



Working-time preferences and work–life balance in the EU

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Working-time preferences and work–life balance in the EU: some policy considerations for enhancing the quality of life

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Introduction

What are the working-time preferences of the workforce in Europe? Which schedules are the most compatible with family and other commitments? These questions are relevant to European employment policy and for the working-time policy negotiations of the social partners for three main reasons. Firstly, working-time reforms can contribute to the objective of raising the European employment rate through an impact on both labour demand and supply. From the demand-side, working-time reform can have a positive impact on job creation or protection, for example in situations where working-time reductions contribute to work-sharing (Bosch and Lehndorff, 2001; Taddie, 1998). From the supply-side, working-time reform that provides a better match with working-time preferences will help to raise the labour market participation rates of some groups of the population, such as women with young children or older workers approaching retirement. This will enable women and men to maintain high rates of labour market participation across their working lives. Secondly, working-time reforms that make it easier for employment to be combined with the time demands of care responsibilities have a key role to play in redressing gender inequality in employment and unpaid work. Thirdly, an improved match between actual and preferred working arrangements will contribute to the broader goal of improving living and working conditions in Europe. These objectives of a higher employment rate, working-time reform through reductions and increased flexibility as one aspect of the modernisation of the organisation of work, and the question of enhancing the work-life balance and the quality of working life are all concerns of the EU Employment Guidelines for 2002.

Box 1 European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions: *Employment Options Survey 1998 and European Working Conditions Survey 2000*

The *Employment Options Survey 1998* was commissioned by the Foundation and the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Labour and Government Administration. It is one of the few sources of information on some important aspects of working-time preferences across the EU and Norway. It is a large representative survey of the working age population (30,000 people aged 16 to 64 years). For further details see the technical report of the fieldwork coordinators (Infratest Burke Sozialforschung, 1998). See the report by Fagan (2001) for an analysis that focuses upon gender issues and for additional discussion of the sample and questionnaire design; Lilja and Hämäläinen (2001) for an analysis focusing upon age; and Bielenski et al. (2002) for more detailed national-level comparisons.

The Foundation's *European Working Conditions Survey 2000* collects detailed information on the working-time arrangements of the employed, including individuals' assessments of whether their working hours are compatible with their family and social commitments. It is a large representative survey of the employed in the 15 Member States (approximately 1,500 persons per country). See the Foundation website at <http://www.eurofound.eu.int/working/surveys.htm> for further information and discussion about the survey and the main report (Paoli and Merllié, 2001). Further reports drawing on the survey data have been published on the following topics: sector (Houtman et al, 2002), gender (Fagan and Burchell, 2002), age (Molinié, 2003), employment status (Goudswaard and Andries, 2002), working time (Boisard et al, 2002), work organisation and health (Daubas-Letourneux and Thébaud-Mony, 2002), work organisation, technology and working conditions (Dhondt et al, 2002), and types of employment and health (Benach et al, 2002).

This article presents evidence about the number of hours that men and women would prefer to work, and their assessments of the degree of compatibility between their work schedules and their family and other commitments drawn from two recent European surveys by the Foundation (see box 1). The next section provides a contextual overview of recent developments in national working-time policies at European and national level. The preferred number of weekly working hours is examined in the section on **National regulations on maximum full-time working hours**, and the compatibility of work schedules with family and other commitments is addressed in **Preferred weekly working hours**. Conclusions are drawn together in the last section.

Working-time trends and policy developments in the EU

The volume of weekly, annual and lifetime working hours fell substantially from the end of the nineteenth century in most industrialised countries, largely driven by collective negotiations and legislation. This long-term trend slowed from the 1980s in most countries (Bosch, 1999; Evans et al., 2001). In the 1990s major and comprehensive reductions in weekly working hours – either through law or in specific collective bargaining agreements – were rare in most European countries, with a few notable exceptions such as France (EIROOnline, 2000a).

The second major working-time trend is that working-time schedules have become more diverse in recent years. The most evident indicator is the rise in the rate of part-time work, which has coincided with the growing presence of women in the workforce. Annualised hour arrangements have also increased (Bosch, 1997). Generally an increasing proportion of the workforce have schedules that involve evening, night or weekend work, or variable hours; although the evidence suggests that most of these arrangements are only spreading slowly (Evans, 2001).

The focus of working-time regulation has also shifted. Historically, state intervention and collective bargaining in relation to working time has centred upon full-time, daytime and weekday work schedules as the reference point for ‘standard hours’ (Bosch et al., 1994; Bosch, 1999). The objectives of regulation have been working-time reductions and a combination of regulatory limits and compensatory premium payments for ‘unsocial hours’ (evenings, nights, weekends and rotating shifts) that fall outside ‘standard hours’. In the period of almost full employment that characterised the 1950s until the mid-1970s, the regulation of working time in most western European democracies was characterised by four basic principles according to the *European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO)* (EIROOnline, 1998, pp. 2-3):

- Legislation set maximum and normal duration for hours for full-time workers. Within this framework companies adopted stable collective work timetables and acquired flexibility through over-time working, lay-offs and short-time working;
- The role of collective bargaining was to improve on statutory provisions, mainly through reductions in the length of the working week and increased annual leave.
- The reduction of working time, along with pay rises, was accepted as a means of sharing productivity gains and hence advancing living standards and social progress;
- Atypical working hours were only used to solve specific problems. Night and weekend work was used to meet specific technical needs in manufacturing or extended opening hours of services. The development of part-time work fitted with a widely accepted social model of women’s economic activity; and this logic also contributed to the early experiments with flexible working hours or ‘flexi-time’ for office workers.

This framework has been transformed since the mid-1970s due to a number of developments, including the intensification of international competition, new production methods and forms of organisation, increased unemployment, rising female participation rates, and more diverse working-time demands from the workforce. The position taken by governments, employers and trade unions in the different Member States has varied according to national economic conditions, the political orientations and policy programmes of governments, the character of the industrial relations system and the existing frameworks of working-time regulations, the pace of implementation of new production methods, and so forth (e.g. see EIROOnline, 1998). However, four broad and common developments in the regulation of working time can be identified.

One shift in emphasis has been the development of specific measures to guarantee equal treatment for part-time and other ‘atypical’ workers, sometimes in conjunction with policies designed to promote the growth of these forms of employment (O’Reilly and Fagan, 1998). The second development is that the slower economic

growth and higher unemployment from the 1970s onwards made employers more able to resist union demands for working-time reductions unless these were accompanied by concessions in the form of increased working-time flexibility and/or wage cuts. As a result, the focus of collective bargaining over working hours in the 1980s and 1990s was various schemes that traded increased flexibility (new schedules, more variable hours, longer settlement periods and annualisation, etc.) for shorter hours (Bosch et al., 1994). Such flexibility agreements were encouraged by European employment policy set out in the 1997 Green Paper 'Partnership for a new organisation of work' and developed in the subsequent annual EU Employment Guidelines (EIROnline, 1998). In sum:

... Flexibility has become the focus in collective negotiations and legislation on working time in most Member States in recent years, although working time reduction remains prominent in France. Any reductions in hours have usually come in the form of extra time off, often in the framework of flexible hours schemes (EIROnline, 2000a).

Generally, trade unions have maintained or strengthened their claim for a reduction in working time in response to these demands for increased flexibility, particularly in countries where this tradition has been firmly established, notably Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy. In contrast the British and Scandinavian unions have tended to prioritise other types of action (EIROnline, 1998, p.5; Bosch et al., 1994). The third notable shift has been decentralisation in working-time regulation:

... a broad and strikingly new trend can be identified...previously it was the case that bargaining on working time had to obey the law, and could only improve on [it]...In the majority of countries, a new logic has been taking shape. The law now sets 'fall-back' or default standards, which are imposed only if they are not modified by collective agreements. The law determines the negotiators' room for manoeuvre and also indicates the permitted bargaining levels and conditions of validity for agreements reached in this area...Its explicit objectives are to acknowledge the responsibility of the social partners in defining the ways in which the introduction of flexibility in working time should be applied (EIROnline, 1998, pp. 6-7).

The fourth and final development of note is that, while the negotiation of flexibility agreements to meet the needs of firms remain important, the most recent issue receiving attention on the policy agenda is that of flexibility to suit the needs of workers – so-called 'family-friendly arrangements' or the 'work-life balance' (European Foundation, 2002). The type of arrangements that are advocated to advance this goal include

- Part-time work (including the right for workers to request an adjustment between full-time and part-time hours);
- Family leave and sabbaticals;
- Flexi-time and other forms of 'time accounts';
- Compressed working weeks;
- Term-time working;
- Job sharing;
- Tele-working;
- Flexible retirement schemes;
- Childcare support.

The need to improve the 'work-life balance' is explicitly promoted as an objective of both the EU Employment Guidelines and the EU Social Policy Agenda. This reflects a policy concern to raise the employment rate

through a better integration of women and retention of older workers in the labour market, and the need to reconcile employment and care responsibilities in light of the demise of the 'male breadwinner' model of family life and the ascendancy of both dual-earner and single parent families.

National regulations on maximum full-time working hours

As part of the objective of modernising the organisation of work, the EU Employment Guidelines explicitly encourage the social partners to negotiate working-time reductions, along with the development of part-time working and flexible working arrangements. This builds upon the EU framework of regulatory limits initiated by the 1993 Working Time Directive, which was extended in 2000 to a number of previously excluded sectors and activities, discussed below. The positions of the European social partners are that the European Trade Union confederation restated its commitment to continue to campaign for a 35-hour week in a resolution adopted at its 1999 congress, but faces continued opposition from the European employers' organisations.

Major general reductions in full-time working hours have been rare across the EU Member States and Norway in recent years. During the 1980s the most notable reductions occurred in former West Germany, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and France (Boulin, 2000; CEC, 1996; EIROnline, 2000, 2001, 2002; Garhammer, 2000; Léonard and Delbar, 2000; Tjzens, 2000). Subsequently, there were few general reductions during the 1990s, with the notable exception of the introduction of the statutory 35-hour week in France from 2000 onwards (box 2). Other general reductions during the 1990s include Denmark where the 37-hour week was introduced in 1991, and where subsequent negotiations have focused upon increased annual leave, greater flexibility and tele-working (box 3) and the Netherlands where collective reductions for full-timers have proceeded alongside the promotion of part-time work (see box 14 below). A small collective reduction was also secured recently in Belgium, where the statutory working week set by intersectoral collective agreement fell from 40 hours to 39 in 1999, and the current agreement provides for a reduction to 38 hours from January 2003 (box 4). Elsewhere in the EU collective working-time reductions are still being achieved in some countries in particular sectors and companies, and remain on the agenda of many trade unions and some governments (see Appendix). For example, in Portugal, the government introduced a statutory reduction to a 40-hour week in 1996 following the social partners' failure to negotiate widespread reductions, and working-time reduction remains an important issue of negotiation for some companies and sectors, although it was less prominent in 2001 than in previous years (EIROnline, 2002b).

Box 2 The introduction of the statutory 35-hour week in France

Between 1982 and 2000 various laws were passed concerned with promoting working-time reduction through collective negotiation at firm level. The logic of the legislative programme is to combine working-time reduction with reorganisation and a devolution and decentralisation to firm-level negotiation (Boulin, 2000). Legislation in 1982 reduced the maximum working week from 40 to 39 hours. The 1996 *Loi Robien* reduced employers' social security contributions for employees who worked between 15-32 hours per week following negotiation at firm-level. The aim was to tackle unemployment by encouraging reduced working hours in order to create or protect jobs. About 1000 firms agreed.

The *Loi Aubry of 1998 and 2000* reduced the statutory working week from 39 to 35 hours from 1 January 2000 for companies with more than 20 employees, and from 1 January 2002 for smaller firms. It obliged the social partners to negotiate over working time, and prompted an explosion of company-level bargaining, not just on weekly working-time reductions, but also issues of overtime, annualisation, time accounts, annual leave and part-time work. It also repealed the subsidy for the creation of part-time jobs initiated by the *Loi Robien*, thus reducing the incentive for the creation of part-time jobs (Boulin, 2000; Bosch and Lehndorff, 2001; Evans, 2001). Thus, this collective working-time reduction has produced a diversification of working-time arrangements within the regulated limit rather than one monolithic form of reduction. An evaluation of the *Loi Aubry* by France's National Economic Planning Agency (EIRO, 2001) concluded that:

- A genuine impact on working-time reduction (WTR), largely through annualisation of working hours, and a net positive impact on job creation had occurred;
- The success was due to a combination of productivity gains, agreements on pay restraint and state subsidies that have enabled WTR without lowering pay or competitiveness;
- Increased collective bargaining activity at company and sectoral level had resulted;
- Surveys of employees indicate that majority feel that their quality of life has improved through increased free time, but working conditions have often intensified and hours are often more irregular.

Large firms have used the legislation to negotiate flexible working practices and to boost productivity, while smaller firms have been more resistant. Implementation has also been hampered by staff shortages in the health sector and other parts of the public sector, which have threatened to trigger industrial action. More than 80% of the 5 million employees affected by the implementation of the law by 2001 say that their lives have improved, and it is estimated that the legislation has helped to create 300,000 new jobs (Henley, 2001, 2001a).

Average weekly working time is falling steadily in France as a result. The average working week was 36.1 hours at the end of September 2001, a fall of 1.7% compared with a year previously. It is estimated that 68% of full-time employees worked fewer than 36 hours a week at the end of September 2001, compared with 52.9% a year previously (EIROOnline, 2002b, p.14).

Box 3 Increased flexibility and more annual leave dominate current working-time debates in Denmark

A 37-hour week was introduced in 1991, since then neither the social partners nor government have supported further collective reductions, instead the focus has been on introducing more flexibility both for organisations and for families with small children. The tendency has been towards more individualised reductions, and demands for more annual leave have dominated collective campaigns in recent years. A strike in May 1998 led the government to legislate for Christmas Eve to become a paid holiday and to increase annual leave by one day, with parents of children under 15 years old gaining another three days of annual leave. Subsequently additional annual leave was negotiated in many collective agreements, with the result that the average annual leave entitlement has been extended from five to six weeks (see table in appendix for more details). Parallel to this, the concept of 'normal' daily hours exempt from premium pay has been extended from 0800-1700 to 0800-1800, and the settlement period for variable working hours has been extended from six to 12 months in the industrial sector (European Foundation, 2002).

There is also a growing demand for tele-work that may dilute demands for further working-time reductions. A 1997 survey showing that 14% of men and 5% of women work from home for at least one day a week, and 41% would like to work from home for one-two days per week. In response to this trend, in 2000 the Danish Commerce and Service Employers' organisation and the services section of the Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees concluded a new agreement regulating and facilitating tele-work (European Foundation, 2002).

Box 4 The Belgian government's policy for promoting working-time reductions and a better work-life balance

In May 2000, the Federal Belgian Minister of Employment and Labour (Laurette Onkelinx, Socialist) announced a project to relaunch the shorter working hours debate (EIROnline, 2001b, p.7; Léonard and Delbar, 2000). The aims of this project are:

- A gradual achievement of the 35-hour week in stages via intersectoral agreements;
- To encourage development of four-day weeks and time-credit schemes;
- To reduce working hours at the end of peoples' working lives;
- The working-time reductions are to be achieved by social partner agreements. This negotiation is in the context of an incomes policy controlled by a 1996 law that obliges the social partners to fix a maximum limit on increases in salary costs every two years, so reductions can not push up wage costs. Thus room for manoeuvre is restricted.

In September 2000 she elaborated her plan in a call for 'More time for oneself. More jobs for all' to address how to enable every working man and woman to opt for their preferred working time arrangements in order to harmonise work and private life. As a result the 2001—2 national intersectoral agreement allocated a section to working time, though employer opposition meant it was less ambitious in scope than the 'Onkelinx plan'. In response, the Minister denounced the 'timidity' of the agreement and outlined a legislative alternative for

- The implementation of a 38-hour working week by 1 January 2003, with financial incentives to move towards a 35-hour week;
- The entitlement to a four-day week for a period of up to five years, supported by financial subsidies;

- The setting up of a time-credit scheme;
- The extension of paternity leave from three to ten days;
- Shorter working hours for workers in their 50s through part-time career breaks.

In Spain there has been a mass popular campaign for the 35-hour week and a number of collective agreements now contain provision for a working time cut to a 35-hour week (see box 5). These reductions are mainly in public services and in regional public administration, and unlike in France, are not explicitly linked to the creation of new jobs. In other countries smaller negotiated reductions (shorter weekly working hours or increased annual leave) have been secured in exchange for increased flexibility sought by employers, as in Denmark (box 3) and Sweden (box 6) (EIROnline, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2002b).

Box 5 The campaign for working-time reductions in Spain

In 1999 a law to introduce the 35-hour week without a reduction in pay was proposed by a ‘popular legislative initiative’ (a constitutional procedure that allows citizens to present proposals directly to Parliament if endorsed by a certain number of signatures). The initiative was presented to Parliament by a wide range of social organisations, minority trade unions and left-wing groups, with the support of 700,000 signatures and large-scale demonstrations. It was rejected by a large majority in the Parliament and opposed by the employers’ confederations. However some employers were not against the idea of government financial incentives for negotiated working-time reductions (WTR). Subsequently, some regional governments have set up incentives for firms to introduce WTR or have introduced reductions for their own employees (Andalucia, Galicia, Aragón, Basque regions). The 2000 bargaining round introduced the biggest reductions in working hours since 1994, largely through company agreements linked to annualisation and a further modest overall reduction in collectively-agreed working time was achieved in 2001 (EIROnline, 2001b; EIROnline, 2002b; Villagómez, 2000).

Box 6 Working-time policy debates and collective bargaining in Sweden

In Sweden, working time is still a topic of public political debate. It is advocated by the left-wing and Green parties in relation to work-sharing to tackle unemployment, and by the Social Democratic party, which emphasises it as a means of enhancing the quality of life. Supporters of working-time reduction also argue that it will promote gender equity. The six-hour day is mooted as the goal (Nyberg, 2000).

In collective negotiations by the social partners both sides are emphasising the need for greater working-time flexibility, although the unions want this accompanied by working-time reductions. The Swedish TUC (LO) wants working-time reduction via five extra days annual leave, which employees can then decide to take as shorter weekly hours or as leave. A public committee is considering new working-time regulations to promote flexibility for both employers and employees, the report is expected in March 2003 (EIROnline, 2001b, p.11).

In some countries the focus has shifted from working-time reductions towards other working-time issues, such as flexibility and modernisation of working-time schedules. For example, the use of time accounts is now the focus of bargaining in Germany, as well as in some sectors in other countries (box 7). Time accounts are one mechanism for providing more flexibility for setting hours over longer reference periods, and are a form of annualisation of working hours. The extent to which such schemes accommodate the working-time needs and preferences of the workforce depend upon the detail of the scheme and the way in which it is operated. Finland is another example where issues of modernisation of work organisation and work-sharing initiatives have taken precedence over collective working-time reductions in policy over the 1990s (box 8), while in Denmark and Sweden the focus of negotiations on working-time reductions is upon increased annual leave (boxes 3 and 6).

