



Eurofound

# Fourth European Working Conditions Survey: Contribution to policy development

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# Executive summary

## Introduction

The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) offers a detailed analysis of various aspects of working life across the European Union, based on both qualitative and quantitative research. The survey is prepared every five years by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), starting with the first survey in 1991. The fourth EWCS was conducted in 2005, with the initial results reported by Eurofound in 2006, and then in greater detail and more languages in 2007. Since then, a number of secondary research analyses of particular themes and issues have been undertaken on behalf of Eurofound, the results of which became progressively available during 2008 and 2009.

This report reviews the policy contribution of the fourth EWCS, paying particular attention to the:

- contribution that the survey currently makes to debates and action regarding specific EU social and employment policies and concerns;
- potential contribution of the survey in identifying new policy concepts that can capture more complex concerns, in the way that ‘flexicurity’ and ‘job quality’ have done in previous research.

The report is based on a mixture of detailed desk research covering the survey results, secondary analyses and other research reports, together with face-to-face discussions with European Commission officials, European social partner representatives and researchers who have worked with the survey.

## Policy context

In its efforts to combat social exclusion and encourage ‘balanced economic growth’, the EU Treaty highlights as one of its key objectives the promotion of employment, and improved living and working conditions. The Treaty, in turn, provides the framework within which specific policies are pursued in different ways and by different groups either within the individual EU Member States or across the EU as a whole. Nevertheless, within this broad framework, differences can arise – for example, in the types of issues to be pursued, by whom and how they are to be pursued, and in terms of the level of priority attached to these issues either by individual countries, various groups or over time.

Given this wide diversity, the EWCS offers a unique source of comparative information on working conditions across the EU, as well as highlighting increasingly important issues that arise as the EU economy faces major demographic challenges. This report acknowledges and describes the contribution that the EWCS has made to current policy concerns through its comprehensive findings on work-related issues, some of which are summarised in the report. It also goes one step further by assessing the survey’s ability to provide insights into new or emerging themes and policy concerns, on which those most concerned can reflect – thus offering a new framework for the development of longer-term policy thinking.

## Key findings

### Reporting of the fourth EWCS results

The first overall message of the fourth EWCS in 2006 was that ‘European workers are satisfied with their working conditions’, although it noted that ‘working conditions vary considerably between individual Member States, between “old” and “new” Member States and also between sectors, women and men and different age groups’. Moreover, a 2007 analysis revealed that only a third of workers feel that their jobs offer good career prospects, while another third consider that their health and safety is at risk because of their job.

Since the initial results of the fourth EWCS were disseminated, eight secondary analysis reports have also been published, giving a more in-depth analysis of key work-related themes, such as: convergence and divergence; the sector perspective; the gender perspective; ageing; work organisation; flexicurity and employability, working time/intensity; and technology and working conditions.

These findings have been widely reported in the European and national press, alerting various audiences to the challenges that such issues raise, as well as indicating where there has, or has not, been progress over time.

### Contribution of the EWCS to current policy concerns

The relationship between the findings of the fourth EWCS and current policy concerns is addressed under the following six broad policy headings:

- general labour market issues;
- workplace issues with an important legal dimension;
- workplace issues with an important managerial dimension;
- workforce capacity and performance;
- gender-related issues;
- EU-level concerns.

Using this framework, the report highlights areas where the EWCS contributes significantly to current policy debates and concerns – such as in relation to job quality, job satisfaction, risks at work, work organisation, flexibility of working time, and work intensity. At the same time, the analysis underlines areas not adequately addressed by the survey – most notably, with regard to skills and learning, as well as mobility. Some detailed examples of the contribution of EWCS data to specific policy areas are included in the report.

### Contribution to future policy

Because the EWCS collects data on a range of issues from a representative sample of households, it is possible not only to present comparative information on specific issues, but also to provide insights into new or emerging themes and policy concerns. In this respect – and addressing the second major objective of the analysis – the report draws on this rich body of research to suggest the following six points of policy intersection, which future policy may need to address:

- work–life balance and gender roles at home and work;
- high-quality employment and modern management;
- flexibility, security and confidence at work and in the labour market;
- social inequalities and workplace inequalities;
- sustainable workforces and work intensity;
- convergence and cohesion in working conditions.

### Strengths and limitations of the EWCS

The EWCS is an invaluable resource, routinely identifying new trends, issues and challenges at the workplace – in both the ‘new’ and ‘old’ Member States – to which employers, employees and their representatives and governments must all respond. Moreover, the wide range of information in the EWCS provides opportunities for multidimensional analyses of relationships between different aspects of working life.

Nevertheless, some limitations of the survey are also highlighted, including:

- its scale – the relatively small sample sizes at national level;
- its infrequency – as it is carried out only every five years, it cannot be used for monitoring short-term policy developments;
- the way in which inter-country comparisons are liable to be affected by cultural norms or everyday expectations.

### Policy pointers

To strengthen the policy impact of the EWCS and bring its findings to an even wider audience, the report recommends the following:

- relating more of the published findings of the EWCS to existing EU policy frameworks and agenda, such as those used in the Commission’s factsheets, as well to the Eurofound’s own conceptual framework;
- presenting the extensive results of the secondary analyses in a succinct, comprehensive and non-technical form, to make them more accessible to policy audiences as well as to the research community;
- reviewing the coverage of the EWCS in light of current and future EU and national policy agendas and considering the extent to which some EWCS results, such as those on working time, could be more closely related to other relevant data sources, such as the EU’s Labour Force Survey;
- encouraging EU Member States to invest more in both national surveys and in the development of the EWCS;
- developing the full long-term potential of the EWCS as a European and national policy tool, similar to the way in which the EU’s Labour Force Survey has been progressively strengthened.

## Aim of the report

The purpose of this report is to present the main policy-relevant findings and lessons from the results of the fourth European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), which provides a detailed and comprehensive review of key aspects of working life and of the relationship between working life and life outside work.

The EWCS is conducted by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), which was established by Council Regulation (EEC) 1365/75, and which states, in Article 2:

- 1. The aim of the Foundation shall be to contribute to the planning and establishment of better living and working conditions through action designed to increase and disseminate knowledge likely to assist this development.*
- 2. With this aim in view, the tasks of the Foundation shall be to develop and to pursue ideas on the medium- and long-term improvement of living and working conditions in the light of practical experience and to identify factors leading to change. The Foundation shall take the relevant Community policies into account when carrying out its tasks. It shall advise the Community institutions on foreseeable objectives and guidelines by forwarding in particular scientific information and technical data.*

In this light, this report seeks to assess the contribution that the survey makes to addressing existing policy concerns – for which a reasonably comprehensive policy framework is used – and then goes on to present some possible new policy themes, concerns and perspectives, drawing upon the rich material available from EWCS-based research analyses, notably those undertaken in the Eurofound’s own secondary analyses.

Finally, on the basis of discussions with a number of policy users and researchers familiar with the EWCS database and reports, this report suggests areas where the survey might most fruitfully be developed and exploited in the future for policy development purposes.

The report is based on:

- detailed desk research covering the initial results of the fourth EWCS, the eight secondary analysis reports commissioned by Eurofound and a variety of other research reports using EWCS material, including those by the European Commission in relation to flexibility, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in relation to work and family life and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in relation to job quality;
- face-to-face discussions with European Commission officials, European social partner representatives and researchers who have worked with the fourth and previous EWCS results.

## Coverage and content of the EWCS

The EWCS offers a detailed review of various aspects of working life and of the relationship between working life and life outside work, based on a sample of almost 30,000 workers across the EU and in other European countries. The survey provides information about the type of work undertaken by those who are selected and interviewed – some 84% of which are employees and 16% are self-employed.

In Eurofound's words, the objective of the survey is to:

- assess and quantify the working conditions of workers across European countries on a harmonised basis;
- analyse relationships between different aspects of working conditions;
- identify groups at risk and issues of concern/progress;
- monitor trends;
- contribute to the Lisbon Strategy on quality of work and employment.

As such, the survey collects data on matters such as working time arrangements, and the duration and type of work contract, but it also collects information about issues of work organisation and working practices – such as the degree of autonomy, the ability to modify working arrangements, the extent of team working, the nature of hierarchical relationships and so on – as well as more wide-ranging information about everyday workplace issues and concerns, notably with respect to health and safety, but also with regard to such issues as work pressures, stress and harassment.

The fourth EWCS 2005 survey was preceded by surveys in 2000–2001, 1995 and 1991. The content of the survey has evolved over time. Of the 63 main questions asked in 2005 (more than 100 when including subsidiary questions), some 31 were unchanged from 2000–2001, 26 were modified and six were new compared with 2000–2001. This has served to keep the survey up to date in relation to policy concerns, and has helped to progressively improve the quality and precision of its findings, but it has also limited the possibility to measure developments over time in certain respects.

## Key messages from the EWCS 2005

### 2006 presentation

In the first announcement of the results of the fourth EWCS,<sup>1</sup> under the banner 'Working conditions in Europe – what workers say', Eurofound reported that 'European workers are satisfied with their working conditions, due largely to improved job security, a positive working atmosphere and good opportunities to learn and grow, while noting that 'working conditions vary considerably between individual Member States, between old and new Member States and also between sectors, women and men and different age groups'.

Eurofound also noted the continuing process of overall structural change – the growth in services (employing around 66% of workers) against declines in manufacturing (employing 29%) and in agriculture (employing just 5%) – alongside the significant increase in the use of computers and the persistent number of workers who consider their health and safety to be at risk because of their work. The fact that a majority of European workers report that work is interesting and offers new opportunities to learn was noted, too, but alongside the fact that access to training had not increased, particularly for older workers.

Eurofound likewise reported that over the previous 15 years, the percentage of workers in high-skilled white-collar occupations has risen from 32% to 38%, but that there were substantial differences in the levels of training that employers provide, ranging from 10% or less in the new Member States to around 40% in northern Europe. However, the position on gender was more ambiguous. While the proportion of workers whose immediate boss is a woman had

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<sup>1</sup> Press release, 7 November 2006.

consistently increased over the previous 10 years, women continue to enter a narrow range of occupations and the pay gap showed no sign of closing. On the gender issue, a specific briefing note was issued addressing some of these concerns in greater detail.<sup>2</sup>

Eurofound underlined the fact that some 80% of workers say they are satisfied with their work–life balance, although more than 44% of those working long hours (over 48 hours a week) reported being unhappy with their work–life balance, and men, particularly working fathers, reported more dissatisfaction with their work–life balance than women.

### 2007 presentation

In the subsequent presentation of the results in 2007,<sup>3</sup> when the report was available in all published languages, the key messages were highlighted again, as follows.

Work is a central element in the daily lives of most Europeans. The conditions of work – working time arrangements, job content, pace of work, pay levels and health and safety – play a huge part in determining well-being and satisfaction. At EU policy level, improving these conditions is seen to be crucial to achieving a better quality of work, greater productivity and increased employment, whereby fulfilling the Lisbon objectives.

Specific findings from the report that were noted were that:

- the pace of work has intensified;
- weekly working hours are decreasing;
- the majority of workers are satisfied with their jobs;
- more workers now use computers and the internet in their job;
- just one third of workers say their job offers good career prospects;
- opportunities for training at work are limited;
- almost one third of workers feel their health and safety is at risk because of their job;
- the majority of workers say their work is interesting.

### National roadshow presentations

Subsequent to the publication of the report, Eurofound has proceeded to go from country to country, highlighting and communicating the country-specific details, often in close collaboration with the various stakeholders in each country. This has enabled the situations in individual countries to be explored and compared with others, although attention has generally been focused on the headline figures, as outlined above, rather than the more detailed investigations that have been carried out in the secondary analyses discussed later. Presentations in 2007 took place in Hungary, Slovenia, France, Denmark and Portugal.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Key messages EWCS and gender'.

<sup>3</sup> Press alert, 21 February 2007.

# Methodological and presentation issues

## Objective evidence and subjective views

The information collected through the survey is both quantitative and qualitative, including subjective responses to a range of questions about work-related experiences.

Conventional descriptions of information or data tend to distinguish between that which is objective and that which is subjective (determined largely by whether the person concerned is an independent observer, or one who is affected or involved) and quantitative and qualitative (reflecting the extent to which it is possible to classify the answers in numerical terms, whether ordinal or cardinal).

In the case of the EWCS, as with other household-based surveys like the Labour Force Survey, all of the information is provided by the respondents themselves, and while no conventional distinctions are made in the survey, the questions that are asked can be put into different categories, taking account of the above conceptualisation:

- questions that can obtain quantitative replies (for example, regarding the number of hours worked, the size of the company in which the person is employed, the gender of their boss, etc.) which could, in theory, be confirmed or denied by third parties;
- questions that generate information that can be categorised in some way, making it possible to provide overall orders of magnitude or to indicate the relative numbers that fall into particular groups (for example, with respect to the organisation of work);
- questions that make it possible to provide some corroborative evidence (for example, in relation to health and safety risks), but where the information sought in the survey generally concerns the subjective concerns, beliefs or fears of the respondents;
- questions that make it improbable to obtain any corroborative evidence, but where the respondents nevertheless feel able to express degrees of concerns, fears or beliefs about particular issues (notably in relation to general satisfaction and confidence).

In practice, these issues and questions tend to be somewhat mixed. Partly in consequence, multiple questions, sometimes of a more indirect nature, are often used to build up a more general picture in relation to the particular issues being addressed.

Such issues are a permanent feature of research work in complex areas, and underline the need to draw on a variety of research tools and methods, including case studies of various kinds (exploratory, explanatory and examples), as indicated by Eurofound<sup>4</sup> with respect to its 'research cycle' approach, which is designed to provide feedback that can ensure the continuing renewal of the EWCS.

## Strengths and weaknesses

Given the increased use that is being made of indicators in monitoring employment and social policy performance at EU and national level, the subjective character of many of the questions and replies in the EWCS may be seen as a weakness or limitation.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2007/51/en/1/ef0751en.pdf>

In some respects this is true, but, overall, such concerns appear misplaced. The EWCS survey data, being produced only at five-yearly intervals and with a relatively small sample base, is not really appropriate for the kind of short-term national monitoring purposes where indicators are most commonly used. On the other hand, the time interval makes it easier to identify when and where significant changes have taken place.

Moreover, the richness of the information available through the survey makes it possible to obtain significant insights into complex policy issues that relate directly to the lives of workers and their families. It clearly addresses many of their real concerns, with questions chosen in order to attempt to elicit relevant answers – even if these are not always the easiest issues to address, formulate or codify – which Eurofound seeks to address through ‘analytical monitoring’.

At the same time, it has to be recognised that it can be difficult to evaluate the validity of the views expressed: are respondents really subject to the kinds of risks or pressures they feel, for example, or are their subjective fears ill-founded when compared against ‘objective’ evidence, insofar as it exists? In that respect, it should be noted that subjective responses (whether or not they are seen by others as being ‘objectively’ correct) can nevertheless determine the attitudes and behaviour of the people concerned, if they believe them to be correct.

Such general methodological concerns, it must be said, are well recognised by Eurofound (and addressed in the section on limitations of the survey in Annex 1 on methodology in the main report) as well as by experienced researchers. However, the views about what is, or is not, useful or useable evidence is nevertheless likely to vary between different categories of people concerned with these issues, in part depending on whether the results do, or do not, conform with any preconceptions.

