

communiqué



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Access to employment for vulnerable groups



Vulnerable groups tend to be marginalised from the labour market and at a high risk of social exclusion. The current EU debate on social inclusion recognises the importance of employment as a means to overcome poverty, but also the fact that employment alone is not the solution to the problem.

At the heart of the European social model is the idea that all citizens – or at least as many as possible – can share in the wealth that is created and hence can participate fully in society. Having a job is, for most citizens, a prerequisite to wider social participation, while losing or finding a job is a key factor in moving in and out of poverty.

Recent European Councils have been focusing on employment promotion among disadvantaged groups in order to reduce the risks of social exclusion and poverty.

'the needs and circumstances of marginalised groups require a response that is comprehensive and integrates social with economic and environmental policies'

The European Council in Nice (2000) drew attention to the importance of promoting employment among vulnerable groups, specifically long-term unemployed people, disabled workers, older workers and ethnic minorities. At the level of the client, this means more effective coordination of services to meet

their multiple and diverse needs. This demands not only coordination between services and agencies at the local level, but also integration between these policies and services at the local, regional and national levels.

The recently published second Foundation paper, *Access to employment for vulnerable groups*, outlines the current situation and looks at employment trends among vulnerable groups. It provides a practically oriented set of

recommendations on how to improve opportunities by applying more

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Workers in candidate countries report twice the risk to health and safety at work

Workers in candidate countries consider their health and safety to be more at risk because of their work than workers in the European Union (40% as opposed to 27%). Longer working days, on average 10 or more hours per day, are also reported.

These are some of the findings of the First Survey on working conditions in the candidate countries. The survey provides a first comprehensive overview of working conditions in the twelve candidate countries, using the same methodology as in the previous Foundation working conditions surveys in the European Union. It addresses a wide range of issues related to the quality of work and employment, such as physical risk factors (i.e. noise, vibrations), working time patterns (i.e. working hours, shift and night work), and occupational health outcomes (i.e. stress).

‘The conclusions at this stage are based on average figures for all the candidate countries which therefore can hide significant differences, in particular between countries,’ says **Pascal Paoli**, coordinator of the Working Conditions team at the Foundation. ‘This means that some of the conclusions might not always reflect the particular situation of a country in the group of candidate countries. Obviously, the same also applies to national comparisons within the Member States group.

The initial findings of the survey were presented to an audience of journalists at the European Business Summit in Brussels on 6 June 2002. A summary of the survey has also been presented to representatives of governments and social partners in the candidate countries, during visits by the Foundation in the spring of 2002. The results of the survey will be published later this year, but some



results are already available on the Foundation’s website.

Structural differences

There are some important structural differences between candidate countries and EU Member States, in particular in the distribution of the workforce between sectors and job categories, and income levels. Agriculture covers 21% of the workforce in the candidate countries compared to 5% in the EU. Fewer workers are also found in the higher skilled job categories, and the proportion of workers with low income levels is higher in the candidate countries.

‘Overall, work organisation can be described as more industry than service oriented in the candidate countries as opposed to the EU Member States,’ says Foundation Director **Raymond-Pierre Bodin**. ‘Also, the interaction between workers and clients is not as widespread in the candidate countries, 58% compared to 69% in the EU, which indicates that any difference in pace of work in the candidate countries is less likely to depend on external demand such as demands from clients, and more on orders from the boss.’

Survey methodology

The survey was carried out in June 2001 and is based on face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of a total of 11,000 workers: 1000 workers in each country, apart from Malta and Cyprus where 500 persons were interviewed. The weighting has been done in accordance with Eurostat’s Labour Force Survey 2000.

The questionnaire is the same as that used for the Third working conditions survey carried out in 2000 by the Foundation in the 15 EU Member States. The questionnaire was developed by the Foundation in a working group involving national experts, representatives of the European Commission and of employer (UNICE) and employee (ETUC) organisations.

