



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Combining family and full-time work

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This report is available in electronic format only.

Full-time work has become an increasingly common employment pattern in the European Union, for both sexes, since the enlargement of the EU to 25 countries in 2004. At the same time, there is widespread discussion about working time flexibility as a desired solution to enhancing the work-life balance of working parents. This report shows that such flexibility varies significantly between countries and sexes. However, to better understand the impact of this flexibility on work-life balance, it must be recognised that flexibility can be either positive or negative, and that predictable working time arrangements may also be a good solution for working parents. The report provides a comparative overview based on 12 national reports, which are also available (as pdf files): [Austria](#), [Czech Republic](#), [Denmark](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Italy](#), [Netherlands](#), [Portugal](#), [Spain](#) and [Sweden](#).

Introduction

Due to structural changes in family patterns and new demands in modern working life, reconciliation of work and family life has become a key issue in European employment policy. Several study results imply that working parents, in particular, find it difficult to achieve a satisfactory balance between work and family commitments. Reported problems include conflicting demands and resources at work and in the family.

Among the good practices aimed at combining work and family life, flexible working time is seen as one solution for reconciling work and family life. Several reports concerning work-life balance and flexible working time focus on part-time work, or at least compare full-time and part-time work in the context of the work-life balance. However, the most prevalent form of working time in the EU is full-time work, both among men and women. This form of employment has become even more predominant since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004.

Since the vast majority of male and female employees in the EU countries - even working mothers - work full time, this report will concentrate on full-time employees, especially parents working full time, and on working time flexibility. The focus will be on the role of flexible work in finding a suitable balance between work and family life. It mainly considers (working) parents with children, but similar arguments could be made for any working person with care responsibilities for dependants or other persons.

The report has three aims. First, it aims to provide an overview of different employment patterns in the EU, and to describe how prevalent flexible and predictable working times are in different countries. It also explores differences between women and men without children, compared with mothers and fathers, and how these differences vary between countries. In addition, the report investigates the main problems in each country in relation to work-life balance and working time.

The second aim is to disseminate methodological knowledge about collecting and using survey data on topics related to working time. In highlighting different question formulations and emphasising their effects on survey results, the report seeks to improve survey data on working time, and on work-life and family issues. This includes introducing the concepts of positive and negative flexibility and predictability of working times.

The third aim is to give examples of good practice in working time flexibility in the workplace. Both company initiatives and those at national level are discussed.

The main focus is on 12 countries covered by the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO): Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Other EU countries are also included in the analysis.

The research data were gathered from three sources. Data from the European Working Conditions Survey 2000 (EWCS) are used to compare different countries. The contributions of the EWCO national correspondents are mainly used in exploring national contexts and institutional differences. The methodological part is based on the contributions of the correspondents. Reference is also made to Eurostat's Labour Force Survey results.

Different employment patterns

Although this report focuses on full-time employees, a number of issues in relation to part-time work should be mentioned, since, in many countries, part-time work is seen as a form of flexible working time. In order to provide an overview of national employment models, part-time work is explored as an important feature within these systems. Since the vast majority of part-time workers in the EU are women, this overview stresses the gender specificity of the issue.

Attitudes towards part-time work differ between and within the EU countries. On the one hand, part-time work is perceived as a good way of combining work and family life, enabling women to find a suitable balance between work careers and children. In this respect, part-time work is understood as a voluntary form of employment. On the other hand, part-time work is sometimes regarded as a sign of disadvantaged labour market position. Part-time jobs can be of low quality and a source of low income, mainly done on an involuntary basis, i.e. the person would either prefer to work full time or to remain outside the labour market. Part-time working hours may sometimes be even more problematic for family life than full-time working hours, particularly in relation to childcare arrangements (see the French contribution).

Problems related to working time flexibility and work-life balance are different among full-time workers. For mothers in particular, full-time work, like part-time work, has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, a work-life balance is viewed as difficult to achieve and the workload too heavy for women who work full time. On the other hand, full-time work provides better opportunities and better jobs, as well as better income, especially for educated women. For example, in the Czech Republic and Finland, women tend to prefer flexible working times to part-time work (see the Czech contribution, Salmi and Lammi-Taskula, 2004).

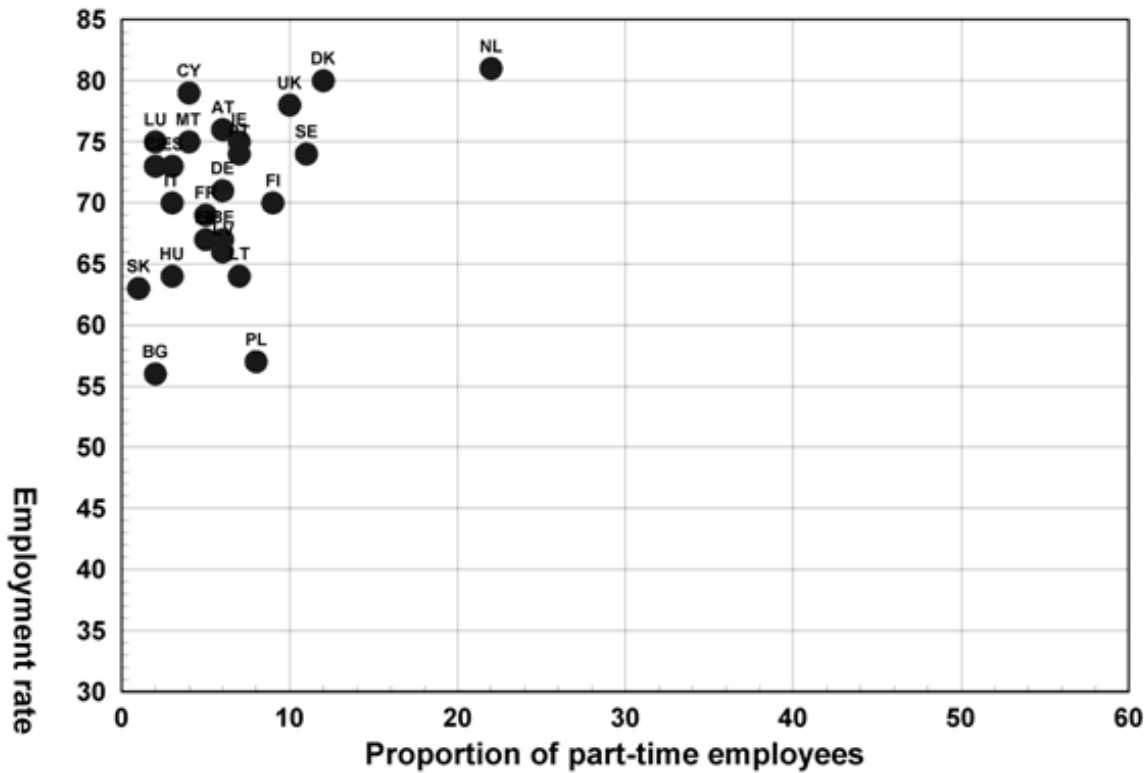
Overall participation in the labour market

To give an overview of the different kinds of employment models in the EU countries, total employment rates and part-time employment rates are used together here as key indicators of employment status.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the employment pattern of men does not differ greatly between the countries. The Netherlands is an exception with fairly high part-time employment for men, while in the majority of EU countries, their part-time employment rate remains below 10%. Figure 2 shows the same figures for fathers aged 20 to 49 years with children aged under 12 years. Although the countries are not specified by name in this figure, the similarity of all the country results is obvious. The pattern of full-time employment becomes stronger among men with children. Men working part time are a small minority in the European labour market.

Figure 1: Men's employment in EU countries, 2003

Employment and part-time employment in EU countries 2003 Men aged 15-64

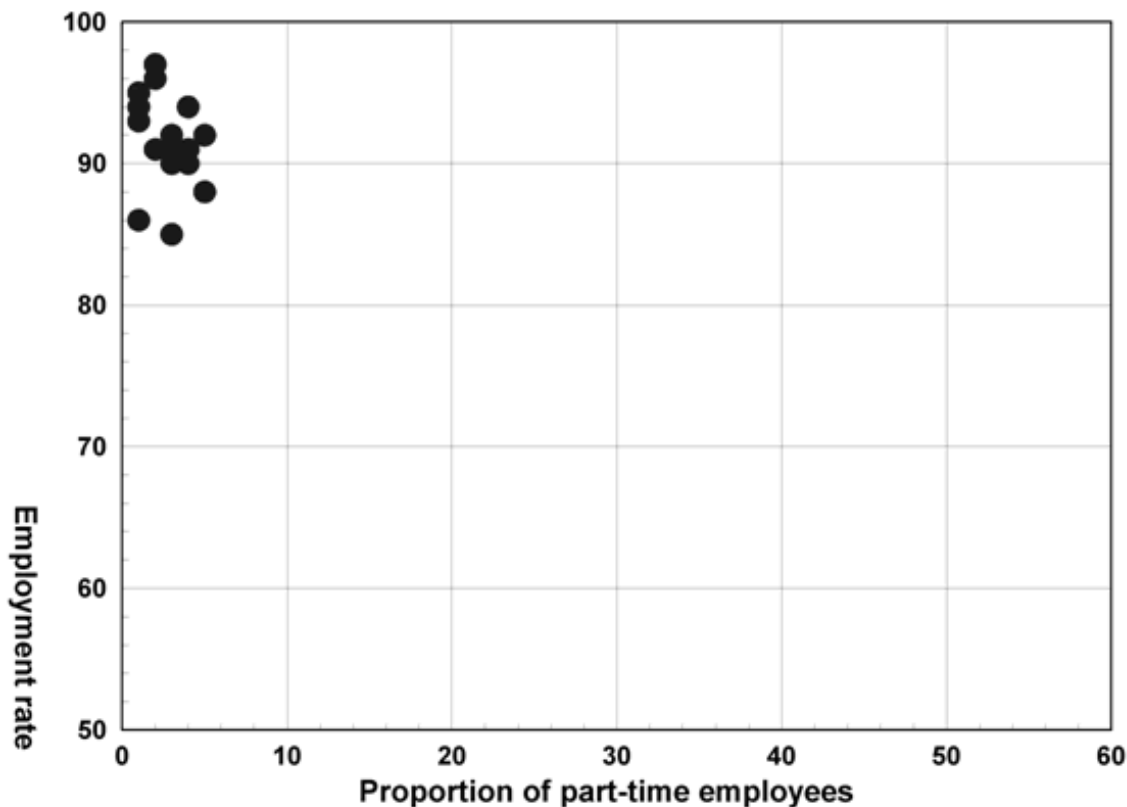


Source: Eurostat, Quarterly Labour Force Data, Employment in Europe 2004

Note: Figures for Luxemburg and Malta 2002. Figures for part-time employment second year quarter 2003 for Cyprus and Latvia. Figure for part-time employment for Germany from OECD Labour Force Statistics, so part-time employment in that case is defined as less than 30 hours a week.

Figure 2: Employment rates and part-time employment, men, 2003

Employment and part-time employment in EU countries, 2003 Men, aged 20-49 with children under 12 years



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, Statistics in focus 4/2005

Note: Figures for part-time employment less reliable due to small sample size for Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Slovenia. Figures for Denmark, Ireland, Malta, Slovakia and Sweden not available.

By contrast, women's employment differs among the EU countries, and can be divided into three patterns, based on their employment and part-time employment rates (see Figure 3). High employment rates and low part-time employment rates among women are typical in Finland, Portugal and many of the east European EU countries. In other words, in these countries, women participate widely in the labour market (over 50% are employed), mainly as full-time workers.

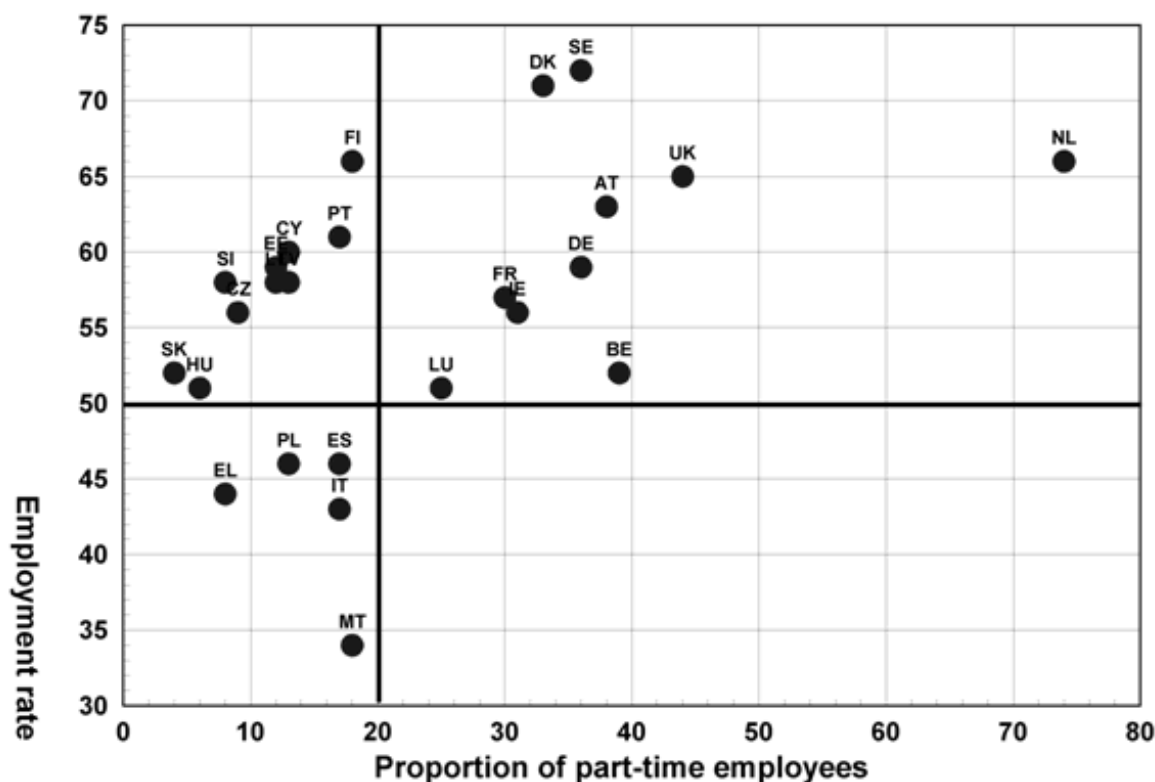
The second pattern of female employment is also characterised by a relatively high employment rate, but the proportion of part-time employment is significant, at over 20%. Many central European countries as well as the UK and Ireland belong to this group, the Netherlands being an extreme example of this model.