Box 7 Time accounts emerging as a focus of working-time negotiations in some sectors

In Germany, collective bargaining reduced contracted weekly working hours from 40.1 in 1980 to 37.4 hours in 1998 in West Germany, with most of the reductions achieved during the 1980s. Only minimal reductions were achieved in East Germany over this period (Garhammer, 2000). The focus of bargaining has shifted from sector-level negotiations over the duration of the working week to plant level and individual 'time accounts', mainly introduced at demand of employers for more flexibility (EIROnline, 2001b, p.16). A recent survey found that 1/3 of employees covered by these time accounts said these arrangements allowed their working time to be adapted to their needs (EIROnline, 2001b, p.21).

Sectoral agreements have also introduced time accounts into the Italian metalworking, chemicals and banking sector and in Sweden this has begun at the sector level following the 1998 bargaining round, with the metalworking and paper sectors leading the way (EIROnline, 2001b, p.22).

Box 8 Flexibility and work-sharing initiatives dominate working-time developments in Finland

The last major reduction in working hours took place between 1986—90 in the tripartite negotiations, to 100 hours per year for blue-collar workers to bring them in line with white-collar workers. This was mostly implemented via increased leave. Since then the emphasis has been on flexibilisation and modernisation rather than collective reductions. This is in the context of most Finnish companies having a small workforce (80% have fewer than five employees and only 3% have more than 20 employees).

In the 1990s various government experiments were introduced to adjust working time to reduce unemployment:

- Full-time workers who reduce to part-time hours receive a pay supplement to compensate for 50% of the wage loss if they share their job with an unemployed person for 12 months. This was introduced in 1996 as an experiment and was adopted as a permanent measure in 1997. About 80% of the users are municipal workers, usually in health care;
- In 1996 job alternation leave introduced, mirroring the Danish sabbatical system. This has been popular, particularly in the public sector;
- The 6+6 day shift model was introduced as an experiment in the private sector. Evaluation shows a number of positive benefits from this work organisation, including increased productivity, but it was not popular with employers – who feared the 6-hour day on full wages would become the norm – and unions who feared the spread of part-time work (Salmi et al., 2002).

All EU Member States now have a statutory framework on maximum working hours that either respect the 1993 EU Working Time Directive or set higher standards. The Directive sets a maximum 48-hour week averaged over a reference period not exceeding four months, a minimum daily rest period of 11 hours, a daily hours limit of eight hours for night workers, and four weeks' annual leave. It also explicitly encourages the social partners to consider equality and work-family reconciliation issues in working-time negotiations. The Commissions' recent review of progress in the implementation of the Directive across the Member States concluded that this had been achieved by a variety of legal, administrative and collective agreement mechanisms, and that the general level of implementation was 'relatively good' (CEC, 2000). However, it identified some points of concern for follow-up action. First, only some specified sectors were exempted in the Directive (air, rail, road, water transport and fishing, doctors in training) and this was not made explicit in all Member States. Most of these exemptions are to be closed by 2003 following a package of proposed Directives adopted in 1998. Second, the definition of which workers 'self-determine their own hours' and

hence are exempt from the Directive has been interpreted too liberally in some countries, particularly in the UK, and should be used more restrictively. Third, there is a risk that the average 48-hour limit may not be respected in some countries due to complexity in the distinctions drawn between regular working time and over-time without absolute limits on the reference period being set. In a few countries there are also problems with the definition and protection of nightworkers. Fourth, some Member States have set a qualifying period for annual leave, but the Directive provides this as an immediate right, on a pro rata basis according to service. Finally, the legislation is constructed in too complex a manner in some countries making it difficult for individuals to ascertain their rights.

Most countries had national legislation that pre-dated the Directive, and was often more stringent, with the exception of the UK and Denmark. In the case of Denmark, this was because working-time regulation was established through widespread collective bargaining, as is the norm for the industrial relations system of this country. However, the Directive was implemented into Danish law in late 2001 in response to some controversy about the reliance on collective agreements (EIRO, 2002). In the UK the national tradition of working-time regulation is characterised by an absence of state intervention combined with uneven regulation across sectors, according to the strength of trade union coverage and collective agreements (Bosch et al., 1994; Fagan, 2000).

In conjunction with legislation, collective agreements play a key regulatory role on working-time. The nature and influence of collective agreements on working-time varies markedly between countries in terms of the content and coverage of agreements, and the relationship between collective agreements and legislation on working time. The average normal full-time hours set by collective agreements in the 16 national economies of the EU15 plus Norway has remained quite stable since the end of the 1990s, at 38.2 hours, ranging from 35-hours in France, through 37-hours in Denmark and the Netherlands, up to 40-hours in Greece (EIRO, 2002; see table 1).

Following implementation of the Directive, eight Member States have legislation that sets the maximum weekly hours at the 48-hour specified limit. This is far in excess of the collectively agreed norms and average hours actually worked in most of these countries, and essentially establishes a safety net. For example, in the Netherlands almost 40% of all employees are now covered by a collective agreement in which a 36-hour week (or even a 34- or 35-hour week) is agreed (Passchier, 2002). The other countries have a lower statutory limit of 40 or less hours, with collectively agreed norms that on average fall slightly below the statutory limit (table 1). All the countries also have daily maximum hours set by legislation. These maximum weekly and daily limits may be exceeded around an average over a reference period in the context of flexibility agreements (see appendix table for more detail).

Usual weekly hours worked by full-time employees were higher than the average collectively agreed limits in almost all countries, but only by one hour or less in eight countries. However, the difference was at least two hours in Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and particularly the UK. In the UK the 6.1-hour gap between agreed and usual hours reflects the low coverage of collective bargaining agreements and a 'long hours' culture (Fagan, 2000).

Table 1 National statutory limits on the maximum working week and working day, 2002

48-hour maximum weekly limit¹ set in legislation			Less than 48-hour maximum weekly limit set in legislation		
Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the UK			Austria, Finland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden (40-hours); Belgium (39-hours); France (35-hours)		
Collectively agreed norms and average hours usually worked by full-time employees are much lower in practice in most of these countries. The notable exception is the UK where the usual average hours of full-time employees are the longest and substantially higher than the collectively agreed norm.			The average collectively agreed norms or hours usually worked by full-time employees are closer to the statutory limit than in the other group of countries.		
	Average collectively agreed norms	Average usual hours of full-time employees²		Average collectively agreed norms employees²	Average usual hours of full-time
Greece	40	40.9	Finland	39.3	39.3
Ireland	39	39.9	Sweden	38.8	40.0
Luxembourg	39	39.8	Portugal	38.7	40.3
Italy	38	38.6	Belgium	39	38.5
Germany	37.7	40.1	Spain	38.6	40.6
The UK	37.5	43.6	Austria	38.5	40.1
The Netherlands	37	39	Norway	37.5	38.5
Denmark	37	39.3	France	35	38.9
Statutory maximum working day¹ in these countries 13-hour (derived from the Directive): Denmark, Ireland, Italy and UK 10-hour: Luxembourg 9-hour: the Netherlands 8-hour: Germany, Greece			Statutory maximum working day¹ in these countries 10-hour: Austria, France, Portugal 9-hour: Norway, Spain 8-hour: Belgium, Finland, Sweden		
Statutory minimum period of annual leave 20 days: Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK 25 days: Denmark, Luxembourg			Statutory minimum period of annual leave 20 days: Belgium 21 days: Norway 22 days: Portugal 24 days: Finland 25 days: Austria, France, Sweden, Spain		

Source: EIRO, 2002; EIROOnline, 2002; appendix.

Notes:

1. These maximum limits may be exceeded around an average over a reference period in the context of flexibility agreements. For example, in the Netherlands the Working Hours Act establishes 'standard regulations' that prescribe a working day of a maximum of nine hours and a working week of a maximum of 45 hours, but the regulations can be adapted subject to consultation to permit overtime working up to an average of 48 hours per week (SZW, 1999).
2. Usual hours actually worked, including extra hours – paid or unpaid – of full-time employees, according to the Eurostat 2000 European Labour Force Survey.

As well as limits on weekly working hours, statutory minimum periods of paid leave exist in all countries. In the UK this has only occurred since the Directive was implemented. The statutory minimum ranges between 20-25 days across the Member States (table 1). The collectively agreed paid annual leave entitlement averaged nearly 26 days in 2001, and varied considerably across the Member States. The average collectively agreed annual leave exceeds the statutory minimum by four or more days in Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK, and overall ranged from 31.5 days in the Netherlands and 29.1 in Germany to 23 days in Greece and Norway, and 20 days in Ireland. The only significant and comprehensive change in annual

leave entitlements in recent years has been achieved in Norway and Denmark. In Norway two extra days' leave were secured in the 2000 collective bargaining round, and in Denmark an increased number of days of 'special' leave to be taken at the employees' own choice have been secured since 1999 (five days in the private sector, three in the public sector) (EIRO, 2001, 2002).

Box 9 Denmark – professional staff work substantial additional hours

- Working unpaid overtime has become a 'new lifestyle' for certain professions (e.g. IT experts, engineers) in the 'new economy';
- Only 10% of engineers work the collectively agreed 37-hour week;
- Lawyers work an average 46 hours per week;
- Weekly hours of highest-level employees have increased by one hour on average from 1997 to 2001 (equivalent to one extra week per year);
- Those professionals who work long days have high stress levels but also high levels of job satisfaction and flexibility.

Source: EIROOnline 2001c.

The final point of note concerning full-time hours is that the actual hours worked by some categories of full-time workers are increasing. At the national level, increases can be observed in some countries, particularly those where income inequalities have widened and labour markets have been deregulated, such as the US, the UK and New Zealand (Bosch 1999, 1999a).¹ Thus whereas countries at comparable levels of economic development tended to converge in the direction of working-time reduction in the past, there are now divergent trends. Yet, in nearly every European country the percentage of full-timers who work 45 or more hours per week has risen since the mid-1980s associated with a spread in unpaid over-time and a growing proportion of people with working-time arrangements that are 'self-determined' with little direct collective regulation. Most of these full-timers are highly qualified managerial and professional employees working to ever-tighter deadlines and time pressures yet are usually considered to 'self-determine' their own working hours, and the self-employed for whom long hours of work are also common. For example, the proportion of the workforce who 'self-determine' their working hours and are thus exempt from regulations has grown in Ireland during the economic boom during the 1990s, and is particularly prevalent in the IT sector (Wickham, 2000). Such time pressures for these categories of managerial and professional workers are found to a greater or lesser extent in all countries (Eurocadres, 1999), including those such as Denmark where average collectively agreed norms and actual full-time hours are shorter than in many other countries (box 9).

This trend of work intensification alongside 'self-determined' working-time contracts raises new considerations about the coverage and efficacy of existing mechanisms of working-time regulation, and places new issues on the bargaining table. For example, the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) argues that mechanisms must be developed to make hidden over-time visible and that the rules for over-time calculations should be reformed (Nyberg, 2000). Another example is France, where the working-time of certain managers and professionals is defined in terms of the number of days worked rather than actual hours (the 2nd Aubry Law fixed this at a maximum of 217 days per year) (Boulin, 2000, p.14).

National developments in part-time work

Rates of part-time employment have increased in recent decades in most industrialised countries (O'Reilly and Fagan, 1998). The majority of part-timers are women, concentrated among mothers. Rates of part-time

¹ Both working hours and wage differentials became more dispersed over the 1980s and 1990s in the UK (Harkness, 1999; Gregg and Wadsworth, 1999).

employment remain much lower for men and concentrated among those who are students or older workers approaching retirement. However, rates of part-time employment for men are increasing in some countries such as the UK and the Netherlands, and in the latter country this includes men in their ‘core’ working years as well as for students and older workers (Delsen, 1998).

Table 2 Part-time employment of men and women by country, 1999

Countries, ranked by the part-time employment rate	% of employed who work part-time			Average part-time weekly hours		
	Women	Men	All	Women	Men	All
Netherlands	67	18	39	18.6	19	18.7
Norway ¹	45	n.a.	n.a.	22.1	19.1	21.4
UK	44	9	25	18.2	16.9	18
Sweden	40	9	24	24.7	18.7	23.5
Denmark	34	10	21	21.6	13.6	19.6
Belgium	40	5	20	21.7	21.6	21.7
Germany	37	5	19	18.1	15.3	17.7
France	32	6	17	22.9	23.3	22.9
Austria	33	4	17	21.9	22.3	22
Ireland	31	7	17	18.6	19	18.5
Finland	17	8	12	20.8	20.2	21.1
Luxembourg	25	2	11	21.1	27.5	20.4
Portugal	17	6	11	20.4	21.3	20.0
Spain	18	3	8	18.2	19.1	17.9
Italy	16	3	8	23.4	26.7	22.1
Greece	11	3	6	21.4	22.4	20.8
EU15 ²	34	6	18	19.6	19	19.5

Notes:

1. The rate of part-time employment is from Barth and Torp (2000) and is only provided for women. The part-time hours data are for 2001 from EIROnline (2002).

2. Excludes Norway.

Source: European Labour Force Survey results for 1999, data for Norway from EIROnline (2002) and Barth and Torp (2000).

There are marked national differences in the rates of part-time employment, the volume of hours worked by part-timers, and the reasons why people work part-time. These national differences are produced by a combination of factors including differences in the state of the economy and the labour market and in the organisation of the childcare, education and retirement systems (O’Reilly and Fagan, 1998). In some countries, for example the UK, market forces and employers’ labour recruitment policies have largely led the expansion of part-time work. In some other countries governments have made concerted policy interventions to promote part-time work to meet one or more of the goals of increased flexibility in the organisation of work, work-sharing or work-family reconciliation, notably in the Netherlands, also in Sweden as part of the parental leave system. Part-time work is particularly prevalent in the Netherlands, Norway, the UK, and Sweden, while the lowest rates are found in Finland, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece (table 2). On average, part-timers work the longest hours in Sweden (23.5), France (22.9) and Italy (22.1); and the shortest hours in the Netherlands (18.7), Ireland (18.5), the UK (18), Germany (17.7) and Spain (17.9).

Part-time work is one means of reconciling employment with other activities, such as looking after children, education or partial retirement. Of the current part-timers in the EU around two-thirds of the women and one third of the men report that they do not want full-time jobs (table 3). At the national level, the proportion of women part-timers who prefer part-time over full-time work is highest in Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and France (70% or more). Male part-timers in these four countries are also more likely to prefer part-time work than elsewhere in the EU, but at a lower rate than for their female counterparts (40-50%). Recent research for the Foundation (Fagan, 2001, table 39) shows that part-timers who do not want full-time work have mainly chosen this work pattern because they want to look after their children or other domestic

commitments, but they also mention the desire for personal time to pursue other activities. Women are more likely to give childcare-related reasons, but this reason was also mentioned by nearly one third of the minority of men who have opted to work part-time. However, it should be noted that when part-time work is opted for as a family reconciliation measure in the context of limited alternative forms of childcare then the notion of ‘choice’ is ambiguous and contingent. Some part-timers would prefer full-time work if childcare services were more extensive, or if full-time working hours were shorter and organised in more ‘family-friendly’ ways. And, as we shall see later in **Preferred weekly working hours** (p. 29), many would like to work longer hours while remaining in part-time jobs, and some do not consider their working-time to be compatible with family life. In sum, the attractiveness of part-time work as a reconciliation measure is contingent upon the volume and schedule of working hours, the availability and social acceptability of alternative forms of childcare, and the quality of pay and other working conditions.

Table 3 The reasons that men and women give for why they work part-time, 1999

	EU15	B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
All																
Did not want FT job	60	10	50	73	30	6	65	31	24	53	72	15	26	20	47	73
Could not find FT job	17	20	15	13	45	25	28	13	36	10	4	11	24	38	30	10
Education/training	11	2	30	8	4	6	7	16	3	6	19	6	6	27	13	15
Own illness/disability	2	3	4	2	3	1	..	1	2	..	5	2	19	3	9	2
Other/no reason	10	65	1	4	18	62	..	39	35	30	..	66	25	12	..	..
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Men																
Did not want FT job	36	35	28	42	20	5	42	18	17	-	50	18	39	23	25	42
Could not find FT job	24	25	13	18	53	26	41	26	45	-	7	22	20	33	34	21
Education/training	25	22	52	27	6	13	17	29	5	37	36	19	9	34	25	33
Own illness/disability	5	6	7	6	5	3	..	2	3	-	7	3	31	3	16	3
Other/no reason	10	12	..	7	16	53	..	25	30	28	..	38	1	7	..	..
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Women																
Did not want FT job	65	10	57	78	36	6	70	36	26	56	80	15	20	19	53	80
Could not find FT job	15	19	16	12	41	25	25	8	33	10	4	9	25	41	29	8
Education/training	8	1	24	5	3	4	5	12	3	-	13	4	5	24	10	10
Own illness/disability	2	2	3	2	2	..	..	..	1	-	3	1	14	3	7	1
Other/no reason	10	68	..	3	18	65	..	44	37	30	..	71	36	13	..	..
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: ‘.’ = less than 0.5%, ‘-’ data not shown because of unreliability due to small sample size. Column totals may not sum to 100% exactly due to rounding of fractions.

Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey results for 1999.

Not everyone in part-time work has sought it to fit in with other activities in their lives. Nearly one in five (17%) part-timers are in this situation involuntarily due to a lack of full-time employment opportunities. In some countries there are measures to encourage the unemployed to take part-time work (box 10). International comparative analysis using OECD data suggests that such incentive structures have a positive impact on the financial incentives to take part-time work and the rates of part-time work found across countries (Doudeijns, 1998). The proportion of part-timers who would prefer to work full-time is particularly high – at least one in four part-timers – among male and female part-timers in Greece (45%), Italy (36%), Finland (38%), France (28%) and Sweden (30%). The issue of involuntary part-time employment appears to be most widespread in France and Sweden in that the overall rate of part-time employment is relatively high (table 2), and more than one in four part-timers in these countries are involuntarily working part-time (table 3). The proportion of part-timers who want to work full-time has increased over the 1990s in both Sweden and France (Nyberg, 2000; Boulin, 2000).

Box 10 Examples of countries where the unemployment benefit system supports part-time work by the unemployed

In Sweden there are some incentives for the unemployed to take part-time work. This can also be considered as an 'indirect subsidy' for employers in that it provides financial support for the unemployed while they are in part-time work. Part-time workers can receive unemployment benefit for being 'part-time unemployed' for up to 300 days or equivalent – for example if they work 80% of full-time hours and are looking for full-time work they can receive an unemployment benefit 'top-up' for a period of almost six years. The number of part-time unemployed in Sweden increased substantially over the 1990s in the context of deteriorating economic conditions (Nyberg, 2000).

Along similar principles, active labour market policies in the UK put pressure on the unemployed to take part-time work. The unemployed eligible for the 'job seekers allowance' are under an obligation to be available for full-time or part-time hours, which helps to create a pool of part-time workers for employers to draw upon, supported by an indirect subsidy from the State. If the unemployed take a low-paid job and have dependent children then they can claim the 'Working Families Tax Credit' (Fagan, 2000).

Unemployed people who accept part-time work can claim part-time unemployment benefit in some of the other Member States, including the Netherlands (Tijdens, 2000), Denmark, Belgium and France (Rubery et al., 1998). In some countries this is a new development, for example in Portugal partial unemployment benefit has recently been created for the unemployed who accept a part-time contract (Perista, 2000).