Moreover, with respect to policy making, it has to be recognised that, with the increasing focus on statistical data in the monitoring of developments and policies by governments, as well as increasing interest from other parties such as the social partners, NGOs, and the press, there appears to be a preference for quantitative (or at least quantifiable), objective information, insofar as it is available or obtainable.

While this is undoubtedly the case, it should be noted that many of the more fundamental issues of policy at national and European level are often couched in general, non-quantifiable terms, as they are in Article 2 of the European Union Treaty, which states that:

*The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.*

More specifically, Article 3 states:

*The Union shall ... work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance.*

*It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.*

*It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States.*

The detailed implications of these general principles are, in turn, spelled out in considerable detail in two chapters of the Treaty – on employment (145–150) and social policy (151–161). The social policy chapter is commonly seen to be the most relevant to the work of Eurofound and the EWCS, as introduced in its initial Article 151, which states:

*The Union and the Member States, having in mind fundamental social rights such as those set out in the European Social Charter signed at Turin on 18 October 1961 and in the 1989 Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers, shall have as their objectives the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions, so as to make possible their harmonisation while the improvement is being maintained, proper social protection, dialogue between management and labour, the development of human resources with a view to lasting high employment and the combating of exclusion.*

*To this end the Union and the Member States shall implement measures which take account of the diverse forms of national practices, in particular in the field of contractual relations, and the need to maintain the competitiveness of the Union economy.*

*They believe that such a development will ensue not only from the functioning of the internal market, which will favour the harmonisation of social systems, but also from the procedures provided for in the Treaties and from the approximation of provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action.*

However, almost all the articles of both the employment and social policy chapters are capable of drawing upon the findings of the EWCS in one way or another, and a more frequent use of the Union's legal framework can be useful in structuring the scope of policy-relevant research.

Overall this broad legal framework underlines the importance, for policy purposes, of not just reporting on the most easily measurable elements, or relying on the most readily available indicators, but of seeking to identify and define the factors and developments that most need to be measured and monitored, as well as the best and most appropriate indicators, even if these turn out to be more subjective and qualitative than objective and quantitative, as conventionally defined.

## Country clusters

There are inevitable presentation difficulties in any reporting of survey results when the data covers 27 or more countries, and there are also technical issues when addressing specific matters where the coverage of the survey is rather limited.

The solution in the 2005 EWCS main report, as in a number of previous reports, has been to present many of its results by groups of countries, using an adapted version of the Esping-Andersen typology of countries, developed originally as a means of classifying national welfare systems. The groups are:

- Continental countries (AT, BE, DE, FR, LU)
- Ireland and the United Kingdom (IRL, UK)
- eastern European countries (CZ, EE, HU, LT, LV, PL, SI, SK)
- southern European countries (CY, EL, ES, IT, MT, PT)
- Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands (DK, FI, NL, SE)
- acceding countries (BG, RO)
- candidate countries (HR, TR).

This approach is defended in the secondary analysis report, *Convergence and divergence in working conditions 1990–2005*, on the pragmatic grounds mentioned above: the difficulty of handling and presenting data on 27 countries and the benefits of aggregating data into country groups in order to increase sample sizes. Moreover, the secondary analysis also notes the relative stability of such groupings, as seen in empirical work and in the report's own literature review, notably with respect to EU15 countries (this report separates the Mediterranean and eastern new Member States).

At the same time, the secondary analysis report also acknowledges that 'due to ... different trends ... these ideal types have to be considered with caution ... and some countries are closer to a different cluster than they had been 10 or 15 years ago' (Italy and Spain being cited). This is quite apart from acknowledging the existence of 'hybrid' countries, such as Austria, Finland and the Netherlands, in such categorisations.

On the other hand, however, the authors of the gender perspectives secondary analysis have rejected the 'clustering' approach, arguing that 'little evidence exists that any of the country groupings which have been used for other purposes have succeeded in producing homogeneous groups with regard to gender and working conditions'. Unfortunately, however, this seem to have left the authors with no alternative than to aggregate the data for all EU27 countries in much of their analysis, although individual country differences are taken into account in some longitudinal analyses and in certain multivariate analyses.

There is no obvious way out of these dilemmas at present, and pragmatic solutions clearly have to be accepted on occasion. However, it does raise a warning against placing countries into categories that may unwittingly carry prejudicial cultural overtones, and which cannot necessarily be justified on empirical grounds, as some of the secondary analyses suggest.

### Exploiting the full potential of the survey

In a document focused on the policy lessons or implications of survey and research findings, readers might be excused for wanting to skip any discussion about the way the results have been obtained or reported. However, it is important to address these issues. Spurious or misleading results abound in all fields of empirical research, and research conducted in relation to the economy and society is no exception.

A simple relationship or correlation between two factors – for example, the perceived quality of work and whether or not the people concerned use computers – may give misleading results if no account is taken of other relevant factors, such as the age of the persons concerned, and particularly the sector of the economy in which they are employed, and the type of job they do.

Hence, when seeking 'the truth', it is increasingly commonplace in social science research to resort to complex, multivariate analytical techniques of the kind that have been used in economics for some time, in order to try to sort out complex relationships.

This is the case with most of the secondary analyses undertaken on the 2005 survey results. It has had positive consequences in terms of increasing our understanding of what is happening, and in terms of avoiding drawing false conclusions based on apparent correlations between different factors.

However, while such analyses may avoid some of the risks inherent in the presentation of simple relationships, it is not always easy to present the results of complex analyses in ways that are readily understandable to non-technical readers looking for operational conclusions.

Nevertheless, this is definitely the way forward, and this report has made as much use as possible of the detailed research-based results that have emerged from the secondary research report analyses in drawing policy lessons from the latest EWCS results.

# EU policy agenda and the EWCS

## EU policy priorities

The overall objectives of the EU Member States in terms of employment and social policy are set out in the EU Treaty, as outlined previously, and provide the framework within which specific policies are pursued in different ways and by different groups within the EU, whether by the EU as a whole; by Member State governments (working independently or together, as in the ‘open method of coordination’); by social partners (working together or independently, at both European and national level); or by other groups in civil society, such as NGOs.

However, not all of these stakeholders or interest groups necessarily agree on the range of issues to be pursued within this very broad framework, or on the priorities to be attached to different areas of policy. Nor is there universal agreement on who is responsible for actions, and whether these should be concentrated at EU, national or local level; whether they should be joint actions; or whether they should be the responsibility of particular groups, such as the social partners.

Moreover, policy priorities can and do vary, not only between different interest groups, but also over time – sometimes in response to changing needs (as currently with demographic ageing or skills concerns) but also as a result of changing political priorities (for example, in relation to the private and/or public delivery of a range of services from transport to childcare) or as a result of publicity about previously overlooked issues (such as suicides at work), whether or not there has been any underlying change in the extent of the problem.

## Drawing up a framework of policy areas

Given the objectives of this project, a first task was to find a way of bringing together policy objectives and the results of the EWCS. In other words, a framework needed to be established within which it would be possible to compare the supply side (the EWCS data) with the demand side (the main areas of policy concern and action) and to identify policy areas where the EWCS was already making a significant contribution, as well as areas of potential development and contribution.

There is no obviously right or wrong way to describe and categorise employment and social policies from an operational point of view, recognising that any such framework is, by its very nature, liable to inhibit efforts to identify new emerging developments and to focus too much on specific issues, rather than broader structural changes.

In order to tackle these problems, a two-part approach was therefore adopted:

- firstly, to draw up as broad a framework of current policy concerns as possible, based initially on the various elements that make up the current EU policy agenda in relation to employment and social matters, but extending the coverage somewhat in order to take account of issues addressed by Eurofound and others, where the original listing was found to be too narrow or incomplete;
- secondly, to move beyond that framework and undertake a more exploratory investigation in order to identify emerging or potential policy concerns and priorities, drawing particularly on the extensive, albeit often fragmented and overlapping, findings that are emerging from the various secondary analyses.

## Addressing EU policy concerns

In relation to policy concerns, six broad policy areas have been identified, which are then subdivided into 15 policy issues, as set out below. These composite categories have been derived from a review of the range of policy documents produced by the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European social partners, and Eurofound, as well

as specific attempts by these institutions to categorise their own policies, bearing in mind that the areas of employment and social policy concern are ever evolving and expanding, notably at EU level, as are the activities of all the parties concerned, including the social partners and NGOs as well as governments.

The EWCS is seen to contribute to almost all of the policy areas identified to some degree. The most important and unique contribution of the EWCS is found, however, to be in relation to the organisation of working life, both at work, and between home and work. The main area where the EWCS contributes little is in relation to mobility, although its contribution is also rather limited in relation to skills and learning.

Other areas where the EWCS makes a significant contribution (but where this generally stands alongside material from other sources) include the issue of quality of work and job satisfaction (in the context of more and better jobs) and the issue of employability (in the context of flexicurity).

In all these cases, however, it is felt that the contribution of the EWCS would be judged to be even more significant if EU-level policy approaches were broader than they are at present, in particular if more attention was paid to the internal labour markets of firms – workplace practices and the like – where EU policy is rather limited (and more oriented towards traditional industrial relations rather than employment concerns) and not just external labour markets, on which EU employment policy is largely focused.

## Outline of policy framework

The policy framework adopted is set out below, with areas where the EWCS is currently most used highlighted in italics.

### General labour market issues

- More and better jobs, including quality of work and employment and job satisfaction.
- The impact of demographic change, notably *older workers* but also younger workers.

### Mobility opportunities

- Workplace issues with an important legal dimension.
- Flexicurity – security and *employability*.
- Rights at work – *discrimination*.
- Risks at work – including health risks related to work.

### Workplace issues with an important managerial dimension

- Work organisation.
- Working time – levels, structures, *flexibility*.
- Work intensity.

### Workforce capacity and performance

- Skills and learning.
- *Technology* and employment.

### Gender-related issues

- Gender balance.
- Work–life balance.

### EU-level concerns

- EU-wide progress relative to other developed economies.
- *Convergence and divergence* between Member States in an enlarged Union.

The following section provides some examples of how the EWCS contributes to some of these different policy issues, with a classification system covering:

- the main policy goals (of the various stakeholders, but particularly the European Union institutions and the European social partners);
- the main relevant findings of the fourth EWCS;
- the policy implications that can be deduced from the EWCS findings.

Putting this ‘modular’ approach fully into practice is not without its difficulties, of course, given the diversity of classification systems regarding employment and social policies currently used by the European institutions and Eurofound.

For example, Eurofound frequently presents its analyses under four policy headings (career and employment security, health and well-being, skills and competences, and work–life balance), as seen in the conclusions section of the 2005 EWCS report, and some (but not all) of the secondary analyses. This categorisation appears satisfactory for many purposes, but it is not used consistently, and does not match that currently used by the European Commission.<sup>5</sup>

### Examples of EWCS coverage in relation to policy issues

Below are presented three illustrative examples from the six policy areas and 15 policy issues categorisation outlined above, concerning:

- gender-related issues (gender balance);
- workplace issues with an important legal dimension (flexicurity);
- workplace issues with an important managerial dimension (work organisation).

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<sup>5</sup> See European Commission Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) 26 category factsheets, but which may be extended during the coming months.

These serve to illustrate the volume and type of evidence available from the EWCS in relation to two significant areas of EU-level policy development in recent decades, and one where there has been little direct attention paid.

EU-wide policy concerns and objectives	
Policy issue	Gender balance
European Union	<p>The EU recognises that women do not enjoy equality with men in a number of respects, including in the labour market (pay, positions of responsibility, types of occupations, jobs and types of work, part-time rather than full-time) despite being, on balance, better educated.</p> <p>This is seen to be explained, in the main, by the continued imbalance in the sharing of family responsibilities (housework, caring for children and other dependents).</p> <p>A range of policy initiatives have been taken, including legislation in line with fundamental Treaty objectives, with a particular focus on gender mainstreaming (although with some specific initiatives as well).</p> <p>General policy objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure implementation and enforcement of gender equality legislation;</li> <li>• tackle social and cultural stereotypes of male and female roles and responsibilities, including promoting entrepreneurship;</li> <li>• raise employment levels of women;</li> <li>• address and reduce the pay gap;</li> <li>• develop flexible working arrangements that suit all needs, in particular those of parents;</li> <li>• provide more quality childcare and other services.</li> </ul> <p>Current initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006–2010;</li> <li>• European Pact for Gender Equality;</li> <li>• European Alliance for Families;</li> <li>• Women and Men in Decision Making.</li> </ul>
National governments	National governments follow EU lines, with equality bodies in all Member States and the European Institute for Gender Equality, although realities vary across Member States.
Social partners	Social partners support the main principles, although in some Member States there is less concern than in others.
NGOs and others	A range of NGOs are particularly active in promoting gender equality in various walks of life, including the labour market and the home.
<b>Evidence from the fourth EWCS</b>	<p>The EWCS4, which contains some new questions on gender differences, has also been supported by a supplementary review covering what are seen to be the most significant issues. Many findings cover the EU27 as a whole, since the gender research group rejected the Esping-Andersen classification of countries as inappropriate.</p> <p>The main finding is that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the combined effects of the occupational segregation of women and imbalances in household responsibilities is at the heart of a wider segregation, including between part- and full-time work.</li> </ul> <p>More detailed findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• persistent gender inequalities in many, but not all, aspects of working conditions;</li> <li>• female employment rates are already at, or above, the 60% Lisbon target in 12 countries. The smallest gender gaps in employment are in Nordic countries and Baltic States, and largest around the Mediterranean;</li> <li>• more than one in three women in the EU15 work part time, but this is much less common in the new Member States where there is a tradition of full-time work, although this is changing;</li> <li>• women have the longest composite hours of work (work and home), even when working part time, because they carry out the bulk of household and care work (children and dependents) – based on survey evidence;</li> </ul>

EU-wide policy concerns and objectives	
Policy issue	Gender balance (cont'd)
Evidence from the fourth EWCS (cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>women's employment is highly segregated (by occupation, sector, level of responsibility, type of job – typically caring, nurturing, providing services to people), while men dominate at two extremes, management and manual work;</li> <li>women earn less than men – partly due to working less, partly due to lower occupations, but also due to being paid less for similar work;</li> <li>part-time covers jobs of different quality;</li> <li>differences in working conditions tend to relate to task differences, and part-time versus full-time. Problems get worse the lower the level of job;</li> <li>levels of job satisfaction are broadly similar for men and women;</li> <li>women report more work-related ill-health than men, after taking account of working conditions and occupational positions;</li> <li>three quarters of the workforce is managed by men, although it is more common for women to be managed by women;</li> <li>since managerial positions tend to involve long, often unsocial hours, this is seen as a reason why fewer women are in such positions;</li> <li>there is no difference between men and women in relation to violence and various potential forms of discrimination. However, women are more likely to experience harassment of various kinds;</li> <li>men contribute the most in 80% of dual-earner couples.</li> </ul> <p>See the fourth EWCS report, <i>Working conditions in the EU: The gender perspective</i>.</p>
Possible policy implications of the fourth EWCS evidence	<p>Household issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender policy focus could be widened to include promoting gender equality regarding domestic work, which is still largely undertaken by women.</li> <li>More efforts could be needed to curb long full-time hours in order to, <i>inter alia</i>, promote a more equitable pattern of total work undertaken by men and women at work and at home.</li> <li>Fathers could be encouraged to make more use of parental leave and to carry a fairer share of household and caring duties.</li> <li>Specific measures could be developed regarding care of elderly dependents.</li> </ul> <p>Occupation issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The segregated nature of women's employment – occupations, sectors, part-time, etc. – could be tackled in a more comprehensive way.</li> <li>The level of representation of women in decision making could be addressed – minority of women in management concentrated at junior levels.</li> </ul> <p>Policy framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender mainstreaming of 'flexicurity' could be considered to avoid increasing gender inequalities given that women are more likely to be employed part-time, on fixed-term contracts, and to have shorter job tenure.</li> <li>The situation in new Member States could be monitored, where there is a risk of a widening of gender inequality.</li> </ul>