The third pattern of employment for women in the EU is one where their overall participation in the labour market is relatively low, but where those who are employed mostly work full time. Southern European countries are well represented in this group.

In summary, it can be said that, on the basis of employment statistics, there are three different models of female employment in the EU countries: full-time employment, part-time employment, and divided employment (either not at all or full-time in the labour market).

Figure 3: Female employment in EU countries, 2003

Employment and part-time employment in EU countries 2003 Women aged 15-64



Source: Eurostat, Quarterly Labour Force Data, Employment in Europe 2004.

Note: Figures for Luxemburg and Malta 2002. Figures for part-time employment for Cyprus and Latvia second year quarter 2003, Eurostat. Figure for part-time employment for Germany from OECD Labour Force Statistics, so part-time employment in that case is defined as less than 30 hours a week.

The total fertility rate for each country is provided in Table 1, the European average (EU25) being 1.46. Interestingly, besides the east European countries, the fertility rate is lowest in countries with low female employment rates. In the east European countries, the low fertility rate is at least partly explained by their major political and economic transition in the past few decades (see Fahey and Spéder, 2004).

Table 1: Three patterns of female employment and fertility rates, EU countries, 2001

Culture of full-time work	Fertility rate
Finland	1.73
Portugal	1.54
Estonia	1.39
Lithuania	1.33
Slovenia	1.25
Czech Republic	1.14
Hungary	1.33
Culture of part-time work	Fertility rate

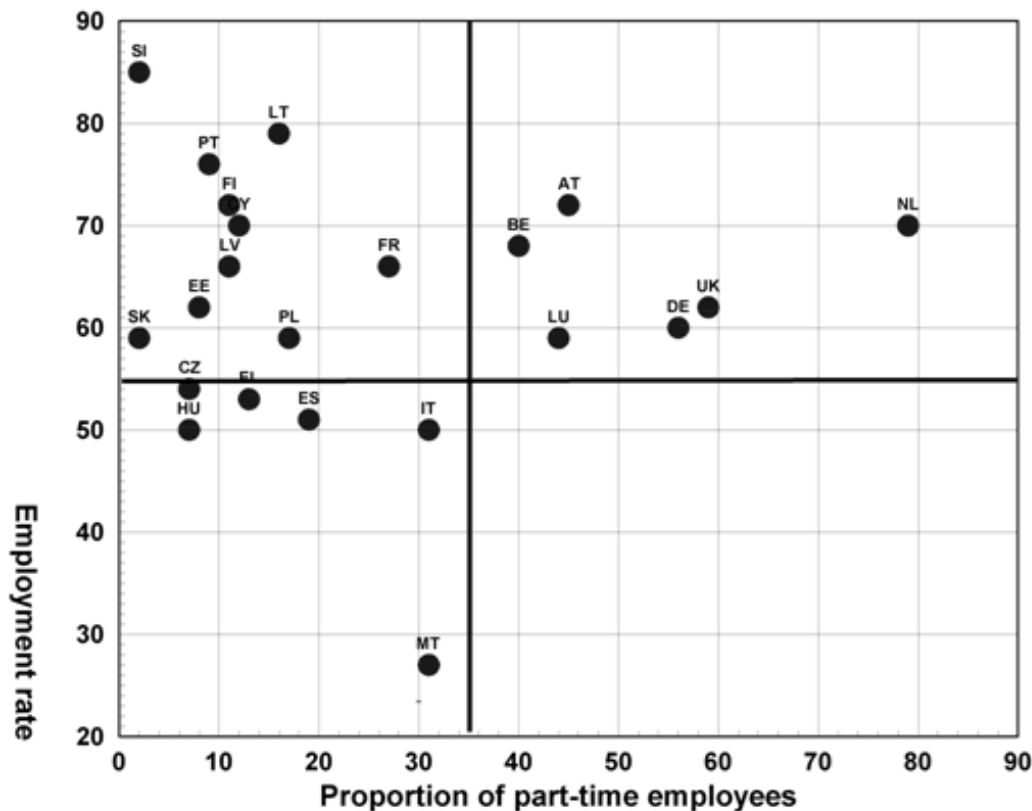
Sweden	1.54
Denmark	1.76
Netherlands	1.72
UK	1.64
Austria	1.32
Germany	1.34
France	1.89
Ireland	1.89
Belgium	1.65
Luxembourg	1.78
Culture of divided working habits	
Spain	1.22
Poland	1.34
Greece	1.3
Italy	1.25
Malta	1.9

Source: Fahey, T.& Spéder, Z, 2004, based on Eurostat, 2002

The same pattern of employment for women remains and even strengthens when only mothers (aged 20 to 49) with children aged under 12 years are included. In countries like Cyprus, Estonia, France, Finland, Latvia, Portugal, and Slovenia, mothers are employed more often and work part time less often than the national average for women. In countries like Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, mothers are more often employed but work part time more often than the national average for women. UK is an exception. Countries representing the culture of divided working habits, such as Greece, Italy, Poland and Spain, are interesting cases. The pattern of work seems to be moving towards full-time employment. Mothers are more often employed than women in these countries on average, but even if they work part time more often than other women, the proportion of part-timers is still quite low. In almost all countries, the employment rates of mothers are higher than the average. This is because, in the age groups younger or older than this, the employment rates are below the average for both men and women.

Figure 4: Employment rates and part-time employment, women, 2003

Employment rate and proportion of part-time employment, 2003 Women aged 20-49 with children under 12 years



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, Statistics in focus 4/2005

Note: Figures for part-time employment for Malta and Slovenia less reliable due to a small sample size. Figures for Denmark, Ireland and Sweden not available.

Institutional and cultural differences

The behaviour in the labour market is affected by at least two issues:

- different institutional situations in different countries;
- cultural differences in gender roles and in what is considered as 'good motherhood and fatherhood'.

First, there are different possibilities in different countries for men and women to find a balance between work and family. People live in different institutional frameworks, i.e. institutionally organised and subsidised family leave and childcare possibilities vary. There are extensive differences between the EU countries in the rights, lengths and subsidies of parental leave, children's homecare or in possibilities of reducing working hours (for mothers and fathers). Besides parental leave, childcare facilities also make a major difference to the possibilities of participating in full-time or part-time employment. The availability and the cost of childcare are important issues that should be included in studies concerning work-life balance.

Second, cultural assumptions of the gender roles in different countries affect the labour market behaviour of men and women. Perceptions of 'good motherhood' and 'good fatherhood' also vary among the EU countries. The social acceptability of working mothers or of reducing fathers' working hours because of family life presumably differs between the countries. The institutional frame both reflects and perpetuates these ideas.

Although there is not the scope in this topic report to discuss the background to these contexts (i.e. institutional and cultural differences), the fact that issues of national context exist is regarded as important when examining

work-life balance.

National context

This section aims at giving an overview of the most relevant and problematic issues for work-life balance in the 12 EWCO countries featured in the study.

The national reports confirm that the issue of how to obtain better conditions for the reconciliation of work and family life among full-time working parents is of great importance in their countries. The most topical concerns vary by country. However, on closer examination of the data from the national correspondents, some key features emerge, and can be grouped around three main themes:

- lack of childcare facilities;
- long, irregular working hours and lack of flexibility in working time;
- unequal distribution of household work among men and women.

These three themes will be discussed separately, based on data from the national reports. Differences in national contexts will be included whenever relevant.

Lack of childcare facilities

A widespread problematic issue among working parents is lack of childcare facilities and the high cost of private childcare in several countries. Only Finland, Sweden and Denmark report that working parents are offered guaranteed public childcare for pre-school children. However, lack of childcare facilities after school for children in the 7-9 age group is also prevalent in Finland and Denmark. Some of the countries also report important regional differences in access to childcare facilities. For example, in Germany, differences exist between the western and eastern regions, and in Austria, the situation in the provinces differs from that in Vienna and in other big cities.

Because of the lack of formal childcare, several of the national reports support the view that there is widespread use of informal care arrangements and use of solidarity networks. Although the prevalence of informal care need not be excluded from cultural norms and preferences, it is obvious that counting on informal care alone as an overall strategy seems to be a high risk and a vulnerable strategy.

Furthermore, families - female relatives in particular - still emerge as a significant solidarity network regarding the provision of care for dependent adults. However, the traditional role of grandmothers in the provision of care to their grandchildren is increasingly compromised, especially in large urban areas, due to the participation of these grandmothers in the labour market (Torres et al, 2004).

Altogether, the national reports underline the need for establishing an adequate network of support facilities to take care of children.

Long, irregular working hours and lack of working time flexibility

According to the national reports, the organisation of working time is another important aspect of a work-life balance. Long, irregular working hours, and lack of access to flexible working time arrangements to fulfil personal needs, are among the main reasons why working time is reported as having a negative impact on work-life balance. Lack of flexibility in working time makes it difficult to align working hours with childcare and school opening hours. In many cases, as in Spain, deeply rooted traditional practices, such as split working times (morning and afternoon), extremely long working hours and fixed start and finish times, make it difficult to organise working time in a flexible way.

In Estonia, study results indicate that the working time problem is particularly widely noted among women. According to the national study, *Women, family and work*, the vast majority of women emphasised that fixed working time schedules were the main problem in coping with family and work. However, for most of the women, working fewer hours or giving up their job was not an option because the households could not afford a drop in income (Hansson, 2001).

The same pattern applies to Portugal. Many Portuguese mothers consider their working schedule as one of the main reasons why they do not spend as much time as they would wish with their children. As a consequence, children often stay at home alone, or have to stay with their mothers in the workplace (OECD, 2004).

Another problem in relation to the impact of working hours on work-life balance is increased time pressure and workload at work. With increasing work demands, people find it even more difficult to cope at home. In Finland, overtime work is most common among upper white-collar employees, of whom around 70% work overtime.

In France, the statutory length of working time has been the main issue of public debate in relation to a work-life balance. In 1999 and 2001, France passed a law on the reduction of working hours, introducing a 48-hour maximum week with 35 hours being the statutory normal working week. At the same time, the legal provisions concerning flexible working time were extended. Study results show that the statutory reduction of working hours has contributed to higher levels of satisfaction with work-life balance among highly qualified working parents, and even more so among mothers with children under the age of 12 years. However, the study results also indicate that the legislative reduction of working hours has generated negative flexibility in working times for non-qualified women in the retail and service sectors. Explanatory factors are the combination of long working hours in shops, supermarkets and service centres, and the extended legislative regulations on flexibility of working time in favour of the employers (Méda and Orain, 2002).

Unequal distribution of household work

Household responsibilities, including taking care of the children, differ significantly among men and women in the 12 countries studied. This trend is confirmed by the national reports, as well as in the European Working Conditions Survey 2000 (Paoli and Merllié, 2001). Studies from the national statistics office in France (INSEE) and the Ministry for Education, Science and Culture in Austria (BMBWK, 2002) indicate that the number of children is also important in this respect. Increased family commitments have a significant impact on the professional choices of women: they either reduce their working hours or stop working. In adapting their work commitments, women very often feel obliged not to pursue very time demanding management career paths, or that they should choose a job with generally predictable working hours, more likely in the public sector. The consequences for their careers cannot be ignored, since the women concerned are aged between 25 and 40 years, i.e. the period of life most favourable for career development (www.insee.fr).

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the Czech Republic, 26% of mothers working full time believe that their family duties interfere with their career advancement and future prospects at least considerably, while the respective proportion among women who are working full time and do not have children is 14%. Among men, there is practically no difference between fathers (8%) and men without children (6%) (#Family and Gender Roles III, International Social Survey Programme 2002).

The gender differences in involvement in household activities and family care work are significant contributors to differences in satisfaction with the work-life balance among fathers and mothers working full time. Being primarily responsible for household work, women express higher degrees of stress and lower levels of satisfaction with their work-life balance than men do. According to a Danish study (Bjerring, Bottrup, Holt and Kold, 2000), this is particularly prevalent among highly educated women with high levels of responsibility at work.

Another Danish study (Lausten and Sjoerup, 2003) shows that men have more access to flexible working time arrangements than women do. However, men do not necessarily use their increased flexibility to contribute to household activities. Instead, for example, they start their work before seven o'clock in the morning or finish later in the evening. At the same time, women (with fixed working times) bring children to, and collect them from, daycare or school and do grocery shopping, since somebody has to do these things. Thus, flexible working times, as such, are not always conducive to equality in families, or in the labour market.

Different ways of examining working time and work-life balance

Definitions

Work-life balance is a complex issue with different variations between countries. To help define the issue of balance and flexibility of working time of full-time employees, three different themes are used here to examine it:

- positive flexibility of working time;
- negative flexibility of working time;
- predictability of working times.

Flexible working times are often offered as a solution for work-life balance. However, when discussing flexibility of working time, the distinction between positive and negative flexibility should be made.

Positive flexibility refers to the possibilities of using flexible working time for one's own needs. This kind of flexibility can be very important for a good work-life balance. Negative flexibility, on the other hand, refers to a situation where working time flexibility is dictated by one's tasks or supervisor. Negative flexibility can either be overtime work or unforeseen changes in working time schedules. In this case, flexibility can make reconciliation of work and family life very difficult.

Thus, to an individual, flexibility can mean both desirable and undesirable working time arrangements. At best, it offers the employee the possibility to adjust his/her working hours to suit personal and family needs. At worst, it means that one has to be flexible - work harder, longer and at inconvenient times - to meet the demands of the employer, without having a say oneself.

Here, both compensated (money or time in lieu) and uncompensated overtime are seen as one form of negative flexibility. This view is taken even though paid overtime can often be desired and needed due to the higher income or greater number of days off it brings. The reason why overtime is perceived as a form of negative flexibility is that, firstly, long working times do not improve the work-life balance (Fagan, 2003). Secondly, overtime work - especially on a continuous basis - has many negative implications, both physical and mental. In addition, it is difficult to ascertain in surveys whether or not overtime is welcomed. The survey results do not indicate whether a person has the option to refuse overtime work.

