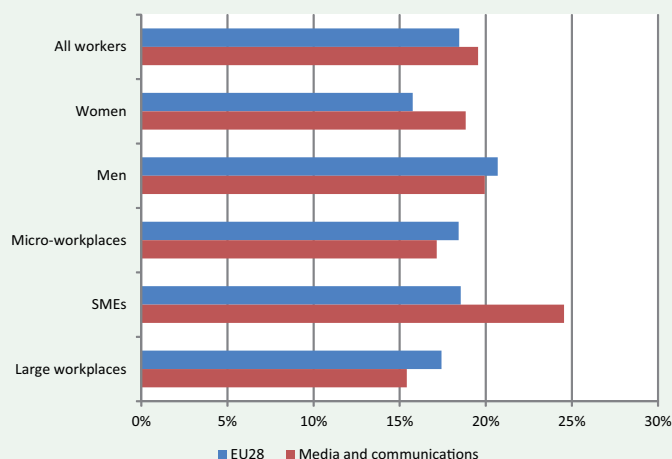


Men working in audiovisual services and information services, in particular, are likely to report irregular working time. This finding, together with the finding on working atypical hours, implies that men in audiovisual services are likely not only to work evenings, nights and weekends, but also to work erratic hours.

Surprisingly, reported levels of work–life balance (having a good fit between working hours and family or social commitments) are above average for audiovisual services, with only 17% reporting a poor work–life balance, compared to 18% in the EU28. Poor work–life balance is similarly less prevalent in telecommunications (15%) and information services (17%), but more prevalent in printing and publishing (23%).

Figure 8 shows the differences between men and women in this respect: men are more likely than women to report poor work–life balance – in common with the EU28 – but this is much less pronounced in the media and communications sector.

Figure 8: Poor work–life balance, by gender and workplace size



What is striking is the high level of poor work–life balance reported by workers in small and medium-sized workplaces in media and communications.

### Work organisation

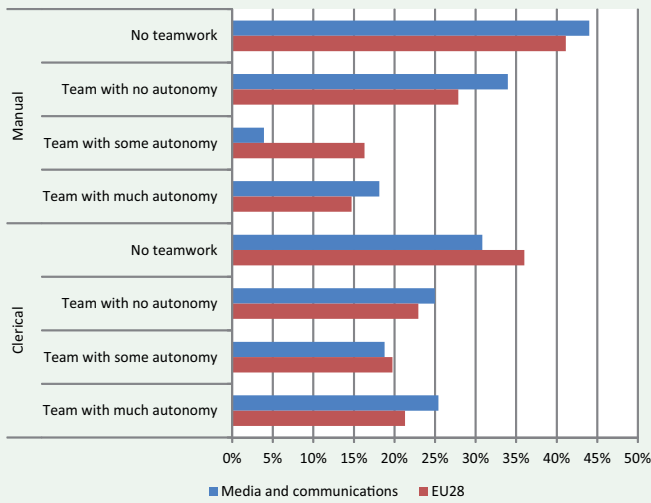
Teamwork has been proposed as an alternative to work organisation models based on high levels of labour division. As teamwork reflects a variety of practices, it can also assume a variety of forms. Different types of teamwork can be identified using the EWCS by looking at the level of autonomy within the teams.

#### Teamwork

Teamwork is slightly more prevalent in media and communications (65%) than in the EU28 (62%). This difference can be mainly attributed to highly autonomous teamwork, which is reported by 23% of workers in media and communications, compared with 19% in the EU28. Workers in clerical jobs in media and communications are much more likely to

work in a team with some or a lot of autonomy (44%) than workers in manual jobs (22%). This difference is much more pronounced in this sector than in the EU28 (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Teamwork and team autonomy, by occupational category



**Task rotation**

Task rotation is also an important feature of work organisation. Depending on how it is implemented, task rotation may require different skills from the worker ('multiskilling') or may not ('fixed task rotation') and is either controlled by management or by the workers themselves ('autonomous'). Task rotation has been shown to be beneficial for workers' well-being, and autonomous multiskilling systems in particular are

associated with higher worker motivation as well as better company performance.

The percentage of workers in media and communications working in a task rotation system does not differ much from the EU28 (Figure 10), nor do patterns vary across different workplace sizes. However, in small and medium-sized workplaces, the prevalence of task rotation is slightly lower than in the EU28 as a whole, and management-controlled fixed-task rotation appears to be more prevalent in micro-workplaces.

**Female bosses**

Gender roles is another dimension of work organisation. The percentage of workers reporting that they have a female boss is 19% in printing and publishing, 27% in audiovisual services and in telecommunications, and 21% in information services – all lower than the EU28 average of 29%. While this finding does reflect the slightly higher proportion of men working in these subsectors, it implies that women are likely to have fewer career opportunities than men, even more so than in the EU28 workforce as whole.