EU-wide policy concerns and objectives	
Policy issue	Flexicurity – employability and flexibility combined with employment security
European Union	<p>The concept of labour market flexibility (advocated notably during the 1990s) was seen to excessively favour the employer against the employee, and was associated with an easy hiring-firing approach, insecure job contracts, and under-investment in training.</p> <p>Flexicurity has since replaced flexibility as the central labour market concept in EU-level policy discussions. There is an emphasis on achieving sustained security of employment for workers over time (but not necessarily in the same job) based on flexible external (also internal) labour markets, supported by appropriate levels of social protection and training/retraining support (inspired by the Danish model, but drawing on the experiences of other countries, notably the Netherlands).</p>
National governments	<p>EU governments have signed up to the flexicurity concept in the European employment strategy, which includes guidelines for policies and practices. However, the enthusiasm of national governments for such policies and their capacity to implement them vary.</p> <p>The effective implementation of flexibility policies is seen to require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appropriate institutional arrangements – employment services, training agencies, social protection systems;</li> <li>• legal protection for all forms of contract – permanent, temporary, full- and part-time, etc.;</li> <li>• funding for employees in transition from one job to another, during periods of training, etc.;</li> <li>• a culture of social partner relations and cooperation between employer and employees generally.</li> </ul> <p>These conditions are generally seen as inadequately met in many EU Member States, notably in the south and in many new Member States (see European employment strategy reports).</p>
Social partners	<p>Social partners at EU level have cooperated in implementing and developing the flexicurity approach, although often from very different perspectives.</p>
NGOs and others	<p>The Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform) has also presented its views and evidence.</p>
<b>Evidence from the fourth EWCS</b>	<p>Various indicators are currently used in ‘measuring’ flexicurity, but four comprehensive new indicators have been proposed by researchers based on a secondary analysis of the fourth EWCS, covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• objective job insecurity (type and content of work contract);</li> <li>• subjective job insecurity (based on worker perceptions of the stability of their employment relationship);</li> <li>• employability (based on elements of human capital, both recent and over time), experience and schooling;</li> <li>• vulnerability (potential inability of people to withstand loss of income – due to job loss, sickness, injury, maternity), depending on their household situation and extent of safety nets.</li> </ul> <p>These factors tend to be related/clustered, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• female and younger workers tend to face a number of negative factors – high job insecurity and vulnerability, low employability;</li> <li>• countries with low average employability tend to have high objective job insecurity.</li> </ul> <p>Further analyses across Member States suggest that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• employability and lifelong learning are + correlated;</li> <li>• employability and employment protection legislation are not correlated;</li> <li>• objective job insecurity is + correlated with low wages, low job satisfaction, lower employability, difficulty in achieving work–life balance (but not with health);</li> <li>• employees are less vulnerable in countries where policies are more focused on ensuring an acceptable standard of living (after Esping-Andersen).</li> </ul> <p>Gender issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender wage discrimination is, of course, apparent, with female workers mainly concentrated in the lower part of the wage distribution.</li> <li>• Discrimination is stronger with jobs with low employability, but disappears in jobs with high levels of employability.</li> <li>• Factors that contribute to the employability gap include less learning and task rotation experience, but not less training.</li> </ul> <p>See also the fourth EWCS evidence on skills and training – notably on the cognitive and intellectual dimensions of work, and the possibility of professional development (including access to training).</p>

EU-wide policy concerns and objectives	
<b>Policy issue</b>	<b>Flexicurity – employability and flexibility combined with employment security (cont'd)</b>
<b>Possible policy implications of the fourth EWCS evidence</b>	<p>The fourth EWCS evidence suggests that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current approach to flexicurity may inadvertently underestimate the extent to which major investments and changes are needed if the approach is to change behaviour in a positive (increased employability, etc.) way.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy issue</b>	<b>Work organisation</b>
European Union	<p>There is limited policy focus at EU level, with much more attention given to external labour markets (flexicurity, mobility, restructuring, etc.) than to internal labour markets, which are (implicitly) seen to be a managerial prerogative, or an issue for social partner negotiations.</p> <p>There is some discussion on traditional (rigid and hierarchical) versus new (flatter structures, autonomy, teamwork) forms of work organisation, including ‘high performance’ workplaces, linked to flexibility, industrial restructuring and productivity, but few initiatives to promote good practice etc.</p>
National governments	More active than EU, but varies across Member States.
Social partners	More active than EU, but varies across Member States, being heavily influenced by industrial relations arrangements, notably the presence or absence of works councils.
NGOs and others	Interest limited.
<b>Evidence from the fourth EWCS</b>	<p>Data are available on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• autonomy – five indicators of ability to choose or change;</li> <li>• functional flexibility and teamwork and task rotation;</li> <li>• determinants of pace of work – people/market versus industrial/machinery;</li> <li>• support from colleagues/superiors/external;</li> <li>• interruptions to work rhythm.</li> </ul> <p>Further study has been undertaken on work organisation in small establishments, and non-market sectors – public administration and social security, education, health and social work.</p> <p>Classification of work organisation:</p> <p><i>Discretionary learning (38%) – particularly in services sectors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of autonomy at work, learning and problem solving, task complexity, self-assessment of work quality, teamwork</li> <li>• Older employees</li> </ul> <p><i>Lean production (18%) – particularly in manufacturing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of teamwork and job rotation, quality of work self-assessment and quality norms</li> <li>• Men over-represented</li> </ul> <p><i>Taylorist (20%) – particularly in manufacturing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low autonomy, particularly in methods of work, few learning dynamics, limited complexity, repetitive and monotonous tasks</li> <li>• Younger employees</li> </ul> <p><i>Traditional (16%)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methods are largely informal and non-codified</li> <li>• Women over-represented</li> </ul> <p><i>Variations across Member States</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discretionary learning – Nordic and Netherlands</li> <li>• Lean – Ireland and the United Kingdom and many new Member States</li> <li>• Taylorist – southern and new Member States</li> <li>• Traditional – southern and eastern</li> </ul>

EU-wide policy concerns and objectives	
Policy issue	Work organisation (cont'd)
Possible policy implications of the fourth EWCS evidence	<p>The advantages of discretionary-learning forms of work organisation could be further investigated, with potential benefits in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lower work intensity, less exposure to physical risk, better work–life balance and working time arrangements;</li> <li>• higher perceived intrinsic rewards from work, higher overall employee satisfaction.</li> </ul> <p>Four indicators are proposed that could be used to measure innovative work organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• percentage of employees learning new things;</li> <li>• percentage of employees involved in problem solving;</li> <li>• composite measure of autonomy;</li> <li>• number of employees working in autonomous teams.</li> </ul> <p>Possible implications of the major differences between sectors and occupations – health sector versus clerical workers, and between countries.</p>

# Secondary analysis reports

Eight secondary analyses were commissioned by Eurofound in relation to the data contained in the fourth EWCS. These reports address the following themes:

- Convergence and divergence in Europe
- Sectoral perspective in working conditions
- Working conditions in the European Union: the gender perspective
- Working conditions of an ageing population
- Working conditions in the European Union: work organisation
- Employment security and employability
- Working time and work intensity
- Technology and working conditions.

In addition to these, further shorter reports have been prepared, mostly on demand, on issues such as women in supervisory positions, low-qualified workers and sexual harassment.

One feature common to most of these documents is a tendency to go way beyond the confines implied by the report's title and enter into a variety of associated issues, often overlapping with other reports, as can be seen in the summaries of their main policy-relevant findings that follow. This is probably a positive, possibly inevitable, feature of such work, although it obviously does not make it any easier to draw overall conclusions from the body of work as a whole.

## Research goals and methods

The EWCS material, by its very nature, has enabled the various research groups concerned to look in depth at different sets of issues with techniques that can highlight certain matters, which in turn may give rise to policy concerns that may not be easily visible when viewed in traditional ways. The issue of 'policy relevance' does, however, create dilemmas for researchers and, most of all, for research commissioning and management bodies such as Eurofound.

If Eurofound does not undertake research that contributes to the eventual development of policy, questions will be asked by many of its audiences concerning its value or relevance. On the other hand, if Eurofound undertakes research on specific policies, it may equally be questioned regarding its role, or even its independence.

There is no simple response to this dilemma. In practice, much depends on the issues addressed, the way work is commissioned, and the quality of the researchers involved – most of whom will, in practice, have faced such issues many times before, and know how to respect both the policy responsibilities of others and their own academic independence.

There is an important role and responsibility for Eurofound here in underlining the need for frankness and openness in both addressing such dilemmas, and in communicating and debating the substantive messages, however pleasant or unpleasant they may sometimes seem to different audiences.

Moreover, governmental bodies have an inevitable tendency to overly protect their policy responsibilities. In such circumstances, one answer for research bodies is not to challenge those responsibilities, but to underline their own responsibilities with respect to the gathering and presentation of evidence, and the drawing of implications.

One potentially fruitful way forward is to make greater use of hypotheses when structuring research enquiries, and assembling and analysing the evidence. The results will never satisfy everybody, especially in areas where there are inherent conflicts of interest, but the approach is a way of identifying areas of agreement and disagreement more clearly, which, in itself, can help contribute to the development of fruitful policy outcomes.

## Secondary analysis 1: Convergence-divergence 1990–2005

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef08104.htm>

This review of the EWCS results provides a comprehensive overview of progress, or otherwise, over the past 10–15 years with respect to working conditions. Results focus on the issue of job quality in the framework of the Eurofound conceptual categorisation. It covers European trends, but it also addresses evidence of convergence or divergence between countries.

The report notes the absence of any indicator referring specifically to working conditions in the European policy framework on quality of work. It also reveals a relative divergence in job quality in its broadest sense within the Union following the entry of the new Member States in 2004 and 2007, although the gap is now beginning to be reduced.

In term of convergence, the evidence suggests a movement towards the average rather than upwards, with Ireland and the United Kingdom effectively swapping places with Scandinavian countries. The differential growth of the service sector across countries is seen as a partial explanatory factor.

Negative patterns of job quality – exposure to health hazards, weekend and night work – are seen to be declining almost everywhere. However, this positive result is offset by an increase in negative patterns of job quality – jobs with poor training opportunities, shiftwork, variable work schedules, increased work intensity and health-related absenteeism.

### Data and methodological issues

Clustering of countries into groups – Continental, southern, Scandinavian, etc – is seen to deal with practical problems of analysis and presentation, but the report warns that this can ‘hide internal diversity and lead to over-interpretation’.

The report notes that the EWCS has evolved significantly from focusing on traditional ergonomic risks to a multidimensional approach related to the quality of working life. This is reflected in the way questions have been added or rephrased, although this can create difficulties in interpreting developments over time.

The report notes that ‘like any other survey, the EWCS is subject to problems linked to the use of self-assessed perceptions in the context of international comparison’. This is particularly challenging with regard to the subjective evaluation of factual information. However, the report also notes that ‘in many cases perceived reality has as much effect as reality itself, affecting both health and social behaviour’.

Culturally driven differences are, however, seen as ‘difficult to normalise’ and require careful interpretation, although this can be partly addressed through improved methods of questioning.

Overall, increasing national sample sizes is seen as a pre-condition for the better use of the EWCS for policy monitoring purposes. At present the report notes that ‘the sampling design does not aim to study the situation in each country in depth but rather to provide strictly comparable data on working conditions at European level or for regional aggregates’, as acknowledged by Eurofound.

With regard to the aggregation of countries, the report justifies this on practical grounds – effectively increasing sample size and making for more accessible presentations – and argues that ‘some of the clusters seem to have a certain stability over time’. On the other hand, the report recognises that ‘certain countries are not fitting as well as before into these clusters’, noting in particular changes in Spain and Italy.

It also notes that certain countries, including Austria, Finland and the Netherlands, are really ‘hybrids’ based on their typologies. Likewise, there are significant differences in levels of economic and social development between the new Member States, within those in eastern Europe as well as between them and the Mediterranean countries Cyprus and Malta.

Two approaches are taken in measuring trends – absolute changes and relative changes (called measure of intensity). Measurements are made between 1995 and 2005 for the EU15 and 2001–2005 for the new Member States.

### **Job satisfaction**

In spite of its subjective nature, job satisfaction has been intensively studied, but it is largely seen in this study as a ‘proxy of job quality’. It notes that workers generally report high levels of satisfaction, and that levels of satisfaction tend to be higher in countries with higher living standards.

For example, while around 85–90% of workers in Scandinavian and Continental countries, plus Ireland and the United Kingdom, reported themselves to be very satisfied or satisfied with their working conditions in 2005, the responses in the new Mediterranean Member States was in the low 80s percentage, while in the southern Member States and the eastern new Member States it was in the mid to low 70s.

The most significant change between 1995 and 2005 was the improvement in Ireland and the United Kingdom (from 87% to over 91%) against the decline in the Scandinavian countries (from 92% to 87%), although with detailed differences in individual countries in these groups and others.

In this presentation of the evidence, while the impact of changes in economic structure (notably the relative growth of service sectors) is seen as important, no direct account is taken of differences between countries in terms of basic economic performance or living standards, such as GDP per worker, or per head of population.

### **Health and well-being**

In terms of the proportion of workers who feel their health is at risk, some of the evidence supports pre-conceptions linked to economic performance. The greatest perceived risks are found in the eastern new Member States (over 40%), the Mediterranean new Member States and southern Member States (33–34%), with only around 20% of workers reporting such concerns in Ireland and the United Kingdom and Continental countries.

However, concerns in Scandinavia are out of line in this respect, being reported close to 35% – an increase from around 25% in 1995, when concerns were similar to those in Continental countries and Ireland and the United Kingdom. Worsening reports for Scandinavia are primarily the result of a significant increase in such concerns from Sweden, illustrating the difficulties and weaknesses inherent in presenting and interpreting country clusters.

In terms of being absent from work for health problems during the year, Scandinavia again reports the highest rates (34%) against the lowest rates in the southern and eastern new Member States (20–21%), with the other groups all coming in around 25%. Here the report notes how these outcomes are likely to be significantly affected by a variety of other factors, some of which may ‘encourage’ and some of which may ‘discourage’ workers from being absent when they experience health problems.

The research concentrates on developments between 1995 and 2005 for the EU15, the only combination of countries and dates for which data are available, where the data suggest some increase in absences from work for health reasons, apart from in Continental countries (where there was a modest decline) and in Scandinavia (where the increase was substantial, from 18% to 34%).

Data on health-related absences exceeding one month is much more consistent across groups of countries, with a range of only 6–8% in 2005, but up somewhat from the level of 3–5% in the EU15 in 1995, although with considerable country variations: in Germany there was no increase over the 10-year period, while in Denmark and Sweden the numbers increased three- and four fold respectively over the period.

The report also considers in some depth the issue of the degree of exposure to various hazardous conditions, categorised as ambient (noise, temperature), chemical or toxic, and ergonomic (strenuous or repetitive tasks, etc.).