Besides the flexibility of working time, the predictability of working time is also of interest here. In this context, predictability refers to scheduled working times that do not change at short notice and that are predictable for the employee well in advance. For example, in periodic work, working times may vary in periods, but the time schedule is known well in advance. In public discussions on working time, inflexible working hours are often seen as a difficult arrangement for achieving a work-life balance. However, like flexibility, predictable working times also have a positive and negative side. When working times are fixed, an employee may not have many possibilities of being flexible - e.g. start slightly later, be absent in the middle of the day - even in the case of small family emergencies. On the other hand, he/she can rely on not being forced to stay longer hours at work or having to reorganise childcare arrangements at short notice because of sudden changes in working time schedules.

National working conditions surveys and work-life balance

The contributions of the EWCO national correspondents reveal that work-life balance and working time flexibility themes are covered very differently in national surveys on working conditions. Table 2 outlines how national surveys on working conditions address flexibility of working time and reconciliation of work and family life.

Table 2: Coverage of themes of work-life balance and working time flexibility, national surveys

Country	Overtime	Work-life balance	Possibility of influencing start and finish times	Positive flexibility	Negative flexibility
Austria	X	-	-	X	X
Czech Republic	X	X	X	X	X
Denmark	X	X	X	-	-

Estonia	X	-	X	-	X
Finland	X	X	X	X	X
France	X	X	X	-	X
Germany	X	X	X	X	X
Italy	-	X	-	-	-
Netherlands	X	X	X	X	X
Portugal	X	-	-	X	-
Spain	X	X	X	X	X
Sweden	X	X	X	-	X

Source: National surveys

Differences in the national context are reflected in national working conditions surveys and in the availability of data on work-life balance. For example, most surveys in Austria focus on mothers employed part time or on reasons why mothers/women are not employed at all. There is no survey focusing on only those mothers who work full time. Besides, as reconciling family and work life is still seen as a problem of women and not of men, surveys focus mainly on mothers. Thus, it is very difficult to provide information on parents working full time (Austrian contribution). This reflects the development in Austria where the part-time employment rate doubled between 1975 and 2000 (BMBWK, 2002).

Surveys in Estonia have covered the theme of reconciliation of work and family life, on the one hand, and topics concerning working time, on the other, but these two issues have not been covered together in any of the reports (Estonian contribution).

Background information - family situation

Questions concerning the family situation are very important in exploring work-life balance. Unfortunately, many national surveys on working conditions do not include questions concerning the family situation or the labour market status of the other household members.

Spain has a useful list of questions concerning the family situation. Notably, compared with, for example, the Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey (FQWLS), questions are included concerning the labour market status of family members other than the spouse/partner. This reflects different family cultures in the EU countries. For example, in the Nordic countries, adult employed children very rarely live with their parents. The Spanish Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace (2003) provides a good example of ways of asking about family relations.

The survey considers, first, an initial range of questions that include the following:

- total number of family members;
- type of family: whether the respondent lives alone, marital status, number of children and other people living in the household.

It then goes on to ask a series of questions concerning the family situation/household:

Q.60 'Are you married or do you have a steady relationship? - Yes/No'

Q.61 'What is the activity situation of your spouse/partner?'

a) Labour market status: Employee (public/private sector), temporary employee (public/private sector), self-employed with employees, self-employed, non-salaried/salaried employee in the family business, cooperative

worker, unemployed, other (what)?

b) Outside labour market: Student, retired, household work, permanently disabled person, other outside labour market (what?), don't know (DK), No response'

Q.63 'Is there any other family member in the household who has a salaried job? - No/Yes. Who? Father/mother, father/mother-in-law, son/daughter, stepson/stepdaughter, son/daughter-in-law, brother/sister, brother/sister-in-law, grandson/granddaughter, other relatives (who?)'

Q.64 'What is the labour market situation of these other family members? (See Q.61a above)'

Q.66 'Have you children? - Yes (how many?)/No'

Q.67 'Have you children at home? - Yes. Under 3 years old (how many?), between 3 and 5 years old (how many?), between 6 and 12 years old (how many?), over 12 years old (how many?)/No'

Q.68 'Do any of your children work? - Yes (how many?)/No'

Q.69 'Are there older people in your family who need help to carry out simple daily activities? - Yes/No'

Several national surveys on working conditions enquire about the spouses' working times (full-time/part-time), and whether they work in the public or private sector.

German, Italian and Finnish surveys also ask about the caring duties of the respondent and the time spent on them:

Q. 'Does someone in your household need care or assistance on a constant basis due to age, sickness or medical treatment?' - This is followed by further detailed questions regarding the assistance required and provided. (German Socio-Economic Panel 2003)

Q. 'How many hours do you devote to each of the following tasks (zero hours, one hour, two hours, three hours, four hours or more): domestic tasks, children's care and education, older relatives, disabled or sick relatives?' - 'And who helps you in such tasks: partner, relatives, friends, public institutions, private arrangement (housecleaners, baby sitters, caregivers), private institutions, none?' (Democratici di Sinistra 2002)

Q. 'People may have to assume care responsibilities for their relatives. Do you help or care for your relatives, such as your own or your spouse's parents or take care of your grandchildren? (Yes/No)'

If yes: 'How many hours per month do you take care or help in total? a) Adults hours, b) Children Hours' (FQWLS 2003)

Bearing in mind Europe's ageing population, these kinds of questions will become even more relevant in the future.

Work-life balance and flexibility of working time

Many national working conditions surveys include a general question regarding work-life balance, while others seek to specify more exactly whether it is the job or family responsibilities that disturbs the ideal balance. Some good examples of questions are collected in the Appendix.

The focus of these questions differs. Some of the formulations not only refer to working time but also to the location of the workplace and the work organisation (France). Some surveys are interested in the respondents' perceptions, in order to measure how inadequate they feel about their work-life balance (Sweden).

The questions in the Dutch and Czech surveys aim at measuring the role of the employer and the ability to use flexible working time arrangements for family needs.

It is significant that most of the surveys include only negative statements about work-life balance. Only the Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey contains statements concerning the positive impact of work on family life and vice versa. Work can, indeed, help people to cope with family life.

The Czech survey includes some statements that measure attitudes towards gender roles. These kinds of statements would be useful in studying how gender roles and conceptions of good motherhood and fatherhood vary in different countries.

Flexibility and predictability of working times

National working conditions surveys include several measurements of working time flexibility. However, the main problem is that most of the questions do not specify clearly the nature of the flexibility (negative or positive).

Some of the questions measuring flexibility of working times concern, for example, the possibility of influencing start and finish times, while others concern working schedules or differences in the time limits regarding flexibility, such as the question in the Danish survey:

‘Are you able to change your working times from day to day, e.g. start work later or finish work earlier? (Yes, up to 15 minutes/Yes, up to half an hour/Yes, up to an hour/Yes, more than an hour/No)’ (Danish Work Environment Cohort Study 2000)

The Appendix outlines examples of questions clearly measuring positive flexibility. In the Spanish National Survey on Working Conditions, the question concerning positive flexibility includes a reference to arrangements necessary for a sudden absence. The Czech survey enquires about the possibility of negotiating working times with the employer.

Questions measuring negative flexibility should include a reference to either the idea of involuntary prolonging of the working day or to undesired changes in work schedule. There are only a few examples with regard to negative flexibility, one of them being from the Spanish Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace:

‘Do your daily working hours change in response to the enterprise’s needs? (Always/Frequently/Sometimes/Hardly ever/Never/DK/No response)’

However, overtime work is addressed extensively in national working conditions surveys, often with several questions, covering compensation, frequency and reasons for overtime.

Predictability of working times is seldom covered, as such, in national surveys. Often, it can be established with two or three questions. However, some formulations do exist, such as this one in the French Labour Force Survey:

‘Do you know your working timetable a) for the next month (yes/no), b) for the next week (yes/no), c) tomorrow (yes/no)?’

See Appendix for further examples of questions.

Flexibility of working time and work-life balance

The aim of this section is to examine the prevalence of flexibility and predictability of working times, as well as their relation to work-life balance, in the 12 countries featured in the study. The focus is on parents employed full time with children aged under 15 years.

As shown in the previous section, the themes of flexibility and predictability of working times, and of work-life balance, are covered very differently in national surveys on working conditions. Even where questions exist, there are often no data available on parents employed full time. Thus, this section largely relies on the European Working Conditions Survey 2000 (EWCS).

Concerning the way in which flexibility of working time is measured in the EWCS, the survey seems to reveal predominantly negative flexibility. According to the EWCS, parents with somewhat flexible working times tend to have poorer work-life balance than those with fixed and/or predictable working times. There is a strong correlation between flexibility of working time and overlong working hours, which may partly explain the phenomenon. However, even those who are not working overlong hours consider their work-life balance to be better when they have, for example, fixed start and finish times at work, compared to those with flexibility in this respect.

Thus, the kind of positive flexibility which would advance work-life balance does not seem to be captured by the questions used in the EWCS. On the basis of the survey, it appears to be the predictability - rather than flexibility in its negative form - of working times that gives greater satisfaction to parents employed full time, in terms of their work-life balance.

Work-life balance

In the EWCS, the subject of work-life balance is touched on in Question 20: 'In general, do your working hours fit in with your family or social commitments outside work very well, fairly well, not very well or not at all well?'

It should be noted that these types of general satisfaction questions tend to produce much more positive responses than when the issue is broken down into more detailed questions or researched by qualitative methods (Fagan, 2003; Pulkkinen, 2002; Lehto, 1996). It is also worth noting that respondents may consider their working hours to be compatible with their family life because they have chosen them strategically, for example, in the context of having to arrange particular forms of childcare (Fagan, 2003, p. 44; Hulkko, 2003).

At European level, 25% of parents employed full time and with children aged under 15 years find that their working schedule does not fit in well, or at all, with family and other commitments, whereas less than one in three finds that it fits in very well. (With regard to this percentage, there could be a possible source of bias towards those reporting fewer family commitments. The question asks, 'How many children under 15 years are currently living at home?' and the statistic assumes that only parents are responding. However, in some households, it may be adult children who are answering the survey. They would not experience the same responsibility for their younger siblings as their parents would for their children.) While both mothers and fathers find their work-life balance poorer than their peers without children do, the difference between mothers and non-mothers is greater than that between fathers and non-fathers (Table 3).

Table 3: Degree to which working hours fit in with family and social commitments, full-time employees, EU15 (%)

	Very well	Fairly well	Not very well/not at all
With children aged under 15			
Men	28	48	24
Women	30	46	24
No children			
Men	33	49	17
Women	36	49	14

Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2000

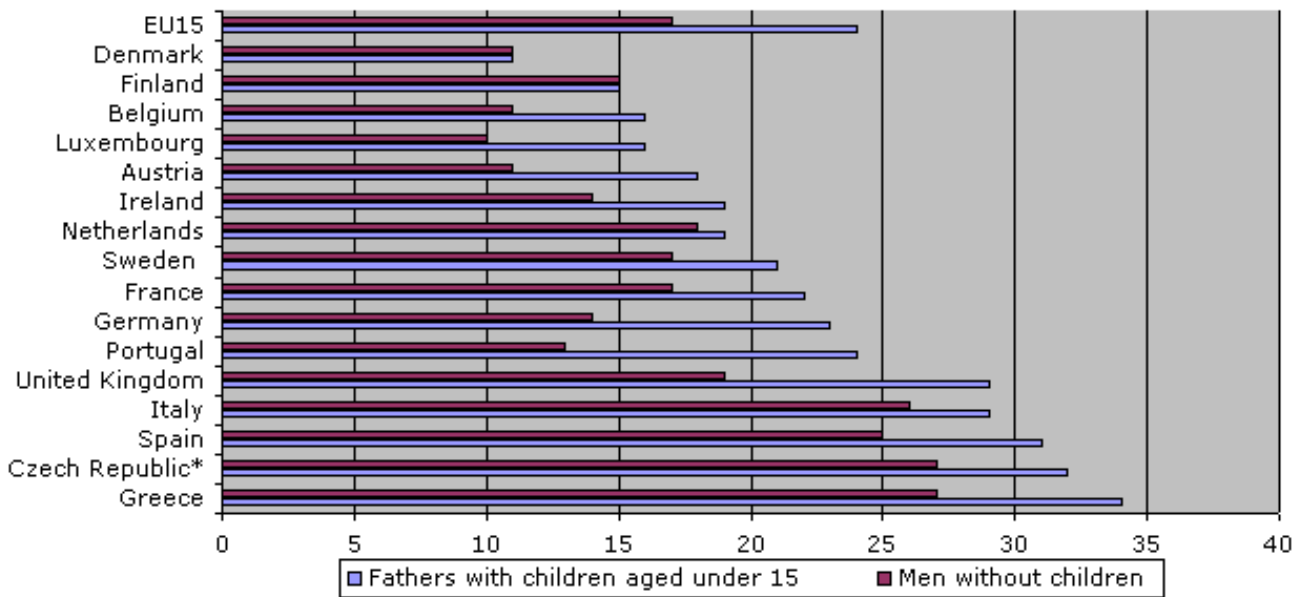
As shown in Figures 5 and 6, there are significant differences between countries, especially concerning mothers. For men, there are not huge differences by country in how much poorer fathers find their work-life balance, compared to men without children. However, the impact of motherhood on work-life balance varies considerably between countries. In Germany, Italy, France, the Netherlands and Austria, the proportion of mothers employed full time with a poor work-life balance is about twice that of their peers without children. This applies also to Belgium,

although the overall proportion of those with poor work-life balance is quite low here.

It is interesting to note the correlation between work-life balance expressed by mothers working full time, and the total fertility rate in the different countries (see Table 1). In almost all of the countries where mothers have a poorer work-life balance experience than the EU15 average (see Figure 6), the fertility rate is also lower than the average (1.46 for EU25 or 1.47 for EU15). The opposite applies to countries with better than average work-life balance. The only exceptions are France with poor work-life balance, but a high fertility rate for mothers, and Austria, with reasonable work-life balance but a low fertility rate.