**Skills and training**

Skills mismatches are more prevalent in media and communications than in the EU28 workforce as a whole (Figure 11). Media and communications' workers are much more likely to be over-skilled than workers in the EU28, and also slightly more likely to be under-skilled. The pattern of reporting being over-skilled is more or less the same across different age

Figure 10: Prevalence of task rotation, by workplace size

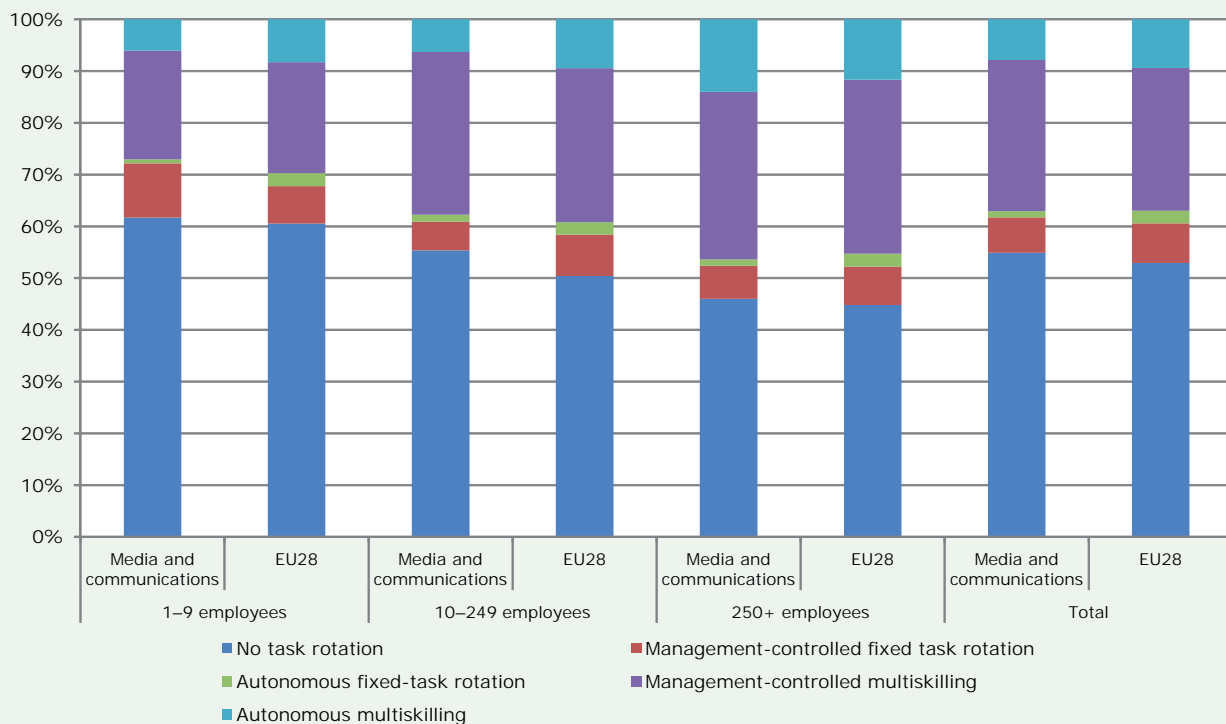
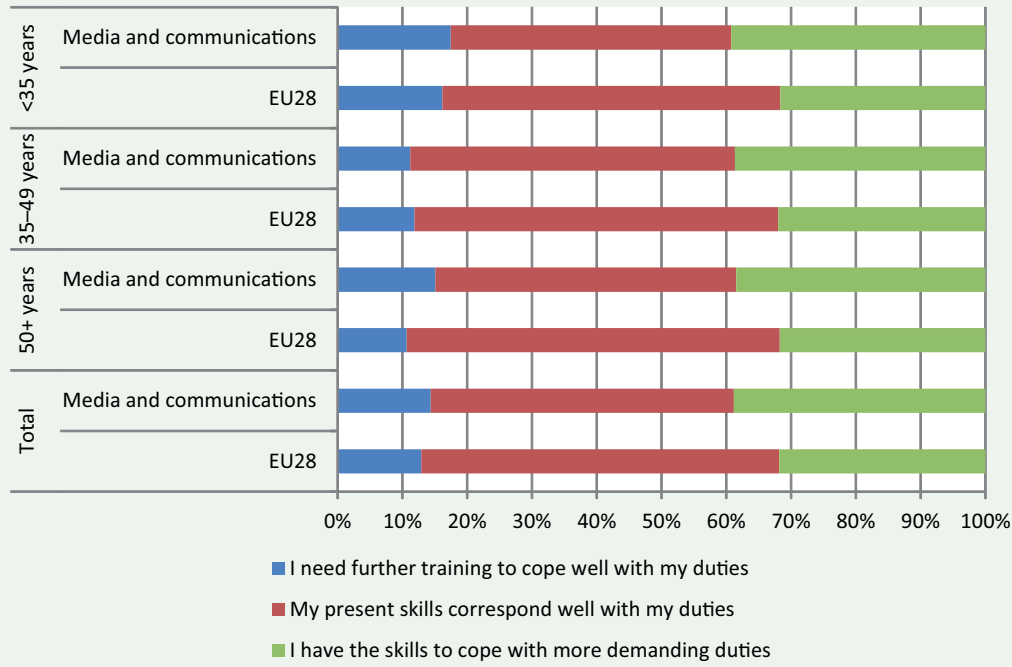


