

COMMUNIQUÉ



EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

The challenge of participation

Overall, Europe is experiencing a "simultaneous top-down and bottom-up move" for more participation. Furthermore, the European participation and collective bargaining system is showing more flexibility and adaptability than its critics will admit, according to Dr Hubert Krieger, research manager at the Foundation.

The content of participation/collective bargaining has been significantly enlarged – from a narrow perspective on working conditions to a wider perspective which includes employment, flexibility, equal opportunities and sustainable development, he says.

Recently the Foundation has hosted a number of events which focused on participation in different contexts. Direct participation in enterprises has been discussed and debated at a number of Foundation events over the past two months. As financial participation moves onto the political agenda in Europe, the Foundation has a timely contribution to make to the debate. It organised two conferences, in Leiden and Dublin, to present the early findings of its research on financial

participation and consider its wider implications.

Participation by women in enterprises through new forms of work organisation was the subject of both a Foundation conference (see page 2), and a new report during September. Overall, both the social partners and the Commission agree that a more integrated approach to women and work organisation is needed. Lars-Erik Andreassen, DG Employment and Social Affairs, told the conference that the issue will now be examined by EWON, the European Work Organisation Network. The Foundation also hosted its information exchanges with Central and Eastern Europe during September and October. Again, participation, in the broad sense, was high on the agenda; social dialogue and equal opportunities were the seminar themes. They were extremely successful from both the participants' and the Foundation's point of view. ☼



Participants at the CEE Information Exchange in Dublin

Work options

At the request of the German Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Mr. Walter Riester, Eberhard Köhler, head of operations at the Foundation, and Harald Bielenki of Infratest Burke Sozialforschung, Munich, presented the findings of the Employment Options of the Future survey to the "Benchmarking Group", a scientific advisory body to the Alliance for Employment, Training and Competitiveness of the German Government on 28 October in Bonn. The study clearly shows that preferences of European citizens in relation to working time, particularly in relation to part-time work and other flexible working time arrangements, are not reflected in what the labour market offers them in terms of working time options. ☼

BEST re-launch

Time management has acquired a new importance in urban planning and industrial working time studies as a way to improve citizens' living and working conditions. In view of these developments, BEST (Bulletin of European Studies on Time), published by the Foundation, has been re-launched this month with wider scope and coverage and a new series of features. The new BEST and its supplement, On Time, will be published biannually in English, French and German. ☼

In this issue

Working time • Gender in work organisation • New work programme

Catalogue No. SY-AA-99-011-2A-C

Gender in work organisation

Representatives of European trade unions and employers' organisations and the Commission agreed and stressed the importance of bringing together new forms of work organisation and equal opportunities for men and women at the Work Organisation and Gender Conference, organised by the Foundation which took place on 21-22 September in Dublin. At the conclusion of the conference, Lars-Erik Andreasen, DG Employment and Social Affairs, said that the Commission recognised the need to have a more integrated approach to the Adaptability and Equal Opportunity pillars of the Employment Strategy and that it would be an issue that the European Work Organisation network (EWON) would examine in the future.

The contributions

Presentations by Juliet Webster from Trinity College and Annette Schnabel from the University of Mainz examined the gender dimension of direct participation of workers in organisational change, based on an analysis of the 1996 EPOC (Employee Direct Participation in Organisational Change) survey data.

Juliet Webster pointed out that innovations in work organisation have gender dimensions: the EPOC survey shows that organisational change is not gender-neutral. Annette Schnabel demonstrated how occupational segregation characterises most working establishments, where women have low-skilled, repetitious tasks and training is provided along gender-stereotyped lines. These findings were interpreted as having consequences for the practice of direct participation as mixed-sex establishments

are more likely to practise direct participation than female-dominated environments. According to Webster, organisational changes are relevant for equal opportunities because there is a considerably greater participation of women in the labour market than in the past and women are numerous in sectors where organisational change has actually taken place, as in the public services sector.

The case studies

A number of case studies were presented: studies of telecommunication call centres in the Netherlands and the UK show that this is a growth area in employment, with a 20 per cent increase in jobs expected over the next five years. These centres mainly employ women as operators while men still dominate the managerial positions.

A contrasting presentation was based on two companies operating in the textile sector (from Denmark and Greece) with a high percentage of female employees. The two enterprises collaborated in their respective sites through an ADAPT programme to introduce team working. This case study demonstrated how, through involving the employees and giving them responsibility for production, quality and design, production costs were reduced and competitiveness improved.

A report and a summary, *Participating on Equal Terms?*, has been published by the Foundation. The summary is available online at www.eurofound.ie.