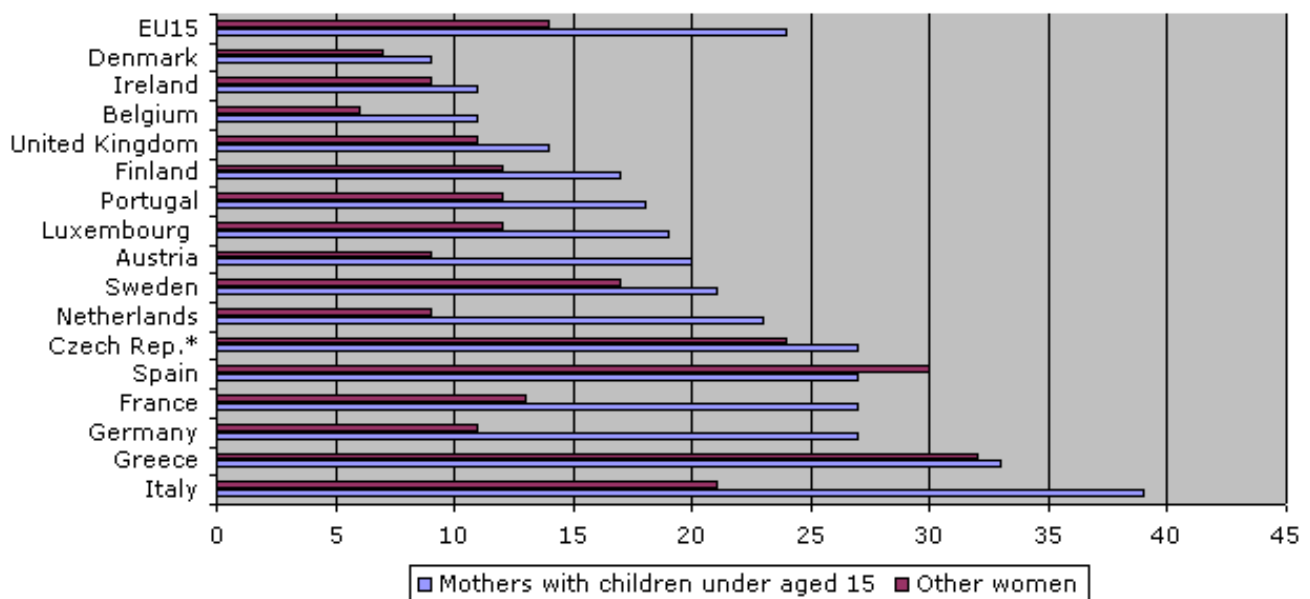
There are no data on general work-life balance from Estonia.

Figure 5: Poor work-life balance, male full-time employees (%)



Source: EWCS, 2000. *Fathers compared with all men, WC 2000

Figure 6: Poor work-life balance, female full-time employees (%)



Source: EWCS 2000. *Mothers compared with all women, WC 2000

Although it is not possible to break down the data of the EWCS by age of the youngest child, some of the national contributions show that the age of the children matters. According to the Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey, over 60% of parents employed full time report having conflicts from time to time with their spouse about working hours, household work and personal time. Among couples without children, the respective proportion is about 40%. The younger the children are, the more conflicts prevail. However, in Finland, mothers' participation in working life does not increase conflicts in families with small children. Fathers employed full time with children aged under three report conflicts almost just as much, irrespective of whether their wife is working (73%) or at home taking care of the children (71%).

However, in this context, it is important to highlight a less negative side of the work-life balance, namely the positive impact of work on family life. According to the Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey, among mothers working full time, 84% of those with children aged under six, and 74% of those with children aged six to 14, report that they cope better with their children when they also work outside the home. In fact, these proportions are even higher than among fathers. It would be very interesting to have comparative data on these issues at EU level.

Flexibility in number of hours worked

The EWCS enquires whether the respondent works the same number of hours every day and the same number of days every week (Q18.1 and Q18.2). On average, men tend to have more flexibility in this regard than women, at EU level and in most of the countries.

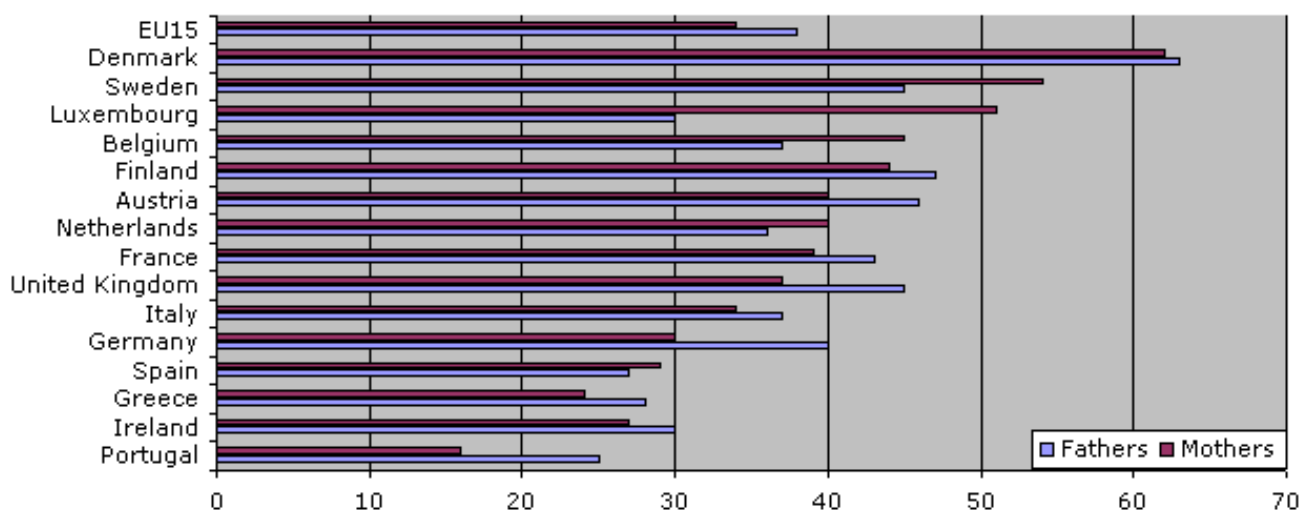
Table 4: Flexibility on a daily and weekly basis, full-time employees, EU15 (%)

	Do not work same number of hours every day	Do not work same number of days every week
With children aged under 15		
Men	37	25
Women	33	20
No children		

Men	35	21
Women	32	16

Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2000

Figure 7: Proportion of those not working same number of hours every day, full-time employees with children aged under 15 (%)



Source: EWCS 2000

Even though the issue of overtime work is not directly covered by the EWCS, it asks how many times a month the respondent works more than 10 hours a day (Q16e). At European level, overlong working days are more typical for men than for women. Overlong working days are more frequent for fathers than for other men, but on average, they are less frequent among mothers than among other women (Table 5). However, in Sweden and in Mediterranean countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal, mothers employed full time tend to work overlong hours more often than women without children do, while in Finland and France, there is no difference between mothers and non-mothers who are employed full time.

Table 5: Work more than 10 hours a day, full-time employees, EU15 (%)

	Never	1-5 times a month	More often
With children aged under 15			
Men	59	23	18
Women	80	12	8
No children			
Men	65	20	15
Women	75	16	9

Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2000

Overlong working days seem to be most common among mothers and fathers employed full time in Finland and Sweden; in addition, very frequent overlong days are typical for fathers in the UK (Figures 8 and 9).

Figure 8: Frequency of working more than 10 hours a day, male full-time employees with children aged under 15 years (%)

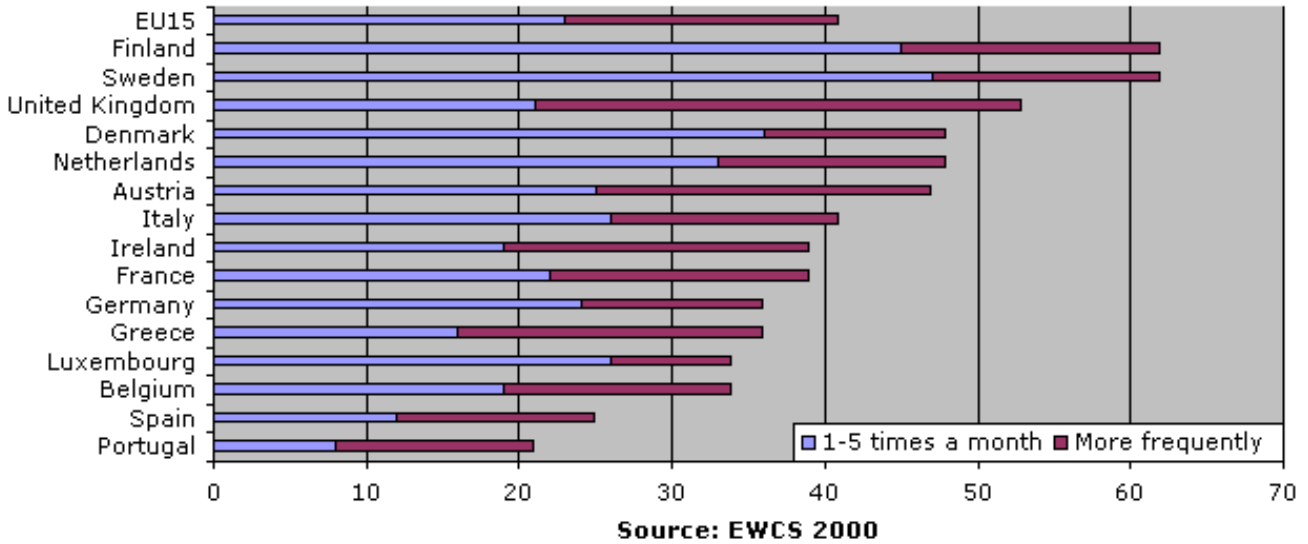
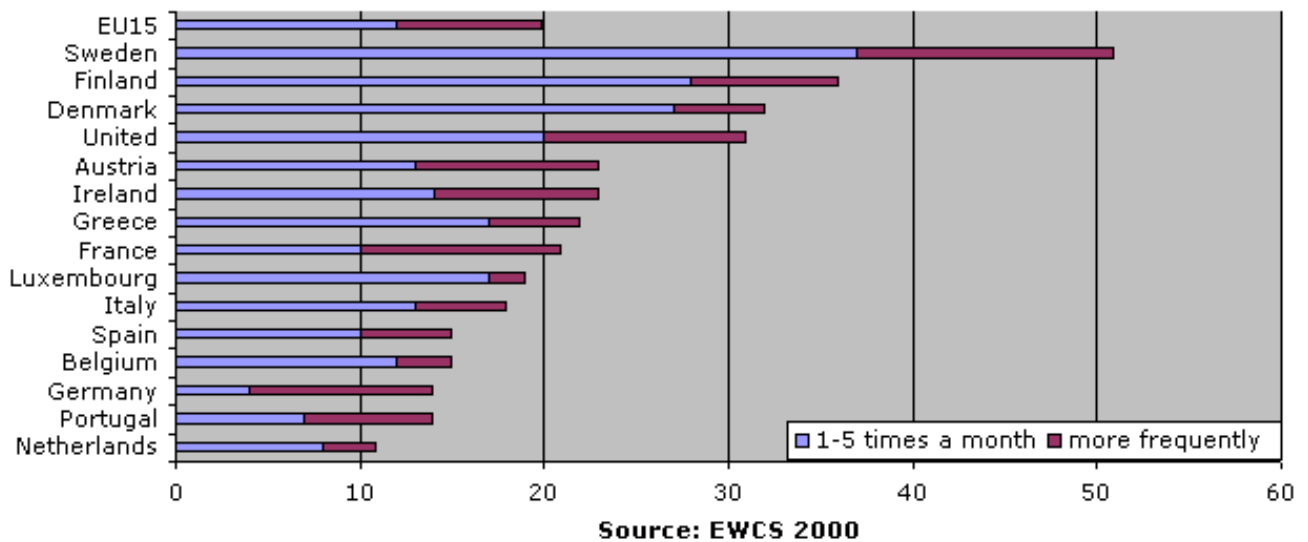


Figure 9: Frequency of working more than 10 hours a day, female full-time employees with children aged under 15 years (%)



Even though the Czech Republic and Estonia could not be included in Figures 8 and 9, the national contributions provide data on the frequency of overtime work in these countries. In the Czech Republic, fathers employed full time also do more overtime work than men on average, whereas mothers do less overtime work than the average for women. It is striking that about 70% of fathers and half (52%) of mothers employed full time report that they work overtime for at least one hour a week. Data on parents were not available for Estonia but, among all full-time

employees, 34% of men and 23% of women report that they do overtime during a normal working week.

National data from the Netherlands, Sweden and Spain also reinforce the trend that men work more overtime than women do. Sectoral segregation of the labour market is noted in the Swedish contribution to explain the gender differences: men mainly work in the private sector and in sectors where overtime work is common. However, data from Portugal and Germany show practically no gender difference in the incidence of overtime work.

Impact of children's age on overtime work

Among Italian employees, overtime work is most common among men aged 25 to 44 years: 30% of these men work overtime. For many, this age is also the most intensive phase of family life. For women, age has practically no impact in this regard: some 24% work overtime (Istat, 2004).

The data from Spain show the highest overtime rates (23%) among fathers with children aged under three years. There is a slight decrease by age of the child so that about 20% of fathers with older children work overtime. For mothers, it is the opposite: those with children aged under three work overtime even more seldom (6%) than those with older children (14-15%).

The case of Finland is of particular interest. In the 1990s, overtime work was most common among fathers with children aged under three years, but now the situation has completely changed: this particular group works less overtime than other men do. No trend of this kind is visible among women. Furthermore, uncompensated overtime is more common among mothers with children aged under three years than among mothers with older children or no children at all. There is an explanation for this. It is possible in Finland to stay on home care leave until the child is three years old, but this opportunity is not as widely used by well-educated mothers as by mothers with lower education levels. Thus, the proportion of upper white-collar employees is greater (42%) among mothers working full time with children aged under three than among other women with children aged three to 14 years (28%) or with no children at all (23%) and working full time. Uncompensated overtime work is carried out mainly by upper white-collar employees (Sutela, 2005).