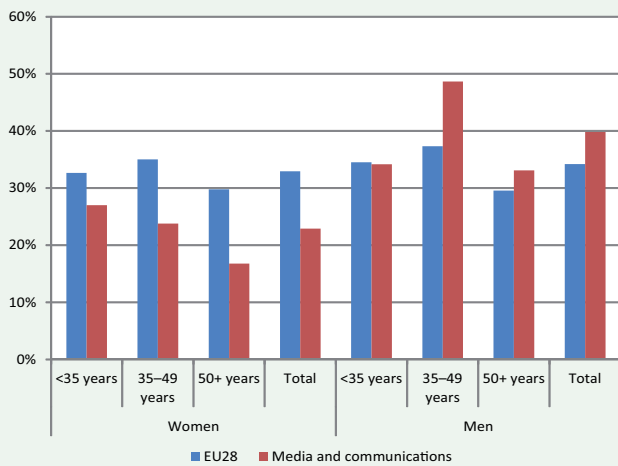
Figure 11: Match between skills and tasks, by age



groups, while workers in younger and older age groups are more likely to report being under-skilled than workers in the middle age group (35–49 years).

Overall, the same percentage of workers in media and communications report having received training as in the EU28 (34%). Within the sector, however, there are huge differences between men and women (Figure 12). Women of all ages in the sector are much less likely to have received training, in comparison to men in the sector and to women in the EU28. Men in media communications are more likely to have received training than male workers in the EU28, particularly men aged 35 to 49 years.

Figure 12: Employer-paid training, by gender and age

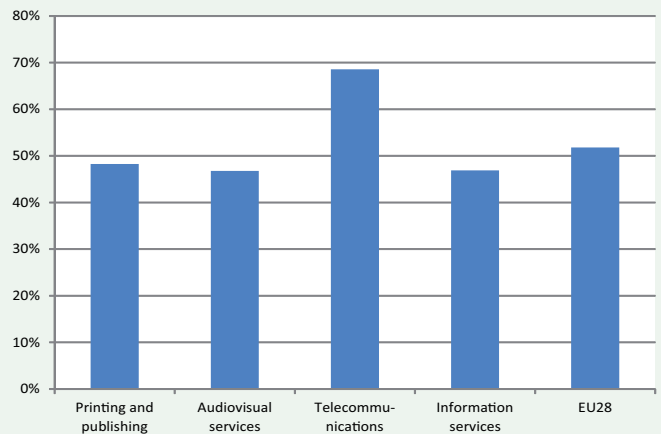


**Employee representation**

The EWCS contains limited information on formal employee representation. It asks whether an employee representative is present in the workplace and whether workers have raised an issue with an

employee representative in the past year. Figure 13 shows the combined results of these questions (an employee representative has been considered to be ‘available’ if they were present in the workplace or when an issue was raised).

Figure 13: Availability of an employee representative at the workplace, by subsector