In terms of ambient risk, relatively little change is observed between 1995 and 2005 across or within country groups, with southern Member States experiencing most effects. This is matched in recent data by the eastern and the Mediterranean new Member States.

In terms of chemical and toxic hazards, the pattern is similar and relatively stable, although with significantly lower risk levels in Ireland and the United Kingdom in 2005, reflecting an improvement from 1995, when they had been on a par with other countries.

In terms of ergonomic risks, where workers were asked whether they were exposed to poor ergonomic conditions for more than half their working day, results remained relatively constant over the period 1995 to 2005 at around 20%, but again with substantial variations within groups, rising to 40% of workers in Greece.

### **Work intensity**

Work intensification is recognised as a complex and multifaceted issue, and the report addresses three issues: the pace of work, the worker's control over their pace of work, and worker autonomy regarding the organisation of their work.

In terms of pace of work, the results are relatively similar across groups of countries, and relatively stable over time with 25–30% of workers reporting that their job involved a high pace of work in both 1995 and 2005.

In terms of control, some 40–45% of workers in all groups of countries declared their pace of work as being 'dependent on external factors' in one way or another in 2005, a little higher than in 1995.

In terms of autonomy over the organisation of work, the proportion of workers declaring that they are unable to choose or change the organisation of their work was virtually the same (33–35%) in all groups of countries in 2005, with the sole exception of Scandinavia, where only 20% considered themselves to be in this position. This is a long-standing difference between the Scandinavian group and the others, although the position in Ireland and the United Kingdom appears to have changed in this period, with 33% of workers in 2005 feeling unable to choose or change the organisation of their work, compared with only 25% in 1995.

### **Skills development**

The report notes that forms of work organisation that include learning opportunities are associated with better working conditions, lower health-related outcomes and better quality of work and employment. At the same time, though, it notes that formal training offers better outcomes than on-the-job learning, as acquired skills are certified and transferable, thereby enhancing mobility and harking back to the traditional distinction between general and specific training.

Using the survey results, the report identifies the proportion of workers in jobs with poor learning opportunities, which is consistent across groups of countries at around 31–34%, with the exception of Scandinavia, where it is lower, at 27%. While Continental and southern groupings show little change over the 1995–2005 period, a small deterioration is noted in Scandinavia (the proportion reporting poor learning opportunities rising from 25% to 27%) and a much more significant deterioration in Ireland and the United Kingdom (from 21% to 31%).

In terms of access to training in the previous year, only 20–25% of workers reported receiving training during this period in Continental, southern and new Member States, compared with closer to 40% in Ireland and the United Kingdom and closer to 50% in Scandinavian countries, with little change over time, apart from an improvement in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

### **Career and employment security**

In this section, the report addresses other aspects of quality of employment, in particular: non-standard employment contracts; discrimination factors; respect for workers' rights, notably to be informed and consulted on working conditions; and information about health and safety risks.

#### *Non-standard employment contracts*

Non-standard employment contracts (fixed-term contracts, temporary agency contracts) are more common in Ireland and the United Kingdom and southern and eastern new Member States in 2005 – accounting for some 16–19% of jobs – than they were in Scandinavian, Continental, and Mediterranean new Member States, where they accounted for 11–12%.

The most notable change in the period 1995–2005 was the decrease in their use in Scandinavian and Continental countries, and the increase in their use in Ireland and the United Kingdom. As with many other aspects of working conditions, the variety within country groups is considerable, with in the southern group, for example, a large increase in their use in Italy and a sharp decrease in Spain, but which nevertheless still left Spain with the highest level of non-standard work contracts of any Member State, at nearly 24% of employment.

#### *Discrimination factors*

Discrimination is recognised in the report as being one of the most difficult issues to measure, especially in any quantitative or comparative way, not least because of cultural factors. Happily, rates of discrimination of various kinds (gender, unwanted sexual attention, nationality, ethnic origin, age, disability) are reported as low – averaging below 2% in all groups of countries – with rates somewhat higher in Scandinavian countries and Ireland and the United Kingdom than in others.

In relation to gender discrimination, results from the survey with respect to the sex of their boss are presented, showing that around 30% of workers in most country groups (with a range from 27% to 33%, with Mediterranean new Member States as an 'outlier' at 40%) have a female immediate boss, representing a significant increase (of the order of 50–90%) over the position in 1995 for EU15 countries.

#### *Rights to information and consultation*

The survey shows that in most groups of Member States, 35–45% of employees report having discussed work-related problems with either their boss or an employee representative in the previous 12 months, with Scandinavian countries being an 'outlier' in one direction with nearly 60% reporting contact in this way, and with Portugal, with only 23% of workers having been consulted, in the other direction. The evidence suggests that such contacts or consultations have decreased somewhat since 1995, apart from in Scandinavia, where they have increased somewhat.

Overall the researchers point out that the situation can also vary considerably between companies of different sizes, which can distort inter-country comparisons given the significant differences in company size structure between large and small countries.

#### *Information about health and safety risks*

In terms of being informed about health and safety risks, Ireland and the United Kingdom stand out with a positive response from nearly 60% of workers, compared with 35–45% elsewhere. There is little evidence of any change over time, apart from in Ireland and the United Kingdom, which had been more in line with other groups in 1995, but have progressively improved since.

#### *Work–life balance*

Reconciling work and social and family life is rightly noted in the report as an over arching issue in the framework of EU social policies, while indicating that ‘positive or negative work–life balance is deeply dependent on individual characteristics such as gender, parental status and working hours’ (especially in the latter case regarding regularity, predictability, and choice).

The report notes that the fourth EWCS contains ‘abundant information about working time and also time spent on non-work activities’ but notes also that ‘only a limited amount of longitudinal information is available’ concerning the dimension of recognising work and social life. Because of this, the report focuses on the specific issue of unsocial hours where more comparative information is available.

In all country groups, some 20–25% of workers work on average more than once a week per month on Saturdays, Sundays or at night, except in the eastern new Member States, where the figure is closer to 30%. This result appears to reflect little significant change since either the 1995 survey or the 2000 survey, however.

#### *Job quality patterns in Europe*

In addressing the issue of the measurement of job quality, the report notes the need to include data not available from the EWCS – for instance, career transitions – in order to provide a comprehensive picture, and reference is made to work by others, such as by Tangian.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the report proceeds to address developments over time in job quality, based on a number of indicators on the issue where data are available from successive EWCS surveys. The report looks at groups of countries as well as variability within groups.

In these respects, the report identifies two main groups: Ireland and the United Kingdom, Continental and Scandinavian group, characterised by higher job quality levels; and new Member States and the southern group, where job quality is seen as ‘generally significantly lower’. At the same time, the combination of factors that contribute to overall job quality are seen to vary between groups of countries, as illustrated in the issues such as health and safety risks or workplace autonomy addressed previously. These detailed differences are presented in an annex to this secondary analysis report.

The report notes that explanations for differences in job quality between countries and groups of countries have been sought by other researchers through a variety of factors, including labour market characteristics, institutional arrangements and policies, as well as factors such as company size and patterns of work organisation. This study looks at the possible impact of differences in economic specialisation (agriculture, manufacturing and services) and concludes that the distribution of different activities does explain a great deal of the differences between groups of countries.

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<sup>6</sup> See section on outside research.

### *Changes in job quality measures over time*

Significant changes are observed between groups of countries over time. In the early 1990s, Scandinavia was at one end of the spectrum, with Ireland and the United Kingdom, and especially southern countries, at the other end, with Continental countries in an intermediate position. By 2005, however, Ireland and the United Kingdom had exhibited a significant improvement, bringing them closer to the Scandinavian position, which had weakened somewhat with the development of some negative factors.

In the Continental group, no overall significant changes are observed, with the position characterised as relatively stable with a slight improvement. There is also relative stability in the southern countries, but at a lower level, while in the new Member States the data are more recent, but tend to present a mixed picture, with improvements in some respects but not in others. In all cases, however, there are significant inter-country differences within groups, both in current positions and trends over time.

### **Conclusions of the report**

The report concludes that the picture with respect to job quality is blurred, and that there are differences between countries regarding different factors. While some improvements are virtually universal, notably in relation to exposure to health hazards, weekend and night work, and improvements in information and consultation, there has been a reduction in learning opportunities for workers, despite the supposed emphasis on lifelong learning in European policies. Moreover, the incidence of shift work and non-fixed working schedules has increased.

Overall the report suggests that the EWCS evidence indicates convergence rather than divergence with respect to working conditions and job quality across the EU, but that this has been more of a convergence towards the average performance level, rather than towards the best.

The report acknowledges weaknesses in the use of clusters of countries, noting in particular the extent of variability that exists in practice within groups. Nevertheless, it supports their continued use on pragmatic grounds – the difficulty in treating 27 countries separately, and inadequate sample sizes to enable valid conclusions to be drawn on more specific issues.

This results in a strong plea, however, for larger national sample sizes, not least in order to be able to assemble viable data at the level of economic sector and company size (which are known to be important factors in determining the quality of working conditions) and to enable more robust conclusions to be drawn using sophisticated statistical techniques.

The report ends with a reminder of the importance of the EWCS from a policy perspective. The survey is a unique source of comparative information at European level on issues that are not covered by the rest of the European statistical system. Improving the national survey is seen as a precondition for a better use of the EWCS for policy-monitoring purposes.

## Secondary analysis 2: Sector perspective

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0814.htm>

This secondary analysis report provides a perspective on working conditions across different sectors based on the fourth EWCS 2005, together with comparisons with earlier surveys. Using this data, it presents:

- a comparative description of working conditions across sectors;
- a detailed description of working conditions in certain specific sectors;
- a comparison of working conditions across sectors between country clusters;
- an analysis of trends in sectoral working conditions from 1995 to 2005.

### Methodology

The analysis is based on data on 11 working conditions under four headings and four outcomes:

Physical environment:

- Ambient conditions
- Ergonomic conditions

Time:

- Duration of work
- Non-standard working hours
- Work–life balance

Organisational environment:

- Job demands
- Job control
- Skilled work

Social environment:

- Social support
- Discrimination
- Violence

Outcomes:

- Mental health problems
- Musculoskeletal health problems
- Absence due to health problems
- Job satisfaction.

Certain contextual working conditions are analysed, such as the use of computers. The report also presents data on differences between sectors with respect to socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, years of work in the organisation, employment status, employment contract, company size, education level and income level.

### *Comparative working conditions across sectors*

The 2005 data from 62 sectors (NACE 2-digit<sup>7</sup>) is reduced to 26 sectors (NACE 1 and 2 digits) for the purpose of the analysis, with scalable and non-scalable working conditions evidence transformed into a standardised statistical format, with a 0 mean and standard deviation of 1.

Composite indices for working conditions and for outcomes are compiled on the basis of the standardised scores of the different working conditions and outcomes (recognising, but ignoring, the fact that some indicators may be correlated). Profiles for individual sectors are then prepared against the ‘overall result’ of the total of all sectors.

A simple four-segment diagram is used to present sectors in terms of their relatively favourable or unfavourable working conditions, and their relatively favourable or unfavourable outcomes (schematic Figure 2).

### *Methodology: Analysis of trends*

Sector profiles are developed for the EU15 for 1995 and for the EU27 for 2000–2002 and 2005. On this basis, a description of trends in sector profiles is developed using 11 sectors (as presented in Table 3 in the report).

Because many survey questions about outcomes changed in 2005, the analysis of trends is limited to data on working conditions (plus job satisfaction, the one comparable outcome).

### *Methodology: Country clusters*

Given that the number of interviews in each country is judged to be too small to allow a detailed analysis on working conditions by sector/country group, countries are clustered using the conventional EWCS categorisation (but with Bulgaria and Romania added to the eastern new Member States).

Results are presented for 2005, covering 13 sectors this time. These results are presented in tabular form for each sector.

For presentations of working conditions and outcomes by sector/country group, composite indices are again used, indicating (a) which country clusters have relatively favourable or unfavourable working conditions/outcomes within each sector, and (b) differences between sectors regarding the working conditions outcomes in the country clusters.

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<sup>7</sup> NACE, Nomenclature générale des activités économiques dans le communautés européennes, is the EU classification system for economic activities.

## Results

### *Socio-demographics by sector*

Sectors differ in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics – gender, age, etc. Sectors can, for example, be male or female dominated, have a workforce of above or below average age, long or short average job tenure, high or low proportions of employees compared with self-employed, with permanent job contracts more or less common, and with variations in terms of average company size, and in the education levels and incomes of the workforce.

### *Sectoral profiles on working conditions and outcomes*

As indicated above, data on 11 working conditions and four outcomes are used in profiling the sectors. In all, 26 sectors are identified, and average results for 2005 are presented in a four-segment chart (Figure 4 of the report). The report then presents more detailed evidence on:

- agriculture, land transport, and hotels and restaurants, which are seen to have the most unfavourable sectoral profiles;
- insurance, financial intermediation, and education, which are seen to have the most favourable sectoral profiles.

These 2005 results are reported as being broadly comparable with the results of a secondary analysis on the EWCS 2000 report by Houtman et al. in 2002.

### *Ranking sectors by working conditions and outcomes*

The report presents a table (Table 5) in which sectors are categorised as unfavourable or favourable (when compared against the average of all sectors) with respect to 15 variables (11 working conditions and four outcomes).

Some variables (ambient conditions, non-standard working hours, job control, skilled work and ergonomic conditions) are seen to vary considerably between sectors, while others, such as ‘discrimination’, vary hardly at all, being much more related to individual factors, such as age and gender, than sector of employment. In terms of outcomes, the greatest variation between sectors is in terms of musculoskeletal problems and job satisfaction.

An additional analysis of contextual working conditions (working with computers, dealing with clients or customers, training, teleworking and working at home) shows that the greatest variation between sectors is in terms of the first three conditions.

### *Trends in working conditions and outcomes by sector*

Changes in sectoral profiles between 1995 and 2005 are analysed on the basis of nine variables (eight working conditions, and one outcome) for which comparable data are available (other variables being excluded due to changes in questions between surveys) in 11 sectors.

The most general finding is that there has been a reduction in the length of the working week, but offset by negative changes with respect to job demands and job control. The most favourable developments over the period 1995 to 2005 are noted in the financial intermediation sector, with the least favourable developments found in construction (Figure 5 of the report) and hotels and catering (Figure 6).

Table 8 of the report lists, for each of the 11 sectors covered, those working conditions and outcomes in respect of which there appears to have been a ‘significant and relevant’ improvement or deterioration.

### *Differences in sector profiles between country clusters*

In terms of working conditions and outcomes, the sectoral profiles of clusters of countries might be expected to vary for a variety of economic, social and cultural reasons. The analysis is conducted for the EU27 in 2005 using data for 15 factors (11 working conditions and four outcomes), 11 sectors, and five country clusters. The analysis compares the different working conditions and outcome between the country clusters with respect to each of the 11 sectors.

The overall evidence is of relatively unfavourable working conditions and outcomes in eastern and southern Member States, with Ireland and the United Kingdom, Scandinavian and Continental countries showing a relatively favourable profile (Figure 7). Not all sectors conform to the general country cluster profiles, however. This is particularly the case with the hotels and restaurants, transport and communications, education, health and social work sectors. Thus:

- in hotels and restaurants, eastern European countries have a favourable profile while Continental countries have unfavourable conditions (Figure 8 of the report);
- in health and social work, Continental countries have unfavourable conditions (Figure 9);
- in transport and telecommunications, Ireland and the United Kingdom have an unfavourable profile (Figure 10);
- in education, Ireland and the United Kingdom, Scandinavian and Continental countries show unfavourable working conditions, while those in southern countries are favourable (Figure 11).