Flexible start and finish times of work

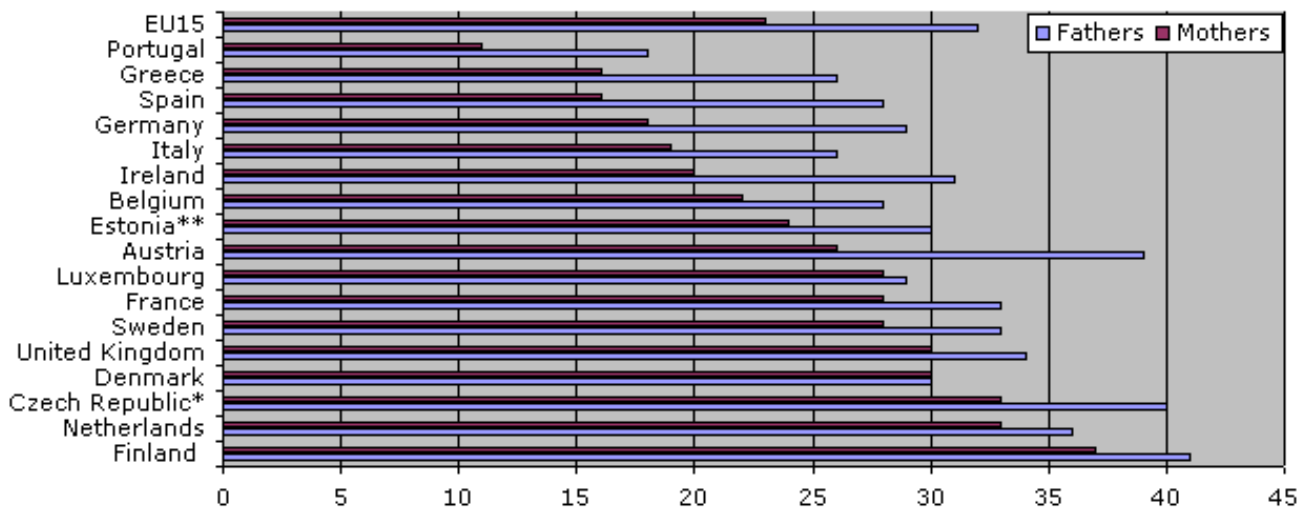
One dimension of flexible working time relates to opportunities employees have to influence their start and finish times of work. In the EWCS, this subject is addressed in question 18a_3: 'Do you work fixed starting and finishing times?'

Less than one in three European full-time employees, men more often than women, report not having fixed starting and finishing times and having some flexibility in this respect. The gender difference is more pronounced between fathers and mothers than between employees without children. Among parents employed full time, the highest flexibility in this regard is to be found in Finland, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands, and also in Austria for fathers (Figure 10).

Table 6: Fixed start and finish times, full-time employees, EU15 (%)

	Yes	No	Don't know
With children aged under 15			
Men	67	32	1
Women	76	23	1
No children			
Men	70	28	1
Women	74	25	1

Figure 10: No fixed start and finish work time, full-time employees with children aged under 15 years (%)



Source: EWCS 2000. *WC 2000 . **incl. non parents and part-timers, LFS 2003

In the Estonian case, separate figures for parents and non-parents were not available for this report. According to the Estonian Labour Force Survey, 30% of all men and 24% of all women working full time can influence their start and finish times of work.

There is a certain ambiguity in the way this issue is addressed in the EWCS. When a respondent reports not having fixed start and finish times of work, it is not clear whether he/she can personally influence those times or whether the flexibility is dictated by tasks or the employer.

Italian data show that both possibilities exist. Among women living with a spouse and with children aged under 12 years - and benefiting from flexibility in their start and finish times of work - 45% report that the reason for the flexibility is family need, 14% cite personal need and 40% give reasons connected with work (Istat, Time Use Survey 2002-2003, preliminary data).

Positive flexibility

Although it seems difficult to capture positive flexibility in the EWCS, some national surveys include questions measuring flexibility from this particular perspective (see above and Appendix). Many national contributions show that men tend to have more positive flexibility than women.

In the Czech Republic, 33% of fathers, but only 18% of mothers, with children aged under 15 years report being able to influence their working hours. In Germany, gainfully employed (including self-employed) men can set their own hours more commonly (25%) than women (14%). In Portugal, employed men have flexible working hours more often (34%) than employed women (19%), and in Sweden, all employed (including part-time working) men have relatively free working times more commonly (31%) than women do (25%). (See national contributions.)

In the Netherlands too, men employed full time have greater opportunities of interrupting their work (75%) than women do (65%). Just over 60% of women, and a little over 50% of men, employed full time, report that they have adjusted their working hours to meet caring tasks.

The Swedish contribution notes that more women work in service or caring professions where the possibility of

influencing one's working time is small. This may apply to many other countries too. However, according to an analysis based on the Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey, the impact of gender remains, even if labour market factors, such as age, profession, socio-economic group, supervisory tasks or pattern of working times, are adjusted. Men still tend to have more flexible working hours, especially in the positive sense (Sutela, 2004).

In examining the national contributions, as well as results from the EWCS, it is striking how little, if any, impact parenthood has on the flexibility - at least positive flexibility - of working times of full-time employees. However, working parents generally have a greater need for flexibility in working time than employees without children. Currently, at European level, the family status of employees does not seem to play a major role from the point of view of the employer, at least when it comes to flexible arrangements of working time.

Predictability of working times

Practically all of the above mentioned questions on working time flexibility can also be used to measure its predictability. However, in the EWCS, the predictability of working times is measured particularly well by Question 19a: 'Usually, how many times a month do your scheduled working times change?'

In this context, there are practically no differences between parents and non-parents, although men generally seem to face changes in their scheduled working times a little more often than women do (Table 7). Changes are faced the most by employees in Finland, Sweden and Germany, and the least in Portugal (Figures 11 and 12).

Table 7: Scheduled work time changes, full-time employees, EU15 (%)

	Never	1-3 times a month	More frequently	It depends
With children aged under 15				
Men	68	10	17	5
Women	74	12	11	3
No children				
Men	71	9	15	5
Women	76	10	11	3

Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2000

Figure 11: Changes in scheduled working times, male full-time employees with children aged under 15 years
Source: EWCS 2000. *WC 2000

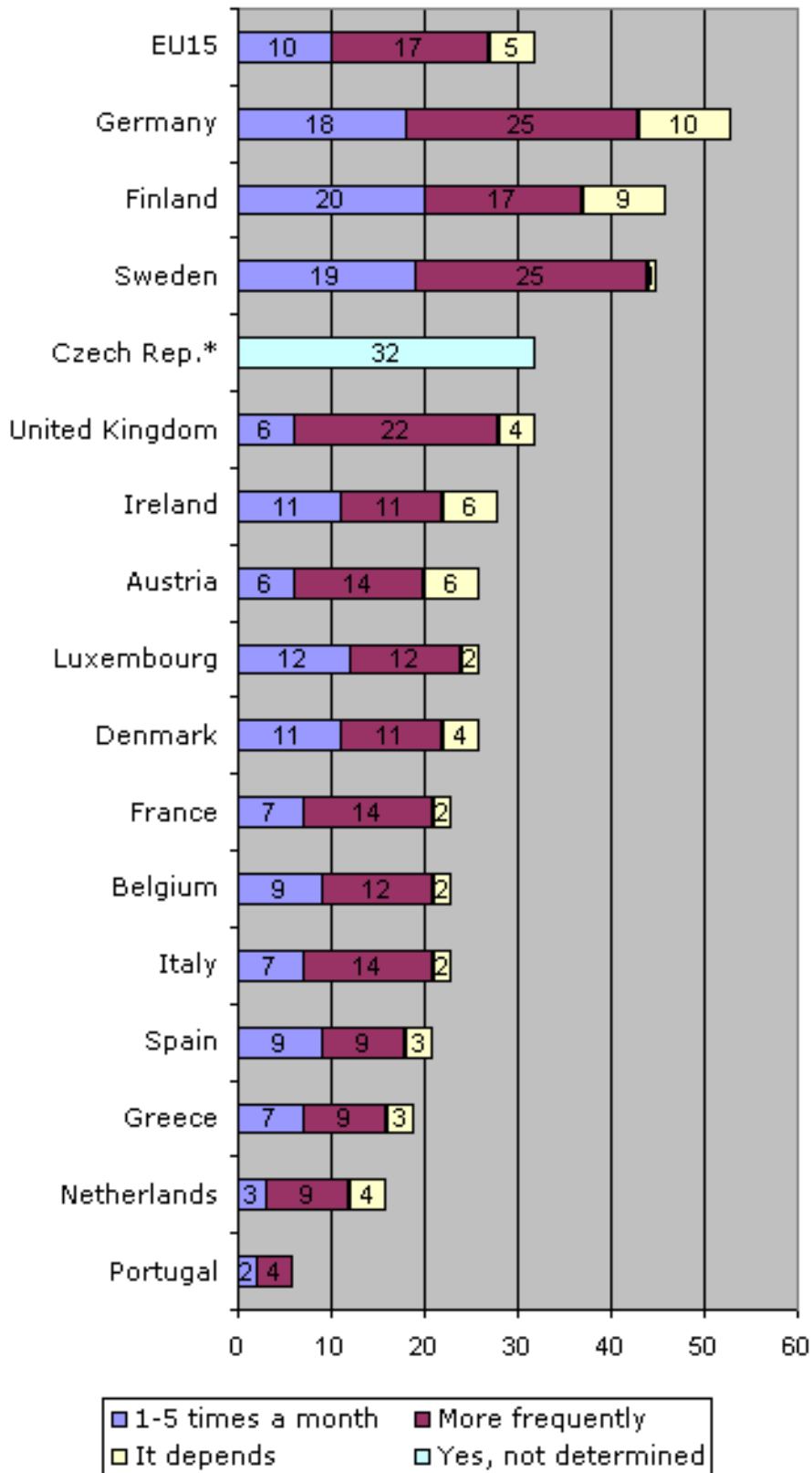
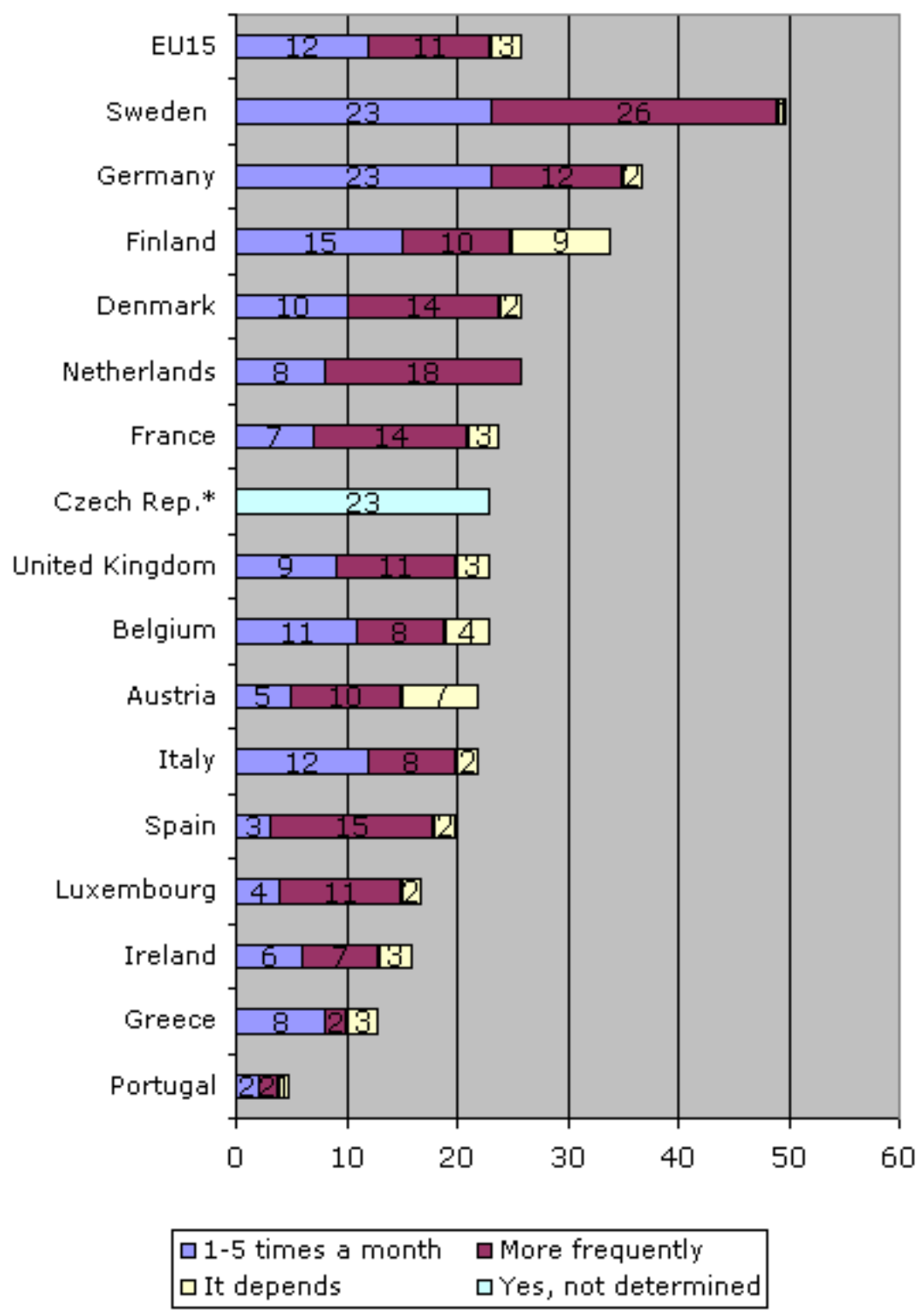


Figure 12: Changes in scheduled working times, female full-time employees with children aged under 15 years (%)

Source: EWCS 2000. *WC 2000



Among Spanish men, the percentage of those whose working times change frequently in response to company needs is highest among fathers with children aged under three years (21%), dropping to 18% among fathers with

children aged from three to five years, and to 14% for those with children aged from six to 12 years. Among mothers, those with children aged six and over also face fewer changes in response to company needs.

Impact of flexibility on work-life balance

In light of the many claims that working time flexibility promotes work-life balance, it is surprising that the EWCS findings rather seem to indicate that a lack of flexibility actually improves the work-life balance satisfaction of parents employed full time. Table 8 reveals that parents with some degree of flexibility in their working time are far less satisfied with their work-life balance than parents who tend to work the same number of hours every day, the same number of days every week, and have fixed start and finish times.