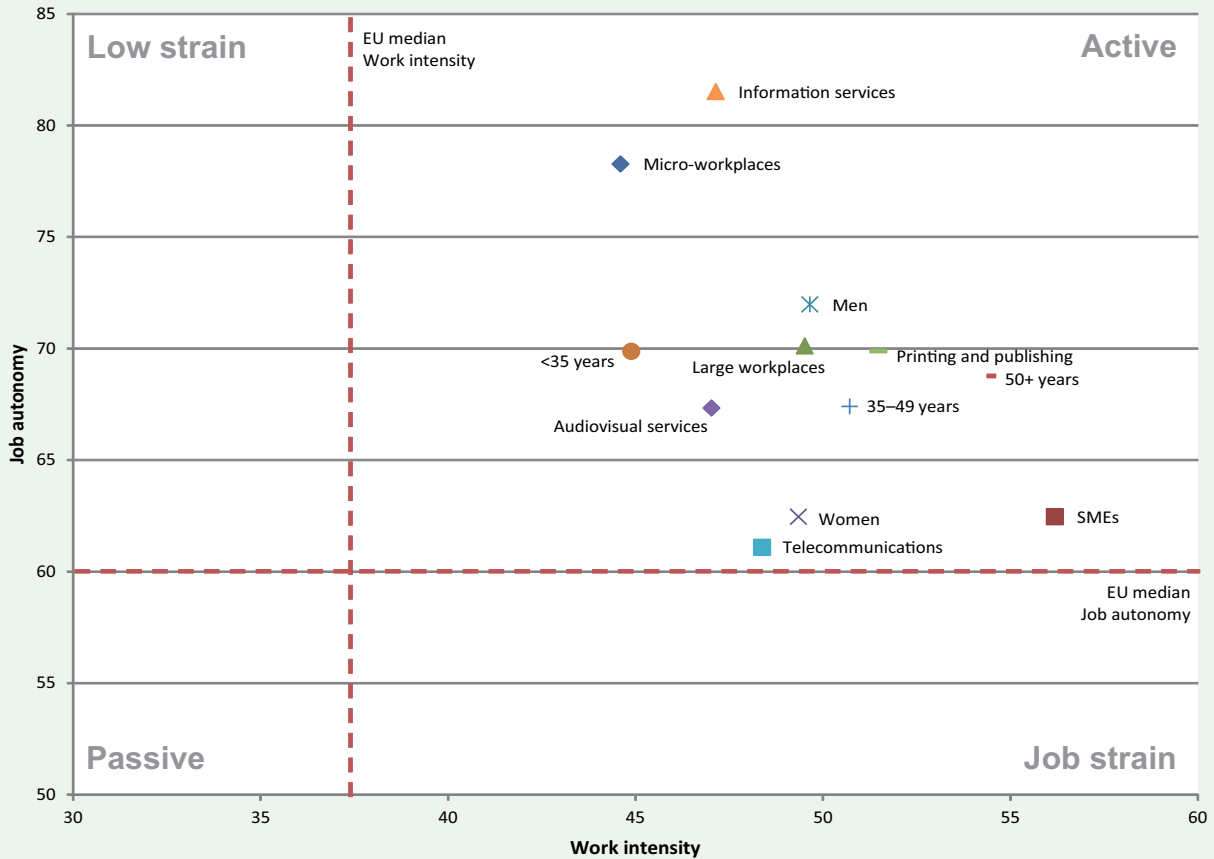
The prevalence of employee representation is just under the EU average of 52% in printing and publishing (48%), audiovisual services (47%) and information services (47%). Telecommunications stands out with a relatively high prevalence of employee representation (69%), which is at least partially due to the high proportion of large companies in the sector.

**Psychosocial and physical environment**

**Job autonomy and work intensity**

The psychosocial and physical environment has a substantial impact on workers’ well-being. According to the job demand and control model of the American sociologist Karasek (1979), workers are more likely to suffer from work-related stress when they are faced

Figure 14: Distribution of groups of workers by average levels of job autonomy and work intensity



with a high level of demands while being limited in the control they have over the way in which they carry out their job. Figure 14 shows the likelihood of workers within media and communications suffering from work-related stress. Groups of workers are plotted along two axes: job autonomy and work intensity.

The results for media and communications are quite striking as the averages of all groups of workers are in the top right quadrant of the plot. Workers tend to be in ‘active’ jobs with high levels of work intensity and high levels of job autonomy.

Although their jobs can be very demanding, workers in media and communications have enough control over the way they do their job and can develop coping strategies through active learning. The other three quadrants are empty. However, the averages for women, SMEs and telecommunications are only just above the EU28 median for job autonomy, so quite a few workers in these groups will experience job strain, represented by the bottom right quadrant. Their jobs are characterised by high levels of intensity and low levels of autonomy, posing the risk of unhealthy stress levels and consequently a range of stress-related illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and mental health problems.

As levels of work intensity are very high in media and communications, not many of workers are likely to be in the bottom left quadrant: the ‘passive’ jobs, characterised by low levels of intensity and low levels of autonomy, with a low risk of stress, but a high risk of frustration and low motivation. Nor are workers in media and communications likely to be in the top left quadrant: ‘low strain’ jobs, characterised by low levels

of work intensity and high levels of job autonomy. These jobs pose a low risk of stress, with the workers being less likely to suffer from frustration and loss of motivation than those in passive jobs.

**Social environment**

A good social environment is characterised by the existence of social support and the absence of abuse at work. Social support can help workers deal with high levels of work intensity. Workers in media and communications are close to the EU28 average on this indicator (Figure 15). Men more frequently report a good social environment than women, particularly in smaller workplaces.