Aside from people who are working part-time for domestic reasons or because they have failed to secure full-time work the other main categories of part-time workers are those who combine employment with education or training, and those who are part-time retired. More than one quarter of all part-timers in Finland and Denmark are combining employment with education and training; this combination of activities is much less common for part-timers in the other Member States. In some countries the proportion of all part-timers who are in education and training may be small but this may still constitute a large pool of young people who combine their education with part-time employment. It is common for young people to combine education or training with part-time employment in the Netherlands, Denmark, the UK and Ireland (see box 11). A relatively high proportion of young people hold a part-time job in Finland and Sweden also (table 4).

Box 11 Students as a pool of part-time labour for employers

Where large proportions of young people are engaged in higher education this can create a pool of students available for part-time employment, particularly if grants and other sources of financial support are limited.

In the Netherlands nearly 50% of all high school pupils have a small (short hours) part-time job, and part-time employment is even more common among university students. Similarly, in the mass education systems of Denmark and Ireland there are large proportions of students employed on a part-time basis. The expansion of the higher education system since the 1980s, combined with reductions in student grants in the UK has created a pool of students available for part-time (and sometimes full-time) employment. By 1999 a quarter of all 15-24 year olds in employment in the UK were working part-time for educational reasons, compared to 15% in 1992. Student part-time employment in the UK is particularly common in towns and cities with universities, in sectors such as retail, catering and in call centres (Blumensaadt and Moller, 2000; Fagan, 2000; Tijdens, 2000; Wickham, 2000).

Table 4 Employment rates¹ by age group by country, 1999

% Employment rate	EU15	B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
15-24 years																
Full-time	30	20	35	41	25	25	20	36	23	27	25	50	40	30	20	37
Part-time	9	6	31	5	3	4	7	10	3	4	38	5	3	15	15	18
Total employment	39	26	66	46	28	29	27	46	26	31	63	55	43	45	35	55
25-49 years																
Full-time	64	64	72	64	69	62	65	64	63	70	54	68	77	74	64	63
Part-time	12	15	13	15	3	5	13	11	5	8	29	15	5	7	17	17
Total employment	76	79	85	79	72	67	78	75	68	78	83	83	82	81	81	80
50-64 years																
Full-time	40	31	53	38	43	40	39	42	35	36	32	37	49	50	56	44
Part-time	9	7	12	10	3	3	8	9	3	3	18	7	9	6	17	16
Total employment	49	38	65	48	46	43	47	51	38	39	50	44	58	56	73	60
65+ years																
Full-time	2	1	1	1	5	1	1	6	3	..	1	1	9	1	2	1
Part-time	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	..	..	2	1	9	1	2	4
Total employment	3	2	2	3	6	2	1	8	3	2	3	2	18	2	4	5
All aged 15+ years																
Full-time	42	38	49	43	43	38	41	46	39	45	36	47	52	49	43	44
Part-time	9	9	13	10	3	4	8	9	3	6	24	9	6	7	13	14

1. Full-time employment rate = the % of the population in the age group who are in full-time employment, same for part-time employment rate. Full-time employment rate + part-time employment rate = total employment rate.

Source: derived from table 1 population by age groups, table 15 employment, table 34 part-time employment from EUROSTAT ELFS results for 1999.

Part-time work among older people approaching retirement is also more common in some countries than in others. More than 10% of all persons aged 50-64 years are employed part-time in the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and the UK, which contributes to the employment rate for this age group exceeding the EU average in these countries. The low employment rate of the older workforce in many countries is a policy concern in terms of pension costs and the fiscal basis of the overall 'dependency ratio'. In response, some countries have reformed pension schemes where these encourage full-time early retirement, and others have introduced reforms that encourage part-time employment and partial retirement as one means of raising the employment rate of older workers (see box 12), although the impact of such measures on the employment rate is difficult to ascertain (Casey, 1996).

Box 12 Flexible and part-time retirement measures

New measures to encourage older workers to switch to part-time work rather than taking full-time retirement have been developed in some countries.

In Austria generous early retirement provisions have recently been revised to reduce the incentives for early retirement. A half-time scheme for older workers was introduced in 1999 in order to encourage their economic activity, so that since 1 January 2000 older workers aged over 50 years (female) 55 years (male) employed for at least 150 weeks have been able to reduce their working hours by half at 75% of full-time pay. This has no effect on their health care and pension insurance systems paid by their employer. The employer is compensated by the state employment services agency (Österreichischer Arbeitsmarktservice). The model is an attempt to counter the growing unemployment among older workers (ÖBIG 2000). In Luxembourg the NAP provides financial support for part-time retirement for those aged 50+ as a means of promoting work-sharing. The state will pay the employer's social security

contributions for up to seven years if the employer hires an unemployed person as a replacement for at least 18 months (National Employment Fund also pays the soc sec contributions of the unemployed replacement)(Borsenberger, 2000).

In Denmark the Ministry of Labour has earmarked a budget for policy initiatives to encourage the economic activity of older workers through flexible employment opportunities such as tele-work or temporary jobs. In Germany a 'progressive retirement law' was introduced in 1996 to enable workers aged at least 55 years to work reduced hours. In France part-time early retirement has been possible since 1993, and there are some state subsidies for firms if they hire new recruits as a result. In the Netherlands collective agreements have introduced more flexibility in retirement and pension schemes covering 70% of employees, including rights to shorter working hours and exemptions from irregular hours such as overtime, shifts or weekend work. In Norway the collectively agreed early retirement scheme (AFP) enables older employees to combine partial employment with a partial pension, which covers 60% of all employed people. In Finland a part-time retirement was introduced in the private sector in 1987 and in the public sector in 1989 to promote work-sharing and to postpone final retirement. It was not widely used to start with, but the conditions of the scheme were improved in 1994 and 1998 after which the popularity of the scheme began to increase (EIROnline, 2001b; pp.12-13; Boulin, 2000; Salmi et al., 2000).

In Belgium the low employment rate for the over 55s is largely due to the extensive use of early retirement schemes over the last 20 years. A part-time retirement scheme was introduced in 1993 but was not widely used. A new part-time retirement option has now been introduced as part of the new time credit scheme (Leónard and Delbar, 2000).

In Portugal partial retirement options are under discussion following the government and social partners' Strategic Concertation Agreement 1996-99 (Perista, 2000).

In some countries there are few incentives and some disincentives to working part-time prior to retirement. In Greece, the eligibility requirements and replacement ratio in the basic pension system was reformed in 1992 to reduce incentives for early (full-time) retirement. The pension system discourages part-time work by older workers because it is a final salary scheme and the pension is reduced by one third if the recipient continues in employment (Katsimi and Tsakoglou, 2000). In the UK there are no statutory measures to encourage part-time work for older workers, no incentives for part-time work prior to retirement in the state pension scheme, and the pension is reduced under the earnings rule for those working part-time after reaching the retirement age (Fagan, 2000). In Ireland generous early retirement packages were introduced in the 1980s recession providing incentives for full withdrawal from employment. There are disincentives to part-time work in the statutory pension system (Wickham, 2000).

Part-time work incurs a number of labour market penalties for at present in most countries these jobs are concentrated in a narrow range of low-paid occupations and sectors, have inferior training and career opportunities compared to full-timers even within similar workplaces, and lower pension and social protection entitlements (OECD, 1994, 2001; O'Reilly and Fagan, 1998). While this may be less of a concern for students involved in part-time work for a limited period of their lives, those women and the minority of men who work part-time for a longer period during their working lives can incur large, and often unanticipated, costs. The inferior training and career prospects of part-timers has macroeconomic costs as well, for it may undermine policy attempts to raise the overall qualifications and skills profile of the workforce (Evans et al., 2001).

The principle of equal treatment in employment and social protection systems helps to improve the quality of part-time work. This principle has developed more slowly in some countries than in others, and within countries progress has been uneven according to the sector and type of firm. For example, the principle was integrated into labour law earlier and more comprehensively in Belgium, France and the Netherlands than in

Germany or the UK (Maier, 1994). In recognition of this problem, the Atypical Work Directive was adopted in 1997 to provide a legal framework of equal treatment for part-timers in the European Union. This has stimulated some recent legislative reforms in a number of Member States (see box 13).

Box 13 Recent state reforms to develop the equal treatment of part-time workers and to promote part-time work

The rate of regular part-time work is very low in Greece. Historically, the unions have opposed the use of part-time employment contracts, and this form of employment was only made legal in Greece in 1990. In 1998 a series of regulations were introduced aimed at ensuring the employment rights of part-time workers as well as tele-workers, homeworkers and the self-employed (Law 2369/1998) and to permit part-time working hours to be defined more flexibly on a monthly basis (previously they had to be fixed on a daily or weekly basis). Part-time work has also been introduced into the public sector. However, the regressive structure of social security taxes and per capita social security contributions creates cost disincentives against the creation of part-time jobs.

The Atypical Work Directive was enacted into national legislation in Italy in 2000. Legislation has also been passed to make it easier to employ people on part-time contracts and to introduce more variable hours. The fiscal system of social security contributions has also been reformed in stages to remove disincentives to the use of part-time work. Two part-time contracts cost the employer more than one full-time contract in social security contributions until this was reformed in 1996. A recent reform to actively encourage the development of part-time work is that financial incentives have been introduced for employers in the form of reduced social security contributions for contracts with 20-32 hours per week. The trade unions have become less resistant to part-time work in recent years and a growing number of collective agreements build upon the statutory provisions with additional measures to promote equal treatment and enhanced conditions for part-timers, such as priority for a move (back) into full-time work when their firms have such vacancies.

In Portugal legislation was passed in 1999 (Law 103/99) to provide equal treatment for part-time work. It also introduced a number of promotional incentives, including reduced social security contributions for part-time contracts. Partial unemployment benefit has also been created recently for those unemployed who accept a part-time job.

In Spain labour law and trade union opposition initially restricted the development of part-time work. In 1980 a regulation was passed that permitted the use of part-time contracts for specific groups of workers (young persons and the unemployed). Further liberalisation was introduced from 1984 onwards, along with various promotional measures to encourage the expansion of part-time work and 'discontinuous part-time contracts' (seasonal contracts) introduced by the government to increase the flexibility of the labour market. The hours worked by part-timers are regulated in a 1998 law (Royal Decree 15/98) which prescribes that part-time employment contracts must specify the number of hours of work on either a daily, weekly or monthly basis, the schedule of these hours and forbids over-time for part-time workers. It also provides for part-time workers who have three years service with their firm to have priority when full-time vacancies arise.

Equal treatment provisions for part-timers in national legislation were strengthened in the UK in 2000 to implement the Directive following litigation and collective bargaining.

Source: Biagi et al., 2000; EIROOnline, 2000, 2001b; Fagan, 2000; Katsimi and Tsakloglou, 2000; Perista, 2000; Villagómez, 2000.

The most concerted attempt to develop equal treatment of part-timers in all aspects of employment and social protection and to promote this form of employment in all areas of the economy has taken place in the Netherlands (box 14, and for a summary of recent developments see Tjidens 2000). On the criteria of equal treatment and the types of occupations where part-time work exists, the quality of part-time work is comparatively high in the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark relative to that found in other Member States (Visser and Hemerijck, 1997; Plantenga, 1997; Fagan et al., 1998; Tjidens, 2000; Daune-Richard, 1998).

In Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain the governments have taken a number of specific measures to promote the expansion of part-time work from the current low rates, such as reform of labour law and the structure of social security contributions (see box 11), and achieving this policy objective is part of the NAPs in each country. Traditionally, the unions were opposed to the use of part-time contracts, not least because of the risk that this form of contract would undercut the working conditions of full-timers, but they are now more amenable to negotiations that involve regulating equal treatment and associated standards under which part-time work is permitted to develop.

Box 14 The promotion of working-time reductions and the ‘part-time model’ through collective agreements in the Netherlands

In response to the recession of the early 1980s the social partners negotiated the Wassenaar agreement, in which the unions agreed to wage moderation in exchange for working-time reduction via collective reductions in the working week and individual reductions through increased opportunities for part-time work.

Collective working-time reductions were achieved in two rounds of collective bargaining in 1982—5 and 1994—7 in exchange for increased flexibility in work organisation (including, for example, extended shop opening hours, just-in-time production methods, working hours flexibility, the reduction or elimination of working-time bonuses for ‘unsocial hours’ and over-time) and an incomes policy of wage moderation in bargaining. Almost 40% of all employees are now covered by a collective agreement in which a 36-hour week (or even a 34- or 35-hour week) is agreed.

Options for individuals to request part-time work were implemented in collective agreements, led by the banking and health care sectors. Research has shown that these collective agreements have had a positive impact both in stimulating the number of individual requests that are made for a switch from full-time to part-time hours, and in raising the proportion of such requests that are granted. However, part-time work is still seen as problematic in certain male-dominated managerial and professional occupations, although there has been some increase in acceptance in the context of labour shortages. In 1998 in a sample of 89 collective agreements only 20 explicitly state that all jobs can be performed on a part-time basis.

Equal treatment for part-timers has also been extended through collective agreements. Discriminatory clauses were found in 50% of collective agreements in 1983, but nearly all had been removed by the mid-1990s. The principle of over-time premium has also been adapted and modernised to accommodate fair treatment for part-timers. Over-time premium are now paid for ‘socially unattractive hours’ rather than hours in excess of full-time.

Source: Tjidens, 2000, especially pp.14-16; Passchier, 2002.

In sum, part-time work has expanded in most countries because of changes in employment practices in some firms, particularly those in the service sector (Smith et al., 1998; Walwei, 1998; Anxo and Storrie, 2001). A variety of state policies have developed to promote part-time work to serve various social and economic goals, particularly more flexible working practices for firms, but also as a means of partial employment for the full-time unemployed or early retired, and as a ‘work-family’ reconciliation measure. Most of the people who elect to work part-time are women with domestic responsibilities but the extent to which part-time work provides them with a high quality reconciliation measure is contingent upon two considerations. Firstly, that the volume

and scheduling of working hours is designed to accommodate employees' working-time needs in relation to domestic schedules and secondly, that equal treatment in pay, career progression and other working conditions is ensured. Reconciliation measures to promote more 'family-friendly' working arrangements or a better 'work-life balance' include a variety of measures other than opportunities to work part-time, and recent developments in this broader agenda of reconciliation measures are discussed next.

National developments in 'work-life balance' policies

The need to improve the 'work-life balance' is explicitly promoted as an objective of both the EU Employment Guidelines and the EU Social Policy Agenda. The type of arrangements that are advocated to accommodate the needs and preferences of workers include childcare services; parental and other family leave schemes; and a variety of measures to enable people to adjust their working hours. These working-time adjustments include more opportunities for part-time work (in particular the right for workers to request an adjustment between full-time and part-time hours in their existing job); flexi-time and other forms of 'time accounts'; compressed working weeks; term-time working; job sharing; tele-working; and flexible retirement through reduced hours working supported by reformed pension schemes.

Statutory maternity and parental leave entitlements and public funding of childcare services have been extended in most industrialised countries in recent years (Moss and Deven, 1999; OECD, 2001). Some governments have also introduced measures to reserve periods of leave specifically for fathers, for example the 'Daddy quota' month in Norway (Leira, 1998), while others introduced or extended leave entitlements to care for sick children and adult relatives, for example in the Netherlands. This expansion of leave and childcare has taken place with countries at very different starting points of existing levels and form of provision. In countries with low levels of provision EU policy has been a major catalyst, for example in developing statutory entitlements to maternity and parental leave via the Directives on these issues, and more recently with the Lisbon summit requirement that Member States improve childcare provision. Other countries start from a position of more extensive leave and childcare that has been put in place by national governments and the collective bargaining of the social partners.

Marked national differences still exist in the extent of parental and family leave and childcare services despite the general trend to increase provision. The Nordic countries have the most comprehensive public childcare services and statutory family leave provisions that enable employment to be more readily combined with care responsibilities than in other countries (Barth and Torp, 2000; Blumensaadt and Moller, 2000; Nyberg, 2000; Salmi et al., 2000; also Moss and Deven, 1999; Rubery et al., 1999; Bettio and Prechal, 1998). The difference in policy content between the Nordic countries should not be overlooked, of course. For example Sweden was the first to introduce parental leave in the 1970s and has the most extensive and most flexible system, while the Danish leave system was introduced more recently in the 1990s alongside training leave (and a sabbatical leave system which has since been phased out) (Moss and Deven, 1999). Aside from the Nordic countries, in France and Belgium relatively extensive childcare provision is also in place and the school day is also longer than in most other Member States, which facilitates full-time employment, although the Wednesday closing of schools means many mothers try to arrange not to work on this day. In countries where public childcare services are more limited, mothers who are employed must arrange childcare provision by other family members or by purchasing private sector services. For example, in Portugal mothers manage through a heavy reliance on childcare provided by grandmothers or privately purchased services (Perista, 2000) and in Greece most non-maternal childcare is provided by grandparents or the informal employment of immigrant labour (Katsimi and Tsakoglou, 2000). Despite the recent expansion of government funding of childcare in the UK most non-maternal childcare is still provided by family members or privately purchased services (Fagan, 2002).

Rubery (2002) concludes that the Lisbon summit requirement to improve childcare provision 'has provoked a near universal expansion of provision' across the EU, but substantial additional expansion is still required. Provision is still very low in most countries. Even in those countries – such as France and the Nordic countries — which have relatively high levels of provision by comparison with other Member States, there are still large areas of unmet demands for childcare. Similarly, in Moss and Deven's (1999) review of the expansion of

parental leave entitlements they conclude that a number of issues must be addressed. Many parents cannot afford to take parental leave unless it is paid at a high earnings replacement rate, yet the parental leave is unpaid or with a low level of financial support in most Member States. Lack of support from personnel and line managers at the workplace generally creates another obstacle for parents wishing to take parental leave. Take-up rates for parental leave are particularly low among fathers due to the combination of these economic, workplace and other social pressures. Targeted incentives to encourage men to take parental leave are important, for otherwise parental leave helps to integrate women into employment but at the same time reinforces gender segregation and the 'mummy track' whereby only women reduce their working-time to take account of family responsibilities. Finally, alongside childcare and parental leave, the other reconciliation issues are how to support people with sick children or elderly relatives in need of care. The development and implementation of leave entitlements to enable the employed to care for sick children and adult relatives is still in its infancy in most countries. Similarly, the availability of eldercare services to assist older members of the population and their carers is underdeveloped relative to the growing demand across the EU (Lewis, 1998; Sipilä, 1997; Anxo and Fagan forthcoming).

Box 15 Recent national extensions of parental leave and entitlements to work part-time hours

In Germany, a new law on parental leave and childcare payments came into force on 1 January 2001 that gives workers the right to reduce their working time in companies with more than 15 employees (which accounts for 75% of all workers) providing there is no internal company reason to prevent such a reduction. The number of hours that can be worked part-time while on parental leave has been raised from 19 to 30 hours per week, with the right to return to full-time work after parental leave. Both parents can now take parental leave at the same time, and the 3rd year of parental leave can now be taken any time up until the eight birthday of the child (European Foundation, 2002).

In Finland the length of the statutory parental leave scheme was extended over the 1990s with the introduction of the home care allowance. Parents also have the right to work part-time and take part-time parental leave until their child is seven years old (starts school). However, this part-time option is not very popular, and only 18% of mothers and 4% of fathers take their leave on this basis. The main reason is that the loss of income is a major constraint on part-time work, but it is also because there is a strong cultural tradition of working full-time in Finland (Salmi et al., 2000).