## Secondary analysis 3: Gender perspective

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef07108.htm>

This secondary analysis report provides an overview of similarities and differences in the working conditions of men and women as reported in the 2005 EWCS. It assesses the impact of such differences on occupational health, job satisfaction and work–life balance, recognising that existing research on gender differences provides differing explanations of such differences (occupational segregation, differences in domestic roles and tasks and discrimination) although, in practice, all three elements can play their part.

In their analysis, the authors consider that the standard Esping-Anderson categorisation or clustering of countries is inappropriate for their analysis, stating that ‘little evidence exists that any of the country groupings that have been used for other purposes have succeeded in producing homogeneous groups with regard to gender and working conditions’. Thus many of the findings are reported for the EU27 as a whole, although multivariate analytical explanation of particular issues commonly include/exclude countries as explanatory factors.

The analysis covers gender segregation in employment and at home, and covers gender differences in working conditions, gender differences in working time and any differential gender impact in terms of job satisfaction, work–life balance and health.

### Employment

Employment is highly gender segregated, as seen in data on occupation, sector and type of workplace, and women are over-represented in certain services, such as clerical support and ‘care’ professions. Likewise, responsibilities in the home are highly gendered too.

Some differences, such as in employment rates and full- and part-time employment, are well known, but there are equally large differences in employment contract status, tenure, occupational segregation, sector segregation and greater managerial responsibility (23% of full-time men against 15% of full-time women).

### Domestic responsibilities

From a gender/household perspective, the workforce can be divided into three groups of roughly equal size:

- those who are single with no dependent children;
- those who are married/cohabit without children;
- those who have dependent children.

However, a pronounced gender division in domestic responsibilities has persisted despite the increased participation of women in employment. The 2005 EWCS shows that women typically spend 50% more time than men on caring for relatives, cooking and housework and on caring for children. This is set alongside differences in patterns of work (part time and full time) and earnings.

### Working conditions

Disparities between men and women in terms of job content and their immediate work environment are addressed, and the analysis considers how far such differences can be ‘explained’ by differences in occupations and patterns of working time, and other job characteristics. The data shows that:

- women are more likely to work on company premises than men, and men are more likely than women to undertake telework from home;
- regular teleworking is, however, done by equal proportions (4%) of men and women;
- part-time workers (mainly women) have many fewer opportunities to discuss work issues with their boss;
- women are more likely to have contact with other people, irrespective of whether they work full or part time;
- women see work as more emotionally demanding than men, whether they work full or part time, irrespective of occupation.

Mixed results are found regarding autonomy and teamwork tasks performed by men and women in different occupations, and working part or full time.

Rates of monotonous work are reported to vary little between men and women (42% and 44% respectively), but 64% of men consider that they work on ‘complex’ tasks compared with 53% of women.

Multivariate analyses suggest, however, that such results can be distorted by differences in the relative importance of part-time and full-time working with, for example, part-time workers being much less likely than full-time workers to work in teams. However, these analyses also show that female workers who work in teams are consistently more likely to have more autonomy regarding the division of tasks than men, whether they work full time or part time.

### Risks

Risks are classified as ambient, ergonomic or social, and the findings are as follows.

#### *Ambient risks*

- Men are much more likely than women to experience a negative physical work environment.
- Part-time workers are generally less exposed to ambient risks, although part-time women are more exposed to chemical products than part-time men.

- Occupation plays an important role in explaining risk, and apparent gender gaps in some cases narrow or disappear when occupational differences are taken into account.

### *Ergonomic risks*

- Overall, the proportion of men and women at high risk of ergonomic hazards (hand/arm movements, heavy loads, lifting people) are close (34% men, 30% women), although there are differences in occupations and other circumstances.

### *Social risks*

- Reported cases of exposure to various social risks (harassment, discrimination, etc.) are low and similar between men and women, although the proportions of women exposed to at least one risk is slightly higher than for men.

### **Working time**

The analysis covers:

- gender differences in paid working hours and composite working hours (including unpaid work);
- disparities in other aspects of working time – work schedules, autonomy etc;
- disparities between men and women employed at similar occupational levels.

Differences in *paid* working hours of men and women are already well documented and have been extensively analysed. Moreover, information from the EWCS regarding *total* or ‘composite’ hours worked, (including *unpaid* domestic work as well as paid work) shows that:

- women working full time have the longest ‘composite’ working week (67 hours), made up of 40 hours paid work, 3 hours commuting, and 24 hours unpaid domestic work;
- men with full-time jobs, and women with part-time jobs, work rather similar total ‘composite’ hours (56 hours), but with much longer domestic hours for women (33) offsetting shorter paid hours;
- men working part time notably spend no more time on unpaid domestic work than do men working full time.

### **Job satisfaction, work–life balance and health**

The report addresses gender differences in relation to job satisfaction, work–life balance or compatibility and work-related health outcomes.

#### *Job satisfaction*

High job satisfaction – being satisfied or very satisfied – is reported by both men (81%) and women (84%) with little difference between part-time and full-time workers, although more detailed questions reveal rather widespread dissatisfaction regarding such aspects of working conditions as pay, and career advancement. In general, gender differences are limited.

The most notable gender differences concern women working in traditional male-dominated blue-collar areas, who see less opportunity to learn and grow or advance their careers than do men working in these areas.

Country variations in job satisfaction are reported as very significant, although the fact that such variation appears, on casual inspection, to be highly correlated with average real living standards is not investigated or acknowledged in the analysis.

### *Work–life balance*

Work–life balance is seen as the issue with the most significant gender differences, given the dual burden that many women face in seeking a combination of jobs and working hours, along with caring arrangements, that fit with family needs.

Some surprise is apparent in the commentary in the report, however, when it is noted that the evidence from the EWCS is that 77% of men and 83% women state that work fits in ‘well or very well’ with their non-working life. Moreover, women report higher levels of satisfaction across all occupational areas, with part-time workers (men and women) reporting significantly higher levels of satisfaction – of around 10 percentage points – than full-time workers. Even female lone parents with part-time jobs report 86% satisfaction.

In practice, by far the most significant differences in levels of work–life balance satisfaction (country differences aside) appear to be between those working very long hours (48+ hours), who report satisfaction levels of only 55%, compared with satisfaction levels of 80–90% for almost everybody working fewer hours, largely irrespective of gender or household situation.

Regarding leave of absence from work, for health, family or other reasons (education, etc.), gender differences are reported as relatively small, with, for example, only a two percentage points difference between men and women (11% and 13% respectively) taking leave for family reasons.

A multivariate analysis concerning work–life balance suggests, however, that the key positive factors (apart from living in certain countries, and avoiding working 48+ hours a week) are related to autonomy in work and with respect to working time, and not having responsibility for children.

Likewise, the negative aspect of long hours is compounded if combined with non-standard working hours (evenings, nights, weekend work) with variable schedules.

### *Work-related health outcomes*

Some 34% of men, compared with 22% of women, considered that they were exposed to work-related health and safety risks, with male-dominated blue-collar areas reporting the highest rate at 48%. The EWCS 2005 also asked, however, how well informed workers were about health and safety risks, which generally produced an encouragingly positive response and little overall gender difference.

When asked if they felt that their health was actually affected (as opposed to being at risk), 32% of women and 38% of men considered this to be the case, with women in craft and related work reporting 60%, above even the 50% of men.

### **Policy concerns**

The following points stand out from the analysis.

- The fact that women working part time commonly work the same ‘composite’ (paid work plus work in the home that is not financially remunerated) hours as men, and that women working full time work considerably longer ‘composite’ hours than men, suggests that gender equality policy needs to consider ways of taking into account unpaid domestic work, as mentioned above, as well as paid work in the labour market.
- With respect to reconciliation measures (regarding work–life balance), much more needs to be done to address both childcare and eldercare concerns (in the latter case, particularly in the light of demographic ageing).

- Long full-time working hours are reported as a major source of poor work–life balance, with a particularly negative impact on families, underlining the importance of accelerating action to eliminate excess hours for both health and family welfare reasons.
- A gender impact assessment is needed with respect to flexicurity policy insofar as an emphasis on promoting part-time work, flexible or variable hours, fixed-term contracts, shorter job tenure, etc. is likely to have a disproportionate impact on women, while undoubtedly contributing to increased employment opportunities.
- There are concerns that the rapid growth in part-time working in many of the new Member States, where full-time work was widespread in the past, may adversely affect overall gender equality, and more than offset gains from better reconciliation arrangements.
- Likewise, the representation of women in decision making needs to be addressed anew given the evidence that 75% of the EU workforce remains managed by men (with women generally in lower levels of management in any case).

### Secondary analysis 4: Ageing

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0817.htm>

The report addresses differences across age groups, including the employment performance of older workers, given the potential impact of demographic ageing on the ‘long-term sustainability of the EU economy’, as seen in the EU employment policy guidelines, and given the need to promote solidarity between generations generally.

#### Employment security, job satisfaction, age discrimination

Older workers seem to experience less job insecurity than average, although the situation appears worse for women than men. Part-time working tends to decline with age, but an increase is seen in the oldest age group (where it appears as more of a voluntary choice compared with younger age groups) with older workers having somewhat more secure employment contracts than younger age groups.

In general, reported job satisfaction varies little across age groups, or between those in full-time or part-time employment, with lower job satisfaction being related to insecurity derived from the nature or content of the job contract.

Explicit, or more subtle, forms of age discrimination encourage the view that older workers are the most dispensable group in the workforce and, while this is not seen to be a widespread problem, it is nevertheless seen as a negative factor for older workers, with age discrimination tending to be associated with threats or other negative experiences at the workplace.

The EWCS 2005 indicates that average earnings levels tend to rise until the age 45–54 and to flatten off and decline thereafter (possibly in line with productivity), but that there are marked differences between countries. This is in line with the experiences from other European data such as the Eurostat earnings and European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) surveys.

However, such reported results do not generally take account of other factors that can affect earnings, such as education and occupation, and which are likely to be unevenly spread across the workforce (with younger workers being better educated than older workers, for example). When these factors are taken into account, the effect of age on wages almost disappears.

No significant evidence of an earning premium (being paid more than others for similar work) for older workers can be found from the EWCS data, with no evidence that these have any effect on employment rates, based on cross-country comparisons, contrary to the view expressed by the OECD that such earning differences may have some effect on hiring and retention decisions.

### Health and well-being

In terms of exposure to risk, workers over 55 report a lower exposure level than workers under 55 in relation to all risks, although the differences are relatively small. At the same time, there are some concerns, particularly with regard to women aged 45–54, and it has to be noted that these results may well be influenced by the early departure of those previously exposed to physical risks.

This concern also arises in relation to work organisation, where work intensity decreases and autonomy rises with age (although involvement in high performance workplaces is low), but where it is not clear, as the researchers note, whether positive results reflect ‘an adaptation of organisational models to an ageing workforce, or ... the early exit from employment of workers engaged in physically demanding work’.

In relation to perception of health status, and the perceived ability to continue working at 60 (the EWCS does not provide objective measures of health conditions), those aged 45–54 seem most aware of the correlation between work and their health, while the proportions of those aged 55 or over reporting that they are at risk declined significantly between the 1995 and the 2005 EWCS.

Moreover, the proportion of people who think they will be able, or want, to do the same job after 60 increases with age, although their attitude is affected by any negative work experiences (discrimination etc) or, notably, if they work with insecure job contracts.

The four most widespread work-related health problems concerning workers aged 55+ are, in order, physical pain (back, muscles), fatigue, stress and headaches, although breathing difficulties and heart-related problems distinguish them most from those aged less than 55 years.

### Skills development and learning

Older workers receive less training and have fewer opportunities to learn new things, although those with higher levels of education and skills and more secure tenure do better, especially if they work in larger companies. And while new technologies tend to reduce their job opportunities, there has been a substantial decline in the number of older workers who never use computers.

### Work–life balance

Average working hours decline very little as workers age, with older workers appearing to have the most regular working hours. This is important since inflexible working arrangements appear to discourage older workers from continuing to work longer, given their increased likelihood of having caring responsibilities, including for those who are elderly or disabled.

Non-standard work schedules, limited job or employment security, and caring responsibilities combine to reduce satisfaction in terms of work–life balance, and the report provides some evidence of a positive correlation between satisfaction with work–life balance and employment rates, based on a cross-country comparison.

### Policy conclusion

The evidence from the EWCS regarding the workplace circumstances and experiences of workers as they grow older is somewhat less negative than some earlier research might imply. Nevertheless, there is little evidence, based on the responses of workers addressed in the EWCS survey, of an overall strategic approach in the EU to workforce ageing, although since the mid-1990s, Eurofound itself has addressed the issues of ‘age management’ within companies.

In order to contribute further to the policy priority of raising the long-run employment participation of older workers (which has increased considerably in recent years), the research results suggests that, if there is a desire to extend average working life in line with EU policies, then it may be most appropriate to focus on the circumstances and needs of workers aged 45–54 with a view to encouraging and assisting them to remain in employment longer at that point, rather than waiting until they are about to retire, when it will probably be too late to change their minds.

In this respect, a 2006 OECD report has made the point that many of those with the most problems, of one sort or another, may already have left the labour market long before the conventional retirement ages. From a methodological point of view, however, the report notes that much of this analysis is inevitably indirect – inferring why people tend to leave the labour market rather than asking them directly – since the EWCS only interviews those still in employment.

Many aspects of working conditions are seen to correlate strongly with the employment rates of older workers (notably with respect to the 45–54 age group), although some of the specific factors appear to vary between men and women, with learning and training being more important for women than autonomy and high performance working. Beyond age 55, autonomy becomes less important for both men and women, while access to training remains a positive factor. In this respect, the workplace factors most likely to encourage older workers to remain in work are: having greater work autonomy, being in high performance workplaces, and having access to learning and training.

In this context, it can be noted that, while the employment rates of older workers have been rising in the EU in recent years, in line with the overall growth in employment, they remain much lower than in the United States. However, this difference is commonly attributed to negative as well as positive factors in the US, notably inadequate pension incomes and healthcare cover, and it remains to be seen how the recession and the decline in private pension incomes in the EU will affect the dispositions of older age groups concerning employment.

### Quality and the sustainability of work for older workers

Improvements in job and employment quality are seen as important in encouraging older people to stay in the labour market given the positive correlation between employment growth and the quality of work and productivity. The concept of ‘work ability maintenance’ is used to describe the achievement of balance between work and a person’s capabilities across their working life. Since some abilities decline with age, various actions are needed, notably at the workplace, in order to maintain older workers’ ‘employability’.

In this respect, the report on ageing proposes expanding the range of quality indicators included in the Laeken guidelines, and drawing on the EWCS, based around Eurofound’s themes of career and employment security, health and well-being, skills development and work–life balance (as used in the report).

## Secondary analysis 5: Work organisation

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0862.htm>

Enterprises organise themselves in a variety of ways, and the resulting systems of work organisation can impact very differently on the quality of work and employment, and on working conditions generally. In this context, the EWCS is seen as a unique source of information for analysing patterns of work organisation in Europe, based on employee-derived data.

Taking account of previous conceptual and empirical work, the researchers have applied statistical techniques (multiple correspondence and cluster analysis) to a range of data from the survey (notably, autonomy in work, learning and problem solving, task complexity, self-assessment of quality of work, and autonomous teamwork) in order to identify significantly different types of work organisation.