Figure 15: Index of good social environment (EU28 = 100), by gender and workplace size

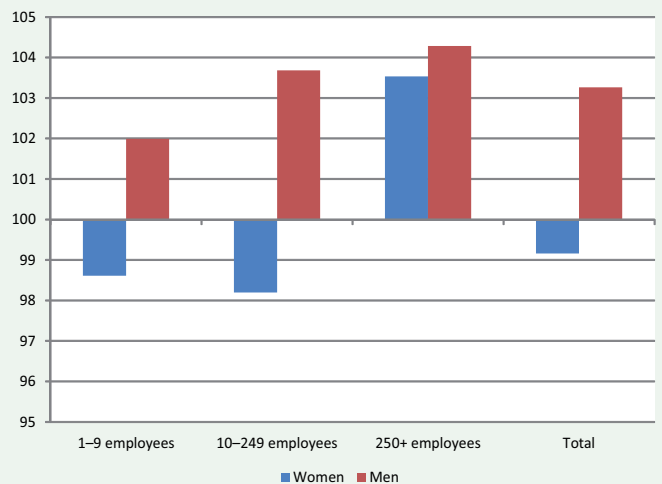
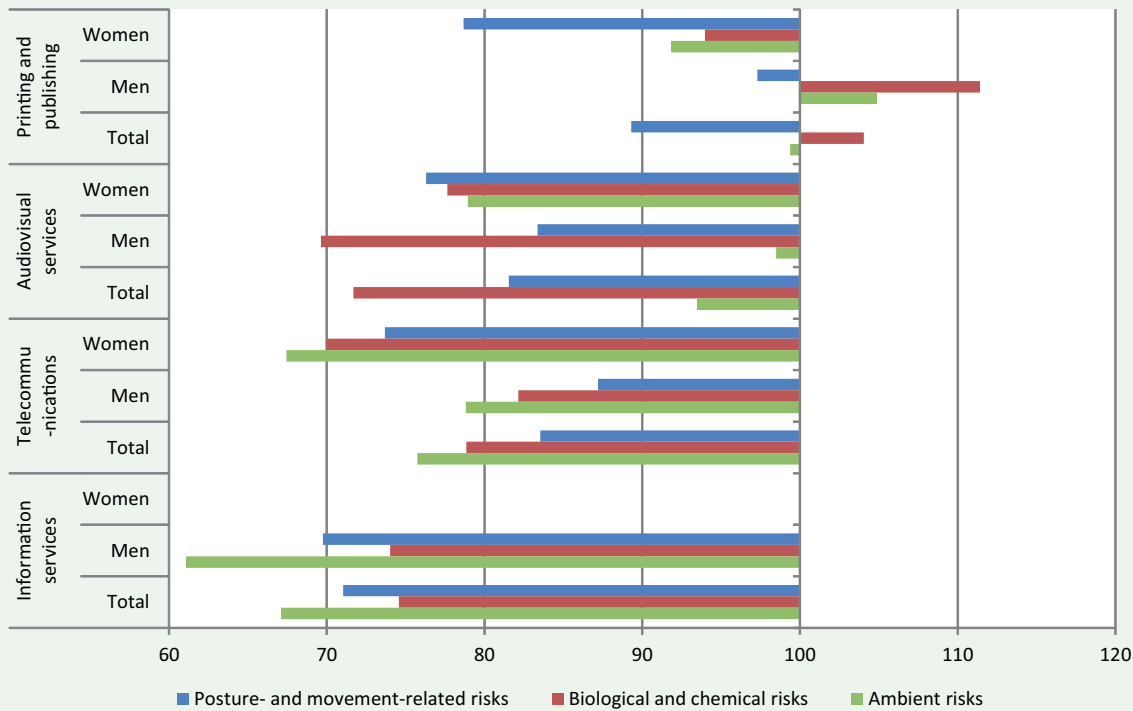




Figure 16: Indices of exposure to physical risks (EU28 = 100), by gender and subsector

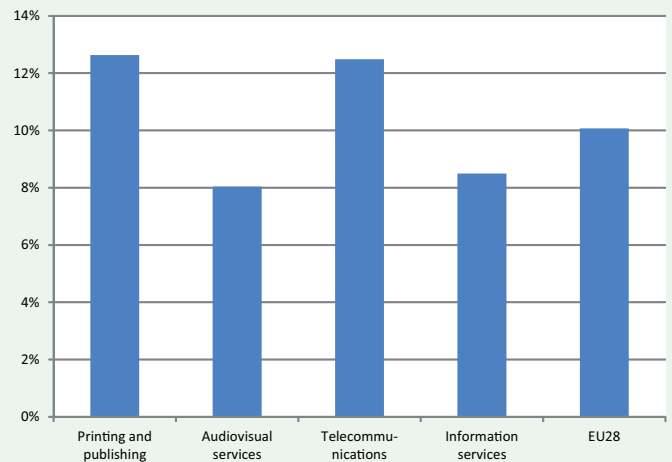


Exposure to physical risks is lower in media and communications than in the EU28, with the exception of men in printing and publishing, who report higher-than-average levels of exposure to both biological and chemical risks and ambient risks (Figure 16). Risk exposure is particularly low in information services.