In Portugal civil servants have the right to request a 20% reduction in weekly working time (typically to a four-day week) with a corresponding reduction in wages. New legislation (Law 142/99) was enacted in 2000 that introduced new regulations on maternity, paternity and adoption. It emphasises the (relative) sharing of parental duties and responsibilities. It provides five-days paternity leave and 15-days paid parental leave at full wages for fathers and five days paternity leave supported by a benefit set at a minimum of 50% of the minimum wage for the sector. Each parent can now take parental leave for three months full-time or 6 months part-time, and workers with a child under 12 years have the right to reduced or flexible working hours. It is too early to evaluate the full impact of these measures, but the unpaid leave entitlements are likely to have limited take-up only (Perista, 2000).

Parental leave entitlements were extended in Italy in 2000 as part of a new and comprehensive set of regulations on leave periods, including for training and education. The law also offers economic incentives to firms that secure collective agreements that allow for working-time flexibility for parents (EIROOnline, 2001b, p.8).

In the UK the legislation on parental leave was amended following litigation at the European Court of Justice to bring it in line with the Directive, and new extended maternity and parental leave rights have been introduced in the new Employment Bill (European Foundation, 2002). The government's 'best practice' recommendations encourage employers to increase the opportunities for part-time work, including the ability to switch from full-time to part-time hours, which have been reiterated in the new 'work-life balance' initiative (see box 18).

In Luxembourg the 1999 legislation implementing the National Action Plan for Employment includes a guarantee of re-employment after parental leave for parents, which can be taken for six months full-time or 12 months part-time, supported by a low flat rate allowance of approximately 130% the minimum wage rate (Borsenberger, 2000)

In relation to working-time adjustments and flexibility measures that are designed to enable workers to improve their work-life balance there have been some developments in national policy and collective bargaining across the Member States. This has been stimulated in part by the European Employment Strategy requirement that governments promote working-time flexibility in conjunction with equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming within the National Action Plans (NAPs). As discussed in **National developments in part-time work** (p. 12), in some Member States there have been recent policy initiatives to promote the creation of part-time jobs. Thus there are country differences in the options for working full-time versus part-time in terms of the extent to which part-time work has grown in the economy, and the quality of the part-time work available (O'Reilly and Fagan, 1998; Rubery et al., 1998a, 1999).

Some governments have also introduced measures that give employees rights to request a reduction from full-time to part-time hours of work for specified periods. Where this has developed it has mostly been made available to two groups of the employed: parents of young children as part of parental leave schemes, and some categories of public sector workers. The right for parents to work part-time within a parental leave scheme was pioneered by Sweden, which still offers the most comprehensive and flexible range of options (Moss and Deven, 1999). This principle has been recently introduced or extended in several other Member States (see box 15). Similarly the right to request part-time hours has been available to some public sector workers in some countries, such as France, for a number of years, and has been introduced or formalised in some other Member States more recently (see box 15).

Box 16 The Dutch Adaptation of Working Hours Act

This new law builds upon the 1996 Working Time Act, which was designed to promote both working-time flexibility for organisations and a better reconciliation of work and care responsibilities for workers (Tijdens, 2000; EIROnline, 2001b). Since 1 July 2000 (Adaptation of Working Hours Act) employees have the right to request the shortening or lengthening of their working hours (i.e. adjustments between full-time and part-time hours) and this can only be refused if the employer can present sufficient operational reasons.

The new law brings together various existing and new leave provisions and seeks to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities:

- the right to adjust working hours due to personal circumstances;
- paid paternity leave (two days), paid leave to care for sick children (ten days), adoptive leave;
- increased flexibility in the six-month part-time parental leave scheme so that it can now be taken in three blocks of one-month.

The most comprehensive initiatives to permit full-timers to transfer to part-time hours have been introduced in the Netherlands and in Belgium. In the Netherlands all employees now have the right to request a move from full-time to part-time hours, and to refuse this employers must provide a justification on operational grounds (box 16). This builds on earlier negotiated agreements between the social partners as part of a broader working-time policy agenda to promote shorter full-time hours and more part-time work in the Netherlands (see box 14). It sits in the context of the other major development in Dutch policy, which is to modernise work organisation through developing flexibility and job security or 'flexicurity' (The law on flexibility and security

came into force in 1999). According to Tijdens (2000, p.21), this new legislation ‘...may well succeed in making employees with care responsibilities the standard reference point in companies’ working time policy’. In Belgium, the new time credit scheme that replaces the career break scheme has been introduced as part of a broader government initiative to promote working-time reductions and a better work-life balance (see box 4), and like the Dutch case, also has the potential to provide a generalised entitlement to part-time work for a specified period (box 17). The impact of these new rights in the Netherlands and Belgium will of course, depend upon how many employees request these adjustments and the extent to which their managers support or resist these changes.

Box 17 Belgium — change over from career breaks to time credits

A new time credit scheme was introduced on 1 January 2002 into the private sector to replace the old career break scheme (introduced in 1985). The career break scheme remains unchanged in the public sector. Under the old career break scheme employees had the right to a career break provided this was requested three months in advance. The career break could be for any period from three months to five years, supported by a low allowance paid by the State (which increased according to family size). The employer had to take on an unemployed substitute. The new time credit scheme gives employees more opportunities for self-determination and employers are no longer obliged to hire an unemployed substitute. The options available to employees are:

- The right to take full-time leave for one year or reduced half-time working hours for one year equivalent while retaining their employment contract and full social security rights. This provision can be extended to a five-year period by sector agreement;
- The right to a 20% working-time reduction for a maximum of five-years (typically moving to a four-day week). For those over 50 years the working-time reduction may be either 20% or 50% and is for an unlimited period.

The current problem is that the revisions to the technically complicated career break regulations are causing some confusion and uncertainty.

Source: EIROOnline, 2001d.

In some other countries where there has not been any new legislation on working-time in relation to the topic of ‘work-life balance’ there are, however, examples of activity in this area. The UK and Ireland are the main examples of where there are high profile, developed government initiatives to encourage companies to develop work-life balance policies on a voluntary basis (see boxes 18 and 19). The emphasis of the UK government’s campaign is upon promoting the ‘business case’ for work-life balance policies. One merit of this approach is that employers are more likely to develop initiatives in this area if they are aware of the benefits of work-life balance policies for their company, and to design policies tailored to the particular circumstances of their company and workforce. Another merit is that linking work-life balance policies to other organisational goals fits with a gender mainstreaming approach to policy development and assessment. However, the danger of relying upon a voluntary approach is that policies spread unevenly across sectors, particularly where collective bargaining representation is uneven, such as in the UK. The outcome is that work-life balance provisions are often targeted by employers at particular groups of skilled employees for recruitment and retention purposes, with fewer provisions to enable lower status employees to enhance their work-life balance.

Box 18 The UK government's 'work-life balance' campaign

The importance of working practices that allow individuals to combine employment with caring responsibilities is a theme that has grown in emphasis in government policy since the end of the 1990s in the UK. The emphasis of government policy is on stimulating employers to voluntary action, rather than direct introduction of entitlements, in line with the liberal tradition of intervention in British politics. In March 2000 the Prime Minister launched a 'work-life balance' campaign to encourage employers to provide working arrangements that enable individuals to combine employment with care responsibilities (DTI 2000). There are three major elements of the campaign:

- The setting up of *Employers for Work-Life Balance*, an independent alliance of 22 leading employers, 14 partner organisations drawn from the voluntary sector and lobby groups concerned with work and family issues, committed to working in partnership with Government to promote good practice in the business community (www.EmployersforWork-LifeBalance.org.uk);
- A £1.5 million *Challenge Fund* to help employers explore how work-life balance policies can help them deliver goods and services more efficiently and flexibly. In addition the Department of Trade and Industry has established a *Partnership Fund* (£5 million over the 2001—5 year period) for projects that foster new attitudes and approaches to partnership in the workforce. Projects that tackle work-life balance issues in partnership with the workforce are eligible to apply for support;
- The publication of the discussion document '*Work-Life Balance: Changing Patterns in a Changing World*' (DfEE, 2000) and the establishment of a website (www.dfes.gov.uk/work-lifebalance).

The emphasis of the Government's campaign is promoting the 'business case' for introducing work-life balance policies to companies through commissioning and disseminating research evidence, funding and disseminating good practice examples, encouraging workplace consultation and setting a good example in the public sector. The types of policies listed are (DfEE, 2000, pp.15-16):

- Adjustments to the volume of working hours – with an emphasis on part-time work, jobsharing, term-time working and 'v-time working' (individual reductions from full-time to part-time hours for an agreed period and at a reduced salary) rather than collective reductions in full-time hours;
- Adjustments to working patterns, including flexi-time, compressed working hours, annualised hours, shift swapping, working outside 'normal' hours and self-rostering;
- Adjustments to where people work, such as working from home;
- Adjustments that allow employees to take leave (maternity, paternity, parental, unpaid career breaks and sabbaticals);
- Other packages that increase employee's choices, such as childcare or eldercare vouchers, phased or flexible retirement.

The government has also set up a *Ministerial Advisory Committee on Work-Life Balance*, chaired by the Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities. It brings together representatives from business, the trade unions, and the voluntary sector to advise Ministers. The Department of Health is also funding the Carers' National Association's *Carers and Employment Project* that will produce an information pack and training for employers on carer-friendly employment policies (for those with responsibilities for caring for the elderly or disabled).

The work-life balance initiative is a high profile government policy, and the amount of promotional activity, advice and website information available from both the government and the *Employers' Work-Life Balance* alliance is impressive. However, it is too early to assess the actual impact on companies' practices. Furthermore, the emphasis is upon voluntary compliance. The danger of the voluntary approach is that policies spread unevenly and become more established in large private sector firms and the public

sector, and are often targeted at high skill employees for recruitment and retention purposes, with access more restricted for lower status employees. However, there have been some important extensions in statutory entitlements. Parental leave was introduced following the EU Directive and the Employment Act (2002) extended maternity leave to a total of 52 weeks maximum (previously 40 weeks), of which 18 weeks are supported by maternity pay, and introduced two weeks of paid paternity leave. The Act also introduces a legal duty for employers to ‘consider’ requests for flexible working by parents with a child aged under 6 years or a disabled child under 18 years, and employers must provide a written explanation of their decision. Employees can appeal to an employment tribunal if their request for flexible working is rejected. Hence there is no automatic right to flexible hours, and this right to request flexible hours is more modest than the entitlements provided for under Dutch law, for example.

Box 19 Work-life balance in Ireland

Working time and the quality of work has become an increasingly important topic for collective bargaining in Ireland in recent years. This is in the context of strong economic growth, rapidly rising female labour market participation, skill shortages, long hours and work intensification among managers and professionals; and the lengthening commute times due to the housing market structure and congested transport infrastructure around Dublin.

Collective bargaining has mainly occurred through national-level agreements, and while there was little mention of work-life balance issues in the 1997–2000 national agreements it is a central topic in the current national agreement (2001) *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF)*. A ‘national framework for family-friendly policies’ has been established under this programme to support and facilitate the development of family-friendly policies at the enterprise level. Specific objectives include increasing childcare and out-of-school childcare, fiscal and social policy measures to encourage job-sharing, parental leave, flexi-time, homeworking and term-time working. Many of these proposals are reinforced by the NAP. However, the voluntarist nature of the framework may restrict the diffusion of the initiatives (EIROnline, 2001b; Wickham, 2000).

There are also examples of other types of initiatives in other countries. These include the public campaign ‘Time for Life’ in France, the promotion of ‘family friendly’ workplaces in the Danish NAP and in good practice recommendations from the Finnish government, and new collective bargaining agreements, such as in the German private sector (box 20). However, a recent review in EIROnline (2001) of developments in collective bargaining on improving the work-life balance concludes that agreements that are oriented towards employees’ working-time needs and preferences are uncommon, particularly in the private sector. Overall,

... there appears to be a considerable gap between rhetoric and reality so far as working time developments and the quality of work are concerned. While the issue has climbed up the agenda of policy makers and there have been significant government initiatives, collective bargaining seems to be lagging behind, with relatively few innovative agreements (EIROnline, 2001b, p.1).

Box 20 Recent public campaigns and initiatives to promote the reconciliation of work and family life

A public campaign was launched in France on International Women’s Day in 2002. It includes an information campaign to promote an equal sharing of domestic and parental tasks among men and women, plus demands for an extension of paternity leave to two months, based on the Swedish and Finnish models. Simultaneously trade unions, political and feminist organisations launched a new campaign ‘Time for Life!’ (Du temps pour vivre!) to promote equality at work and home (European Foundation, 2002).

In Denmark, working-time flexibility has been a focus of the NAP process since its inception in 1997. The 1999 NAP stressed the importance of promoting a better combination of work and family life and set three targets: better access to childcare, the promotion of flexible working-time arrangements which take the family aspect into account; and increasing the number of 'family-friendly' workplaces. The 2000 NAP emphasised that working time should be adapted to local conditions, with an average weekly working time of 37 hours; that access to part-time work should be guaranteed by collective agreements and established a significant funding stream for a project 'management, organisation and competence' to promote flexible work organisation in enterprises (EIROnline 2001b, p.9).

In July 2001 the German government and employers' association signed a bipartite agreement on equal opportunities in the private sector, which included the development of measures to promote 'family-friendly' employment conditions through equal opportunities, flexible working arrangements, childcare support (European Foundation, 2002).

The Finnish government has recently sponsored a large four-year study of work/family issues (STAKES 'Combining work and family life' project) to identify results and recommend good practice (Salmi et al., 2000).

The key role that state regulations play in the promotion of work-life balance policies is evident from recent comparative studies that examine the relationship between statutory work-family provisions and extra-statutory provision in firms. This research shows that state regulations stimulate provision at the company level by establishing new entitlements and higher expectations (EIROnline, 2001b; den Dulk, 2001; Evans, 2001; OECD, 2001). Where statutory provision is high, such as childcare and parental leave in Sweden, then additional provision by employers is limited. However, where state entitlements are absent or low then provision is more uneven across firms and contingent on the 'business case', which is subject to the vagaries of the business cycle. In general, 'best practice' examples of work-family measures are more established in the public sector, in financial services, in large firms and those firms with 'progressive' human resource management policies, and least established in manufacturing and small firms (although small firms may offer more informal practices as some compensation). Overall voluntary provision by firms does not compensate for low levels of legal provision, although the number and scope of workplace arrangements are slow increasing in countries with low levels of statutory provision.

Conclusions

This review of trends and developments in working-time policy across the EU has examined the regulation of full-time working hours, the development and regulation of part-time work and developments in 'work-life balance' policies.

There are some common developments across Member States driven by a combination of EU regulations, employment policy and the social partners' European-level negotiations and bargaining agendas; and other shared pressures including the economic conditions of competing in international markets and the challenges to the existing gender division of work and responsibilities associated with women's increased involvement in employment. Another cross-border influence are shared collective agreements in multi-national companies, for example working hours were reduced in Peugeot's Ryan plant near Coventry in the UK as a direct result of developments in the plant's French parent company (Eironline, 2000).

But marked national differences persist in working-time practices and policy developments. There are also national differences in the mechanisms for negotiating working time, for example Anxo and O'Reilly (2000) distinguish between a state-led ('statist') tradition such as in France, the negotiated social-democratic tradition (e.g. Sweden, Germany) and the voluntaristic tradition of the UK and Ireland. These differences in working time are still found between countries when comparisons are made at the level of sector or occupation (e.g. Bosch et al., 1994, 1997; Boulin and Hoffman, 1999; Golden and Figart, 2000; Rubery et al., 1998a, 1999).

This can be illustrated with a recent comparison of collective agreements about weekly working hours in metalworking, local government and banking in the EU15 plus Norway (EIROnline, 2002). This showed that within countries the collectively agreed weekly hours tended to be longer in metalworking and shortest in banking, with local government falling in between. However, these sector tendencies interact with national tendencies. For example, the collectively agreed 35-hours in metalworking in France and Germany are lower than the 40-hour agreement in local government in Austria, Greece, Luxembourg and Sweden (EIROnline, 2002).

A number of different institutions provide the context – or the ‘national framework’ – which shapes the working-time practices (and preferences) found in different countries, which is summarised in box 21. The key influence is the different statutory regulations and collective agreements on working-time, and the working-time policies and practices that employers develop within these frameworks, which was the focus of the review in this section. Another form of working-time regulation is firms’ operating hours. The liberalisation of shop opening hours — which affects both the working hours of retail workers and the shopping patterns of consumers — occurred in a number of countries over the 1990s, ranging from those such as Germany² and the Netherlands, where opening hours were highly regulated, to the UK where the more limited regulations pertaining to Sunday opening were removed. Plans to liberalise shop opening hours are currently under debate in Austria (EIROnline, 2001b, p.11). The structure of employers’ non-wage labour costs also has a bearing on contractual hours. For example, hours or earning thresholds in the structure of employers’ social security contributions can encourage employers to create short hour part-time jobs or ‘marginal’ jobs to reduce these costs, while per capita rather than hourly-related costs create fixed costs that can deter the use of part-time contracts.

The second group of institutions that influence men and women’s working hours are the structure of earnings and the income distribution. Earnings levels and purchasing power – particularly in relation to housing costs in some economies – may create financial pressures to work long hours and more generally will influence the feasibility for individuals to exchange working-time reductions for lower earnings. The unemployment and pension system also creates incentives or barriers to full-time and part-time work (Doudeijns, 1998; Ginn and Arber, 1998). Financial transfers from the state to support ‘male breadwinning’ arrangements in households via tax allowances or benefits for non-employed wives and mothers can also reduce women’s labour supply and help to reinforce the existing gender division of labour within the family system. For example, an individualised progressive tax system, in countries such as Denmark and Finland discourages long working hours and may encourage employees to take time off instead of over-time payments, while in contrast no such fiscal deterrent exists in the UK’s individualised personal tax system. In Germany the tax splitting system can encourage the (male) breadwinner to work longer hours rather than a dual-earner arrangement, whereas an individualised personal tax system provides some incentives for both members of a couple to seek employment.

Thirdly, the organisation of the education and training system, and the associated system of financial support for students and apprentices affects the labour supply of young people. For example, where there is a ready pool of young people available for part-time work they may become an important source of labour for the retail sector.

² In Germany the 1994 Working Hours Act permitted more Sunday work and the 1996 Shop Opening Act further extended opening hours.

Box 21 The institutional features that influence societal differences in working-time practices (and preferences)

Working-time regulations and policies

- Regulations in labour law and collective agreements on the length of full-time hours, part-time work, entitlements to work reduced full-time or part-time hours, etc.
- The system of ‘work-family’ reconciliation measures (childcare facilities, extended leave, reduced hours and other family-oriented working-time arrangements) provided for in law, collective agreements and employers’ personnel policies; including promotional campaigns to encourage such developments run by government and other social actors.
- Regulations on firms’ operating hours (e.g. shop opening hours);
- The cost structure for employers’ when using different working-time arrangements. This includes regulations on premium pay for working over-time, Sundays and certain other schedules. The structure of non-wage labour costs (employers’ social security contributions) can influence the creation of part-time jobs, the structure of part-time hours (marginal ‘short hour’ or longer hours of work) and the volume of hours worked by full-timers.

The earnings and income distribution system

- The earnings structure and relative purchasing power of the workforce (minimum incomes, earnings differentials);
- The personal taxation system (the number of hours worked, and the division of working hours between spouses in systems of aggregated rather than individualised personal taxation systems);
- The social protection system can create incentives or disincentives to part-time work for the unemployed and part-time retirement for the older population;
- Financial transfers by the welfare state through the personal taxation system and the social protection system to ‘male breadwinners’ to support non-employed spouses or partners can influence women’s labour supply.