Table 8: Degree to which working hours fit in with family and social commitments, full-time employees with children under 15 years, EU15 (%)

	Men				Women		
Working hours:	Very well	Fairly well	Not well		Very well	Fairly well	Not well
Same number of hours every day							
Yes	33	49	17		32	47	21
No	19	47	34		26	44	29
Same number of days every week							
Yes	32	49	19		33	47	20
No	15	46	39		19	39	42
Work more than 10 hours a day							
Never	32	52	15		31	48	21
1-5 times a month	28	48	24		27	42	30
More often	14	34	52		24	35	41
Fixed start and finish times							
Yes	33	49	18		31	47	22
No	18	45	37		25	43	32
Scheduled working hours change							

Never	32	49	18		34	45	21
1-5 times a month	27	43	30		16	52	32
More often	15	43	41		18	42	40

Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2000

Furthermore, satisfaction with work-life balance is significantly higher among parents who face no changes in their scheduled hours than among those whose scheduled working times change each month. The more changes there are, the less satisfied these parents are. At the same time, unpredictability of working times is also strongly connected with flexibility of start and finish times, varying number of hours worked per day or varying number of days worked per week, as well as overlong workdays.

In Germany, working time flexibility seems to refer to negative flexibility in about one in three cases. According to the German Socio-Economic Panel (#GSOEP), among those gainfully employed who do not have fixed daily working times (about 40% of all), 29% of men and 34% of women report that working times are fixed by the employer and vary from day to day. At the same time, 39% of men and 24% of women report that they set their own hours.

According to a French study, alternating working times make combining family life and work extremely difficult for employed mothers. The proportion of those having difficulties in achieving a work-life balance because of alternating working times is twice as high (81%) among women with children aged under 11 years, than among other women (42%).

This becomes more understandable when the correlation between flexibility and length of working time is taken into consideration. According to the EWCS, parents who have some degree of flexibility in their working time also frequently work overlong days (Table 9).

Table 9: Frequency of working more than 10 hours a day, full-time employees with children under 15 years, EU15 (%)

	Fathers				Mothers		
Working hours:	Never	1-3 times a month	More frequently		Never	1-3 times a month	More frequently
Same number of hours every day							
Yes	75	17	8		89	7	4
No	34	33	33		62	23	16
Same number of days every week							
Yes	65	21	14		85	9	6
No	40	31	29		58	25	17
Fixed start and finish times							

Yes	71	20	9		85	8	6
No	33	31	36		61	26	13
Scheduled working times change							
Never	67	20	13		84	10	6
1-5 times a month	57	29	14		77	14	9
More often	35	32	34		55	28	17

Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2000

The length of working days alone correlates strongly with work-life balance, especially among fathers, as seen in Table 8 (see also Fagan, 2003). Furthermore, the strong correlation between flexibility of working time and overlong working days strengthens the view that the flexibility measured in the EWCS refers predominantly to a negative form of flexibility, from the point of view of the employee and his/her work-life balance. Even among parents, especially fathers, who never work overlong hours, those with fixed start and finish times are more satisfied with their work-life balance than parents with flexibility are in this regard.

Discussion on flexibility

As noted in many of the national contributions, flexible working times are often connected with managerial and professional jobs requiring a high level of education (see also Fagan, 2003, p. 46). An exception is well-educated women in teaching and nursing professions who rarely have positive flexibility in their working times (Swedish contribution).

Individual agreements, as well as employees' commitment and sense of responsibility for their work and working time (working-time autonomy), seem to contribute to the lengthening of working hours. Paradoxically, even though these competitive employees, with strong labour market positions and demanding tasks, are supposed to have considerable individual negotiating power, they are also the group whose working times are constantly stretched. The theoretical possibility of self-regulating one's working time does not have a practical influence, if the overall working hours are too long (Julkunen and Nätti, 1999, p. 200; Antila, 2002, p. 125).

Julkunen and Nätti (2002) note, too, that employees have tended to favour regular working times, regarding them as a protection against inconvenient and unpredictable working hours. They believe, however, that the situation is gradually changing: various modernisation processes create a sense of willingness among individuals to accept change, and people are starting to demand working times that are more adapted to their changing life situations (Julkunen and Nätti, 2002, p. 194). It is becoming increasingly important to study working times and preferences in order to discover these kinds of possible cultural changes in working times and work orientation.

Besides this modernity process, more concrete institutional factors, such as availability of childcare, should also be included in an analysis. Additionally, cultural gender roles seem to renew themselves, to a surprising extent. As long as the traditional gender division of household work does not change, the increasing flexibility in work seems to remain the privilege - and obligation - of men. Such concrete issues largely determine what kind of flexibility is needed or desired by parents to attain a satisfactory work-life balance.

Good practices in promoting family-friendly workplaces

This section aims at promoting European learning through presentation of national experiences and good practices on family-friendly policies, including flexible working time arrangements in the workplace.

These strategies include a wide variety of initiatives. The data on good practices, which have been collected by the national correspondents, can be divided into initiatives promoted by governments and those promoted by companies. Good practices through workplace policies can be summarised as initiatives promoting:

- individual flexitime (with and without core hours);
- employees in a company organising their own working time collectively, in order to fulfil different personal needs;
- working parents' childcare needs provided by the company;
- reduction of working time, including part-time work;
- training on time management and stress management;
- flexibility of working hours when family emergencies occur.

Below are short descriptions of interesting state and company initiatives. They imply that there is a variety of good practices in the 12 countries featured in the study.

Government initiatives

'Family and Work Audit' in Austria

- The initiative: In 1998, the relevant Austrian Ministry introduced the 'Family and Work Audit'. Its goal is to help companies create a family-friendly environment for employees. For this purpose, the Audit analyses the family-friendly measures taken by the companies in question.
- Case examples: Flexibility of working hours is one of several measures in the Audit. A small car-selling company (30 employees), for instance, offers its employees the possibility of flexitime with family-oriented core hours. A hairdresser with 11 employees offers flexitime without core hours. Most of the small companies, however, offer flexible working hour arrangements according to the individual family needs of their employees (Dörfler, 2004).

National network on work-life balance in France

- The initiative: In 2002, a national network, 'Combining family and work life', was launched as part of the French EQUAL programme. Altogether, 25 projects have received financial support and guidance with regard to this network programme, under the coordination of RACINE (a national support structure for the EQUAL programme in France).
- Field of action: child-minding models to suit atypical hours; networking of supply of and demand for child-minding in rural areas; public transport for atypical hours or locations; training of managers on time management issues; development of indicators on work-life balance for the social rating of companies, etc.
- Case examples: The first completed overview of experiences from the network was presented in a report published in 2004 (Silvera, Buseyne and Donlevy-Gomes, 2004). All of the projects involve several actors, private and/or public (local communities, child benefit offices, etc), and several fields of action. In one of the projects, the companies involved (in the food-processing industry) have introduced 'young parents' positions', with working hours adapted to the needs of young parents (especially when they are in a precarious situation, such as single parents, for instance). The purpose is to create a flexible multi-task team to take care of last minute replacements, or respond to unexpected overloads. These teams only work during the day (the usual working hours in this sector are two shifts of eight hours, with morning and evening teams), which makes it easier to combine with family commitments. The project managers in the company are responsible for ensuring that these jobs are not regarded as a secondary workforce in the company.

Competition on best firm applying equal opportunities in the Czech Republic

- The initiative: In 2004, the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade and the non-profit organisation, 'Gender Studies', launched a competition to find the best firm applying equal opportunities in the Czech Republic. The criteria for the Equal Opportunities 2004 award were the integration of equal opportunities as part of the corporate culture. The competition was divided into large, medium and small enterprise categories.
- Case example: The winner in the small- and medium-sized enterprises category was R-Pressé, publisher of Respekt weekly. The weekly newspaper's editorial board emphasises the balance between family and working life for women and men. Parents are not obliged to work at weekends and can choose special leave over and above their statutory leave. Employees, male and female, can make use of flexible working hours, work part time or work from home.

‘Equality is Quality’ in Portugal

The Prémio ‘Igualdade é Qualidade’ (‘Equality is Quality’ Prize), has been awarded since 1999 by the Comissão para a Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego (Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment), a national tripartite body. The ‘Equality is Quality’ Prize is awarded to businesses and employers that pursue exemplary policies regarding equality between men and women, particularly in terms of reconciling work and family.

Collection of best practices in Germany

The German [Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Young People \(in German\)](#) collects best practices as part of a governmental policy programme. The ministry also organises competitions and publishes brochures promoting family-friendly workplaces. The initiatives include:

- a dedicated web page on the [‘success factor family’ \(in German\)](#) , providing information and examples of good practices;
- a [brochure \(1.8Mb pdf; in German\)](#) comprising a checklist of family-friendly personnel management strategies for small- and medium-sized companies, prepared jointly with the [DIHK](#) , the umbrella federation of the chambers of commerce, and the Hertie Foundation;
- another [brochure \(440Kb pdf; in German\)](#) , encouraging a family-friendly working environment and providing best practice examples, published by the Ministry jointly with the [Bertelsmann Foundation](#) ;
- launching and financing a [study \(850Kb pdf; in German\)](#) investigating the cost benefits of family-friendly personnel management and measures. The study, conducted by Prognos AG, gives evidence of cost benefits for a medium-sized company example, with a return on investment of 25%.

Company initiatives

Employees planning their own working time schedule in Italy

ZF Padova, the Italian plant of the German group ZF, employs approximately 400 blue- and white-collar workers. The company has introduced a new time planning system which gives the employees greater control over their working hours. All employees can design their personal working hours according to a multi-week design, with a maximum of 45 hours per week. On a weekly basis, the employees plan their working hours according to their personal needs for time off, for example, for parental leave, holidays, supplementary training, etc. A team, composed of the logistics manager, operations manager, HR manager and a works council member, monitors and guides the employee-controlled time planning.

Reduction of working hours in Germany

The German printing company, Druckwerkstatt Kollektiv GmbH, Darmstadt, has reduced its regular working hours to 30 hours per week in order to improve the balance between working and non-working life. There are special reductions in the working hours of parents (with full pay): six hours a week for children in a crèche, four hours for kindergarten children, and two hours for school children. The working hours are flexible and can be adapted to personal needs, in cooperation with colleagues and taking into consideration the company’s needs.

Company level agreement on part-time work in Portugal

A large Portuguese telecommunications company has concluded a collective agreement offering part-time working arrangements for employees in the following situations:

- employees with children aged up to 12 years;
- employees caring for incapacitated relatives;
- student employees;
- employees with reduced work capacity.

According to the company’s human resources manager, the part-time work option ‘is often required by employees who give as the main reasons the need to fulfil family commitments or childcare responsibilities’ (Guerreiro et al, 2001).

Family-friendly policies introduced by a company in Spain

In 2004, the Spanish division of the French insurance company, [Coface Ibérica](#), received the national award for flexible workplaces (*Premio Nacional Empresa Flexible*). The award was launched by the [Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs](#) and the Spanish High Council of Chambers of Commerce.

Coface Ibérica employs 81 people, 70% of whom are women, and recently achieved annual sales growth rates of 40%. The company has adopted the following practices to promote work-life balance:

- Flexible start and finish times are permitted, as long as the monthly target of working hours is met. A deficit of up to 10 hours may be accumulated but this has to be written off in the following month. Equally, excess working hours, with an upper limit of 10 hours, may be exchanged for days off. There is no work on Friday afternoon.
- It is unlikely that employees will request a reduction in working hours or even part-time work, although it is possible. Instead, employees are allowed to change their working hours in response to their particular family needs.
- Maternity and paternity leave go beyond the legally established limit, at the request of employees. However, evidence shows that this only happens in exceptional cases, such as international adoptions. Annual holidays are set at 31 working days and there are reduced working hours in the summer between 15 June and 15 September.
- There is complete flexibility when family emergencies occur. Absence from work in these circumstances does not affect annual holidays, but is compensated through the monthly target of working hours.
- In addition to the aforementioned strategies, employees benefit from training on time management and stress management.

Company introduces stress-reduction policies in Denmark

The Danish company, Novozymes, with approximately 2,000 employees, is the biotech-based world leader in enzymes and micro-organisms. Novozymes is also known and acknowledged globally as a company that focuses considerable energy on 'soft values'. The company is a world leader in running a sustainable business in accordance with international standards.

In 2002, Novozymes focused on the balance between employees' working and family lives, partly because it emerged that stress was a problem among its employees. The company introduced new regulations to facilitate the balance between work and family life, including new maternity leave 'laws'. Today, employees are offered longer maternity leave than is required by Danish legislation. Furthermore, employees of Novozymes are first in line for childcare services in the area where the Novozymes plant is located. In addition, Novozymes established a washing and grocery shopping scheme whereby the company offered to do the employees' washing and grocery shopping; however, this service has recently been abandoned due to lack of interest among employees. Finally, the company has a flexible working hours scheme through which employees are able to plan their own working hours, to a large extent (www.novozymes.dk; Grosen and Knudsen, 2003).

Flexible working hour arrangements in Finland

The Finnish municipal hospital, Jorvi, has launched a programme of working time autonomy in order to introduce flexibility to an otherwise rather strictly organised shift work schedule. In the new autonomy model, work shifts are planned together with all employees, aiming to take into account individual needs for different working times. Previously, the management was solely in charge of the working time schedules.

Employees' working time options have been expanded from the previously fixed eight a.m. to four p.m. schedule, to a possible start time of seven a.m. and a possible finish time of six p.m. This has helped customer service and enabled more individualised working hours. The working times are negotiated within these limits so that the employee's needs are taken into account.

Legislation on working time set the boundaries for the possibilities, but employees are able to influence their working times, while also ensuring that the work is done and that patients do not suffer as a result of the new time model. The aim is to improve the well-being of the employees and to help in the recruitment of skilled employees in the future. In addition, the project is expected to have a positive influence on the work organisation and the

availability of services offered. So far, the results have been promising and the experiment has been adopted. Both employees and customers are more satisfied now than they were under the previous working time model. Employees are more committed to their work and productivity has risen. The project received an award by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

Commentary

This topic report sought to map the coverage of work-life balance and flexibility of working time in national working conditions surveys; to compare differences in the flexibility of working time in the 12 countries, focusing on full-time employed parents; and to study the connection between flexibility of working time and work-life balance. The results of the report are based on EWCS 2000 data and on national contributions of the EWCO network correspondents.

First, the results of the EWCS show that there are significant differences between countries with regard to the work-life balance experienced by working parents. Both mothers and fathers find their work-life balance poorer than their peers without children do, and the difference between mothers and non-mothers is greater than the one between fathers and non-fathers. In particular, the impact of motherhood on work-life balance differs significantly between the countries. In some countries, the proportion of mothers employed full time, experiencing a poor work-life balance, is about double that of their peers without children. In other countries, the difference is minor. The fathers most dissatisfied with their work-life balance are found in Greece, the Czech Republic, Spain, Italy and the UK, while the most dissatisfied mothers in this regard are found in Italy, Greece, Germany, France, Spain and the Czech Republic.