The types of risks that are most common vary considerably across subsectors. Posture- and movement-related risks are most prevalent in telecommunications, while biological and chemical risks are most prevalent in printing and publishing and information services, and ambient risks are most prevalent in audiovisual services.

Despite showing the highest levels of risk exposure, workers in printing and publishing most frequently (13%) report not being very well informed or not at all well informed about workplace risks (Figure 17). The percentage of workers reporting having insufficient information in telecommunications (12%) is also above the EU28 average of 10%. Workers in audiovisual services and information services (8% for each subsector) less often feel they require more information on workplace health and safety risks.

Figure 17: Not very well or not at all well informed about health and safety risks at work, by subsector

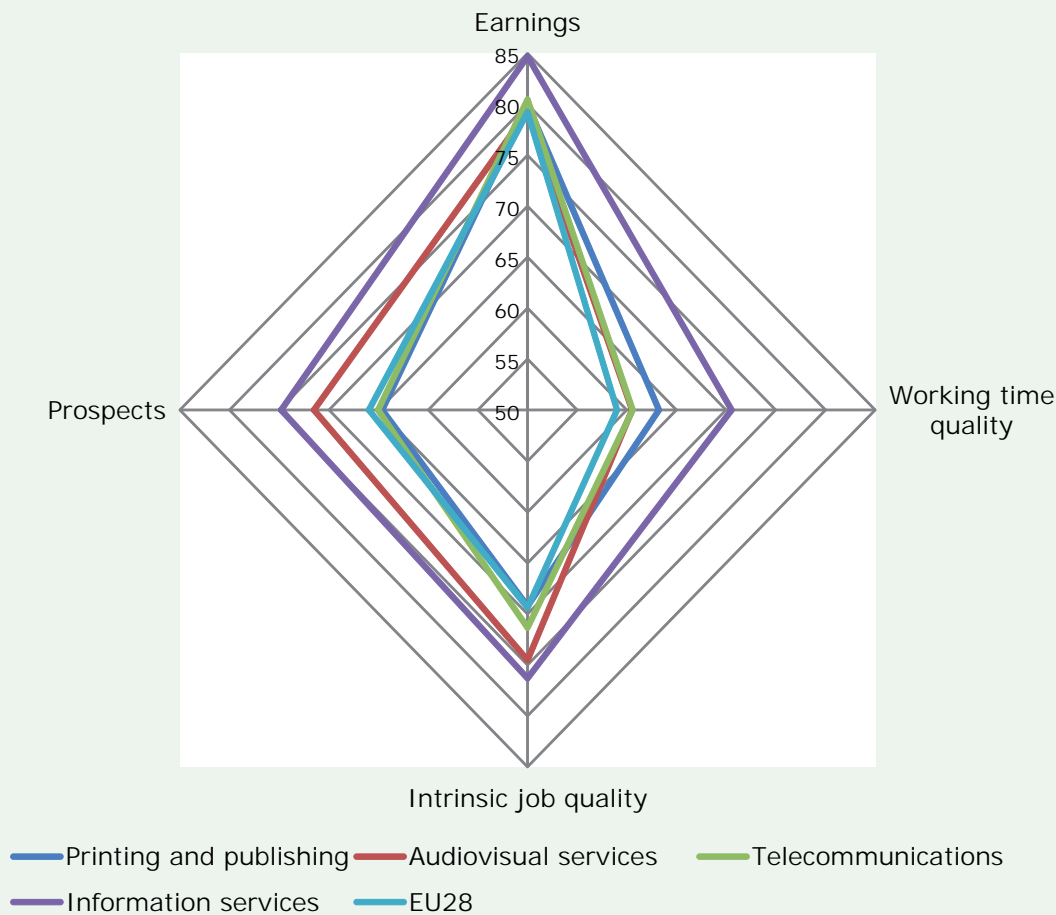


## Job quality

In the report *Trends in job quality in Europe*, the authors constructed four indices of job quality: earnings, prospects, intrinsic job quality and working time quality. The indices are built using job characteristics that are unambiguously associated with workers' well-being. Figure 18 summarises job quality in the media and communications sector. It shows the average score for the sector on each of the indicators, with and without controlling for the structural characteristics of the workers in the sector (age, gender, workplace size, education level and country), and for the EU28.