The education and training system

- The labour supply of young people for full-time and part-time work is affected by the enrolment rates, the hours of attendance, and the financial support available from the state, their families or through employers’ apprenticeship arrangements while in education and training schemes.

The family system

- The gender-based division of employment and particularly the extent of men’s involvement in childcare and domestic work;
- The availability of non-parental childcare (family members and informal networks, state provision or subsidies, availability and price of childcare services in the market);
- Social norms concerning maternal employment (whether or not it is common practice for women with young children to be employed, and whether full-time or part-time employment is acceptable);
- Household composition and inter-generational resource flows (money, informal care, etc.).

Economic conditions

- Business cycle and labour demand (skill shortages in particular activities, over-time, unemployment levels).

Fourthly, the gender-based division of labour within families has a major influence on women's employment patterns. Women do most of the childcare and housework, which limits their labour supply, and this is often underpinned by social norms concerning what is acceptable and appropriate behaviour for women and men. State policies play an important role in either reinforcing or modernising this gender arrangement. The way that financial transfers to support the 'male breadwinning' arrangement can operate through the taxation and social protection system has already been mentioned. The public funding or provision of childcare, other 'work-family' reconciliation measures and school opening hours has even more impact on women's working-time behaviour and preferences. In the absence of state provision the availability of childcare provided by family and informal networks, or purchased in the market becomes a critical factor. Furthermore, whether or not it is financially feasible or unavoidable for women to be non-employed will depend upon the earnings of their partner if they have one, their own earnings potential and whether they can find a job.

Finally, all of the institutions discussed above are of course located within, and influence, the economic conditions and employment opportunities which women and men face in the labour market. During upturns in the economic cycle increased labour demand is often covered by over-time instead of recruitment, particularly if there are skill shortages. The ease of finding employment or changing jobs and the degree of job insecurity will also influence the working-time arrangements that individuals are prepared to do, their expectations about which alternatives are feasible and their ability to negotiate these alternatives.

The **Preferred weekly working hours** reviews the pattern of weekly working hours and preferences for men and women across the EU.

Preferred weekly working hours

The first part of this section examines the employment rate, volume and schedule of working hours for men and women across the different European countries. Then men and women's working-time preferences for the number of hours per week and more generally for full-time or part-time work are explored. The third and last part of the section assesses which work schedules provide the best fit with family and other commitments.

Working-time practices

The first element of working-time to note is the overall employment rate, for a higher rate is one of the targets of European employment policy. The employment rates for men in the core working years (25-49 years) are already high and quite uniform across countries (at least 80% or more), and while unemployment for this group of the workforce is an issue, other groups in the workforce have to be mobilised to achieve any major increase in the employment rate. This includes raising the employment rate of women, for much of the overall national differences arise from the variation in women's employment rates (table 5), largely due to the different participation rates of women with dependent children.

A useful concept for describing these national differences in women's employment patterns is the extent to which the 'male breadwinner' assumption shapes the gender division of labour within the family and in state policies that influence women's employment patterns – particularly the working-time, family and fiscal policies outlined in box 21 above (Lewis, 1992, 1993; Sainsbury, 1994). The 'male breadwinner' arrangement is least evident in the Nordic countries, where both women and men have high labour force participation rates across their working lives and where the smallest gender gap in employment rates are found. In contrast the gender gap is more pronounced in many other Member States, particularly Greece, Italy and Spain.

The gender gap in employment rates has been closing over recent years, largely because each new generation of women follows a higher and more continuous pattern of labour market participation during the child raising years compared to their predecessors (Rubery et al., 1999). However, differences in maternal employment patterns within countries according to region and social category such as ethnic origin or qualification level

should not be overlooked. Germany is a clear example of regional differences. Women in the East Länder of Germany had a high, and largely full-time employment profile prior to unification, underwritten by state policies that endorsed women's employment, including extensive childcare services. In contrast the typical profile for women in the West Länder, is to exit employment or move into part-time work upon motherhood. These regional differences remain despite the assimilation of the East Länder under the state policies of the West Länder (Garhammer, 2000). Regional differences are also important in Italy, where employment rates are much higher in the North than in the weaker economy of the South (Biagi et al., 2000). The UK is an example of where there are marked differences in rates of part-time work between mothers according to ethnic origin (Dale and Holdsworth, 1998). Qualification levels and related differences in employment opportunities also produce differentiation between women across Europe, with highly qualified women being the most likely to be in employment and to work full-time (Rubery et al., 1998, 1999).

Table 5 The employment rates of men and women by country, 1999

Countries, ranked by the overall employment rate	% Employment rate (population aged 15-64 years)			Gender gap in the employment rate ²
	All	Men	Women	
Denmark	76	81	72	9
Norway ¹	75	80	71	9
Sweden	71	72	69	3
Netherlands	71	80	61	19
UK	70	77	64	13
Austria	68	77	60	17
Portugal	67	76	60	16
Finland	67	70	65	5
Germany	65	72	57	15
Luxembourg	62	74	49	25
Ireland	62	74	51	23
France	60	67	53	14
Belgium	59	67	50	17
Greece	56	72	40	32
Italy	52	67	38	29
Spain	52	68	37	31
EU15	62	72	53	19

Note:

1. Data for Norway are from the Norwegian Labour Force Survey, provided by Barth and Torp (2000).

2. Male employment rate minus women's employment rate.

Source: European Labour Force Survey, 1999.

The headcount employment rate conceals variation in the volume of hours worked in employment by men and women in the different countries. This is largely due to different national rates of part-time work among employed women, but also because the average hours worked by full-timers and by part-timers varies nationally (see tables 1 and 2 above). Table 6 presents the overall average usual weekly working hours – including any paid or unpaid over-time — in the main job for employed men and women in 2000. Among employed men, the longest average usual weekly hours are worked in Ireland and Greece, in excess of 44 hours per week, followed by Portugal (43.8) and the UK (42.9). The shortest hours are worked in Denmark and the Netherlands, at less than 39 hours per week. The average hours worked by employed women fall between 33-37 hours in 7 of the 15 countries shown, rising to 38 or more in Portugal, Greece and Finland and falling just below 33 in Belgium, Germany and Norway, down to 29.8 in the UK and 25.2 in the Netherlands. Women work shorter average hours in employment compared to men in each country. This gender gap is just over eight hours at the EU-15 level, and widens to more than 11 hours in Ireland, the UK and the Netherlands, while the average gender gap is smallest in Finland (3.5 hours) and Sweden (4.8 hours).

A key reason why women commit less time to employment than men on average is because women do most of the childcare and unpaid domestic work. This gender inequality in the division of domestic work is changing gradually through a slow process of ‘lagged adaptation’, whereby men’s relative contribution to childcare and domestic work has increased across recent generations in response to women’s rising time commitment to employment (Gershuny et al., 1994; Gershuny, 2000; Van der Lippe and Roelofs, 1995). However, this adaptation of the gender division of labour is still very limited. Public policy to encourage men to be more involved in the domestic sphere — such as the ‘daddy leave’ quotas in the Swedish and Norwegian parental leave scheme — can help to speed the adjustment, but even here the increased involvement of men has been slow (Leira, 1998). In general the net effect of employment for women is to raise their total volume of work (paid and unpaid). For example, in couple households with a child aged less than five years old and where both adults are employed full-time, on average mothers spend just over twice as much time on childcare and other domestic work as fathers (OECD, 2001). Furthermore, a growing proportion of child raising is located in lone parent households, and men’s contribution to the unpaid work in these households is minimal.

Table 6 The usual weekly volume of hours worked by employed men and women by country, 2000

Countries, ranked by men’s average hours	Average (mean) usual weekly working hours (main job, including paid and unpaid over-time)				Average gender gap in working hours for the employed ³
	Employed men		Employed women		
	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation	
Ireland	44.7	14.4	33.4	11.5	11.3
Greece	44.6	19.1	39.6	17.8	5.0
Portugal	43.8	13.3	38.7	13.6	5.1
UK	42.9	12.4	29.8	12.8	13.1
Finland	42.5	12.1	39.0	14.2	3.5
Spain	42.3	11.4	36.2	12.7	6.1
Austria	42.1	10.2	36.0	14.7	6.1
Norway¹	41.8	9.8	32.5	12.6	9.3
Belgium	41.4	12.8	32.9	12.8	8.5
Germany	41.2	11.7	32.2	11.6	9.0
Italy	41.2	10.8	35.1	10.5	6.1
France	40.9	10.6	35.0	12.1	5.9
Sweden	40.0	9.9	35.2	9.5	4.8
Denmark	38.7	10.1	33.3	9.6	5.4
Netherlands	36.9	11.3	25.2	11.9	11.7
EU15²	41.6	11.9	33.2	12.6	8.4

Note:

1. Data for Norway are from the *Employment Options Survey* 1998.
2. Luxembourg is not shown separately due to sample size limits, but is included in the overall EU15 figure.
3. Employed men’s average usual weekly working hours minus employed women’s average usual weekly working hours.

Source: *European Working Conditions Survey*, 2000.

The average weekly hours presented in table 6 conceal the variation in weekly working hours for different groups of workers in each country. One indication of this variation is the standard deviation, which estimates the hours range that captures the hours worked by two thirds of the employed.³ For employed men and women in each country the standard deviation is at least nine, which indicates that two thirds of the employed have working hours that fall within nine hours of the average (above or below the average). So at the EU15 level, the weekly working hours of approximately two thirds of the employed men fall between 20.9-53.5 around an average of 41.6 (standard deviation 11.9), and for employed women the equivalent range is 20.6-45.8 around an average of 33.2 (standard deviation 12.6).

³ The standard deviation indicates that in a normal distribution around 68% of the distribution will lie within one standard deviation above or below the arithmetic mean (average). For example, the standard deviation of men’s weekly hours is 9.9 hours in Sweden, and the average is 40.0 hours so an estimated 68% work between 30.1 and 49.9 hours per week.

Table 7 Current weekly working hours of the employed by country, 2000

Employed men

	% Distribution of weekly working hours						Total %
	Under 20	20<35	35<40	40<45	45<50	50+	
Belgium	2	10	43	24	2	19	100
Denmark	5	5	58	13	6	12	100
Germany	4	3	36	33	8	16	100
Greece	2	28	10	32	4	24	100
Italy	4	8	22	37	8	21	100
Spain	3	6	9	49	11	22	100
France	2	7	51	15	8	17	100
Ireland	4	7	23	26	8	32	100
Netherlands	10	14	21	38	6	11	100
Portugal	2	4	10	50	16	18	100
UK	2	7	29	29	11	22	100
Finland	2	8	21	42	9	18	100
Sweden	3	9	9	59	5	14	100
Austria	2	5	34	34	6	19	100
EU15	3	7	29	33	9	19	100

Employed women

	% Distribution of weekly working hours						Total %
	Under 20	20<35	35<40	40<45	45<50	50+	
Belgium	13	33	32	13	2	7	100
Denmark	10	29	47	7	4	3	100
Germany	14	28	28	23	2	5	100
Greece	6	30	14	30	5	15	100
Italy	9	24	22	30	9	6	100
Spain	10	19	14	39	8	10	100
France	8	27	45	8	3	9	100
Ireland	12	27	29	22	5	5	100
Netherlands	31	41	13	12	1	2	100
Portugal	6	16	14	46	6	11	100
UK	24	28	26	13	4	5	100
Finland	5	14	37	27	6	11	100
Sweden	6	28	15	44	3	4	100
Austria	7	31	24	24	3	11	100
EU15	14	27	27	21	4	7	100

Note: The percentages shown may not sum to 100 exactly due to rounding of fractions. Luxembourg is not shown separately due to sample size limits, but is included in the overall EU15 figure.

Source: *European Working Conditions Survey, 2000.*

This spread in working hours around the average is due to a combination of factors. Firstly, the self-employed work longer average hours than employees in every country (Rubery et al., 1998). The self-employed determine their own working hours largely without the protection of working-time regulations, many work in sectors with longer than average working hours, such as agriculture or catering, and regardless of sector long hours are often required to keep their businesses viable. Secondly, working-time practices also vary between sectors and occupations, associated with differences in collective agreements for major sectors or categories of workers such as manual and non-manual occupations (blue- and white-collar). For example, in a number of countries the working-time limits set by collective agreements are lower in the public sector than the private sector (see Appendix). Thus, while the range of collectively agreed full-time norms are now quite narrow

across the EU and Norway (EIRO, 2000), actual hours diverge more when over-time,⁴ part-time work, self-employment and second jobs are included.⁵ In most countries the result is that the weekly working hours of the workforce tend to cluster around one or more points, with the degree of uniformity being greater in some countries than in others. The UK is the most extreme case, with the greatest dispersion in the number of hours worked, which is associated with the history of weak and uneven regulation of working-time in this country (see Bosch 1999; Bielenski et al., 2002).

The range of weekly working hours is shown in table 7. Across the EU the majority of employed men work between 35-45 hours per week (just over 60%), but the distribution varies between countries. The impact of the introduction of the 35-hour week in France can already be seen in that half of employed men have usual weekly hours in the 35-39 hour range; Denmark has a similarly large clustering of men in this category. Part-time work for men has risen in recent years but it is rare in most countries, and is usually concentrated on students and those approaching retirement (Delsen, 1998). The exception is the Netherlands, where nearly one quarter of employed men work less than 35 hours a week and where part-time work for men has spread into the core working years. In Greece a large proportion of men also usually work less than 35 hours a week, most are public sector employees with short full-time hours just below the 35 hour mark. The proportion of employed men who work very long hours is much higher in some countries than in others, with more than 20% of employed men working very long hours of 50 + in Greece, Italy, Spain, Ireland and the UK.

Women's working hours are more dispersed than men across a range of part-time and full-time hours, but as for men, there is some variation by country. Long full-time hours are most prevalent in Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Finland, where more than 15% of employed women work at least 45 hours a week. There are large clusters of employed women with hours in the 35-39 hour range in France and Denmark, mirroring the profile for men in these countries. The shortest average hours (30 or less) are in the UK and the Netherlands (see table 6), where over half of employed women work less than 35 hours a week, including large proportions who have short part-time hours (less than 20 hours). When people are asked to define themselves as full-time or part-time, then the lowest rates of part-time work for women in the EU are consistently recorded in the four Southern Member States (Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy) and Finland. This is still generally the case when an hour threshold is used, but this table also shows that substantial proportions of women work between 20-34 hours in Greece and Italy associated with shorter full-time hours agreements in the public sector.

The last table in this section compares the weekly work schedules of men and women in the Member States (table 8). There is quite a variety in the pattern of schedules. If we define a standard working week as one that involves working weekdays (no weekend work), during the day and for no longer than ten hours per day this 'standard weekdays' schedule encompasses less than half of the European workforce: just over one quarter of employed men and just over one third of employed women.⁶ Conversely, many of the employed have schedules that involve weekend work, long days, rotating shifts or regular night-work.

⁴ The Foundation's *Employment Options Survey* showed that in 1998, 63% of employees reported that they worked over-time, including 18% who worked over-time every day and another 19% who did it at least once a week (Fagan 2001).

⁵ Six per cent of employed men and women in the EU15 held more than one job in 2000: 3% on a regular basis and 3% on an irregular basis. Of those with regular multiple employment, the additional employment outside of the main job was for an average of 11 hours a week in the case of women and 13 hours a week in the case of men (Fagan and Burchell, 2002).

⁶ A schedule of weekday, daytime working hours approximates what has perhaps always been at the heart of collective bargaining over working-time and working-time premia – the distinction between 'social' or 'standard' versus 'unsocial' or 'non-standard' working hours (weekends, nights, shifts) and the historic goal of an eight-hour day. This distinction between 'standard' and 'non-standard' hours remains relevant for regulations, even if large proportions of the workforce work 'non-standard' hours. For example, most countries used Sunday as part of the normal weekly rest period when implementing the WT Directive (CEC, 2000, p.13).

Table 8 The weekly schedule of the employed in their main job, by country

Employed men

Country ranked by standard weekdays	% Distribution of schedule						Total
	Standard weekdays	Standard days	Some long days	Regular long days	Some evening/ nights	Shifts/ nights	
Greece	18	21	12	22	9	18	100
Finland	20	6	35	15	7	17	100
UK	21	15	15	18	5	26	100
Italy	23	21	19	11	6	20	100
Sweden	26	7	33	8	8	18	100
Ireland	26	16	19	19	5	15	100
Austria	28	15	19	15	7	16	100
France	29	15	14	16	8	18	100
Germany	32	14	20	15	1	18	100
Netherlands	32	11	30	12	3	12	100
Spain	33	15	9	11	10	22	100
Belgium	35	9	17	13	7	19	100
Portugal	36	21	11	16	6	10	100
Denmark	36	11	20	7	19	7	100
EU15	28	16	17	14	6	19	100

Employed women

Country ranked by standard weekdays	% Distribution of schedule						Total
	Standard weekdays	Standard days	Some long days	Regular long days	Some evening/ nights	Shifts/ nights	
Greece	25	30	10	14	7	14	100
Italy	28	30	12	5	5	20	100
Finland	30	11	22	6	7	24	100
France	33	27	8	9	8	15	100
Spain	36	26	4	6	8	20	100
Sweden	37	12	23	5	8	15	100
UK	37	21	7	6	7	22	100
Belgium	40	22	11	6	3	18	100
Austria	40	28	9	7	5	11	100
Denmark	41	18	12	2	19	8	100
Germany	42	23	10	4	2	19	100
Ireland	42	20	8	3	6	21	100
Netherlands	45	21	14	3	5	12	100
Portugal	53	25	5	8	4	5	100
EU15	37	24	9	6	6	18	100

Key	
<i>Standard weekdays</i>	Daytime, no long days (ten hours or more), no weekend work
<i>Standard days</i>	Daytime including weekend work, no long days
<i>Some long days</i>	Daytime, up to five long days (ten hours or more) per month, may include weekend work
<i>Regular long days</i>	Daytime including at least six long days (ten hours or more) per month, may include weekend work
<i>Some evening/nights</i>	Excludes those with rotating shifts or long days
<i>Shifts/nights</i>	Alternating shift pattern during daytime, days/nights, or permanent nights. It excludes those with permanent morning or afternoon shifts.

Note: Luxembourg is not shown separately, but is included in the overall EU15 figure.

Source: *European Working Conditions Survey, 2000.*

Focusing upon the schedules of employed men, the proportion that works these 'standard weekdays' ranges between 20% and just over one third across the countries. Where the incidence of schedules other than 'standard weekdays' accounts for 20% or more of employed men this is highlighted in the table. This shows that 'standard days' (that encompass weekend work) are more prevalent for men in Greece, Italy and Portugal than elsewhere. Schedules that involve some long days – which will include some people working compressed four-day weeks – are most common in Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Regular long days are most common in Greece and are rare in Denmark and Sweden. Shifts or permanent nights are most widespread in UK, Spain and Italy, and notably lower in Denmark where instead there is a particular high rate of men working some evenings/nights (19%) but not as elements of rotating shifts as defined in this survey.⁷

In comparison to men, higher proportions of women work 'standard weekdays' in every country. Employed women are also more likely to work 'standard days' including some weekend work than men in every country, and it is only in the three Nordic countries shown that fewer than 20% of women work this type of schedule. Conversely, women are less likely than men to work schedules that involve long days. There is little gender difference in the incidence of schedules involving some evening or night work, rotating shifts or permanent nights. The gender differences in work schedules are partly associated with women's greater propensity to work part-time, for part-timers are the least likely to work long days, but among full-timers women do fewer long days as well. Part-timers of either sex are more likely than full-timers to work some evenings or nights, and are as likely to work rotating shifts or regular nights.