### Work organisation categories

Working initially on data for employees in private sector firms employing 10 or more people, the research distinguishes four types of work organisation:

- ‘discretionary learning’ forms of work organisation of the kind most associated with Scandinavia, with a focus on autonomous team-working (covering 38% of employees);
- ‘lean production’ forms of work organisation where such autonomy is controlled and limited (covering 26%);
- ‘Taylorist’ forms of work organisation, which are structured and inflexible (the ‘production line’ being the extreme case) although forms of ‘flexible Taylorism’ are recognised (covering 20%);
- ‘traditional and simple’ forms of work organisation in which working arrangements tend to be informal (covering 16%).

An important finding is that two important dimensions of modern human resource development – strong ‘learning dynamics’ and high ‘problem-solving activity’ – are found in both of the ‘modern’ forms of work organisation (the ‘discretionary learning’ and ‘lean production’ types), albeit with more employee autonomy in the first case than in the second.

### Differences across countries, sectors, occupations

Further analysis indicates that different structures of work organisation are not evenly spread across all sectors. In the financial sector, for example, over 80% of employees fall into the first two categories, compared with little more than half that number in textiles, clothing and leather. Likewise, nearly 90% of senior managers and professionals work in ‘discretionary learning’ or ‘lean production’ environments, compared with fewer than half those numbers for machine operators and unskilled workers.

Each form of work organisation tends to be associated with particular sectors, establishment sizes, occupational grouping, demographic groups, and (to some extent) gender, and the report aims to control for these factors when seeking to identify differences between Member States. The resulting analysis suggests that differences in work organisation practices between Member States are substantial, and cannot be explained by structural differences.

This leaves us with a rather conventional stereotype – with Scandinavian countries at one end of the ‘modern’ to ‘traditional’ spectrum, and the Mediterranean countries and some new Member States at the other – although how far

such differences are explained by social or ‘cultural’ differences (as is implicitly implied) or by differences in levels of economic development (which are not directly addressed) remains unclear.

### Work organisation and HR practices

The report also investigates the relationship between different forms of work organisation and different human resource (HR) management practices concerning training, employment contracts, payments systems, and workplace consultation generally, taking due account of sectoral, occupational and other differences, as above. This analysis shows:

- a strong relationship between work organisation and training support, with over 70% of those in the two ‘modern’ systems receiving paid training or on-the-job training, compared with 35–40% in ‘traditional’ systems;
- differences are less great with regard to employment contracts, with 80–85% of those with ‘modern’ work organisation having indefinite contracts, compared with 75% in the ‘traditional’ categories;
- as regards consultations with the employer about work, these take place in around 55–65% of cases in ‘modern’ work organisation systems compared with 35–40% in ‘traditional’ cases, with consultations with employee representatives in around 25% of ‘modern’ cases compared with around 15% in ‘traditional’ cases.

### Quality of work and employment

Past research suggests that the quality of work and employment is positively correlated with ‘modern’ types of work organisation (‘discretionary learning’ and ‘lean production’) as against ‘traditional’ systems, such as ‘Taylorist’ or ‘traditional or simple’. This research indicates, however, that the reality is rather more complex.

The analysis looks at various measures of quality of work and employment, including various risks, work intensity, work–life balance, intrinsic rewards, psychological and social ‘happiness’, and working conditions, across all four categories of work organisation.

All types of risk – ergonomic (associated with lifting, repetitive movements, etc.), ambient (noise, temperature), chemical, biological and radiation (notably through breathing and handling) – seem significantly more serious (of the order of two or three times) in ‘lean production’ and ‘Taylorist’ work environments than in ‘discretionary learning’ or ‘traditional or simple’ ones.

In terms of working time, long hours (weekly or daily) seem twice as prevalent in both types of ‘modern’ systems compared with ‘traditional’ ones, as do variable working hours from day to day, while non-standard working hours (night, shift, evening) seem more associated with ‘Taylorist’ systems.

In terms of work intensity, described in terms of routinely high-speed working, or persistent tight deadlines, those working in ‘lean production’ and ‘Taylorist’ systems report the most negative perceptions – around twice the numbers employed in either ‘discretionary learning’ or ‘traditional and simple’ systems.

In terms of work–life balance, ‘discretionary learning’ and ‘traditional and simple’ score somewhat higher (85% against 75%) than the other, ‘intermediate’ categories.

In terms of any individual’s view of the quality of their job, a distinction is drawn by some researchers between intrinsic factors associated with the workplace, work organisation and so on, and extrinsic factors, most obviously levels of remuneration of all kinds, including pay, bonuses, and pensions.

The 2005 survey includes a number of new questions (such as an employee's 'opportunity to do best', 'feeling of work well done', 'able to apply own idea', 'opportunity to learn and grow') that enable work organisation systems to be better compared in terms of their intrinsic contribution to the quality of work. The results show that employees in 'discretionary learning' and 'lean production' systems feel significantly more positive – with results 50–75% higher – than employees in 'Taylorist' or 'traditional and simple' systems.

Other new questions concern the psychological or social contentment or integration of those interviewed. The results suggest that dissatisfaction is relatively widespread: 29% do not think they are well paid for their work; 44% do not think their job offers good career prospects; and 21% do not feel 'at home' in their workplace. In general, 'modern' workplaces produce more positive responses than 'traditional' ones, notably with regard to career prospects, with workers in 'Taylorist' organisations most alienated from their work environment.

Overall job satisfaction, as felt by employees, clearly depends on all the above factors and, no doubt, many others besides. The 2005 EWCS does ask a basic question, however, regarding employees' degree of satisfaction with working conditions in their main paid job. Around 90% of employees in 'discretionary learning' situations are satisfied or very satisfied, compared with 80% in 'lean production' situations, 70% in Taylorist environments, but with some 83% of those in 'traditional or simple' organisations also considering themselves to be satisfied or very satisfied.

This overall assessment is reflected in the more detailed analyses with 'discretionary learning' systems consistently scoring higher than all others, notably compared with 'Taylorist' systems. And while the 'lean production' approach generally arrives in second place, this is not always the case, with 'Taylorist' systems scoring better with regard to some aspects of health risks, as well as with respect to some dimensions of working time.

With regard to small enterprises – those with fewer than 10 employees – their work organisation characteristics tend to be closer to those in 'traditional or simple' systems in larger companies.

Autonomy of work in the main non-market sectors (public administration and social security, education, and health and social work) is much more prevalent than in market sectors, as are more 'cognitive' aspects of work, such as learning new things, solving problems, tackling complex tasks etc. Innovative organisation methods such as teamwork, job rotation, and quality of work self-assessment also seem more developed.

### Conclusions for policy

The main conclusion drawn is that greater attention needs to be given to the economic and social impacts of different types of work organisation, given the systematic links between forms of work organisation and the quality of jobs, including working conditions and health and safety. In this respect, the adoption of discretionary learning forms of work organisation result in better working conditions in terms of lower intensity of work, less exposure to physical risks, fewer non-standard working hours, better work–life balance, and lower levels of work-related health problems.

The 'discretionary learning' model is also associated with higher perceived intrinsic rewards from work, better psychological working conditions, better social integration at work, and higher levels of overall job satisfaction.

The report states that no efforts have been made to develop explicit indicators of work organisation nor indicators for the operational dimension of 'quality in work', which only includes an indicator of work–life balance and nothing about the most basic extrinsic indicator of work: pay.

The report demonstrates the extent of variations across the Member States, after taking account of differences in structural characteristics (sector and occupational composition, for example) before producing comparative figures.

However, it does not directly take account of one of the most important factors likely to influence differences in work organisation between Member States, the level of economic development, which is likely to determine, or be associated with, different types of production systems, different structures of production and different levels of management sophistication.

### Indicators

The report proposes a new complementary EU-wide survey in order to obtain matched employer–employee data, given that the EWCS is based on employee responses alone. The report also proposes monitoring indicators using data on:

- the percentage of employees learning new things on the job;
- the percentage of employees involved in problem-solving on the job;
- a composite measure of autonomy in the workplace;
- employees in autonomous teams compared with those in all teams.

The researchers have constructed a proposed composite innovative work organisation index based on the above, whose qualities may need to be evaluated.

The report also suggests that the survey material analysed in their paper be used in order to develop, not just indicators of work organisation, but also a series of indicators for various dimensions of quality of work, in relation to the issues addressed: physical risk, work-related health and safety risks, working time, work intensity, work–life balance, psychological working conditions and satisfaction with working conditions.

## Secondary analysis 6: Flexicurity and employability

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0836.htm>

The European Commission's *Employment in Europe 2007* report noted that 'flexicurity is a difficult concept to tackle analytically, largely due to its holistic nature', having acknowledged that its 2006 report had focused exclusively on the external labour market component of flexibility, and had not considered those forms of flexibility that are provided in the firm through the implementation of different work organisation practices.

The 2007 report sought to address that weakness, drawing heavily on EWCS data, while noting that its coverage was still limited to the flexibility aspect of the flexicurity approach, and did not address the security aspect (an issue that remains a subject of contention between social partners).

This secondary analysis report also focuses primarily on the issue of the balance between internal and external flexibility, but seeks to address a specific concern that, while 'flexicurity' may increase 'external' labour market flexibility, it may also undermine 'internal' labour market flexibility within firms (including the extent of company investment in the 'human capital' of their workers), which is seen to depend on implicit 'guarantees' that employment adjustments to structural or other changes will be mainly achieved within the firm, without employees having to seek work elsewhere.

The report focuses on data from the EWCS concerning objective and subjective job security and insecurity, vulnerability and employability, as it seeks to assess the extent to which the benefits or concerns about 'flexicurity' are, or are not, justified.

In this complex analysis it is not always entirely clear what survey data have been used, and how, in respect to different issues. Moreover, the use of the questionnaire-derived negative terms like insecurity or vulnerability often results in the use of double negatives, which does not make for easy reading. In this summary such wording has been changed, with ‘greater security’ substituted for ‘less insecurity’, for example, although these presentational changes remain open to eventual correction.

The results appear to be based almost entirely on EWCS data (apart from one section on labour market institutions) using various proxies, for example, ‘expected job tenure’ as an indicator of objective job security, but expressed in relative rather than absolute terms. Likewise, subjective job security is measured by replies to one specific EWCS question. Employability, on the other hand, is measured in terms of experience in the previous 12 months (learning, training, task rotation), labelled ‘on-the-job employability’, and again expressed in relative terms.

### Research findings

Some of the findings are rather predictable, such as that many (negative) features (high job insecurity, vulnerability and low employability) tend to be highly correlated – or that employability and education are positively correlated (see two graphs in the report, Figure 2 and Figure 3, based on cross-country comparisons). A strong relationship is also seen between employability and lifelong learning.

Others findings are more surprising, and not always readily explicable, such as that workers without work contracts or with only temporary contracts (and hence normally seen as being in insecure jobs) report fewer health problems than others. No clear explanation is given, although it is noted that further investigation, for example controlling for the age of the workers concerned (temporary workers tend to be young and therefore less likely to face health issues) may do so. A control by sector might also contribute.

When data on subjective and objective insecurity are analysed in relation to conventional measures of labour market flexibility/inflexibility, notably the OECD-inspired employment protection legislation (EPL) index, the result casts serious doubts on the real, as opposed to theoretical, impact of the latter on the attitudes and behaviour of workers. In effect the relationship between the EWCS subjective and objective measures of security (or insecurity) are positive, which is out of line with the OECD’s EPL, implying that the latter is not actually measuring objective job security.

The difference appears to be that the OECD’s EPL is measuring the legal and contractual provisions for hiring and firing workers, whereas objective job security is better measured by type of employment contract and other factors such as tenure and company size. In other words, there is a significant difference between the legal position of employees and their actual prospects of retaining their jobs.

The report also assembles evidence to show that, when objective job insecurity is high, it is more difficult to reconcile work and family life. However, while gender differences are commonly found across many aspects of labour market working, this does not appear to be the case in these respects, where gender differences are often absent or non-existent (with some exceptions). Indeed, the report concludes that, once differences in job characteristics are taken into account, no gender differences are apparent in the ability to achieve work–life balance.

The report also asks whether flexible employment contracts make it easier to reconcile work and family life, but finds that when objective insecurity is high, it is more difficult to reconcile work and private life, as measured by a combination of insecurity factors.

Other findings include the evidence that employability is positively related to education level, but that while it rises over time, it appears to decline after a long job tenure (20+ years). Likewise, formal training is seen as more important for the employability of women, while training and rotation are more important for men.

## Conclusions and policy

It is not always entirely clear which of the results in this report come from empirical analyses based on the EWCS, and which reflect findings from other research. Moreover, in seeking to identify relationships, for example between indicators of subjective job security and vulnerability and employability, the report omits to mention some of the more basic facts, for example that subjective job insecurity is higher in all new Member States compared with the old Member States (although Portugal is borderline).

## Secondary analysis 7: Working time/intensity

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0927.htm>

Intensity is measured in the EWCS in terms of time pressures or constraints (from colleagues, customers, targets, machines, management), but also in terms of perceived intensity – high speed, deadlines, enough time – with a strong relationship reported between the two.

### Measuring work intensity

#### *Work intensity and working conditions*

The effects of work intensity are measured through logistic regressions against working conditions, with account taken of job characteristics, employee characteristics, Member States, pace ‘constraints’ and type of work organisation (autonomy, etc.). The results of the logistic regressions are consistent with crude comparisons.

Dichotomous variables are also constructed, including *ceteris paribus*, the ‘all other things being equal’ approach. In the report’s view, ‘all pace constraints are associated with a higher probability of physical exertion’. Likewise, ‘people under time constraints do not seem to be as able to take precautions to contain risk’.

#### *Psychological working conditions*

The absence of positive aspects is addressed in the analysis using extensive variables: psychological working conditions. The report finds that pace constraints are associated with psychological stress, but not necessarily for all people; intense work has different effects on different individuals, and not all types of pace constraints have the same consequences.

#### *Work organisation*

Autonomy is associated with better working conditions, but active jobs are not better than low-strain jobs in the views of workers. Workers consider high-intensity and low-autonomy situations to be associated with poor physical and psychological working conditions. High intensity lowers the probability of work being sustainable into old age, and is therefore a constraint on the prolonged employment of older workers.

### Working time

This part of the report addresses the variability in working hours, and the relationship between working hours and job content. One of the report’s findings is that it is difficult to derive, either empirically or theoretically, a set of country groupings that provided consistent homogeneous clusters.

An interesting finding is that one of the positive aspects of being self-employed is that less time is spent on travelling to work. Over 50% of the self-employed and 43% of employers spend fewer than 20 minutes travelling, compared with only 21% of employees.

The report also notes the need for more information on second jobs, given that 6% of employed people have them, and raises an interesting hypothetical question for part-time workers, namely: 'If your partner did an equal share of the domestic chores, or if better and more affordable childcare facilities were available, would you then want to work full time?'

### *Working time and other aspects of work*

The link between long hours and poor psychological working conditions, as set out in Figure 31 of the report, re-enforces the categorisation of 48+ hours as 'overworking'. On the other hand, while long hours tend to severely worsen psychological working conditions, very short hours do not improve them. In other words, the best working conditions are associated with 'normal' work durations.

Also, work duration and work intensity are not alternatives. Data over time suggest a growing gap between people who work intensely for long hours and people with jobs involving low levels of strain and relatively few hours.