Figure 18: Job quality in media and communications subsectors compared with the EU28



Note: Scores on all four indicators range from 0 to 100

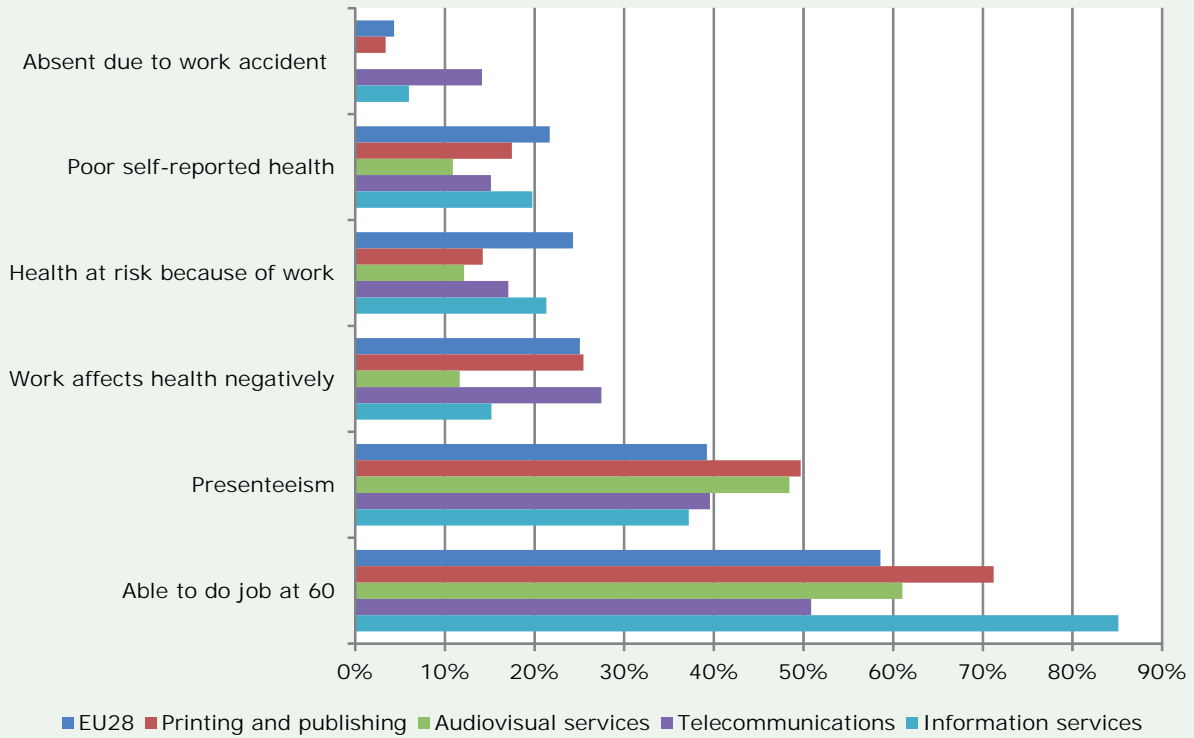
Figure 18 shows that jobs in all four subsectors are of relatively high quality, particularly in terms of working time quality and intrinsic job quality, differences that remain significant after controlling for the structural characteristics of the sectors. Jobs in information services have the highest quality – on all four dimensions. The relatively high level of education of the workers and the prominence of the sector in countries with relatively good working conditions account for some of this difference, but after controlling for structural characteristics, the subsector still scores well above average. Audiovisual services scores particularly well on intrinsic job quality and on prospects, but less so on earnings and working time quality. Controlling for the structural characteristics of the sector hardly changes this result. Apart from slightly higher levels of working time quality and intrinsic job quality, both printing and publishing and telecommunications show patterns similar to the EU28 average. Except for slightly lower scores on earnings, as a result again of the relatively high level of education of workers in these sectors, these patterns remain the same when controlling for background characteristics.

## Health and sustainability of work

Working conditions can have both a positive and a negative impact on the health of workers and on the sustainability of their jobs.

Figure 19 shows slightly different patterns in relation to health outcomes and job sustainability for the subsectors in media and communications. As in the previous section, multivariate analyses were carried out to check whether differences between the subsectors and the EU28 change when controlling for background characteristics (age, gender, workplace size, education level and country). With regard to absenteeism due to an accident at work and poor self-reported health, all differences are relatively small, except for the high level of absenteeism due to accidents in telecommunications. This difference remains after controlling for structural characteristics. Workers in all subsectors, except for information services, report that their health is at risk because of their work less frequently than workers in the EU28 as a whole. With regard to the negative effect of work on health, only the difference for audiovisual services remains after controlling for structural characteristics.