There are some marked national differences in women's work schedules. The proportion working standard weekdays ranges from a quarter of employed women in Greece up to more than half of women in Portugal. Women are more likely to work some long days if they are in Finland or Sweden, regular long days if in Greece, and shifts if in Italy, Finland, Spain, the UK and Ireland. As for men, the rate of evening/night work for non-shiftworkers is highest in Denmark.

One final aspect of work schedules to consider is the degree of working-time autonomy for employees. This is very limited for many workers, for example one third of the employed in the EU15 consider that they have no influence at their workplace over their working hours or even when they take their annual leave while another third feel they have influence over both issues. Similarly, on the specific issue of start and finishing times just over 40% of employees feel that they have some influence over their start and finishing times — consisting of around 20% who vary their start and finishing times and another 20% who have fixed start and finish times – while the remainder have start and finish times set by their employers. The degree of working-time autonomy varies markedly according to occupational status, and is generally highest among managers of both sexes and male professionals, and lowest among low-skilled manual (blue-collar) jobs (Fagan and Burchell, 2002).

Preferred volume of weekly working hours

The relationship between working-time preferences and practices is two-way. On one hand, preferences influence the working-time arrangements that people seek in job applications, in individual and collective negotiation of working-time at the workplace, and through their contribution to broader political debates about the organisation and use of time in society. On the other hand, existing working-time practices and the wider social context shape peoples' working-time preferences. Preferences adapt when changes in economic conditions, workplace innovations or policy interventions alter the context in which people experience and evaluate their situation and make decisions based on the alternatives that they consider to be open to them. For example, in European societies mothers tend to prefer shorter hours of work where public childcare services

⁷ A slightly different definition of shiftwork is used in the European Labour Force Survey, but this study also shows that Denmark has one of the lowest rates of 'usual' shiftwork among its workforce (European Commission, 2000).

are limited, and longer hours when there are more extensive childcare services for the latter scenario makes full-time employment more feasible.

Working-time preferences are rarely fully realised in practice, for choices are constrained by the working-time options available at their workplace or in the wider labour market. The hours that people work are also affected by other considerations that may have equal or higher priority to their working-time preferences, such as financial need or a vocational commitment to doing the job well. However, women and men's working-time preferences do have some influence on their plans and behaviour, hence information about these preferences throws light on the kind of policy developments that the population would like to see. Furthermore, by analysing variations in peoples' preferences associated with their different employment and domestic circumstances it is possible to reflect on the conditions and policy environment under which different types of work arrangement become more or less sought after.

The Foundation's *Employment Options Survey 1998* revealed that nearly two in three employed persons in the EU15 and Norway would prefer to work a different number of hours to their present arrangement. Half (51%) would prefer to reduce their hours, whether traded for lower current earnings or against future pay rises.⁸ Another 12% would like to work longer hours. Employed men are even more likely to want to reduce their hours than are employed women, conversely women are more likely to be under-employed and to want to increase their hours. Overall, employed men are slightly more likely to have a preference to adjust their hours than employed women. However, this is partly because women are more likely to exit the labour market if they require less time consuming jobs in order to manage care responsibilities but are unable to secure this working-time arrangement. In this discussion we focus on the preferred number of weekly hours of work, but it is worth noting that the study also showed that there was strong support for the wider introduction of the option to take time off in compensation for overtime work, and for opportunities to take sabbaticals (see Fagan, 2001 for more detail).

Box 22 Definition and classification of weekly hours

The measure of hours used in the analysis is average current weekly hours, including overtime. The following categories are used:

'Short part-time' = less than twenty hours 'Moderate full-time' = 35-39 hours 'Very long full-time' = 50+ hours

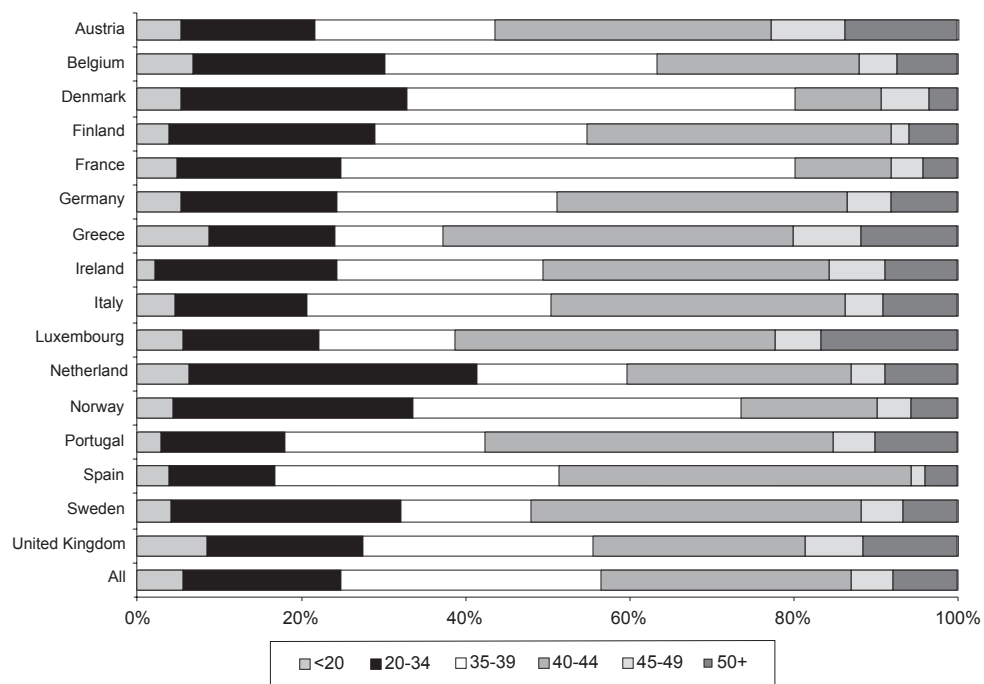
'Substantial part-time' = 20-34 hours 'Long full-time' = 40-49 hours

Table 9 and figure 1 presents the preferred hours of employed and job seeking men.⁹ There is less variation among men – between countries and within countries — in their working-time preferences than in the current working-time arrangements (compare with table 7 above). The dominant picture is that most men would prefer to work shorter hours than they currently do. In each country the average preferred hours of men is less than average current arrangements (compare with table 6 above). The standard deviation is also a little narrower, indicating less diversity within in each country in men's preferred number of hours than in their current practices. On average, across the 16 European countries men would prefer to work a 36.5 hour week, with male job seekers preferring slightly shorter working hours to the employed (35.3 compared to 36.7 hours). The average preferred hours cluster between 35-37 hours in 11 of the 15 countries, and between 34-39 hours in all of the countries.

⁸ The analysis was derived from two open-ended questions: 'In total, how many hours per week do you work at present – on average?' (Question 55) and 'Provided that you (and your partner) could make a free choice so far as working hours are concerned and taking into account the need to earn a living how many hours per week would you prefer to work at present?' (Question 56).

⁹ 'Job seekers' were defined in the survey as all those who were not employed but would like a job now or within five years. Taken together, the employed plus 'job seekers' encompassed 90% of all working-age men and 80% of all working-age women in the sample.

Figure 1 The preferred weekly working hours of men, by country



Note: Includes employed and 'job-seeking' men.

Source: Analysis of the Foundation's *Employment Options for the Future Survey*, 1998.

A distinction has been made in the analysis between 'short' and 'substantial' part-time hours and 'moderate', 'long' and 'very long' full-time hours (see box 22). Both short part-time hours (less than 20 per week) and very long full-time (50+ per week) are uniformly unpopular among men in every country. However, there are some national differences between men in working-time preferences. The largest proportion of men who prefer to work substantial part-time (20-34 hours) or short full-time (35-39 hours) are found in Belgium, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark: in these countries more than half of the male workforce prefer a working week of between 20-39 hours. These six countries – with the exception of Finland – already have some of the shortest average working hours for men (see table 6 above). One of the reasons may be that there is a widely established preference for shorter working-time in these countries that has been sustained and developed through a successful history of working-time reductions in previous collective agreements and legislation. The political context of the survey is also important, which took place in 1998. This was the same year that the French Aubry Law was passed and introduced a reduction to a 35-hour week to be implemented from the year 2000.¹⁰ It was also in 1998 that there was a widespread strike in the Danish private sector for shorter hours via extended holidays. In this period working-time reductions were also a topic of public debate in Belgium and the Netherlands, although this was not a particular focus in Norway (Barth and Torp, 2000; Boulin, 2000; Blumensaadt and Moller, 2000; Léonard and Delbar, 2000; Tijdens, 2000 and see Appendix). Another reason why preferences for the shortest working time are less widely expressed among men in countries where longer hours are currently worked is probably because of the size of the adjustment to their hours and income that this shift into short full-time hours would involve. Thus, their starting point affects their assessment of the feasibility of the alternatives. This suggests a 'stepping-ladder' process of adaptation in working-time preferences; shaped by past reforms, public debates, wage settlements and current working experiences.

¹⁰ 61% of the French respondents to the survey said that they wanted to reduce their hours, which was higher than the average for all 16 countries (51%) and higher than in any other individual country.

Table 9 Preferred weekly working hours for employed and job seeking men by country

	% Distribution of preferred weekly working hours in each country							Average (mean)	Standard deviation
	<20	20<35	35<40	40<45	45<50	50+	Total %		
Austria	5	16	22	34	9	14	100	38.4	11.9
Portugal	3	15	24	43	5	10	100	38.2	9.5
Ireland	2	22	25	35	7	9	100	37.4	10.0
Spain	4	12	35	43	2	4	100	37.0	6.9
Italy	5	16	30	36	4	9	100	36.9	9.3
Greece	9	15	13	43	8	12	100	36.7	13.2
UK	8	19	28	26	7	12	100	36.6	11.8
Germany	5	19	27	36	5	8	100	36.6	10.0
Sweden	4	28	16	40	5	7	100	36.2	9.2
Belgium	7	23	33	25	5	7	100	35.8	11.8
Finland	4	25	26	37	2	6	100	35.6	9.9
France	5	20	55	12	4	4	100	35.6	8.4
Netherlands	6	36	18	27	4	9	100	35.5	10.3
Norway	4	29	40	17	4	6	100	35.0	8.7
Denmark	5	28	47	11	6	3	100	34.3	9.2
EU15+N	6	19	32	30	5	8	100	36.5	9.9
All employed men								36.7	9.9
All job-seeking men								35.3	9.9

Note: The countries are ranked by average preferred hours. Luxembourg is not shown due to sample size limits, but it is included in the overall figure for all countries (EU15+N). 'Job seekers' were defined in the survey as all those who were not employed but would like a job now or within five years. Taken together, the employed plus 'job seekers' encompassed 90% of all working-age men and 80% of all working-age women in the sample.

Source: Analysis of the Foundation's *Employment Options for the Future Survey*, 1998.

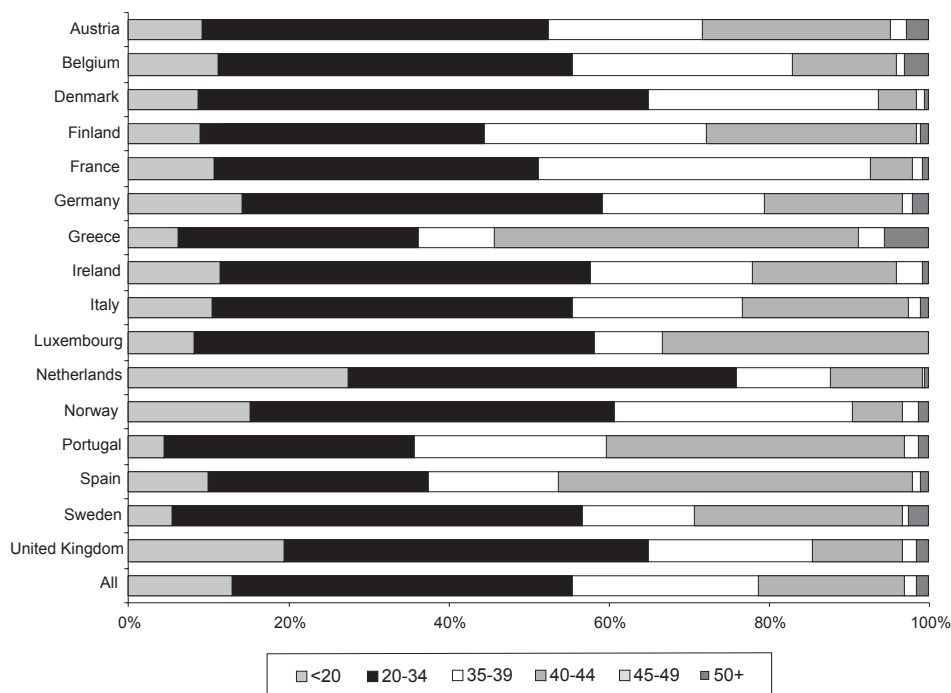
As for men, in each country the preferred hours of employed and job-seeking women are lower than current arrangements (compare with table 6 above), and on average the working-time preferences of job seeking and employed women are similar, at 30 hours per week across the 16 European countries (table 10 and figure 2). The discrepancy between actual and preferred hours is smaller on average for women than for men in most countries (compare tables 9 and 10 with table 6). At the European level, the average preferred working week is 3 hours shorter than the current average for women, compared to a five-hour gap for men (from 41.6 to 36.5 hours). Hence, if men and women were able to achieve their preferred number of working hours then the gender gap in the number of hours worked would diminish.

The proportion of women that prefers full-time work varies between countries, although most want to escape or avoid very long hours (50+). Two thirds of women in Greece, Portugal and Spain would prefer to work at least 35 hours a week; so would just over half of women in Finland (56%). The level falls to between 40-50% of women in most of the other countries, down to around a third in Denmark and the UK and around a quarter in the Netherlands. Working hours that cluster into the substantial part-time hours category (20-34 hours) are preferred by a large proportion of women in each country: over 40% of employed and job seeking women in most countries. The proportion of women that prefer substantial part-time hours is much higher than the proportion that currently work these hours in each country (see table 7 above), indicating a latent demand among women for this working hours arrangement. In contrast, short part-time hours (less than 20) are much less popular in every country. Sizeable minorities of women in the UK (20%) and the Netherlands (27%) favour short part-time hours, similar to the existing rate of women with short part-time jobs in both economies. However, in both countries there is a mismatch because many women with short part-time hours would like to work longer hours, while others would like to enter working arrangements with short part-time hours (Fagan, 2001). Across the 16 countries 46% of part-timers with short hours (less than 20) want to work

longer hours, on average another 15 per week, while only 7% want shorter hours. In comparison a higher proportion of those in substantial part-time jobs wanted to retain their current hours, and most of those who wanted to change their hours wanted an increase (Fagan, 2001: tables 31 and 32).

Overall, women's average preferred hours are shortest in the Netherlands, at 24.9 hours, where women's working hours are already the shortest. Less than 30 hours is also the preferred average for women in Ireland, the UK, Germany, Norway and Denmark. The average preferences for women in the other Member States are for longer hours ranging between 30-35. A key influence on women's working-time preferences is motherhood. Women are more likely to prefer shorter working hours – either short full-time or substantial part-time – if they are mothers with young children (Fagan and Warren, 2001). The average number of hours that mothers prefer to work increases from just over 25 a week when they have a child aged less than six years to just over 30 when their youngest child is at least 15 years old, with similar preferences for employed and job seeking mothers (Fagan, 2002: table 6.4). There is some variation in mothers' preferences between countries, particularly among non-employed women (Fagan, 2001). Part-time hours are more popular among mothers in some countries such as the UK and the Netherlands, where the social norms and limited public childcare facilities endorse this arrangement. Preferences for short full-time hours are more widespread among mothers in countries where public childcare services and other work-life balance measures to facilitate this form of employment are more extensive, such as the Nordic countries or France. However, other factors such as financial considerations and social norms concerning gender roles are also influential (see figure 1). For example, the demand for part-time work is lower among women in Portugal than in many other Member States despite the lack of public childcare services. These preferences in Portugal have arisen from a combination of a tradition of full-time employment for mothers reinforced by contemporary financial pressures and supported by reliance upon grandmothers to help with childcare (Perista, 2001). Furthermore, across most of the countries the differences in women's working-time preferences are not as large as might be expected despite quite different systems of childcare, working-time regulations and so forth: an average difference of two hours or less between women in Sweden and Portugal for example, or between women in the UK and Denmark.

Figure 2 The preferred weekly working hours of women, by country



Note: Includes employed and 'job-seeking' women.

Source: Analysis of the Foundation's *Employment Options for the Future Survey*, 1998.

So far we have seen that there is a clear desire for working-time reductions among full-timers, including an expansion in ‘substantial part-time hour’ arrangements. Table 11 shows that a large proportion of the employed in the EU15 and Norway want a reduction from full-time to part-time hours: 23% of all employed women and 19% of all employed men currently work full-time and would prefer to work part-time. The majority of part-timers want to retain this working hours arrangement and part-time employment is also the preferred option of large percentages of job seekers in each country — 38% of all job seekers in the EU15 and Norway overall (Fagan, 2001: table 52). In sum, the preference for part-time work exceeds the current rate of part-time work in most national economies. However, it should also be noted that many of those who work part-time, or want to work part-time, want to do so for a finite period of their lives,¹¹ for example when their children are young. Hence mechanisms to facilitate transitions between full-time and part-time hours are an important element of any policy to promote the expansion of part-time work.

Table 10 Preferred weekly working hours for employed and job seeking women by country

	% Distribution of preferred weekly working hours in each country							Average (mean)	Standard deviation
	<20	20<35	35<40	40<45	45<50	50+	Total %		
Greece	6	30	9	46	3	6	100	34.9	10.8
Spain	10	28	16	44	1	1	100	34.1	8.5
Portugal	4	32	24	37	2	1	100	33.9	8.4
Sweden	5	51	14	26	1	3	100	32.5	7.9
Finland	9	35	28	26	1	1	100	32.1	9.5
France	11	40	42	5	1	1	100	31.5	8.5
Austria	9	43	19	24	2	3	100	30.9	11.1
Belgium	11	45	28	12	1	3	100	30.6	10.6
Italy	11	45	21	21	1	1	100	30.1	9.8
Ireland	12	46	20	18	3	1	100	29.6	10.1
Denmark	9	56	28	5	1	1	100	29.5	8.7
Germany	14	45	20	18	1	2	100	29.1	10.5
Norway	15	46	30	6	2	1	100	29.1	10.5
UK	20	45	21	11	2	1	100	27.7	10.5
Netherlands	27	49	12	12	0	0	100	24.9	10.2
EU15+N	13	42	23	19	1	2	100	30.1	10.1
All employed women								30.2	10.0
All job seeking women								30.4	9.6

Note: The countries are ranked by average preferred hours. Luxembourg is not shown due to sample size limits, but it is included in the overall figure for all countries (EU15+N). ‘Job seekers’ were defined in the survey as all those who were not employed but would like a job now or within five years. Taken together, the employed plus ‘job seekers’ encompassed 90% of all working-age men and 80% of all working-age women in the sample.