According to the EWCS, employee access to flexible working time arrangements also varies by country. A complete lack of all forms of flexibility in working time for parents employed full time is most prevalent in Portugal, Greece, Spain and Ireland, whereas the greatest flexibility is found in Finland, Sweden and the UK. In all of the countries, men have more flexibility in working time than women do. Parenthood has hardly any impact on access to flexible working time arrangements.

One surprising result is that, according to the EWCS, parents with reasonable flexible working times tend to have a poorer work-life balance than those with fixed and/or predictable working times. There is a strong correlation between flexibility of working time and overlong working hours, which may partly explain the phenomenon. However, even those employees not working overlong hours consider that their work-life balance is better when they have fixed start and finish times of work, compared to employees with flexibility in this respect. This trend prevails in practically all of the countries.

However, a distinction must be made between positive and negative kinds of flexibility. For an individual, 'flexibility' can mean desired or undesired working time arrangements. At best, it offers the employee the possibility to adjust his/her working hours to suit personal and family needs (positive flexibility). At worst, it means that one has to be flexible - work harder, longer, at inconvenient times - to meet the demands of the employer, without having a say oneself (negative flexibility). Even though flexibility of working time and poor work-life balance seem to be connected, the conclusion should not be drawn that flexibility, as such, is something negative. Rather, it seems that the positive aspect of flexibility could not be analysed with the EWCS data.

Besides flexibility of working time, institutional and cultural factors, such as availability of childcare and predominant gender roles, affect work-life balance significantly. Although the topical issues vary by country, the aspects that emerge as most problematic are: lack of childcare facilities; long, irregular working times and lack of flexibility in working times; and unequal distribution of household work among men and women.

The national working conditions surveys cover the themes of work-life balance and flexible working times very differently. In order to improve the quality of the surveys, this report aims at sharing knowledge about good practices for gathering information on these themes.

First, although work-life balance has been on the agenda for a long time, there is surprisingly little solid statistical data at EU or national level. This area should be taken more seriously by survey researchers.

Second, when survey questionnaires are developed, it is desirable that the positive impact of the family on working life and vice versa would be included in surveys on working conditions. Most people are happy to work and also to have a family. In this way, the positive aspect of a work-life balance could also be discussed.

When flexibility of working time is discussed, its dual dimension of positive and negative characteristics should be taken into account. Thus far, most of the questions on flexibility in both the EWCS and the national working conditions surveys do not differentiate between these aspects, but seem to capture the negative rather than the positive aspects of flexibility.

A further aim of this study was to promote European learning in relation to work-life balance, through presenting national experiences and good practices from different countries. Many of these good practices include creative ideas. They show that governments and companies are increasingly aware of the role that satisfactory work-life balance can play both in terms of cost-effectiveness for the company as well as in terms of employee well-being.

Work-life balance is of great importance to the daily life of EU citizens, and future research is necessary to investigate this topic in greater depth. Its impact is significant for European economic competitiveness and demographic development. For example, through positively flexible working times, companies can offer men and women better possibilities of combining work and family, which would promote women's employability, in particular. Women's abilities and competencies will be increasingly important in light of Europe's ageing population. Furthermore, the opportunity of a good work-life balance has a positive impact on family formation. As outlined above, with few exceptions, those countries that had low satisfaction levels regarding work-life balance also had fertility rates below the EU average. Fostering a good work-life balance will improve the possibilities for women and men to enjoy both work and family, without being forced to choose between the two.

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Appendix 1: Sample survey questions

Examples of good ways of asking about work-life balance in working conditions surveys

Country: Italy

Question: Are you able to combine your work with outside work engagements?

Response options: Very well/Fairly well/Not very well/Not at all

Source: Italian Agency for Training, Isfol, 2002 Quality of Work Survey

Country: France

Question: Do you feel that your work (times, location, organisation) makes organising your family life difficult?

Response options: Yes, absolutely/Yes, a little/No, not at all/No response

Source: Life story - building of identities, INSEE, 2003

Country: Sweden

Question: Are you too tired, do you miss time with family, friends and free-time activities?

Response options: Yes/No/Don't know (DK)

Source: Swedish Working Environment survey

Country: The Netherlands

Question: Does the organisation in which you work allow you to adjust the time you begin and end your work, to fit in the care of children or others?

Response options: Yes/No/DK

Source: TNO Working Situation Survey, TAS 2003

Country: Czech Republic

Question: How does your employer, or supervisor, help you balance your family and work duties?

- part-time work;
- special leave (for family matters);

- allowed to work at home;
- opportunity to choose work shifts;
- childcare in the workplace (crèche...);
- contributions towards child minding by another person or institutions, organisation, or (contribution to) holiday trips for children.

Response options: I have this opportunity and make use of it/I have this opportunity and don't use it/I don't have this opportunity/Not applicable

Source: Module on Czech 'Work Orientation', International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2005

Country: Czech Republic

Question: How often do you feel that.....the demands of your job interfere with your family life?... the demands of your family life interfere with your job?

Response options: Always/Often/Sometimes/Hardly ever/Never

Source: Module on Czech 'Work Orientation', ISSP 2005

Country: Czech Republic

Question: How often has each of the following things happened to you in the last three months?

- I came home from work so tired that I wasn't able to do the things that needed doing at home.
- The amount of time I spent at work made it difficult for me to fulfil my family duties.
- Work that I had to do at home meant that I was so tired when I got to work, I wasn't able to work well.
- I find that my family duties make it difficult for me to concentrate at work.

Response options: Several times a week/Several times a month/Once or Twice/Never

Source: Czech 'Family and Gender Roles III', ISSP 2002

Country: Czech Republic

Question: How do you cope with your family and work duties?

Response options: I manage both without much difficulty/I cope with my work duties well but at the cost of the family/I cope with family duties well, but at the cost of work/I half-manage both of them/I have problems at work and in the family/I can't cope

Source: Balancing Family and Working Life, 2004

Country: Finland

Question: At home and work, people often face conflicting demands. Here are some statements regarding such problems. How do they apply in your case?

- I feel that I am neglecting home matters because of my job.
- When at work, I feel free from the family and its noise.
- I cope better with my children when I also go to work.
- Reconciliation of work and family is made easier for me with the help I get from family or friends.

Response options: Completely true/True to some extent/Untrue to some extent/Completely untrue/Not applicable

Source: Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey (FQWLS) 2003

Country: Czech Republic

Question: To what extent do you agree or not agree with the following statements:

- It is important to pursue your career even if it infringes on your family life.
 - It is not right for men to be at home with the children and for women to be going to work.
- Response options: Strongly agree/Fairly agree/Neutral/Fairly disagree/Strongly disagree

Source: Balancing Family and Working Life, 2004

Examples of good ways of asking about working time flexibility

Country: Germany

Question: Nowadays, there are a number of different types of working hours available. Which of the following possibilities is most applicable to your work?

Response options: Fixed daily working hours/Working hours fixed by employer, which may vary from day to day/No formal working hours - set my own hours/Flexitime within a working hours account and a certain degree of self-determination of daily working hours within this account

Source: German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP)

Country: Portugal

Question: What kind of working schedule do you have?

Response options: Fixed working hours/Flexible working hours/Shift working hours/Night working hours

Source: Survey on Workers' Working Conditions 2000

Country: Denmark

Question: Are you able to change your working hours from day to day, e.g. starting work later or finishing work earlier?

Response options: Yes, up to 15 minutes/Yes, up to half an hour/Yes, up to one hour/Yes, more than one hour/No

Source: The Danish Work Environment Cohort Study, 2000

Examples of good ways of asking about positive working time flexibility

Country: Finland

Question: I can use flexible working hours sufficiently for my own needs

Response options: Completely true/True to some extent/Untrue to some extent/Completely untrue/Not applicable

Source: FQWLS 2003

Country: Finland

Question: Are you able to influence your working hours?

Response options: A lot/Quite a lot/A little/Not at all

Source: FQWLS 2003

Country: Spain

Question: During working time, can you stop work or leave the workplace when you need to?

Response options: Yes, if a colleague takes my place/Yes, without a colleague having to take my place/No/DK

Source: Spanish National Survey on Working Conditions

Country: Czech Republic

Question: Have you ever asked your employer for the following, or for a break in the interest of balancing work and care for the family? How did he/she react?

- for unpaid holiday leave;
- for shorter working hours;
- to change the start and end times of your working day;
- for another form of flexible working hours.

Response options: I have asked and he/she (always) agreed/I have asked and he/she didn't (ever) agree/I have asked on several occasions with different results/I have never asked

Source: Balancing Family and Working Life, 2004

Examples of good ways of asking about negative working time flexibility

Country: Spain

Question: Do your daily working hours change in response to the enterprise needs?

Response options: Always/Frequently/Sometimes/Hardly ever/Never/DK/No response

Source: Spanish Survey on Life Quality in the Workplace

Country: Austria

Question: Is this your working time arrangement because you have chosen it or for some other reason?

Response options: Chosen/Other reason

Source: Microzensus supplementary programme

Country: Austria

Question: Another arrangement of working time is on-call work, which is contractually defined, and which means that the employer defines working time and the number of hours according to his/her needs without setting minimum working hours. The employee is available on call and is only paid for the performed hours. Is this your working time arrangement?

Response options: Yes/No

Source: Microzensus supplementary programme

Country: Finland

Question: How often do you have to be flexible in your working hours, as dictated by your tasks or your supervisor?

Response options: Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Less often/Never

Source: FQWLS 2003

Examples of good ways of asking about overtime

Country: Finland

Question: Do you sometimes work overtime for which you receive compensation?

Response options: In money/In time in lieu/In both/Neither

Source: FQWLS 2003

Country: Finland

Question: (Continued, if the respondent works compensated overtime) How often do you do such overtime?

Response options: Almost daily/Every week/Every second week/At least once a month/Less frequently

Source: FQWLS 2003

Country: Finland

Question: Do you sometimes do overtime for which you receive no compensation?

Response options: Yes/No

Source: FQWLS 2003

Country: Finland

Question: (Continued, if the respondent works overtime without compensation) How often do you do such overtime?

Response options: Almost daily/Every week/Every second week/At least once a month/Less frequently

Source: FQWLS 2003

Country: Finland

Question: When you think about combining your working hours and the rest of your life, how would you describe the following statements:

...I have to do more overtime work than I would like to

Response options: Completely true/True to some extent/Untrue to some extent/Completely untrue/Not applicable

Source: FQWLS 2003

Country: Germany

Questions: Do you work overtime?

- Can you also collect this overtime in a so-called working-hours account?
- If you work overtime, is the work paid, compensated with time in lieu, or not compensated at all?
- How was your situation with regard to overtime last month?

Source: GSOEP

Examples of good ways of asking about reasons for overtime

Country: Spain

Question: What is the main reason why you work longer hours than usual?

Response options: Excessive workload/Temporary lack of staff/Personal reasons/Other (specify)/DK

Source: Spanish National Survey on Working Conditions

Country: The Netherlands

Question: Below, several reasons to work overtime are suggested. Please give the reasons that apply to you. (More answers possible)

- I don't do overtime;
- I do overtime because I want to do it myself;
- I do overtime because my boss wants me to;
- I do overtime because I like my work;
- I do overtime in order to get the work done;
- I do overtime because it gives me something extra (e.g. money/respect/opportunities for promotion);
- I do overtime because my colleagues expect that from me.

Response options: Yes/No

Source: TAS

Examples of good ways of asking about predictability of working times

Country: France

Question: Do you know your working timetables: for the next month? for the next week? tomorrow?

Response options: Yes/No

Source: Labour Force Survey, France

Country: Czech Republic

Question: Do you (in your main activity) work varying hours?

Response options: Never/Yes, each day/Yes, each week/Yes, each month/Yes, according to seasons/Yes, varies some other way

Source: Households, work and flexibility, 2000-2003

Country: Czech Republic

Question: How many days in advance do you find out that your working hours will change?

Response options: [Number of days in advance]/Not until the day on which the working hours change

It depends whether..... (spontaneous answer)

Source: Households, work and flexibility, 2000-2003

Appendix 2: Survey sources

EU level

European Working Conditions Surveys

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions Surveys: 1990/1, 1995/6 and 2000 in the EU15; 2001/2 in the then acceding and candidate countries.

Survey 2000: interviews with over 21,500 workers (1,500 in each Member State, except Luxembourg: 500). Questionnaire-based, comprising over 80 questions in face-to-face interviews conducted outside the workplace.

Survey 2001/2: a total of 11,000 workers were interviewed.

European Labour Force Survey (LFS)

The 2003 LFS was conducted by Eurostat in the 25 Member States of the EU, three EFTA countries and two candidate countries. The LFS is a large household sample survey, providing quarterly results on the labour participation of people aged 15 years and over, and on people outside the labour market.

Austria

Mikrozensus yearly results 2002

The Mikrozensus survey started in March 1968 and is carried out on a quarterly basis. The survey focuses on topics such as population, qualifications, education, professional position and working time.

The sample size of the *Mikrozensus* surveys of 2002 encompassed around 34,720 households each time the survey was conducted. These data were then extrapolated to provide information on either the total Austrian population or Austrian employees. The results of each of the four surveys were also extrapolated to provide data on the entire year of 2002. Around 60,000 people were interviewed each time the survey was conducted. On average (in each of the surveys), 27.3% of the contacted households could not be interviewed as nobody was at home.

Supplementary programme on working time, June 2001

The supplementary programme of the *Mikrozensus* survey of June 2001 focused on working time (*Dauer und Struktur der Arbeitszeit*). The extrapolated basic population of the supplementary programme comprises 3.4 million employees and 2.9 million wage and salary earners.

Supplementary programme Labour Force Survey, March 2003

Each Mikrozensus survey includes a supplementary programme (*Sonderprogramm*). That means that the questions of the Mikrozensus survey are asked on a quarterly basis, and the supplementary programme of the Mikrozensus changes every three months.

Since 1995, the first supplementary programme of each year has been a Labour Force Survey

Arbeitskräfteerhebung). The topics covered by this survey range from employment, working time, preferred working time and unemployment, to job search, education and second jobs. The Austrian contribution refers to information from the Labour Force Survey of March 2003.