More opportunities

Strengthening and Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities through Collective Bargaining – a summary of the main findings of the project – written by Inge Bleijenbergh, Jeanne de Bruijn and Linda Dickens has been published by the Foundation, in all official languages. The summary relates the findings of the project to the European Employment Strategy framework. According to the authors, the promotion of equality bargaining depends on the joint action of the social partners, the national governments and the European Union institutions, which are all required to implement improved measures aimed at ensuring women's proper representation and participation within organisations.

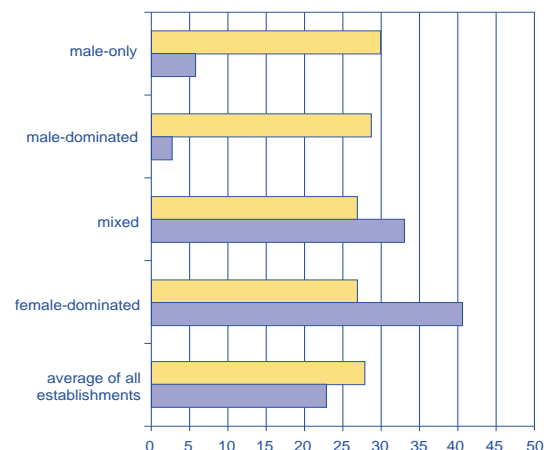
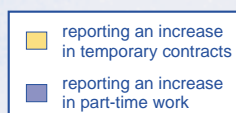
Safety incentives

There has been widespread interest in the Economic Incentives to Improve the Working Environment project which has developed innovative approaches to promoting health and safety in the workplace.

Prof. Edouard Petrossiants, director of the Scientific Centre for Socio-Industrial Problems of Occupational Safety, in Moscow, has translated into Russian the *Innovative Economic Incentive Model* for the improvement of the working environment for distribution among health and safety experts. He believes that the model "might give an impulse for development of a Russian version of the system" based on the recently passed laws on mandatory insurance in work places.

research in figures

Gender composition of establishments reporting an increase in part-time/temporary contacts



Source: EPOC Survey

A new look at working time

Working time – always a critical labour market issue – has come to the fore in the European debate on how to reconcile work and family duties. Technical and demographic changes require a new assessment of working time and its influence on how we live and work. The Employment Options of the Future survey, carried out by Infratest Burke Socialforschung which recorded the views of more than 30,000 people, aged 16-64, in all Member States and Norway, analyses the actual situation and the preferences of Europeans in relation to labour market participation and working time.

Time preferences

“How to share paid work and domestic duties among partners within a family is relevant to more than two-thirds of the working population, or 70 million couples, in Europe. The current patterns of sharing paid work among men and women are not in line with people’s preferences; people want solutions that help them reconcile work and family life. There will be growing pressure on both politicians and industry to provide more flexible working time solutions for working people,” according to Timo Kauppinen, research manager at the Foundation. Kauppinen illustrates the extent to which working times are not in line with people’s preferences by reference to the survey results.

“Currently, the working arrangements of approximately 14 million couples are that the man works full-time and the woman works part-time yet this would be the preferred situation of 20 million couples. In addition, the situation where both partners work part-time is practised by only one million couples although as many as ten million would like this combination. The traditional family set-up, in which the man works full-time and the woman stays at home, the current situation of 23 million couples, is the preferred option of only 11 million couples.”

Demand for part-time

There is massive demand for part-time work; more than 40 per cent of couples in Europe would prefer at least one of the partners (usually the woman) to work part-time while

currently only 20 per cent of couples have this working time arrangement. Part-time work undoubtedly has important implications for gender equality; it can accommodate the different needs of people in certain phases of their life cycle to cope with domestic or other social commitments and to make the transition from full-time to part-time work and vice-versa easier than it is at present. Couples in Europe are willing to move in the direction of more flexible working time and place. In addition, technological advances are an important factor in encouraging a more



Timo Kauppinen, research manager

flexible approach to working time and places. Realistically, home can be an extension of the workplace for many people. The survey indicated a great willingness for people to work at home if they were given the opportunity to do so.

Working from home

Already a relatively high percentage of employed people work at home; nine per cent mainly work at home and another 23 per cent do some paid or unpaid work for their job at home. One third of those who presently do not work at home would like to do so. The survey recorded that seven per cent would like to do all their work from home while 24 per cent would like to combine working in the workplace with working in the home. This


means that in addition to the 32 per cent of employed persons who currently carry out at least part of their work at home, another 21 per cent would like to work at home either on a full-time or part-time basis.

Most people want to work from home because it helps them to combine paid work and family duties; nearly half of those surveyed gave this as their motivation for wanting to do so, while over 40 per cent said that it would save them commuting time.

In terms of future labour market participation, the opportunity to work at home is of great importance to those who are not presently employed. It is seen as an attractive option by over half of those who are currently unemployed and by over 60 per cent of young people at the beginning of their careers and women returning to the labour market.