Source: Analysis of the Foundation’s *Employment Options for the Future Survey*, 1998.

Comparing the situation in the different countries shows the distinctive position of the Netherlands as the ‘part-time capital of Europe’ (Visser and Hemerijck, 1997; Tijdens, 2000). A larger proportion of employed men work part-time in this country than elsewhere in Europe, and a further substantial proportion currently employed full-time would prefer to work part-time hours, so that 42% of employed men in the Netherlands prefer part-time work. However, a substantial proportion of employed men in Sweden, France and Norway aspire to the ‘Dutch model’, for around one in three employed men in these countries want part-time work. Part-time work is less popular among men in the other Member States, particularly in Portugal and Austria, but even in these two countries 15-20% of employed men would prefer part-time work. Part-time work is more

¹¹ Just over a third of the full-timers who would prefer to work part-time would like to do so for a period of five years or less (Fagan, 2001: table 38).

Table 11 Preferences for full-time and part-time employment among the employed, by country

Employed men		Row %				
	% Distribution of the employed by their preferences for full-time or part-time hours					
	Full-time + do not want part-time hours	Part-time + would prefer full-time hours	Full-time + would prefer part-time hours	Part-time + do not want full-time hours	Part-time for other reasons¹	
Austria	83	2	11	2	3	
Portugal	79	1	15	1	4	
Finland	78	1	19	0	2	
Belgium	76	2	19	2	1	
Germany	75	2	18	1	4	
Italy	75	3	17	1	4	
Denmark	74	0	19	2	5	
Spain	73	2	18	3	4	
UK	72	2	17	3	6	
Ireland	71	3	19	1	6	
Greece	70	4	20	2	4	
Norway	68	0	24	2	6	
France	67	2	26	2	3	
Sweden	62	3	26	2	7	
Netherlands	57	1	28	4	10	
EU15+N	72	2	19	2	5	

Employed women		Row %				
	% Distribution of the employed by their preferences for full-time or part-time hours					
	Full-time + do not want part-time hours	Part-time + would prefer full-time hours	Full-time + would prefer part-time hours	Part-time + do not want full-time hours	Part-time for other reasons¹	
Portugal	61	3	25	5	6	
Greece	59	11	22	2	6	
Finland	55	4	31	6	4	
Spain	52	9	21	8	10	
Austria	50	2	18	23	7	
Belgium	50	5	18	22	5	
Italy	46	6	32	11	5	
Ireland	45	3	26	17	9	
Denmark	42	4	24	18	12	
Germany	38	9	17	28	8	
France	34	11	33	16	6	
UK	38	3	17	31	11	
Norway	36	5	21	23	15	
Sweden	31	13	24	21	11	
Netherlands	23	1	16	46	13	
EU15+N	40	7	23	22	8	

Note: Most of the members of this group are employed part-time because they are students or have ill-health/disabilities. Luxembourg is not shown due to sample size limits, but it is included in the overall figure for all countries (EU15+N). The rate of part-time work differs from the results shown in the European Labour Force Survey for some countries, which may be due to differences in question wording.

Source: Analysis of the Foundation's *Employment Options for the Future Survey, 1998*.

popular among the employed women than the men in each country, associated with the gender division of labour around parenthood discussed above. At the same time a larger proportion of women than men are employed part-time because they could not find full-time work (7% of employed women compared to 2% of employed men), this is particularly so in Greece, France and Sweden. Part-time work is by far the majority

preference of women in the Netherlands, for only a quarter of employed women want to work full-time in this country. Over half of the employed women in the UK, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany and Ireland also prefer part-time work. In Germany women in the West Länder have a stronger preference for part-time work than those in the East Länder (Garhammer, 2000). The proportion of employed women who prefer part-time work is lower but still high in most of the other countries. Part-time employment is least popular in Spain, Finland, Portugal and particularly Greece, but even in Greece 22% of employed women work full-time and would prefer to be in part-time jobs. By adding together the proportion of women who want to move from full-time into part-time work and from part-time into full-time this provides a measure of the mismatch between women's jobs and their preferences in the different countries. This shows that the proportion of employed women who would prefer to move is particularly high in France (43%), Italy (38%), Sweden (37%), Finland (35%) and Greece (33%). In contrast less than 20% of employed women would prefer to change their status in the UK and the Netherlands. However, it should be remembered that many of the part-timers in the UK and the Netherlands work short hours and it is this group who are the most likely to want longer, but still part-time, hours (see Fagan, 2001: chapter 5, also Fagan, 1996; Plantenga, 1997).

Table 12 Perceived barriers to part-time working: all full-time employees

	% Who mentioned one or more of the following (multiple responses)				
	It would not be possible to do my current job part-time	My employer would not accept it	It would damage my career prospects	Part-timers have worse employment rights	Could not afford to work part-time
Netherlands	47	55	51	25	32
UK	63	60	53	66	61
Sweden	64	55	49	47	36
Denmark	52	59	45	50	28
Norway	53	53	44	48	30
Germany	53	60	56	43	43
France	61	54	46	35	54
Ireland	59	61	55	63	53
Austria	55	71	53	43	34
Belgium	55	50	50	29	37
Finland	42	45	32	40	35
Portugal	62	62	41	52	47
Spain	56	65	44	54	29
Italy	60	64	32	20	44
Greece	82	56	53	68	49
Women	47	48	42	39	40
Men	63	66	51	45	48
Would prefer part-time work	47	54	42	41	50
Do not want part-time work	63	61	49	43	30
EU15+N	58	59	48	43	44

Note: Countries are ranked by the existing rate of part-time employment, which is most widespread in the Netherlands. Luxembourg is not shown due to sample size limits, but it is included in the overall figure for all countries (EU15+N).

Source: Analysis of the Foundation's *Employment Options for the Future Survey*, 1998.

There are a number of disadvantages associated with working part-time in most countries, discussed in **National developments in part-time work**. Full-timers' perceptions of the disadvantages of working part-time did not vary that much between countries (table 12). The countries have been ranked according from the Netherlands, with the highest incidence of part-time work in the economy, down to Greece, with the lowest. Full-timers have broadly similar perceptions of the disadvantages of working part-time in countries where this

form of employment is more widely established as in countries where part-time employment is rare. No country scored consistently better than the others in terms of full-timers' perceptions of the disadvantages of part-time work.

More than half of full-time employees said that they did not think it would be possible to do their current jobs part-time, which only fell to less than half of full-timers in the Netherlands and Finland. In most countries the proportion of full-time employees who thought their employer would not accept them working part-time was similar or even higher than the proportion that thought their job could not be done on a part-time basis. Around half or more thought that part-time work would damage their career prospects, and it was only in Italy and Finland that this fear was less widespread.

Full-timers were less likely to mention inferior employment rights as a disadvantage associated with part-time work in the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and France. These are four of the countries where the principle of equal treatment was established relatively early in national labour law (Maier, 1994), and has been extensively developed in the Netherlands since the early 1980s. Forty per cent or more thought part-timers had unequal treatment in the other Member States, rising to over 60% in the UK, Ireland and Greece. Financial constraints were another barrier. This applied for over half the full-timers in the UK, France and Ireland. In contrast, this was an issue for less than a third of full-timers in Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Spain.

In contrast to the lack of a clear national distinction among full-timers, there is a clear gender differentiation. Women employed full-time perceive fewer barriers to part-time work than men. Women are particularly more likely to think that it would be possible to do their job on a part-time basis or that their employer would accept this arrangement. This is indicative of the gender segregation of employment, where part-time work is highly concentrated in female-dominated job areas.

Furthermore, full-timers of either sex who did not want to work part-time were more likely to identify these obstacles and barriers to working part-time than were full-timers who expressed a preference for part-time work. This suggests that preferences for particular working-time arrangements are influenced by the assessment of the career and financial costs incurred, and that in turn more people might prefer to work part-time if the associated penalties were reduced through policies to promote the quality of part-time work. Here the implementation of equal treatment combined with the new entitlements to request part-time hours that have begun to be established in a number of countries, notably the recent reforms in the Netherlands and Belgium (see **National developments in 'work-life' balance policies** (p. 20)) may help to reduce the barriers to working part-time. However, the message from this table is that the take-up of this entitlement to request part-time hours is still likely to be impeded by a number of organisational issues at the workplace as well as the loss of earnings.

Work schedules and their fit with family and other commitments

Clearly one of the reasons why people may prefer to adjust their working-time is to improve the fit between the time-demands of their jobs and those associated with family and other commitments outside of employment. Table 13 explores this question using people's answers in the Foundation's *European Working Conditions Survey 2000* to the question 'in general, do your working hours fit in with your family or social commitments outside work very well, fairly well or not at all well?' It should be noted that when 'satisfaction' questions such as these are asked in surveys they typically produce positive responses that should not be read simply at face value. More probing explorations about satisfaction in qualitative studies enable people to make more considered and nuanced assessments that reveal higher levels of dissatisfaction (e.g. Burchell et al., 2002). Furthermore, respondents may consider that their work schedule is compatible with family life because it has been selected strategically in the context of having to arrange particular forms of childcare, or in relation to other considerations such as the work schedules of their partners. If there was a change in their situation or their expectations about what 'compatible' standards are, for example due to changes in childcare services,

then it might be expected that the types of schedules assessed as ‘compatible’ would also change. Detailed and qualitative interviews would be necessary to obtain more considered opinions and to explore what people mean by ‘compatibility’ and what it is about their hours and other commitments that do or do not produce this sense of ‘compatibility’. Nonetheless, survey data provides some useful indications that have the advantage of permitting comparisons of the responses associated with various working conditions and domestic situations.

Men and women working long full-time hours (40 or more) are more likely to consider their working hours to be incompatible with family life and other commitments than those with shorter full-time or part-time hours. This finding is reinforced by other research that has also shown that full-timers who work long hours are the least satisfied with the amount of time that they have for family and leisure pursuits (Fagan, 1996). Hence part-timers report higher levels of ‘work-family’ compatibility than full-timers. Comparing men and women with and without dependent children reveals that mothers employed part-time are the most likely to report that their working hours are compatible with family life, and parents employed full-time the least likely, with those without dependent children falling in between. It is striking that there is no gender difference in the assessment made by parents employed full-time, although what fathers and mothers actually mean by ‘compatibility’ is likely to be quite different given the gendered division of care responsibilities in the home.

Table 13 Employed men and women’s assessment of the compatibility of their working hours with family and other commitments, EU15

Volume of hours

	% Who report that their working hours fit ‘poorly or not at all’ with family and social commitments		
	Men	Women	All
20 or less	17	9	11
20<30	14	7	8
30<35	23	12	16
35<40	15	17	16
40<48	22	23	23
48+	42	36	40
Total	22	16	19

Employment and parental status

	% Degree to which working hours are perceived to fit in with family and social commitments outside employment			
	Very well	Fairly well	Poorly/not at all	Total
Fathers with dependent children	27	48	25	100
Mothers employed full-time	27	48	25	100
Mothers employed part-time	50	41	8	100
Men without dependent children	31	49	20	100
Women without dependent children	40	45	15	100
All employed	34	47	19	100

Note: Dependent children are defined as aged under 15 years and living at home.

Source: *European Working Conditions Survey, 2000.*

The volume of hours is not the only relevant consideration, the schedule is also important. On one hand, work schedules that spill into the evening, night and weekends can be considered disruptive to family life in that they present coordination difficulties with the daily schedules of raising children or creating shared ‘family time’. On the other hand, such schedules may offer alternative opportunities for the coordination of employment with family life. Table 14 demonstrates the variation in the levels of compatibility reported for

different schedules. Men and women who work at least 35 hours a week are least likely to judge their work schedules to be compatible if they work long days or weekends on a regular basis, or some weekends in conjunction with long days, or evenings, nights or rotating shifts. Conversely, daytime, weekday work without long days is the most compatible; although the inclusion of some weekend work or some long days only raises the incompatibility score a few percentage points. Higher levels of work intensity also reduce the sense of 'compatibility', as does low levels of time autonomy. The table shows that the compatibility of schedules is influenced by the volume of hours worked for women working less than 35 hours per week are much less likely to report 'a poor fit' for each schedule than those men and women working longer hours.

Variable start and finish times are less compatible than fixed ones, particularly when the variation is set by the employer; but also when the workers have some influence in varying their hours. This appears to be paradoxical, since if workers have some autonomy to vary their start and finish times this might be expected to make their jobs more compatible with other activities. The explanation is likely to be found in the nature of the job, for this autonomy may be associated with a managerial or professional job that requires a commitment of long hours and thus the ability to influence start and finish times may provide insignificant relief from the other working-time demands of the job.

Table 14 Employed men and women's assessment of the compatibility of their working schedules with family and other commitments, EU15

Schedule type	% Who report that their working hours fit 'poorly or not at all' with family and social commitments			
	Men, 35+ hours	Women, 35+ hours	Women, <35 hours	All ¹
Daytime, weekday, no long days ²	6	9	4	6
Daytime, some weekend work, ³ no long days	8	17	5	10
Daytime, weekday, some long days	11	12	6	11
Daytime, regular weekend work, no long days	18	24	8	18
Daytime, some weekend, including long days	30	34	8	28
Daytime, weekday, regular long days	39	25	..	33
Daytime, regular weekend, including long days	38	34	35	37
Some evenings/nights, but not rotating shifts ⁴	37	31	13	28
Rotating shifts or permanent nights ⁵	35	32	18	31
Low level of work intensity	15	15	5	13
Some work intensity	21	20	11	19
Higher level of work intensity	38	32	14	32
Fixes own start and finish times	14	12	6	12
Start and finish times fixed by employer	17	20	9	16
Varies own start and finish times	27	22	10	22
Start and finish times varied by employer	44	36	13	36
Little working-time autonomy	28	27	12	24
Some working-time autonomy	18	16	8	16
More working-time autonomy	21	16	6	17
All	22	20	9	19

Notes:

1. '35+ hours' refers to people working at least 35 hours per week and '<35 hours' refers to people working less than 35 hours per week. Men working less than 35 hours per week are not shown separately in order to simplify the table, but are included in the overall 'all' column.
 2. A 'long day' is defined as working 10 hours or more. 'Some long days' are one-five per month, 'regular long days' equal at least six per month.
 3. 'Some' weekend work includes one-four days per month, 'regular' weekend work is more than four days per month.
 4. 'Some' evenings/nights includes people who report that their work schedules do not always fall into daytime hours, but are not part of shift rosters. Evenings are defined as 6-10pm and nights as 10pm-5am in the survey.
 5. Rotating shifts includes all those with an alternating shift pattern during daytime hours or day and night shifts or permanent nights. It excludes those with permanent morning or afternoon shifts.
- ..' indicates data not shown because of sample size limitations.

Source: *European Working Conditions Survey, 2000.*

Further exploration using multivariate analysis showed that long working hours, ‘unsocial’ schedules (long days or working during the evening/night), and high work intensity each have an independent, negative effect on men and women’s assessment of the degree of compatibility of their working-time arrangements with their family and social life (Fagan and Burchell, 2002). Of these three aspects of working-time it was working ‘unsocial’ schedules that had the most negative impact. Working-time autonomy offers some respite, but this is relatively weak compared with the negative effect of working unsocial or long hours. Gender and occupational status are insignificant factors once the actual details of working hours and schedules are taken into account (Fagan and Burchell, 2002).¹²

Some workers do find ‘non-standard’ schedules to be compatible with their other commitments. For example one quarter of men and women working rotating shifts report that this fits in very well with their other commitments, but this proportion is much lower than that reported by people who do not work rotating shifts. So it seems that while ‘non-standard’ full-time work schedules may suit some, the working-time elements that contribute to a greater sense of work-family compatibility are regular, daytime schedules without long days or long working weeks; in other words the ‘standard working week’; that has been the benchmark of industrial relations since the earliest negotiations about regulations. Yet this is in tension with many of the schedules that are being introduced to provide companies with more flexibility to cover variable or extended operating requirements.

Conclusions

The focus of working-time negotiations and legislation has shifted in emphasis since the mid-1970s. Collective working-time reductions remain on the agenda of the trade unions and have been achieved in some sectors and nationally in some countries such as France, but major reductions in full-time hours have been comparatively rare. Instead, there has been a growing emphasis upon ‘modernising’ working-time through flexibility agreements (new schedules, more variable hours, and longer settlement periods including annualisation) and decentralisation of regulations to company or plant level. Measures to promote part-time work and to provide equal treatment for part-time and other ‘atypical’ workers have also been developed. More recently, working-time flexibility to meet the needs of works – so-called ‘family-friendly arrangements’ or ‘work-life balance’ has risen up the policy agenda. These tendencies in working-time policies and debates can be observed in varying degrees in most of the EU Member States and have been encouraged further by the EU employment guidelines which explicitly encourage the social partners to negotiate flexible working arrangements, part-time work and working-time reductions. Improving the ‘work-life balance’ is also set as an explicit objective in these guidelines as well as in the EU Social Policy Agenda.

A number of aspects of current working-time arrangements have been highlighted in this review. Firstly, women’s employment rates although rising are still notably lower than those for men in a number of Member States. Secondly, long working hours are still prevalent in Europe – for example more than one in five employed men and nearly one in ten employed women usually work 48 or more hours a week. Thirdly, part-time work has spread, mainly among women. Both the incidence of long hours working and of part-time work varies quite a lot between countries. Fourthly, there is also quite a variety in the pattern of working schedules for both full-time and part-time workers. For example, only around one in four employed men and one in three employed women have ‘standard weekdays’ schedules; conversely many of the full-time and part-time employed have schedules that involve weekend work, long days, rotating shifts or regular night-work. Finally, the degree of working-time autonomy is quite limited for many employees, and is generally greatest for those in higher occupational positions.

Current working-time arrangements are out of step with the preferences of many men and women. In particular, long full-time hours are unpopular and provide a poor fit with family commitments, as well as

¹² As well as having negative effects on the issue of ‘work-family’ compatibility, working arrangements that involve long hours, unsocial schedules or intense workloads also increase the incidence of work-related illness, independent from the effects of other working conditions (Fagan and Burchell, 2002).

being detrimental to health. Part-time work is the preferred arrangement for many: 23% of employed women and 19% of employed men currently work full-time and would prefer part-time work, most part-timers want to remain part-time, and many job seekers would prefer part-time rather than full-time work. The preferred arrangements are either substantial part-time hours (20-34) or short full-time hours (35-39) and the proportion of the workforce who would like to work these hours far exceeds the proportion that currently do so. On average across the 16 European countries men would prefer to work a 36.5-hour week and women a 30-hour week. There are some national differences in working-time preferences, for example in men's willingness to work part-time or whether women prefer substantial part-time hours rather than short full-time ones, but overall there is more similarity across countries in working-time preferences than in current working-time arrangements. More opportunities to take time off in compensation for over-time work, and to take sabbaticals would also be welcomed. The type of schedule that men and women consider is the most compatible with their family and social lives is the 'standard working week' of regular, daytime schedule without long days or long working weeks. Yet this practice is being eroded by many of the schedules that are being introduced to provide companies with more flexibility to cover variable or extended operating requirements.