Working time is seen to be strongly related to gender, country, and occupation. A strong link is found between high-intensity work and accidents, poor working conditions and health risks, all of which are linked to 48+ hours of working. Long hours also have a negative effect on employability, allowing those affected little time to develop.

On the other hand, the research results show that some people cope well with high-intensity working, although the report comments that this may, indirectly, provide an obstacle to the career development of others (notably women who may not be available to work very long paid hours), and can also be incompatible with work-life balance for men. In this context, the promotion of part-time work is not seen to be the answer either.

Other issues include the finding that high autonomy and high social support can help to mitigate the negative aspects of work intensity; the need for micro measurements of the quality of work; the lack of wage compensation for high-intensity work; high-intensity work seen as incompatible with EU ambitions, including the desire to raise the employment rate of older workers; and no evidence of a reduction in work intensity over time.

## **Secondary analysis 8: Technology and working conditions**

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0863.htm>

This analysis investigates the impact of different types of technology on working conditions and the health and well-being of workers, as well as the relationship between technologies and different systems of work organisation. Based mainly on EWCS 2005 data, it addresses two main questions: which types of technology are used by whom and where, and how is technology use related to working conditions? In addition, the report addresses trends in technology use during the 1995–2005 period.

### **Technology types**

Technology use is categorised in four broad groups:

- computer technology – work situations involving PCs, networks, etc. (40% of workers);
- machine technology – work situations without computers (23% of workers);
- combined machine and computer technology use (10% of workers);
- technology-free work environments i.e. without machines or computers (26% of workers).

Data are analysed by country, sectors, gender, educational qualifications and other background factors.

## Technology usage

Technology usage varies a great deal between different groups or categories of employees, and between different economic activities and countries.

In terms of *computer technology*:

- computer use is much higher among those with higher education (70%) compared with those with low education levels (15%);
- computer use is higher for women than men in all age groups; nearly 50% of women against under 40% of men among those aged 30–49, for example;
- gender differences in computer use are significantly less among the better educated compared with those with low or intermediate-level education, although differences in the latter cases can be explained in terms of the gender segregation between occupations;
- computer use is highest in finance (80%+), property (65%), public sector education and health (55%) and public administration and defence (60%+);
- the use of email and internet at work varies considerably between Member States, from around 40–50% in the northern countries of the EU15 down to 30% or fewer in the Mediterranean and new Member States.

In terms of *machine technology* use:

- machine technology use is more common among men aged 15–49, people with low educational qualifications, craft workers, machine operators, etc.;
- machine technology is also most commonly found in manufacturing, mining and construction sectors;
- machine technology use is most prevalent in Mediterranean Member States and the new Member States.

In terms of *combined computer and machinery* use:

- the prevalence of such situations varies between Member States broadly in line with their use of computers alone.

In terms of *technology-free work environments*:

- non-use of technology at work is most common among women 50 years or older, workers doing unskilled work, service workers, shop and sales workers, as well as those in very small enterprises;
- technology-free situations at work are more widespread in wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants, and education and healthcare.

### Technology use and worker and workplace characteristics

Different technology characteristics are compared against:

- types of work organisation (autonomous teamwork, task autonomy, advanced functional flexibility linked to task rotation);
- working conditions (work intensity, learning opportunities, ergonomic risks, (i.e. both psychosocial and physical factors));
- health and well-being (stress symptoms, musculoskeletal complaints, job satisfaction);
- skill level (both self-reported regarding monotony and repetitiveness of work and ISCO occupational levels).

An overall comparison is made between the prevalence of different work organisation regimes (working in an autonomous team, high job task autonomy, advanced functional flexible job) and the four technology use categories. These suggest the following points:

- the proportions working in an autonomous team vary least across the technology regimes, from 30% in machine technology and no technology to 35% in computer and computer and machine technology;
- the proportions having high job task autonomy vary most, from 60% in computer technology regimes, 45% in machine and computer regimes, down to fewer than 30% in machine technology regimes;
- the proportions having advanced functional flexible jobs (i.e. jobs involving rotating tasks and different skills), was, however, both high and relatively consistent (at between 40–50%) across all three of the technology-using regimes, with the greatest presence in the case of joint use of machine and computer cases.

While the focus on the report is on the findings of the 2005 EWCS, one finding of the 1995–2005 trend analysis is that there has been a decrease in the extent of high task autonomy jobs, which, the report comments, may be related to the development of computer software systems that enable companies to impose more structured working arrangements.

### Other findings

Cross-country comparisons indicate a generally negative association between the use of computer technologies and machinery technologies i.e. countries with a relatively high proportion of one tend to have a relatively lower proportion of the other.

As regards career prospects, workers who use computers, or both machines and computers, are more than twice as likely to envisage good prospects of career advancement compared with those working in other technology regimes. Again, the highly educated are more likely to report good prospects than others.

As regards the likelihood of being contacted outside normal working hours about the job, those with higher education levels appear to be twice as likely to be contacted in this way compared to other employees, especially if working in computer, or machine and computer, technology 'regimes'.

### Technology use and health and well-being

The EWCS data show that, in general, computer use appears to be associated with better working conditions and lower occupational health risks than machine use at the workplace. In this study, the effects of different technologies have been compared against certain working conditions and health factors such as: work intensity, learning opportunities, ergonomic risks, stress symptoms, musculoskeletal complaints and satisfaction with working conditions.

In all cases, those working under computer technology regimes report more positive reactions than others, with those working under machine technology reporting the most negative results (notably with respect to ergonomic risks, and musculoskeletal complaints) and scoring the lowest in terms of overall satisfaction with working conditions.

People working with both computer and machine technologies reported relatively positively with respect to one issue, learning opportunities, but were less positive regarding work intensity, being no better than people working under a machine technology regime.

Such analyses suggest the following:

- computer use is associated with more learning opportunities, fewer ergonomic risks, fewer musculoskeletal complaints, and greater job satisfaction;
- machine use is associated with higher work intensity, fewer learning opportunities, more ergonomic risks, and lower job satisfaction.

However, these apparently strong ‘associations’ may partly reflect the effect of other workforce or workplace characteristics concerning computer or machine use. Hence, multivariate analyses were undertaken in order to try to separate out the ‘pure’ technology effect on work intensity, learning opportunities, ergonomic risks, work-related stress symptoms, musculoskeletal complaints and job satisfaction from the effect of certain *other* factors, specifically the age and education of the people concerned, as well as workplace characteristics such as the presence of autonomous teams, high task autonomy and functional flexibility.

The results of these multivariate analyses suggest a somewhat different picture. They suggest (a) that the percentage of overall variance that is explained is generally low, although it varies a great deal between different concerns, and (b) that the percentage of overall variance accounted for by technology alone is generally very small. The two relevant percentage figures are set out below, respectively, in relation to the six issues:

- Work intensity – 6% and 5%;
- Learning opportunities – 24% and 5%;
- Ergonomic risk – 21% and 11%;
- Work-related stress symptoms – 9% and 2%;
- Musculoskeletal complaints – 17% and 7%;
- Job satisfaction – 17% and 4%.

However, further analyses suggest that, while the different technology-use regimes do appear to have some (albeit limited) impact on working conditions, this is not the end of the story in that differences in systems of work organisation arrangements (notably high task autonomy) can effectively offset the negative effects of, say, machine technologies.

It remains the case, however, that the findings of these multivariate analyses are not easy to interpret, and that many of the ‘real’ causes of different experiences may be contained in factors not included in the analysis (which would appear to be the case given the relatively low level of variance that is ‘explained’).

Nevertheless, significant differences clearly exist between the experiences of computer users, machine users and non-users of technology, with associated differences between men and women, different age groups, different sectors and

occupations and different Member States. Moreover, different types of technology users tend to work under different working conditions.

In this respect, however, the research findings state: ‘two work organisational characteristics – namely, working in autonomous teams and high task autonomy – appeared to ease the negative effects of machine use at work. In the presence of autonomous teams and high task autonomy, the negative impact of machine use on learning opportunities is lowered, and so is the risk of developing stress symptoms.’ In short, the adoption of modern work organisation arrangements can offset any inherently or potentially negative aspects of more traditional technologies.

### **Caveats and suggestions for the future**

The report, while acknowledging the EWCS as a rich source of data, nevertheless notes that it is not possible to measure all the indicators in depth, and proxy variables had to be used at times – as noted particularly with regard to machine use, and work intensity and ergonomic risks. And while there is no undue concern regarding the low overall levels of variance explanation from this work, it is suggested that efforts be made to include other factors in the analysis in order to improve this situation.

In particular, the report suggests including the following in future EWCSs:

- direct, rather than indirect, measures of machine use;
- more details on how successfully the technology is absorbed and managed;
- the extent to which workers can influence the choice of new technology;
- more details on technology and ICT use in high-performance workplaces organisations (although preferably in linked employer-employee surveys);
- more detailed information on computer use such as programming, scheduling, pace.

### **Policy implications**

The most important points to emerge are seen to be as follows.

- It is not so much the technologies themselves, as the working conditions associated with them, that cause high risks to health and well-being.
- Particular types of work organisation (notably autonomous teams and high task autonomy) can offset the potential negative effects of more traditional technologies.
- Workplace needs have to be matched by workplace resources. While this is obvious in relation to physically demanding tasks – making lifting equipment available, for example – it is equally important regarding learning (cognitive) needs.
- Technological solutions need to be customised to encourage and support companies to develop IT solutions to meet their needs.
- A machine–computer divide exists between sectors, and across Member States, (both linked, though not explicitly mentioned in the report, to their levels of economic development) calling for a devolved and diversified policy approach to build capacity. This is important, not only to ensure convergent technological progress, but to prevent a polarisation in workplace health across the EU.

# Other research reports based on the EWCS 2005

In addition to the rich research findings that come out of the Eurofound's detailed and extensive secondary analyses reported above, considerable research use has already been made of the fourth EWCS results by a range of other EU-level institutions (the European Commission, the European Parliament, the EU-level social partners) as well as international research centres like the OECD and ILO, other European agencies, notably the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Bilbao, and independent research groups and individuals such as the Hans Böckler Foundation in Germany and the Work Foundation in the UK.

Using the policy headings outlined previously, the following analyses have been identified as having been based partly or wholly on the 2005 EWCS results.<sup>8</sup>

## General labour market issues

- *Putting a number on job quality? Constructing a European job quality index*, Leschke, Watt, Finn, European Trade Union Institute for Research, Education and Health and Safety (ETUI-REHS), 2008
- *Is work in Europe decent?* Tangian, Hans Böckler Foundation, Germany, 2007
- *Exploiting Europe's knowledge potential*, Work Foundation, November 2007
- *Inwardness: The rise of meaningful work*, Work Foundation, May 2008

## Workplace issues with an important legal dimension

- *Flexicurity: Reconciling social security with flexibility*, Seifert, Tangian, Hans Böckler Foundation, 2008
- *Employment in Europe 2007*, European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Chapter 2, 'Active ageing and labour market trends for older workers' (specifically in relation to age discrimination (page 89) and work organisation, ergonomics and job design (page 101)), 2007
- *Expert forecast on emerging psychosocial risks and occupational safety and health*, European Agency for Health and Safety at Work (EU-OSHA), 2007
- *Mental health in workplace settings*, Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Affairs (Santé et Consommateurs, DG SANCO), conference paper, 2008
- *OECD Employment outlook – 2008 edition*, OECD, Chapter 4, 'Are all jobs good for your health? The impact of work status and working conditions on mental health', 2008
- *Can 'good work' keep employees healthy? Evidence from across the EU*, Work Foundation, 2008
- *Modernising labour law to meet the challenge of the 21st century*, COM (2006) 708, November 2006

## Workplace issues with an important managerial dimension

- *Employment in Europe 2007*, European Commission Employment in Europe, Chapter 3, 'Working time, work organisation and internal flexibility – flexicurity models in the EU', 2007
- *Impact assessment of certain aspects of the working time directive*, European Parliament, September 2007

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<sup>8</sup> Based on an internal Eurofound analysis.

## Workforce performance

- *Common principles of flexicurity*, Rapporteur Christensen, European Parliament, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), November 2007
- *Promoting sustainable productivity in European workplace*, opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (Ecosoc) on promoting sustainable productivity in the European workplace, September 2007
- *Key challenges facing European labour markets: A joint analysis of European social partners*, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), Business Europe, European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME), European Centre of Employers and Enterprises (CEEP), 2007

## Gender-related issues

- *Babies and bosses, reconciling work and family life – a synthesis of findings for OECD countries*, OECD, 2007
- *Redistribution of unpaid work and gender, first forum on Europe's demographic future*, European Commission, October 2006
- *ETUC position on work–life balance*, European Trade Union Confederation, October 2007

## EU-level concerns

- *Modernising social policy for the new life course*, OECD, 2007
- *Cohesion and social inequalities*, opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (Ecosoc) on economic and social consequences of financial market trends, September 2007
- *Benchmarking working Europe*, European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)

These reports contain extensive and detailed analyses based on EWCS findings and data and are likely to contribute significantly to the development of policy thinking. For example, the *Employment in Europe 2007* analysis of ‘working time, work organisation and internal flexibility’ provides a wide-ranging assessment of alternative work arrangements. It notes that most analyses of ‘flexicurity’ focus exclusively on the external component, and do not consider what is achievable within the firm through the implementation of different work organisation practices, for example working-time arrangement, rotation and teamwork, discretion or autonomy at work.

In order to assess the importance of these factors, the report states that it made ‘extensive use of a large number of data sources, in particular the European Foundation’s EWCS, in order to map the various dimensions of flexibility’. In doing so, the report finds that ‘new forms of work organisation (which generally make increased demands on workers, but also allow greater autonomy) are associated with positive outcomes in the labour market and increased job satisfaction, while the basic functional flexibility model (high intensity team work with little autonomy) is associated with negative outcomes’.

Moreover, the analysis suggests that more advanced internal-flexibility forms of work organisation (characterised by high levels of autonomy, complex problem-solving and continuous training) are associated with greater in-house innovation and improved workforce employability.

On a more specific, but nevertheless important issue, the chapter on working conditions and mental health in the 2008 OECD Employment Outlook uses the EWCS survey data to show that ‘across countries there is a fairly strong positive correlation between increases in the percentage of people working more than ten hours per day at least once a month, and increases in work-related mental problems’ (as reflected in stress, sleeping problems, anxiety and irritability).

# Contribution to EU policy perspectives

## Measuring societal progress

In terms of quality of work and well-being at its broadest level, policy interest is growing in the development of ways of measuring societal performance that go beyond the traditional methods and coverage of national accounting, which are seen by economists and statisticians as much as general observers, to provide an incomplete, even distorted, picture of progress and well-being. This is an area where the EWCS clearly has a particular contribution to make.

Two important initiatives can be noted. The first, Measuring the Progress of Societies, is an OECD-led project<sup>9</sup> which has a range of partners, including the European Commission. The aim is to develop better measures of such fundamental issues as societal well-being and social sustainability, as well as matters related to the economy and the environment, under the headline notion of ‘progress’, as part of wider efforts to promote evidence-based policy.

The second is the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress that was launched by the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, in 2008 and which reported in September 2009. This project was led by Nobel prize-winning economists Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, and coordinated by Jean-Paul Fitoussi of OFCE, Paris.

The report<sup>10</sup> from this important Commission makes specific and positive reference to Eurofound’s working conditions surveys in its discussions on decent work, paying particular attention to the availability of data on non-standard employment, gender gaps in employment and wages, discrimination at the workplace, lifelong learning and training, employment of disabled persons, working time and unsocial hours, perceived work–life balance, work accidents and physical risk factors, work intensity, work-related health problems, social dialogue and workers’ autonomy.