A summary of the report is available for downloading at www.eurofound.eu.int/working/ccseminar.htm

Data from the survey is available on www.eurofound.eu.int/working/ccindex.htm

For more information, contact John Hurley, Information Liaison Officer at e-mail: joh@eurofound.eu.int

Access to employment for vulnerable groups

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comprehensive and integrated policies, as well as improving the coordination of social security and employment institutions which are responsible for policy implementation.

The aim behind the Foundation papers is to highlight knowledge and analysis from Foundation research, and to provide a timely contribution to the debate at European level, in the areas of employment, equal opportunities, social inclusion, time use and diversity. The objective is to make past, present and future work of the Foundation relevant and accessible in a concise format.

‘The Foundation has contributed with research on the relationships between social protection and labour market strategies over the past ten years,’ says **Robert Anderson**, research coordinator of the Living Conditions team at the Foundation. ‘The research has drawn on the analysis of policies and examination of the development of active strategies, building on experiences from local case studies.’

A shift from passive to active labour market measures

Social protection has over the past two decades been viewed as a mechanism to maintain minimum

levels of welfare. Today, there is a consensus across the EU that social, economic and employment policy are closely inter-linked and interacting, all contributing to the improvement of quality of life for all. Social policy towards unemployed people as well as others not in work is shifting away from passive income support to active measures to help get them into employment. Such measures can be divided into two broad categories: measures which help the unemployed get a job by assisting them in their search or improve their employability through training and further work experience; and direct access to employment through financial means (subsidising or reducing taxes and/or social contributions) or by assisting in starting-up a business or becoming self-employed.

Vulnerable groups are characterised by the multiplicity and complexity of problems they face, not only in employment and skills but concerning health, housing, income and other difficulties. The need for integrated and comprehensive policies is already enshrined in the European Social Policy Agenda and forms the basis of European Social Fund initiatives. However, Foundation research has shown that the development of effective coordination, partnership, and

citizen/worker involvement is problematic. The paper outlines many Foundation studies that have examined in detail how to put these principles into practice.

Coordinated strategies

All the EU Member States have committed themselves to aligning labour market strategies and social security policies as part of the European Commission’s Social Policy Agenda. Combating social exclusion also requires a strong partnership between public authorities, social partners, and non-governmental organisations.

‘We could conclude already in the mid-90s, based on our research, that the needs and circumstances of marginalised groups require a response which is comprehensive and integrates social with economic and environmental policies,’ says **Robert Anderson**. ‘This places great demands on the development of quality services, and training and support, for staff who are being asked to work in new and challenging ways.’

For more information, contact Teresa Renehan, Information Liaison Officer, e-mail: ter@eurofound.eu.int

Less stress at work in Malta

The Foundation is preparing for EU enlargement by visiting all candidate countries and presenting the work of the Foundation to representatives of governments, trade unions and employers. On 21-22 May 2002, the Foundation visited Malta, where the Foundation Director **Raymond-Pierre Bodin** and Deputy Director **Eric Verborgh**, together with experts from the Foundation, discussed the initial findings of the First Survey on working conditions in the candidate countries.

‘Working conditions in Malta are very much influenced by the nature of jobs, the Maltese economy being essentially service-oriented,’ commented Mr Bodin after the visit. ‘Client-driven work, with a high degree of worker autonomy, leads to less stress and other work related health problems.’

The Foundation’s programme of visits to the candidate countries will be completed in September, with visits first to Cyprus and later to Turkey.



Foundation Director Raymond-Pierre Bodin with Dr Lawrence Gonzi (left), Malta’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Social Policy.

Increase in time pressure at work

Time pressure continues to rise in the European Union, resulting in more intensive work situations, according to recent research carried out by the Foundation.

The Foundation has published two reports based on secondary analysis of the findings of the Third European survey of working conditions, which was carried out in 2000.

The first report looks at the relationship between the use of technology (both machines and computers) at

work and working conditions, and the second report examines the health of workers in different forms of employment in the EU.