Changing traditional models

According to Kauppinen, there will be an increasing demand for changes in legislation and working practices to take account of these preferences.

“Traditional working time models are deeply rooted; obstacles in the form of regulation, management arrangements and attitudes, mitigate against change. On the other hand, the preferences recorded in the survey indicate that people have very flexible attitudes to both working hours and place. There is clearly scope to develop more flexible practices in Europe.” 

Contact: ciara.doyle@eurofound.ie

events diary

7-9 December

ONLINE Information Exhibition,
OOP/Foundation stand, London.

9-12 December

European Network on Workplace Health
Promotion – 8th Conference – Helsinki

13-14 December

International Conference on Women’s
Entrepreneurship, Rovaniemi, Finland.



Publications mentioned

BEST: European studies on time 1/99

Available in EN and FR
www.eurofound.ie

An Innovative Economic Incentive Model to Improve the Working Environment: Testing in France

Available in EN and FR
Cat. No. SY-96-96-223-* -C
ISBN 92-827-0372-X
€7

Participating on Equal Terms: The Gender Dimensions of Direct Participation in Organisational Change

Available in EN
Cat. No. SY-22-99-676-* -C
ISBN 92-828-7146-0
€25

Summary available online in EN FR DE IT ES
www.eurofound.ie

Strengthening and Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities through Collective Bargaining

www.eurofound.ie

Training in Environmental Management - Industry and Sustainability

Available in EN
Cat. No. SX-21-99-989-* -C
ISBN 92-828-2242-7
€16

Sustainable Development Online

www.eurofound.ie

New publications

New approaches to improve the health of a changing workforce

www.eurofound.ie

Employment family and community activities:

A new balance for women and men

www.eurofound.ie

New forms of work organisation Innovation, competitiveness and employment

The sixth European ecology of work conference

www.eurofound.ie

Eirobserver 5/99

www.eurofound.ie

• Free publications can be downloaded directly from the website and priced publications can be ordered on-line (www.eurofound.ie). They can also be ordered from your usual bookshop or from one of the sales agents of the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. (Addresses available at www.eur-op.int)

Linking health and safety

The existence of a direct cause-effect link between occupational safety and health and employability was the key conclusion of the Health and Safety at Work conference, organised by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, in the context of the Finnish Presidency of the EU, recently held in Bilbao, Spain. Figures on the effect of injuries and work-related illness on productivity, cost effectiveness and employability in Member States require a new multi-disciplinary approach to this issue. Pascal Paoli, research manager at the Foundation, addressed the conference on the scale of the problem; he pointed out that 600 million working days per year are lost in the European Union for occupational health reasons, with an estimated cost for Member States between 185 billion and 270 billion Euros. ☀

Environmental training

Enterprises which want to comply with international environmental regulations and standards in an efficient way face considerable difficulties in which education and training in the implementation of the new processes of environmental management has an important role. *Training in Environmental Management - Industry and Sustainability*, a new report published by the Foundation and written by John Ulhøi, Henning Madsen and Marie Kjær analyses and assesses the present and future educational needs and challenges related to the introduction of environmental management into industrial companies at various organisational levels. The results stress that the success of corporate environmental programmes depends not only on the existence of a professional

environmental management function but also on the degree of integration and support at all levels throughout the organisation. ☀

Programme preparation

In preparation for the formulation of its new four year programme 2001-2004, the Foundation will be reassessing the current and future context of social, economic and environmental change in which the Foundation will have to operate and assessing the Foundation's capacity, in terms of its strengths and weakness, to contribute through its work to the challenges facing Europe.

The preparation process is being opened up both its end users and independent experts and institutions including nominees of the Administrative Board, Commission staff, representatives of relevant organisations and experts in the Foundation's core areas of concern through the organisation of "brainstorming" seminars which will be conducted over the next two months.

Commenting on the process, Wendy O'Conghaile, advisor to the directorate, said that the seminar format has been developed to encourage input from end users and other external experts and institutions in order to widen the perspective of the programme at the initial stages of development.

The seminars will focus on the Foundation's capacity: to monitor the major factors of change; to identify and research new and emerging issues and to respond, in a timely and relevant way, to issues arising on the current policy agenda.

In particular, the seminars will consider the Foundation's communications strategy, means of strengthening links with policy development and the continued enlargement and consolidation of its existing networks. ☀

communiqué

Communiqué is published by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.
Telephone: (353-1) 204 3100
Fax: (353-1)282 6456

The Foundation is an autonomous body of the European Union, established by Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75 of the EC Council of Ministers of 26 May 1975.

Acting Director: Eric Verborgh.

Communiqué is published 10 times per year. Any item may be reproduced without further permission if the source is acknowledged.

Communiqué is available free of charge.

Programme Manager: Brid Nolan

Editor: Felicity Hogan

Original language: English

Printed in Ireland

EF/99/61/EN