



DIRECTOR'S DIARY

Taking a long-term view of flexibility

Against a background of rapid change, working patterns are becoming more flexible and diversified; consequently, individual workers must adjust to a less stable work environment. In an effort to bolster the required flexibility with the security of the European social model, Member States are seeking to develop flexible working arrangements in tandem with active labour market policies and modernised social security systems. This month, Eurofound's latest report, *Flexibility and security over the life course*, examines the long-term effects of greater flexibility in employment contracts and working time on individuals' employment status, income and occupational level. It is one of the first studies to look at this issue from a life-course, or longitudinal, perspective.

Also this month, Eurofound sectoral studies highlight the key role that innovation must play in helping the commerce sector meet the challenges of a more complex environment. Representatives of companies in the sector, the social partners, SMEs and public authorities took part in a workshop held in Dublin on 19–20 November 2007, at which they examined the current state of the sector, and drew up an 'agenda for change'. The findings of the research, together with the conclusions of the participants, are available online in a new sectoral studies dossier.

Lastly, Eurofound has been invited to cooperate in three events over the course of the Slovenian EU Presidency: at a conference dealing with the integration of young people into the labour market in Brdo in April, at the '7th European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty' in Brussels in May, and at a conference on the rights of disabled persons in Kranjska Gora, also in May.

Jorma Karppinen
Director

Flexibility and security: a juggling act

The success of countries such as Denmark in instituting flexicurity practices can serve as a model for other Member States in their efforts to balance flexibility and security; however, policymakers who want to make such reforms need to take account of national characteristics and change policies gradually, according to a new report from Eurofound, *Flexibility and security over the life course*.

The research on which the report is based looked at the long-term impact of working in flexible contracts, and of working part time, on an individual's career over the life course. The report argues that policies are needed to strengthen the employment security and prospects of people working on non-standard contracts, in order to compensate for the long-term negative effects that such work can have on their future income, employment status and career development. The study drew on earlier Eurofound research as well as European and national panel data for its analysis.

Read more at www.eurofound.europa.eu/press/eurofoundnews/2008/february/newsletter2.htm

Eurofound/EP debate impact of globalisation

What is new about globalisation? This and other questions will be debated at a forthcoming high-level conference, 'The impact of globalisation on structural change and employment', in Brussels on 4 March. Eurofound and MEPs Stephen Hughes and Alejandro Cercas have joined forces to create a forum at which the impact of globalisation will be discussed and long-term strategies for meeting its challenges explored.

With Commissioner Špidla as the keynote speaker, the conference will examine the challenges facing businesses, regional authorities, national governments and EU policymakers and debate how the increasingly international division of labour is creating new winners and losers. In roundtable talks, participants will look at the factors that motivate companies to relocate and the role that social partners can play in these decisions, analyse the lessons that can be learnt from the new European Globalisation adjustment Fund and debate how flexicurity and active labour market policies are implemented in Member States.

Read more at www.eurofound.europa.eu/press/eurofoundnews/2008/february/newsletter3.htm

NEWS IN PICTURES

At the end of 2007, Eurofound concluded a major process of organisational development, part of which entailed changes in the focus and personnel of its research units. Following the reorganisation, the heads of Eurofound's research units are (from left to right), **Robert Anderson** (Living Conditions and Quality of Life), **Agnès Parent-Thirion** (Monitoring and Surveys), **Stavroula Demetriades** (Industrial Relations and Workplace Development) and **Donald Storrie** (Employment and Competitiveness).



Spotlight on European commerce sector

Multinational companies working in the commerce sector in Europe need to be more innovative in order to meet the challenges posed by greater competition, complex supply chains, changing consumer trends and the difficulty of attracting skilled workers to the sector. Innovation, in terms of the type of stores, operations, products and branding, is a critical factor in boosting productivity and development. This was one of the recommendations that emerged at a workshop entitled 'Commerce at the crossroads – the future of the commerce sector in Europe' organised by Eurofound in Dublin on 19–20 November 2007. The conference marked the culmination of a research project that investigated the present state of the sector in Europe, looked in detail at selected company and city cases, and drew up future scenarios for possible directions that the sector might take over the coming decade. The complete *EMCC dossier on the commerce sector* is available online, at www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/content/source/eu08001a.htm

New resource packs coming in 2008

As part of its ongoing work in communicating findings from social policy research to a wider audience, Eurofound is creating a new series of resource packs, the themes of which will be drawn from priority European policy areas. For each theme, the resource pack will be a 'one-stop shop' for those seeking details of Eurofound's research into the subject. Each pack will contain a factsheet highlighting the policy context, policy responses and main findings, as well as reports and résumés that Eurofound has published on the subject. For 2008, four packs will be produced and launched at key events that address that pack's theme. The topics of the packs are active ageing, globalisation, flexicurity, and migration.

Top 10 web downloads in 2007

Findings from Eurofound's three key surveys – on working conditions, working time and quality of life – and their resulting analysis are the most popular items for download from Eurofound's website, as revealed by an analysis of the trends of web usage over 2007. The most popular item for download during the year was the descriptive report for the fourth *European Working Conditions Survey*. Also occupying slots in the top 10 were two publications associated with the survey: a résumé summarising key findings of the survey (3), and another résumé looking at this and previous surveys, *Fifteen years of working conditions in the EU: Charting the trends* (7). Two reports analysing findings from the *European survey on working time and work-life balance* also make it into the top 10: *Working time flexibility in European companies* (5) and *Working time and work-life balance in European companies* (2). And finally, although the European Quality of Life Survey was carried out in 2003, its descriptive report, *Quality of life in Europe*, is still proving popular, ranking at 4 in the list.

More information on Eurofound's surveys is available at www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/index.htm

Social reality discussed in Scotland

On 6 December, in Edinburgh, Eurofound participated in a seminar entitled 'Social Scotland and social Europe: Do they go together?' that compared Scotland's 'social reality' with that of other EU Member States. Jointly organised by the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Parliament Office and the European Commission, the event linked in with the European Commission's programme of social reality stocktaking, a major public consultation seeking views on a range of social changes facing European citizens. The seminar was one of a series that will take place throughout Europe, aiming to contribute to the debate on the reality of European society today and on the European Social Model. It explored how Scotland compares with other European countries in terms of the following: quality of life and work, social and economic inclusion, child poverty, homelessness, gender equality and family policy, labour market performance and decent jobs, and health-related issues.

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A European social model for the future
14 February, Brussels, Belgium
Eurispes

6th European Business Summit – Greening the economy: New energy for business
21–22 February, Brussels, Belgium
BusinessEurope and Federation of Enterprises in Belgium

Mobbing in the Workplace
18 February, Vienna, Austria
Beratungszentrum des OGB

The impact of globalisation on structural change and employment
4 March, Brussels, Belgium
Eurofound and European Parliament



PUBLICATIONS

Unless otherwise stated, publications are in English.

Representativeness of the social partners: Gas sector
www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/studies/tn0702017s/index.htm

Quatrième enquête européenne sur les conditions de travail
www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0698_fr.htm

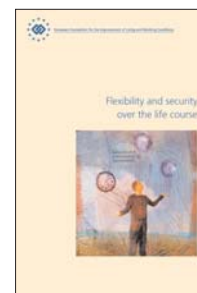
Foundation Focus: Family matters
www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef07113.htm

EMCC dossier on the commerce sector
www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/content/source/eu08001a.htm

Programme of work 2008: Annual management plan
www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0802.htm

Publication of the month

Flexibility and security over the life course



www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0762.htm