Given that the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report is proposing the use of a wider range of indicators for monitoring developments in economic performance and social progress, it notes the limitations for this purpose of the EWCS as a result of the relatively small sample sizes for individual countries. Nevertheless, the publication of this report is an extremely significant development, and the EWCS could be very actively and directly involved in its follow-up, given its pioneering role in the development of data in this field.

A number of national organisations already use the EWCS questionnaire in relation to their own national surveys, and the questionnaire is also to be used for the Global Working Conditions Survey to be carried out by ILO in cooperation with Eurofound.

There are also other indirect links in that much of the work on job quality and flexibility being conducted at the Hans Böckler Foundation by a research group headed by Andranik Tangian is based on EWCS data, and is feeding into the OECD project.

## Possible new issues of EU policy concern

The second approach to the challenge set out in this project moves beyond the rather compartmentalised policy framework used previously, and investigates more wide-ranging emerging policy concerns and priorities, drawing particularly, but not exclusively, on the rich and often complex findings of the various secondary analyses presented above, in order to identify new, emerging, policy ‘hot spots’, or to suggest new ways of addressing existing and recognised policy concerns.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en\\_40033426\\_40033828\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_40033426_40033828_1_1_1_1_1,00.html)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/en/index.htm>

A notable recent example of the emergence of a new policy ‘nexus’ was ‘flexicurity’ which seeks, in principle at least, to integrate parts of labour market policy and parts of social security policy in a mutually supporting way, in order to both increase access to employment and maintain income levels. This is similarly the case with respect to the issue of ‘job quality’, which also emerged as a composite concern that covers a set of inter-related issues that had previously been addressed in more compartmentalised ways under various areas of employment, social and industrial relations policies.

## Balancing policy goals and priorities

For some time, the basic focus of economic and social policy concerns in Europe has been on raising employment levels and maintaining or boosting productivity, in pursuit of raising long-term living standards and social integration in a gender-sensitive way.

However, current employment policy priorities to raise or maintain employment levels, prolong working life, increase the participation of women, and increase flexibility and productivity, depend for their success not just on changes in the ‘external’ labour market, but also on the successful management of life at work and at home, by all parties concerned, as well as on appropriate social support, provisions and policies.

In this respect, there are concerns, as reflected even in the European Commission’s own *Employment in Europe 2007* report, as well as Eurofound’s secondary analysis on flexibility and employability, that policies and practices surrounding some forms of ‘flexicurity’ may not only lead to insecurity and loss of job satisfaction, but may also undermine efforts to raise human resource investment and weaken the commitment of employees to their jobs and place of work. Likewise, the evidence presented in the work organisation report demonstrates how the quality of work and employment is significantly determined by the system of work organisation in place.

More generally, however, there is a recognition that societal concerns need to be addressed alongside, rather than apart from, economic and employment concerns, and that a satisfactory work–life balance within households involves not only suitably flexible working arrangements, but also a more equal sharing of domestic as well as work responsibilities, including for dependents.

Thus, a high-performing, motivated, and capable workforce depends on employers recognising the need to take a well-informed, gender-balanced, view of people’s potential, using modern, team-based, methods of management and organisation, with a positive attitude to managing risks, and strong and clear rules against abuse of various kinds.

Achieving such a better quality of life is not a zero-sum game, in which gains for some will always be at the expense of others. Some will always do better than others, on whatever criteria is chosen, and some will always require help from others in order to share in the general prosperity, but, in a general sense, everybody can be winners insofar as they achieve their full potential. On that criterion, though, all societies in the world are grossly underachieving, including those of the EU.

In that context, confidence is an important factor for all people, in all aspects and levels of life, and the policy framework needs to support and encourage this. Policies that seek to drive change by fear risk producing not only insecure, defensive, and paranoid populations, but ones that risk under-performing in all aspects of life as well as work. Robust but supportive, management policies are a central part of the solution, and many insights can be gained from the EWCS in that respect, notably through inter-country comparisons, which demonstrate considerable differences between Member States.

All of this evidence suggests that more policy focus is needed at EU level on promoting modern management and avoiding seeing economic, employment, social protection, and industrial relations issues as existing in separate boxes. In this respect, the great strength of the EWCS is the fact that it addresses a range of inter-related aspects of work, making it possible to build up a more realistic picture of working life than is possible from any other source, notably when using appropriate techniques of multivariate analysis.

Taking these general reflections as a starting point, the wide range of evidence coming out of the 2005 EWCS results has been reviewed, especially that emerging from the secondary analyses, as well as other independent work that exploits the data source.

On that basis, some new, composite, policy themes or concerns emerge, around which it may be useful or even necessary to focus policy and research attention in the future. These should not be seen as a rigid definitive listing, but rather as illustrative of the kinds of issues that the EWCS results highlight as being worthy of serious discussion, and which could be used to generate new and more informed policy debates about how best to develop EU labour markets and social systems in pursuit of common goals.

### **Possible new policy themes emerging from the EWCS analysis**

Some of the composite themes that can potentially be drawn up on the basis of the evidence available from the EWCS are as follows.

- Work–life balance and gender roles at home and work
- Quality employment and modern management
- Flexibility, security, trust and confidence
- Social inequalities and workplace inequalities
- Sustainable workforces and work intensity
- Convergence and cohesion

Each of these themes is addressed in turn below.

#### **Work–life balance and gender roles at home and work**

The EWCS evidence demonstrates how gender imbalances at the workplace and in the home are inextricably linked. In effect, the well-known gender segregation at work, in terms of type of work, level of responsibility, hours of work, etc, sits alongside a segregation of activities that leaves women, on average, undertaking significantly higher number of paid and unpaid hours each week compared with their male partners in addition to bringing home lower levels of earnings than men from equivalent jobs.

This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to easily or rapidly improve gender balance at the workplace by actions there alone, and suggests that economic, social and employment policies need to address social attitudes about gender issues as well as work-related ones.

If such an approach were to be pursued, however, this would imply that policies would need to be developed in ways that provide appropriate incentives for men and women, and their employers, to develop a work–life gender balance overall, and not just in relation to work.

### Quality employment and modern management

Most of the indicators that have been developed for monitoring policy progress in relation to the quality of employment emphasise legal and contractual relationships, or issues such as access to training.

These are important factors, but they need to be considered alongside the fundamental issues of work organisation and management style, recognising that teamwork and personal autonomy figure significantly in high-performance workplaces, but their use varies significantly, not only between type and size of companies, but between regions and Member States of the EU.

The evidence suggests that the widespread adoption of modern, best practice management methods is central to the achievement of quality employment, and needs to be given a much higher profile in policy development, with appropriate support from governments.

### Flexibility, security and confidence

The flexicurity approach aims to improve overall labour market performance by increasing labour market flexibility while maintaining income security. This represents a rebalancing of earlier policy approaches to labour market flexibility that were commonly focused on making it easier for firms to adjust their levels of employment and to introduce various forms of non-permanent job contracts.

Flexicurity has widened the agenda, bringing on board issues of income security and employability, although much attention has nevertheless remained focused on the external labour market. This could undervalue the benefits of flexibility within the firm, which, in turn, depend on effective systems of work organisation, and also on a recognition of the importance of maintaining the value of human resource investments, and of workforce morale.

Failing to take account of the potential negative impact on corporate enterprise culture of unbalanced flexibility approaches could lead to a deterioration in relations between employers and employees, with implications for longer-term workforce development within companies.

This suggests, *inter alia*, that the contribution of short-term and temporary contracts to the improvement of both external and internal labour market flexibility should take account of their impact on long-term workforce commitment.

### Social inequalities and workplace inequalities

An important reminder from the analysis of the results of 27 EU Member States is that inequalities exist, not only between Member States of the Union, but also within national societies.

Inequalities between Member States largely reflect levels of national economic advancement and performance, something that could perhaps be taken into account more explicitly in future EWCS analyses, but inequalities within societies reflect a much wider range of factors, from equality in access to educational facilities through to the distributive consequences of national taxation and social security arrangements.

Whatever the causes, inequalities in terms of work and life experiences vary between countries, between men and women and between those with different educational backgrounds. Inequalities are reflected in the continuing traditional categorisation and treatment of employees (white and blue collar, managerial and others etc) and of populations – high, middle and lower social classes.

The EWCS evidence demonstrates that there are few, if any, trade-offs that compensate those working at the ‘bottom of the pile’. Poorly paid jobs tend to be associated with poor working conditions and lower levels of job satisfaction, while jobs at the other end of the spectrum tend to deliver better conditions and higher levels of satisfaction on all dimensions and criteria.

Again, policy in this area appears fragmented. There are widespread concerns about rising income inequalities, just as there are concerns about job quality, but the parallels between life at work and life outside work appear to run deep. If social cohesion is to have real meaning, then it seems that actions to address general social inequalities may need to be much more closely related to actions to address inequalities at the place of work.

### **Sustainable workforces and work intensity**

The ageing of the EU population due to reduced fertility and increased longevity is acknowledged, with the consequences for the labour market in terms of larger cohorts of older relative to younger workers in the years ahead, with wider economic implications.

This has brought forth policy action designed to raise effective retirement ages, but action to support older workers to remain in employment longer appears to be largely focused on those about to retire (and whose minds are probably made up) and not enough on those for whom retirement may still be a little way off, and who are probably more open to influence.

Research suggests that the decisions of the latter groups will partly depend on the extent to which they are supported in positive ways through training and changing workplace arrangements, the prospect of flexible arrangements later in life (working three out of four weeks, for example) or a progressive reduction in hours.

Conversely, negative experiences in terms of work intensity, stress and harassment – all the psychosocial risks and issues that can adversely affect job satisfaction – will have exactly the opposite effect. At the same time, it is important to note that, given the significant segregation between women and men in terms of employment situations and structures, some of the consequences may often be very different. For example, men are affected by physical issues, while women suffer more from mental health issues.

### **Convergence and cohesion**

A central objective of the European Union is to improve the economic, social and employment performance of the European Union with an upward convergence to the standards and achievements of the best-performing Member States and major EU-wide structural policies deployed through the regional, social and agricultural support funds.

The latest enlargement of the Union has, obviously, led to a significant widening of performance levels between Member States since, on average, economic productivity in the new Member States was little more than 50% of the EU15 average. As expected, however, the gap between old and new Member States has progressively diminished as the new Member States catch up with above-average rates of productivity growth.

However, the secondary analysis on convergence suggests that, in terms of working conditions, there has been not so much a general upward movement towards the highest level, as a convergence towards the average, with standards in Scandinavian countries, for example, falling somewhat, even though standards in other countries, notably Ireland and the United Kingdom, have risen. How far this is due to particular factors such as policy changes, the impact of greater global competition and the differing capacity of national governments, social partners, and other agencies is unclear, but warrants close attention.

Likewise, significant differences in working conditions appear to persist between sectors, sometimes but not always across all Member States, implying that more action at this level is needed if the Union is to fulfil its most fundamental objectives in terms of raising working and living standards for all.

## Implications for the balance of employment and social policies in the EU

These themes, which emerge from the rich body of material assembled in the fourth EWCS and which are addressed in a variety of ways and from a range of perspectives in the individual secondary analysis reports, raise a number of general concerns about the overall balance of current EU policies in relation to employment and social issues, as well as everyday practices across the Union. It is appropriate to ask, for example, the following questions.

- Is there an appropriate balance between legal regulation – notably over work contracts, working time, etc – and social partner guidelines and agreements concerning best practice modern management?
- Could and should the Union do more to shift the focus of policy away from minimum standards towards exemplary examples – not least in terms of management and workplace-based cooperation?
- Could more be done to pursue higher productivity growth, not just through technological advances, but also through improvements in work organisation and working methods?
- Should more be done to encourage companies to better match their demands on the labour market with the capacity and availability of the workforce that is actually there? In other words, can ‘mismatch’ over skills or working hours be addressed in a balanced, rather than one-sided, way as part of the process of raising levels of labour market participation?
- Can a gender mainstreaming policy in the labour market ever be effective without educational and other support that promotes and supports gender equality outside of work and in the home?
- Is broader social, psychological and managerial support, and not just occasional doses of lifelong learning, needed throughout people’s working lives in order to maintain the levels of motivation and performance required to ensure they can contribute more fully, and for longer?
- Should much more use be made of subjective indicators as a way of demonstrating how people feel about the quality of their working lives, and should governments and social partners be encouraged to discuss these concerns as a basis for common action?

# Conclusion

The executive summary provides a general overview of the coverage and findings of this report. However, the following points stand out from the large volume of documents studied and the discussions held with policy users and researchers.

## Importance of the EWCS as a source of data

- The EWCS is a unique source of information, which addresses issues that are central to EU employment and social policy concerns.
- The survey is particularly valuable in Member States that do not have their own reports.
- The main weaknesses with the survey relate to its infrequency and relatively small sample size at national level.
- The existence of the EWCS is encouraging more countries to establish national reports and to raise the sample size and frequency.

## Strengths and weaknesses of the survey for policy purposes

- Subjective, self-reported data has its limitations, but it also has validity in its own right.
- Inter-Member State comparisons are liable to be affected by cultural factors and expectations that call for careful interpretation.
- Infrequently published data cannot be used for monitoring short-term progress, but it can provide benchmarks and illustrate long-term structural shifts.
- Some parts of the survey overlap with other surveys, for example, the Labour Force Survey in relation to working time.
- The lack of a comparable enterprise-based survey is regretted by many of those who use the EWCS as a resource.

## Extent to which policy makers use the EWCS

- The survey addresses many of the current policy concerns of the EU; the main areas not adequately addressed concern mobility and skills and learning.
- The survey is particularly strong in relation to workplace-based developments, which are extremely important, but do not figure highly on the EU agenda of governments.
- The survey illuminates many current policy concerns, but its most significant impact is on the development of longer-term policy thinking.

## New and emerging policy concerns identifiable through the 2005 EWCS

- Work–life balance and gender roles at home and work
- Quality employment and modern management
- Flexibility and confidence at work and in the labour market
- Sustainable workforces and work intensity
- Social inequalities and workplace inequalities
- Convergence and cohesion

## Scale and frequency of the EWCS

- Member States could be encouraged to invest in both national surveys and in the development of the EWCS (larger samples, and more frequent surveys being the priorities).
- A long-term aim would be to develop the full long-term potential of the EWCS as a European and national policy tool, as has progressively happened with the Labour Force Survey.

## Audiences for EWCS findings

- The EWCS provides evidence on the state of working life across the EU as a whole, but also regarding the situation in individual Member States.
- The EWCS is of particular interest to EU-level bodies, national governments, social partners, NGOs and researchers generally, but it also attracts wide general press interest, especially at national level.

## Overall policy contribution of the EWCS

- Without the EWCS there would be an enormous gap in our knowledge of working conditions in the EU and issues that become increasingly important as worker aspirations rise as the EU economy faces major demographic challenges.
- The EWCS could contribute even more to policy development than it does at present if its results were more clearly related to EU policy agenda and if its detailed research reports were available in succinct, non-technical, forms.
- While the EWCS is sometimes seen as focusing primarily on employee concerns, the data it contains on issues such as work organisation and workplace efficiency could also contribute to the general economic debate on competitiveness.
- Highlighting the costs of bad practices and the benefits of good, the survey provides information that can encourage positive change.