The popularity of part-time work is subject to a number of caveats concerning the quality of these jobs. One is that there is little demand among the workforce for very short part-time hours (less than 20 per week). The second is that there are a number of obstacles to working part-time: for many consider that it would be difficult to arrange part-time hours in their current job, and that working part-time incurs inferior career prospects and employment rights. Financial constraints were another barrier. A third caveat is that part-time hours are often wanted for a finite period only — for example to care for young children or to undertake further training — after which longer hours may be preferred. The fourth concern is that there is a mismatch of jobs and workers, for while many want to move into part-time work, involuntary part-time work remains a problem for nearly one in five part-timers. It must also be recognised that while many mothers prefer part-time work as a work-family reconciliation measure this assessment is shaped by the social context — the availability of childcare services and other work-life balance measures, as well as financial considerations and social norms concerning gender roles. Hence some mothers who prefer part-time would prefer full-time work if childcare services were more extensive, or if full-time working hours were shorter and organised in more 'family-friendly' ways.

These results indicate that one target for employment policy should be to reduce the incidence of long weekly working hours. The 48-hour weekly limit set by the Working Time Directive should be lowered to curtail this practice, and the social partners should be encouraged to negotiate further collective reductions in full-time hours. Furthermore, the Commission's review of the implementation of the Working Time Directive identified two principles that are relevant for strengthening working-time legislation and the detail of collective agreements (CEC, 2000). One is the notion of 'self-determined' working hours and the exemption of these contracts from regulation, the other is the complexity of measuring working-time for those who are covered by the regulations. The Commission concludes that the definition of 'self-determined' working hours has been applied too liberally in some countries, particularly the UK, and that its use should be restricted to a more limited range of activities. This recommendation is important to implement given that a growing proportion of the workforce is in managerial and professional activities where working hours lean towards 'self-determined' arrangements in conjunction with work intensification associated with new 'flexible' work practices. Secondly, the Commission concludes that for those workers covered by collective regulation there is a risk that complex distinctions between regular hours and over-time, and the lengthening of reference periods used for averaging hours in flexible working-hours agreements undermine the efficacy of upper regulatory limits. This is exacerbated where workloads have become more intense or variable and there is a shift away from weekly to longer settlement periods. Both 'self-determination' and flexible working hours agreements present challenges to the coverage and efficacy of existing regulations, and the measurement of working hours for some activities. These include issues such as how to expose and calculate 'hidden' over-time; whether it is more effective to regulate the number of days rather than hours worked for some (managerial and professional) occupations; and whether schemes where actual weekly hours vary

considerably around an average over a reference period (e.g. annualisation) require upper limits for the actual working week. Another tool that may help to curtail long working hours for workers who are deemed to 'self-determine' their hours is a requirement that companies develop time-budget accounting methods for typical workloads so that they can demonstrate that workers are not obliged to work excessive hours due to unrealistic workloads and the associated stress, which may contravene health and safety regulations.

There are a number of policy issues raised in relation to part-time work. The policy objective should be to develop part-time work as a high quality reconciliation measure rather than a poor compromise, and this requires activity on two fronts. One is to improve the quality of part-time jobs, including working hours that are designed to accommodate domestic schedules. The other is to ensure that full-time work is a genuine alternative for those that want it through increasing the availability of childcare services and other 'work-family' reconciliation measures.

Taking the quality of part-time work first, this has been improved by the implementation of the principle of equal treatment but additional measures are needed because part-time work remains concentrated in a narrow range of lower status service occupations with low pay, inferior training and career prospects, and low pension and social protection entitlements. Further effort is needed to deepen the application of the equal treatment principle with full-timers in equivalent occupations, to raise the working conditions of all workers in those jobs where part-time work is concentrated, and to promote part-time work in a wider range of higher-level occupations. Mechanisms to facilitate transitions between full-time and part-time hours are an important way of promoting part-time work in a wider range of occupations and to enable people to work part-time for a finite period. However, the take-up of such entitlements is still likely to be impeded by a number of organisational obstacles at the workplace as well as the loss of earnings. Examples of best practice and evaluation studies concerning the development of regulations and agreements to improve the quality of part-time work at company, sector and national level are instructive. One important example is the Netherlands where there has been a concerted policy effort to promote equal treatment of part-timers in all aspects of employment and social protection combined with the new entitlements for employees to request part-time hours. Similar entitlements to switch to part-time hours for finite periods have also been introduced in a number of other countries. More generally, the Employment Guidelines should encourage the National Action Plans for employment to attend to the development and evaluation of measures to enhance the 'quality' of part-time work and the right to request part-time hours, and not just the quantity of part-time jobs.

An expansion in good quality part-time work in conjunction with shorter full-time working hours will make it easier for women and men to combine employment with the time commitments of family responsibilities. However, to enable parents to find their preferred arrangements increased childcare services and other 'work-family' measures are also needed. This will help to raise women's employment rates and may contribute to a renegotiation of the gender division of labour within households as well. Maternity and parental leave entitlements and public funding of childcare has been extended in most industrialised countries in recent years. However, there are still large areas of unmet demand for childcare. Eldercare services are also underdeveloped relative to the growing demand of an ageing European population and the development and implementation of leave entitlements to enable the employed to care for sick children and adult relatives is still in its infancy in most countries. Several issues remain outstanding in relation to parental leave as well: for few can afford to take it when it attracts low or no earnings replacement, and lack of support from personnel and line managers at the workplace generally creates another obstacle for parents wishing to take parental leave. Take-up rates for parental leave are particularly low among fathers. Targeted incentives to encourage men to take parental leave are important, for otherwise parental leave helps to integrate women into employment but at the same time reinforces gender segregation and the 'mummy track' whereby only women reduce their working-time to take account of family responsibilities.

In relation to working-time adjustments and flexibility measures that are designed to enable workers to improve their work-life balance there have been some developments in national policy and collective

bargaining across the Member States, stimulated in part by the European Employment Strategy. However, overall working-time agreements that are oriented towards employees' working-time needs and preferences remain uncommon, particularly in the private sector. The social partners are explicitly encouraged to negotiate on this issue in the Employment Guidelines and the recent Directive adopted in February 2002 to establish a national framework for informing and consulting employees may help to stimulate workplace discussion and negotiation on 'work-life balance' issues in some companies.¹³ However, it seems likely that additional measures will be required to encourage the social partners to negotiate on this issue, and the evidence indicates that statutory entitlements are the most effective means of stimulating higher and more even provision across firms.

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¹³ This Directive was adopted following an earlier directive that provided for worker involvement in European companies, to accompany the Regulation on the European Company Statute (a new form of company incorporated at EU level) that was adopted in October 2001 (EIROnline 2001a).

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Appendix

Summary of the main regulations on full-time weekly working hours and associated proposals in the EU Member States and Norway, 2001

Country	Legislation on weekly hours ¹	Additional detail about collective agreements
Austria	<p>40-hour week/eight-hour day Over-time up to five hours/week</p> <p>Weekly hours may be varied up to 50 by agreement if the average 40-hour week is maintained.</p> <p>Over-time paid at 1.5 premium of basic rate for hours in excess of 40. Additional hours worked in excess of contract and up to the 40-hour threshold are paid at normal rate.</p>	<p>Collective agreements establish additional limits below the statutory limits in many sectors and may permit more over-time. Many collective agreements set double rate premium for hours worked at nights, on public holidays and on Sundays.</p>
Belgium	<p>Reduced from 40 to 39-hour week from 1 January 1999 in an intersectoral agreement.</p> <p>In 2000 the Minister for Employment and Labour encouraged the social partners to debate reduction to a 38-hour week to be achieved in stages. In the social partners' 2001-2 intersectoral agreement they agreed to call on lower-level negotiators to reduce the maximum working week from 39 to 38 hours by 2003.</p>	<p>Sector agreements establish limits below a 39-hour week for over 90% of employees. For example, a 35-hour week is established in the banking, finance and commerce sectors.</p> <p>Flexible working hours are mainly negotiated at the enterprise level, and there is a trend in sectoral agreements to set frameworks that permit greater flexibility to be negotiated in enterprises.</p>
Denmark	<p>37-hour/week introduced in 1991 (established in collective agreements, which have the force of law).</p> <p>The Holiday Act (adopted May 2000) increased employees' flexibility relating to the taking of annual leave entitlements.</p>	<p>80% of the workforce is covered by collective agreements. Most agreements also stipulate over-time premium or time off in lieu and limits on the volume of over-time.</p> <p>White-collar employees can work up to 45 hours per week, compensated by time off in a different week.</p> <p>In 1998–2000 working-time reductions in the form of increased holiday entitlements (three-five days) were achieved in many collective agreements. The average annual vacation prior to these extensions was five weeks.</p> <p>In 2000 the reference period for working-time flexibility in the industrial sector was increased from six to 12 months, although the average working week remained 37 hours.</p>
Finland	<p>40-hour week/eight-hour day, annualised settlement. 1996 law permits collective agreements that allow greater room for local negotiation.</p> <p>Weekly hours may be varied over a 52-week reference period if the average 40-hour week is maintained.</p>	<p>Collective agreements cover over 80% of the workforce. Local agreements on working time are increasing, with a growing focus on flexibility.</p> <p>36.25-hour/week in public sector and white-collar agreements.</p>

Country	Legislation on weekly hours ¹	Additional detail about collective agreements
France	1982—2000 seven laws dealing with working time passed. Including <i>Robien law</i> (June 1996) to encourage working time reduction in companies. <i>The Aubry law</i> (June 1998) reduced the statutory limit from 39-hour/week to 35-hour/week from 1 January 2000 for companies with more than 20 employees. The <i>2nd Aubry Law</i> (February 2000) extended this requirement to small companies from 1 January 2002.	The legislation sets framework that obliges collective bargaining on working time at sector and company level. Bargaining is increasingly decentralised to the company level. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By November 2000 around 4.6 million people were covered by working-time reduction agreements negotiated since June 1998. • Many agreements on working-time reductions were accompanied by moderation in pay rises and sometimes by pay freezes. • Under the legislation agreements can either safeguard or create jobs ('defensive' and 'offensive' agreements); over 90% were of the 'offensive' type. • Overall, the French government estimates that almost 252,000 jobs have either been safeguarded or created.
Germany	48-hour/week In 2000 employees gained the legal right to request a reduction in working hours to part-time, which the employer may refuse only if there is good business reasons.	35-40 hour/week widely established in collective agreements, which cover the majority of the workforce. Average annual paid leave is 31 days. After the negotiated reductions in weekly working-time achieved during the 1980s and 1990s, recent debate and negotiation has focused on lifetime working hours. In 2000 partial early retirement was a key focus, as were 'working-life time accounts' with the latter introduced in the steel industry.
Greece	48-hour/week for manufacturing. 40-hour/week is legally binding in the General Collective Agreement for other sectors. The Ministry of Labour sets the maximum permissible over-time hours per worker by sector every six months. Legislation to reform Industrial Relations adopted in December 2000, includes provisions relating to working time and over-time and conditions of part-time work.	A number of collective agreements set a limit less than 40/hour week. The lowest limit is in the public sector (37.5 hour/week). The introduction of the 35-hour week was one of the key bargaining demands of the trade unions in 2000, but no progress was made.
Ireland	The <i>Organisation of Working Time Act</i> (1997) specifies a maximum 48-hour/week (introduced into national law to incorporate the EU Working Time Directive). The law permits fewer derogations than the Directive, enforces a premium for Sunday working and outlaws 'zero hours' contracts. The Act also introduces an onus on employers to recognise employees' family responsibilities in their working-time policies.	The issue of working-time reduction does not have a high profile at governmental level, but it has become an increasingly important topic for collective bargaining, mainly at national-level agreements, where some unions are using the new 48-hour limit as a lever for further negotiated reductions and/or annualisation.

Country	Legislation on weekly hours ¹	Additional detail about collective agreements
Italy	<p>40-hour week introduced in 1997 (the 1997 law does not specify the daily limit anymore, so there is some debate about whether the eight-hour day has been revoked). Collective agreements have the power to determine the reference period (not exceeding one year) over which the average working week should not exceed 40-hours. Over-time maximum is two hours per day and 12 hours per week. The law introduces time banking (banca ore) that allows employees to choose whether to receive time off in lieu or payment for over-time. There are also incentives for collective negotiations of working-time reductions via reduced social security contributions for employers as a work-sharing measure.</p> <p>This 1997 Act replaces the previous statutory regulation, established in a 1923 Act, of a 48 hour week/eight-hour day</p>	<p>A 40-hour week/five-day week was already established in most collective agreements by the early 1970s. Lower limits set in some collective agreements, including: Public sector 36-hour/week, banking and finance 38-hour/week.</p> <p>In 2000 working-time flexibility is a key collective bargaining theme (extended reference periods for averaging hours, annualised hours etc.).</p>
Luxembourg	<p>40-hour week/eight-hour day</p> <p>A maximum of two hours over-time per day; exemptions may be granted by ministerial authorisation.</p>	<p>Companies may opt for a four-week reference period under the 1999 National Action Plan for Employment (work organisation plans 'POT' scheme). The average working week must not exceed 40 hours, the maximum weekly hours must not exceed 48 and the maximum daily hours must not exceed 10.</p> <p>In 2000, the extension of the reference period for working time was reformed in a number of collective agreements. In total 47 companies had introduced 'POT' schemes by 30 April, 2000.</p> <p>In 2000 the two principle unions (LCGB and OGB-L) called for legislation to introduce a 35-hour week and a 6th week of annual leave. The government opposes this and favours collective bargaining on this and other working-time reforms.</p>
Netherlands	<p>40-hour/week over a 13-week period (maximum nine-hour day and 45-hour week) (1996 Working Hours Act).</p> <p>By collective agreement daily hours may be extended to 12, as long as average weekly hours do not exceed 60 over a four-week reference period (and do not exceed 48 hours over a 13-week period).</p> <p>The Adjustment of Working Hours Act, governing the flexible organisation of working time came into force on 1 July 2000. This gives employees the right to request an individual</p>	<p>90% of employees are covered by collective agreements. Over half of the collective agreements have a 36-hour week, including the public sector.</p> <p>The right to request part-time hours is widely established in collective agreements (pre-dating the legislation in 2000).</p> <p>In 1999 the social partners reached a policy agreement within the Bipartite Labour Foundation (STAR) on increasing the options for individual employees within collective agreements via a</p>

Country	Legislation on weekly hours ¹	Additional detail about collective agreements
Netherlands <i>(continued)</i>	reduction to part-time hours or an increase to full-time hours. Employers may only refuse on the basis that it will cause serious operational problems for the organisation.	multiple-choice model in which employees have some scope to trade time and money (document 'Moving towards customised conditions of employment'). It remains to be seen how widely the policy model is implemented, for the recommendations of STAR are not legally binding.
Norway	40-hour week/nine hour day established in the Work Environment Act. More liberal rules for managers and certain occupations. Tighter rules for weekends, evenings, nights and shift work. Average weekly hours may vary up to 48-hours, as long as the 40-hour maximum is maintained over a reference period of up to 52-weeks. Over-time limited to a maximum of 10 hours per week, 25 hours during four successive weeks and a total 200 hours per year.	Collective agreements cover about 75% of the workforce. 37.5-hour/week (usually 7.5 hours daily, Monday-Friday) is standard in most sector collective agreements since 1987. In 2000 working-time reductions in the form of increased holiday entitlements were achieved in a number of collective agreements. Current entitlement is 21 working days (plus about 10 public holidays) per annum, this was extended by two days in 2001 and a further two days in 2002.
Portugal	The 1990 Economic and Social Agreement introduced a progressive negotiated reduction from a 44-hour/week to a 41-hour/week (Law 398/91). A 40-hour/week was introduced in legislation in 1996 (Law 21/96), following the failure of the agreed reduction to be widely implemented through collective agreement in the previous 5 years. A 50-hour week may be worked as long as the 40-hour average is maintained over a four-month reference period (or up to 12-months by collective agreement). Over-time is restricted to 200 hours per year since 1991 (Decree-Law 398/91), which is a relaxation of the previous limit of 160 hours. Collective agreements can agree different reference periods to the three-month period set in law.	Public sector 35-hour/week. Many private sector collective agreements set a limit below 40 hour/week but the effectiveness of regulations is limited in some sectors. For example, the 40-hour week has not been established in the textile industry. The 1996/99 Strategic Concertation Agreement emphasised a number of measures to adapt working-time and work organisation to promote work-sharing alongside the reduction of working-time, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reduction of over-time; • The promotion of part-time work (Law 103/99); • The use of partial retirement schemes; • The organisation of employment-training; schemes with temporary replacements made by recruiting unemployed persons. Union confederations propose a 35-hour week, two consecutive days rest per week (weekend in principle), limits on over-time and an increase in annual leave to 25 working days. Opposed by the employers' confederations, which emphasise more flexibility in working hours.
Spain	The Workers' Statute (LET) established a 40-hour/week in 1983. Weekly hours may be higher if a 40-hour week is maintained over a collectively agreed reference period.	35-hour/week in many collective agreements, usually this has been achieved in exchange for more flexibility in working-time or work organisation. Some small additional progress made towards a 35-hour week in some collective agreements made in 2000. Regulations on over-time are limited or poorly enforced.

Country	Legislation on weekly hours ¹	Additional detail about collective agreements
Sweden	40-hour week introduced in 1973, following a series of statutory reductions since the 48-hour week maximum was introduced in 1920. Over-time is limited to 48 hours during a four-week period (50 hours per calendar month), up to a maximum of 200 hours per year.	Collective agreements cover the majority of the workforce. Deviations are possible in collective agreements, but 75% of collective agreements have 40-hour/week limits and longer hours are rare.
UK	48-hour/week (introduced into national law to incorporate the EU Working Time Directive), averaged over a 17-week reference period. The UK is the only member state where the government negotiated a derogation allowing employees to 'opt out' of the 48-hour limit. The removal of this 'opt out' is currently a matter of dispute between the government and employers associations versus the trade unions.	Less than half of the workforce is covered by collective agreements. Lower limits are established by collective agreements in some sectors, notably: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering 37.5-hour/week (this sector has traditionally led the way in achieving working-time reductions in the UK, most recently in the late 1980s/early 1990s); • Public sector 37-hour/week (achieved in a 1997 'single status' agreement for manual and non-manual local government workers which reduced the 39-hour week for manual and craft workers in local government in 1999 to a 37-hour week); • Banking/finance 35-hour week. <p>The current working-time debate centres largely on the implementation of the EU Working Time Directive.</p> <p>The most vocal union on working-time reduction at present are the main school teachers' unions, which are calling for a 35-hour week in the context of rising workloads. The train drivers' union have also called for a 35-hour week.</p>

Note: There are a number of derogations and additional details in the different countries for certain sectors and occupations, notably managers; and different settlement periods for the averaging of weekly hours. Annual hours vary according to leave entitlements. See the national reports for additional information.

Source: The national reports: Barth and Torp, 2000; Biagi et al., 2000; Borsenberger, 2000; Boulin, 2000; Blumensaadt and Moller, 2000; Fagan, 2000; Garhammer, 2000; Katsimi and Tsakloglou, 2000; Tjzens, 2000; Léonard and Delbar, 2000; Nyberg, 2000; ÖBIG, 2000; Perista, 2000; Salmi et al., 2000; Villagómez, 2000; Wickham, 2000; supplemented by EIROnline, 2000, 2001b, 2002; Evans et al., 2001; The Foundation, 2002.