The report, *Work organisation, technology and working conditions*, can be downloaded at www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/0205.htm

The report, *Types of employment and health in the EU*, can be downloaded at www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/0221.htm

RESEARCH IN FIGURES

Working conditions for non-permanent and part-time workers are found to be not as favourable as for permanent, full-time workers, according to a recent Foundation study based on analysis of the results of the Third European survey of working conditions. The report aims to show the relationship between employment status and working conditions in the EU.

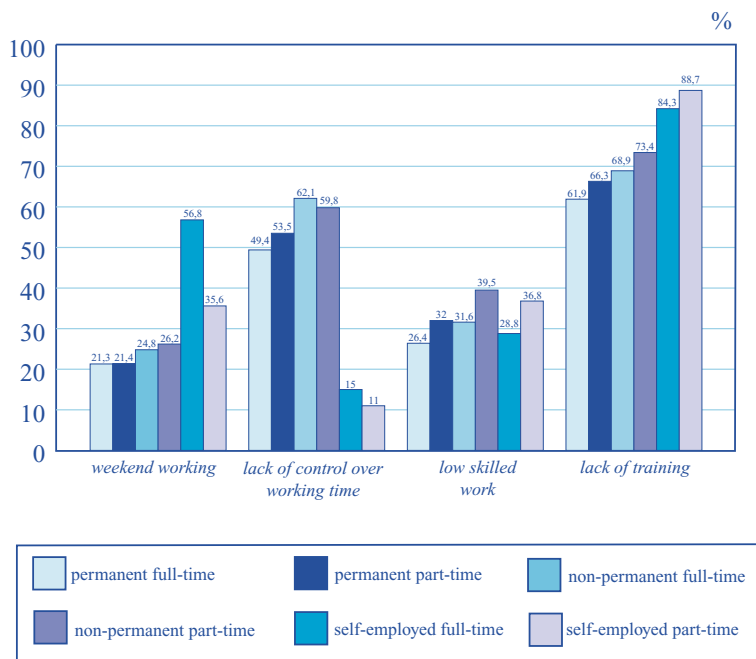
Both non-permanent and part-time workers tend to have lower skilled

jobs with less control over their time and work. Workers in these two forms of employment work fewer non-standard hours, and have limited training opportunities.

For self-employed workers, the situation is similar, except that these workers report a high level of control over both their time and work.

The report, *Employment status and working conditions*, can be downloaded at www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/0208.htm

Working conditions by employment status



Source: *Employment status and working conditions, 2002*

EVENTS

Foundation Forum
Dublin, Ireland, 29-30 August 2002

Labour supply and diversity in the work life on local, national, European and global level
Gothenburg, Sweden, 2 September 2002

Workingonsafety.net
Elsinore, Denmark, 3-6 September 2002

PUBLICATIONS

Access to employment for vulnerable groups (Foundation paper no. 2)
www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/General.htm

Annual report 2001
EN+FR (on the website shortly in all languages)
www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/General.htm

EIRObserver 03/02 EN:
www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int/eiroobserver.html

Employment status and working conditions (report) EN:
www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0208.htm

Integrated approaches to active welfare and employment policies (résumé) EN:
www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0237.htm

Public sector reform under EMU (résumé) EN: www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0213.htm

Temporary agency work in the EU (résumé) EN:
www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0202.htm

Travail et santé au travail (report) FR:
www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0206.htm

Types of employment and health in the EU (report) EN:
www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0221.htm

Working conditions in candidate countries and the EU (résumé) EN:
www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0246.htm

Work organisation, technology and working conditions (report) EN:
www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0205.htm

Working time preferences in 16 European countries (report) EN:
www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF0207.htm

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

Towards equality for temporary agency workers

Temporary agency work was the most rapidly growing form of atypical employment in the European Union over the past decade. Concerns persist about the working conditions of 'temps' compared to their permanent colleagues.