The sample of the supplementary programme Labour Force Survey 2003 encompassed 33,500 households. In 22,500 households, people could be interviewed. The programme provides extrapolated data on 7,932,000 people. As the survey focuses on labour issues, 6.6 million people with a minimum age of 15 are covered by the supplementary programme. The *Mikrozensus* survey allows the interviewed member of the household to answer on behalf of all members living in the household. In March 2003, the proxy data obtained in this way accounted for 46.7% of survey data.

Czech Republic

Working Conditions 2000 (WC 2000)

Carried out by the [Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs](#) .

National representative survey, using the methodology and questionnaire of the EWCS of the European Foundation for Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Additional questions concern the organisation of the work day and atypical forms of employment.

Methodology and sample characteristics:

- Interviews carried out face-to-face at peoples' homes;
- 2,031 employees and self-employed people included;
- Sample size: 1,029 interviews fully completed;
- Multistage random probability sampling;
- Sample is representative according to sex, age, NACE, ISCO and NUTS2 codes;
- Response rate is 62%; answers were weighted.

Measuring the Quality of Working Life 2004 (MQWL 2004)

Carried out by the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs.

Methodology and sample characteristics:

- Interviews carried out face-to-face at peoples; homes;
- Sample size: a total of 2,007 complete interviews were conducted;
- Survey population consisted of persons aged 15 to 69 who were employed and had worked for their current employer for a minimum of three months.

Balancing family and working life 2004 (BFW 2004) - Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs

This sample survey is not representative of the entire population of the Czech Republic. The population sample targets families with young children up to 10 years old.

Methodology and sample characteristics:

- Interviews carried out face to face at peoples' homes;
- Sample size: 1,219;
- Questioning in the form of a quota sample throughout the entire Czech Republic;
- Quota features: region, size of location, sex, completeness of family, age of oldest child;
- Target group: persons living in a shared household where the oldest child is no more than 10 years old.

Work Orientations, ISSP 1997 (WO_ISSP97), International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)

Principal investigator in the Czech Republic: Institute of Sociology, Academy of Science of the Czech Republic, Prague

The formulation of questions in the survey are referenced in the Czech contribution; the data are not given as it is out-of-date. A survey called Module on Work Orientation 2005 ISSP (WO ISSP05) is planned for 2005; the question formulations are given.

Methodology and sample characteristics (WO ISSP97):

- Standardised interviews;
- Sample size: 1,080;
- Sample type: three-stage random stratified sample;
- Fieldwork September to December 1997.

Family and Gender Roles III, ISSP 2002 (FGS_ISSP02), International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)

Principal investigator in the Czech Republic: Institute of Sociology, Academy of Science of the Czech Republic, Prague

Methodology and sample characteristics:

- Standardised face-to-face interviews;
- Sample size: 1,289;
- Sample type: three-stage stratified probability sampling
- 1. Stratified probability sampling of election districts
- 2. Probability sampling of households in selected district
- 3. Sampling of household member based on Kish grid;
- Fieldwork: September to October 2002;
- Answers were weighted.

Households, work and flexibility, HWF 2000-2003 (HWF00-03)

Principal investigator in the Czech Republic: Institute of Sociology, Academy of Science of the Czech Republic, Prague

Methodology and sample characteristics:

- Standardised face-to-face interviews;
- Sample size: 1,556;
- Sample type: randomly selected;
- Fieldwork: spring 2001;
- Response rate: 53.3%.

Denmark

Labour Force Survey

Carried out by Statistics Denmark.

Based on quarterly interviews of 15,000 people from the Danish population, aged 15-66 years. Each person participates for two quarters in one year and one quarter a year later. Those who cannot be reached by telephone are asked to fill out a written questionnaire sent to them by mail.

The Danish Work Environment Cohort Study 2000

Carried out by the National Institute of Occupational Health.

Ongoing national interview survey, carried out in 1990, 1995 and 2000.

The interviewees are chosen at random. In 1990, 8,664 participated. For 1995 and 2000, the figures were 8,583 each year.

Estonia

Labour force surveys (LFS)

Conducted by the Statistical Office of Estonia.

Working life barometer (WLB)

The survey was conducted twice (in 1998 and 2002) at the initiative of the Finnish Ministry of Labour (Antila and Ylostalo, 1999, 2003).

Based on nationally representative sample of around 1,000 individuals.

Time use survey

The Statistical Office of Estonia joined the international time use survey project in 1995, and the survey was conducted in Estonia in 1999-2000. The target population in Estonia are residents aged 10 years or over (except institutionalised people). In all, 6,234 individual questionnaires, 5,723 diaries for Day 1 and 5,714 diaries for Day 2 were returned (response rate 96.8%).

Babysitting in Estonian families

Published in 2004. Designed as background information for policymaking for the Bureau of the Estonian Minister of Population Affairs. Covered 501 parents of six month to three-year-old children, who were interviewed in 2003. The sample also included 1,137 people with no children, and the survey is nationally representative.

Women, Family and Work

Published in 2001. Designed as background information for policymaking for the Bureau of the Estonian Minister of Population Affairs. Focuses on problems in reconciling work and family life. The target group of the survey were women who are under 40 and have at least one child younger than 10 years of age. The sample was 1,142 women living in Tallinn, who completed forms which were distributed through the kindergartens and schools in 2000; the response rate was 76.1%. According to the authors of the survey, the results can be taken as fully representative of Tallinn .

Finland

Finnish Quality of Work Life Surveys (FQWLS)

Carried out by Statistics Finland.

Personal face-to-face interviews.

Surveys in 1977, 1984, 1990, 1997 and 2003, involving each time between 3,000 and 6,000 employees.

The number of answers received in the latest survey was 4,104, a response rate of 78%.

Includes questions on the physical, mental and social work environment and the employees' experiences relating to it, as well as questions on work experience, position in the labour market, conditions of employment, occurrence of physical and psychological symptoms, work motivation, job satisfaction, career development, and experiences relating to gender equality and fair treatment.

France

Working conditions survey

Supplement to Labour Force survey. Last held in 1998, and a new survey has been carried out in 2005. In the 1998 working conditions survey, the questionnaire was submitted to all workers in employment in a third of the Labour Force survey sample, i.e. 22,000 persons.

Life story - building of identities

Carried out in 2003 by INSEE (national French statistics institution), in cooperation with other statistics institutions - DARES as part of the Ministry of Labour, DREES in the Ministry of Health, and others. Some 8,403 persons were interviewed in all; 4,387 for the section on people's career profile or identity. This part included 20 questions on working conditions, satisfaction at work, conciliation of family and professional life, the importance given to work, and what workers would like to change in their working situation.

Germany

Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) 1984-2003

Carried out by the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW).

Annual survey, Households panel. The panel was started in 1984.

In 2003, a sample of more than 12,000 households, and nearly 24,000 people were involved.

The GSOEP is a wide-ranging representative longitudinal study of private households in Germany. It provides broad information on diverse aspects relating to household composition, occupational biographies, employment, earnings, health and satisfaction indicators.

Subjects covered in topical modules of the survey are personal values, preferences and expectations, social security, education and training (in 2000), and allocation of time.

Microcensus

Conducted by the Federal Statistical Office.

The Microcensus is the official representative statistical survey of the population and the labour market, involving each year 1% of all households in Germany (continuous household sample survey). The total number of households participating in the Microcensus is about 370,000 (820,000 persons).

The purpose of the Microcensus is to provide statistical information on the economic and social situation of the population, as well as on employment, the labour market and education. The European Union Labour Force Sample Survey is integrated into the Microcensus.

Italy

Time Use Survey 2002-2003 (provisional data)

Carried out by Istat (Italian statistics bureau).

Quarterly Labour Force Survey

Carried out by Istat (Italian statistics bureau).

Quality of work survey (QWS)

Carried out by Isfol (National agency for training policies and evaluation).

Involves a multistage random sample, and 2,000 interviews were conducted, according to the CATI technique.

DS (Democratici di Sinistra) inquiry

This survey was carried out in 2002, without sample design, by means of the political organisation's newspaper, websites, meetings, and directly in some hundreds of workplaces. More than 22,000 questionnaires were collected.

The Netherlands

Labour Force Survey

Carried out by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

The Labour Force Survey started in 1987 and was held annually. In 1999, there was a major change in methodology. Before 2000, the Labour Force Survey was a face-to-face interview with workers, but since then, interviewers with laptops target more than 8,000 households every month. More than half of the people who are approached tend to respond. Respondents are interviewed face-to-face, but are also approached by telephone again on four consecutive occasions at intervals of three months each (i.e. covering one whole year; response about 90%).

In total, 390,000 interviews are held every year.

Living Conditions Survey (POLS in Dutch)

From 1977 to 1997, working conditions, including stress risks and (some) stress outcomes, have been surveyed in the 'Living Conditions Survey' by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). Since 1997, this survey has been integrated into the Permanent Quality of Life Survey (POLS). Since 1989, the survey has been carried out on an annual basis; before that, it was conducted every three years. The number of workers (employees and self-employed) in each sample ranges from about 3,000 in its early years, to about 6,000 in most recent years. Response rates are around 50%.

Over the period of more than 25 years, questions have been added. In 1994, the sequence of many risk exposure questions was changed, as well as the answering categories for several questions. This makes it almost impossible to draw a linear line before and after that year, without referring to other statistical information on the topic covering the same period.

Netherlands Survey on Working Conditions (NEA)

Carried out by TNO Work and Employment since 2003, and intended to be conducted every second year. In its first year, the sample size was 10,075 employees (excluding self-employed workers). The focus of this survey is more restricted to working conditions, compared with the POLS and TAS.

TNO Working Situation Survey (TAS)

The TNO Working Situation Survey (TAS) survey was initiated in 2000. It is intended to be carried out every second year, and has now delivered information from two representative samples of the Dutch workforce, one in 2000 and one in 2002.

The number of workers (employees and self-employed) in the sample is, on average, about 4,000, with a response rate of 53% (2000) and 45% (2002).

This survey touches on more work topics than the CBS survey, and measures most concepts with scales, rather than using only one or two items. However, since there is not much trend information as yet, the TAS is only used to supplement the CBS data.

Portugal

Survey on workers' working conditions

Inquérito de Avaliação das Condições de Trabalho dos Trabalhadores

Carried out by the labour statistics division (Departamento de Estatística do Trabalho, Emprego e Formação Profissional (DETEFP)) of the Labour and Solidarity Ministry (MTSS)

The survey was conducted for the first time between 1999 and 2000.

It was based on a sample of 5,000 workers from a population of 2,346,031 (workers of all economic activities except sections L, P and Q of NACE: public administration and defence; compulsory social security; other services).

Some 4,252 employees were included in the data (85% response rate). The interviews were carried out in the workplace, face to face.

The survey questionnaire considered several subjects, such as: occupational safety and health (OSH) management, exposure to physical agents (noise, radiation, vibration, etc.), exposure to chemical agents, exposure to biological agents, safety at the workplace, occupational and health outcomes.

A new survey on working conditions is currently being prepared, to be launched in 2005.

Employment Survey

Inquérito ao Emprego no Sector Estruturado

Carried out by the [Direcção-Geral de Estudos, Estatística e Planeamento](#) - DGEEP (formerly named Departamento de Estatística do Trabalho, Emprego e Formação Profissional, DETEFP) of the Labour and Social Solidarity Ministry (MTSS)

The survey on structured employment, carried out within the formal sector of the economy, is mainly intended to evaluate, in the short term, employment trends, employment composition, flows of personnel in and out of employment, as well as to provide forecasts.

All sectors of economic activity are covered, except sections A, L and P of NACE: agriculture; public administration; defence and compulsory social security, as well as households with domestic staff.

This sample survey is carried out every three months in the establishments of the structured economic sector, which includes companies and other entities legally established (and which deliver personnel lists). It is carried out by post, and covers a sample of about 10,000 establishments.

Spain

Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace

(Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo)

Carried out by the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

The survey is conducted annually since 1999. The last survey was in 2003.

Surveyed population: Working people, both employed and self-employed, aged 16 and above, living in family households.

Sample: 6,020 surveyed people.

Interviews are carried out in person (not by telephone), at the households of the surveyed workers.

Fifth National Survey on Working Conditions

(V Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Trabajo)

Carried out by the Spanish National Institute of Safety and Hygiene in the Workplace (subsidiary body of the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs).

Surveys were conducted in: 1987, 1993, 1997, 1999 and 2003.

Surveyed population: Businesses with more than one employee and across all activity sectors (except agriculture and mining).

Sample: 9,290 interviews were carried out: 4,054 with managers and 5,236 with workers.

There are two questionnaires: a 'company' one, to be completed by someone from management, and a 'worker' one, to be completed by an employee (or two, for businesses with more than 250 employees).

All interviews were carried out in person, in the workplace.

Sweden

Work Environment Survey (AMU in Swedish)

Carried out by Statistics Sweden (SCB).

The survey has been conducted biannually since 1989. The 2003 survey was conducted on behalf of the Swedish Working Environment Authority (SWEA).

The purpose of the surveys is to describe the work environment (both physical and psychological) of the population in employment between the ages of 16 and 64 years.

The 2003 Work Environment Survey is based on a sample of just over 14,000 members of the employed population.

The survey is carried out by means of supplementary questions to Statistics Sweden's regular labour force surveys, which are conducted by means of telephone interviews. Those who have taken part in the interview survey and answered the supplementary questions then receive additional questions in a postal questionnaire.

The Work Environment survey is linked to the Labour Force survey, thus enabling further analysis on the backgrounds of individuals who have responded.

Swedish Labour Force Survey

Carried out by Statistics Sweden (SCB).

The surveys are carried out every month through telephone interviews with a representative sample of 17,000 persons in the 16-64 age group. Each individual is interviewed eight times over a two-year period.

Living conditions surveys

Main focus is how people negotiate and organise different dimensions of their lives to suit their current needs. Included here as there are questions related to working life and the working environment as well as to working times. Surveys are carried out by face-to-face interviews with a random sample of the population aged between 16 and 84 years. Between 12,000 and 13,000 individuals are interviewed over a two-year period. In all, almost 200,000 individuals have been interviewed since the survey began in 1975.

Swedish time use survey

The second Time use survey was carried out in 2000/01 by Statistics Sweden. The first survey was carried out 10 years earlier, in 1990/91. The survey is based on time use diaries kept by individuals, which show how individuals negotiate between different spheres of life. The population is comprised of individuals between 20 and 84 years of age. In all, there were 6,218 respondents in the 2000/01 survey.

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