Figure 19: Health and sustainability of work



Presenteeism is more frequent in printing and publishing and audiovisual services than in the EU28, but the difference for audiovisual services disappears when controlling for structural characteristics. Workers in both printing and publishing and information services are more likely to say that they will be able to do their job at 60 than workers in the other subsectors and workers in the EU28.

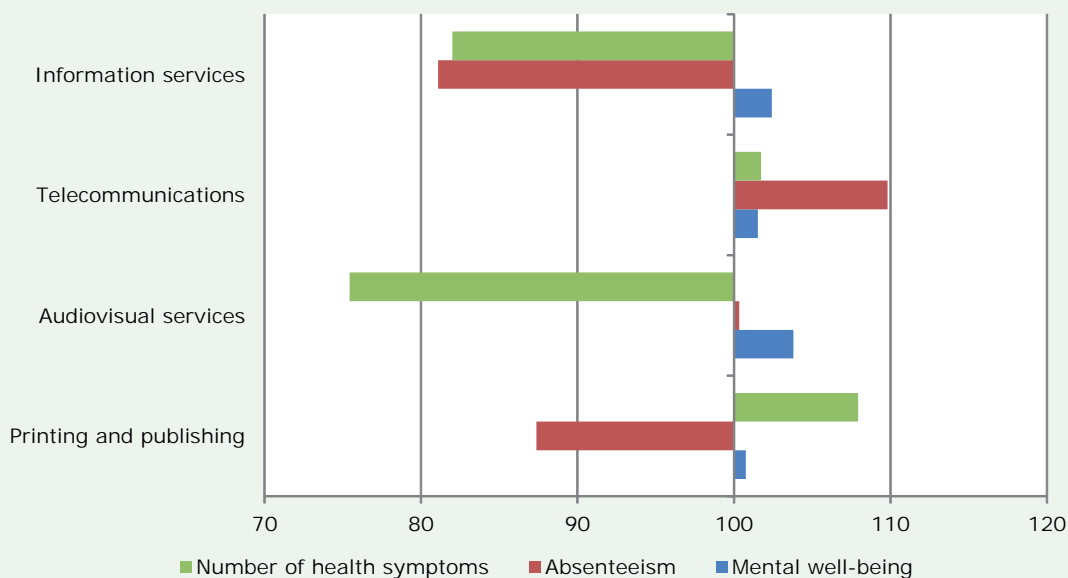
Figure 20 shows a fairly favourable picture of media and communications, with mental well-being scores close to the EU28 average, and absenteeism and the reported number of health problems mainly being lower. Exceptions are the relatively high levels of absenteeism in telecommunications, and of the

number of reported health symptoms among workers in printing and publishing.

However, when controlling for the age, gender, workplace size, education level and country of the workers, the only difference that remains is the relatively high number of health symptoms among workers in printing and publishing.

It is important to keep in mind that the impact of work on health is a very gradual process that can take a long time and cannot be fully captured in a cross-sectional survey. The results in this section are likely to underestimate the often negative health effects that physically and psychologically strenuous working conditions can have.

Figure 20: Indices of health symptoms, mental well-being and absenteeism (EU28 = 100)



## References

Eurofound (2012), *Trends in job quality in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Eurostat (2013), EU Labour Force Survey database, available at [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search\\_database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database)

Karasek, R. A. Jr (1979), 'Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 24, pp. 285–308.

## European Working Conditions Survey

Eurofound developed its European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) in 1990 in order to provide high-quality information on living and working conditions in Europe. Five waves of the survey have been carried out to date, enabling long-term trends to be observed and analysed.

The EWCS interviews both employees and self-employed people on key issues related to their work and employment. Fieldwork for the fifth EWCS took place from January to June 2010, with almost 44,000 workers interviewed in their homes in 34 countries – EU28, Norway, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo. The 5th EWCS was implemented by Gallup Europe, who worked within a strong quality assurance framework to ensure the highest possible standards in all data collection and editing processes.

The questionnaire covered issues such as precarious employment, leadership styles and worker participation as well as the general job context, working time, work organisation, pay, work-related health risks, cognitive and psychosocial factors, work-life balance and access to training. A number of questions were included to capture the impact of the economic downturn on working conditions.

For more information on the EWCS, see <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/ewcs/index.htm>

## Sectoral analysis

The report *Working conditions and job quality: Comparing sectors in Europe* and the series of 33 sectoral information sheets aim to capture the diversity prevalent across sectors in Europe in terms of working conditions and job quality. The report pinpoints trends across sectors in areas such as working time and work-life balance, work organisation, skills and training, employee representation and the psychosocial and physical environment. It identifies sectors that score particularly well or particularly poorly in terms of job quality and sheds light on differences between sectors in terms of health and well-being.

For more information, see <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/ewcs/2010/sectorprofiles.htm>

### Further information

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