The number of temporary agency workers has in recent years increased five times in Denmark, Spain, Italy and Sweden, and has doubled in the all other EU Member States. In total, some 6 million persons are estimated to be employed by a temporary agency during 2000. Temporary agency workers tend to be younger, exposed to poorer working conditions and receive less training opportunities than other types of employee. With the exception of the three Scandinavian Member States, the majority of agency workers are men. It is clear that the gender distribution of agency work can be largely explained by considering the sectors (industry and construction) in which the two sexes tend to work.

In a recently published report by the Foundation, the main trends in this form of employment and the problems and challenges it poses for the different member states and the EU as a whole were examined. The report concludes that temporary agency work has the potential to offer considerable economic benefits to user firms, advantages to the wider economy and profits to agencies and to do so without the erosion or circumvention of employment standards in the user firm. The sector as a whole generated a turnover of 59 billion euro in 1999.

'Temporary agency work is really a method for companies to outsource labour and it provides them with a flexible solution for employment,' says Dr **Donald Storrie** of the Centre for European Labour Market Studies in Gothenburg, Sweden, author of the Foundation



report, *Temporary Agency Work in the European Union*. 'The job matching function of temporary agency work is also positive from both the worker's and employer's perspective.'

Nonetheless, despite the legal principle in place in several member states that agency workers must receive equal treatment with those in the user firm, there is evidence of circumvention of employment standards as regards pay and working-time regulation, with negative consequences for the temporary agency worker.

Providing a basis for the EU directive

'The Foundation report has been used extensively in the recent proposed EU directive on working conditions for temporary workers, as well as in the subsequent debate,' says **Ola Persson**, research manager at the Foundation. 'This is a good example of how Foundation research can contribute to the policy-making process.'

The proposed legislation (March 2002) aims to establish the principle of non-discrimination, including for pay, between temporary agency workers and comparable workers in the user undertaking to which the temporary agency worker has been assigned.

'The report provides a comprehensive overview and a good analysis of temporary agency work in the European Union,' said **Ieke van den Burg** (PSE, NL), rapporteur for the European Parliament Committee for Employment and Social Affairs on working conditions and temporary workers, at a public hearing and press conference on the issue in Brussels on 28 May.

Timetable for the directive

The issue already has been discussed in the Council working group and Mrs van den Burg aims to have a draft document ready for the July session of the European Parliament. The draft document should then be brought before the autumn plenary, paving the way for reactions from the European Commission and opening up a debate in the Council during the Danish EU Presidency.

The report and the text of the proposed directive are available at www.eurofound.eu.int/working/temp_agency.new.htm

More research information on working conditions can be found at www.eurofound.eu.int/working/working.htm or by contacting John Hurley, e-mail: joh@eurofound.eu.int

INSIDE THE FOUNDATION

Luxembourg conference on financial participation

Financial participation was one of the topics for discussion during the visit of **François Biltgen**, Luxembourg's Minister of Labour, to the Foundation on 28 May. The Foundation was asked to assist in the

preparation of a conference in Luxembourg in September 2002, which would share the Foundation's expertise and research on the topic of workers' financial participation.



Raymond-Pierre Bodin, the Foundation's Director, with François Biltgen, Luxembourg's Minister of Labour and Eric Verborgh, the Foundation's Deputy Director.

Record level of web users

The Foundation website recorded a total of 61,197 user sessions in April 2002. In May, this figure rose to its highest ever level: 67,557 user sessions.

The EIROOnline website (www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int) registered 81,636 user sessions in April and 94,213 in May, also a record high level.

Most popular downloads

The Foundation's *Annual Report 2001*, *Third European Working Conditions Survey* (especially the French language version) and the first Foundation paper, *Quality of Work and Employment*, were the three most downloaded documents from the Foundation website up to the end of May 2002. A strong runner-up was the recently published *Temporary Agency Work in the EU*. Up to the end of May there were a total of 8,015 downloads of the Foundation's *Annual Report 2001*, which was made available on the website on 23 May.

communiqué

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