

communiqué



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Issue 3, March 2005

DIRECTOR'S DIARY



The transition to market economies in the central and eastern European countries seems to have done little to improve employment for women or to help close the pay gap between women and men, according to the Foundation's recent report on *Working conditions and gender in an enlarged Europe*. At a time when Europe is focusing its efforts on creating more and better jobs and increasing the numbers of women employed throughout the European Union these findings highlight the need to put equal rights between women and men in Europe's labour markets at the very centre of the policy debate.

The 74th meeting of the Foundation's Administrative Board will take place in Dublin on 1 April, after which the 2004 Annual report will be published in all 20 EU languages. Work is in progress on the EIRO user survey, and final adaptations are being carried out for the new-look *Eurofound* web design. Following the successful visit to Hungary this month, preparations are also underway for the next phase of the road show presenting the findings of the European Quality of Life Survey in Spain. The visit will take place in Madrid on 25 and 26 April 2005.

Willy Buschak
Acting Director

IMPORTANT NOTICE

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Industrial relations still differ in the EU, Japan and US

Collective bargaining remains the dominant method of settling pay and working time in Europe, covering approximately two-thirds of workers in the European Union of 25 countries. This contrasts against one fifth of the workforce covered by collective agreements in Japan and only one eighth of the US workforce, the Foundation has found in its new report, *Industrial relations in the EU, Japan and USA 2003-4*.

Collective bargaining remains almost entirely decentralised in Japan and the US, while bargaining in the EU is conducted at all levels, from the national intersectoral to the individual workplace, depending on national systems. There are, however, signs that in a number of countries - most notably France and Germany - collective bargaining is becoming even more decentralised, moving from the sectoral to the company level.

The report is available at www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int/annualreports.html

Working conditions and gender in an enlarged Europe

The difference in working hours between women and men is much smaller in eight of the new EU Member States from central and eastern Europe than in the former EU15 countries, the Foundation's new comparative study of working conditions for women in these countries shows. The findings also suggest, however, that women's pay increases are not developing at the same rate as men's despite the fact that women remain as highly educated as men.

The transition to market economies in the former communist countries has brought major expansion of employment in the services sector, for both men and women, with a subsequent decline in employment levels in industry. During the past decade, the overall employment levels in services in the eight new Member States concerned has almost reached the levels of the former EU15 countries, some two-thirds of the total labour force, with the exception of Poland. While the changes have varied in proportions of men and women working in the expanding services sector, the largest increases for both men and women was noted in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Lithuania, with smaller changes in Hungary and Slovenia.

The report is available at www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF04138.htm

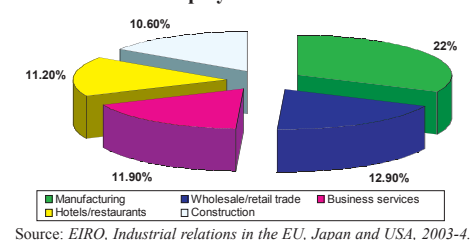
Research in brief

Migrant workers on the European labour market

Migrants in the EU Member States are more likely than average to have 'flexible' and fixed-term contracts. Across the EU, fixed-terms contracts were held by over 20% of non-EU nationals in 2001, compared with 13% of EU nationals. The sectors where migrant workers are employed tend, across the EU, to be generally labour-intensive and low skilled.

In the EU as a whole, foreign workers enter the full spectrum of occupations, but seem to be concentrated largely at the top and bottom of the labour market. Many migrant workers are in professional or skilled occupations, some 23.3% of non-EU national workers are in high-skilled non-manual occupations. However, the largest group of migrants is found in unskilled manual work, accounting for 33.7% of non-EU national workers.

Main sectors of employment for non-EU nationals



Source: EIRO, *Industrial relations in the EU, Japan and USA, 2003-4*.

Regional social capital in Europe

Social networks play an important role in combating both social exclusion and unemployment in disadvantaged regions, the Foundation argues in its new report *Regional social capital in Europe*. For almost a decade, Europe's regions and local authorities have developed policies aimed at economic growth, employment and social inclusion, in a bottom-up approach to meet the Lisbon goals. But little is known about the role of resources necessary for capacity-building, networking and trust, commonly referred to as social capital. In an effort to highlight good practice cases and propose strategies that make better use of the concept, the Foundation examined six disadvantaged regions that face employment and social exclusion problems. The report is a first inroad into the regional dimension of socio-economic research, a new area in the Foundation's new four-year work programme 2005-2008. Later this year, the research on 'Promoting quality of life in rural areas' will take this regional approach forward.

Download the report at www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF04114.htm

A guide to employment initiatives for an ageing workforce

The Foundation will produce a set of guidelines to improve the employment situation for Europe's ageing workforce and to help extend working life for the elderly. By reviewing about 100 company cases, some of which were part of the Foundation's research on 'Combating age barriers in employment' a decade ago, this project will create an understanding of current company policies and the changing situation of older workers. The research will cover company cases in all former EU15 countries, six of the new Member States plus Romania and Bulgaria. An analytical report on developments in age management and an open database of current good practice examples, highlighting programmes that incorporate gender issues, the life course perspective, collective bargaining and transferability, will complete the results of this project by the end of the year.

Follow progress in the living conditions area at www.eurofound.eu.int/living/living.htm

Young, male and self-employed in Turkey

Turkey's labour market is dominated by young, male and self-employed workers, with few signs of achieving equal opportunities similar to those in the European Union, the Foundation told a public hearing at the European Parliament in Brussels on the role of women in social, economic and political life in Turkey. At the event, organised by the Parliament's Committee on women's rights and gender equality on 16 March, the Foundation presented key indicators on the situation of women workers in Turkey.

Outsourcing services: Balancing opportunities and threats

Outsourcing is becoming common business practice across Europe as it offers opportunities for companies' efficiency gains, participants were told at the EMCC company network seminar held in Tallinn, Estonia, on 17-18 March. With recent advances in information and communication technologies making it possible for a vast range of business services to trade internationally, the issue of outsourcing has become increasingly central to the work of Europe's social partners. While representatives of employer organisations and businesses highlight the financial gains offered by outsourcing, trade union representatives argue the need for labour agreements to protect against job losses caused by outsourcing. Both parties, however, acknowledge the increasing use of outsourcing as a tool for business optimisation and, more importantly, the need for both sides to adapt their attitudes and identify the opportunities of this growing trend.

More information at www.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/content/source/eu05001a.html

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EF/05/05/EN

Care work in Europe

6 April 2005, Brussels, Belgium
Institute of Education, University of London

Demographic challenges for social cohesion

7-8 April 2005, Strasbourg, France
European population committee of the Council of Europe

Impulse in der Europäischen Sozialpolitik

8 April 2005, Vienna, Austria
Austrian federal chamber of labour

Annual conference of the Association of management and professional staffs

10-11 April 2005, London, United Kingdom
Amicus the Union

Annual conference of European information association

15 April 2005, London, United Kingdom
European information association

PUBLICATIONS

Industrial relations in the EU, Japan and USA 2003-2004 (report)

EN
www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int/2005/02/feature/t0502102f.html

Sector Futures Transport (2) – Which direction?

EN
www.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/content/source/eu05003a.html

EWCO survey data reports:

Quality of work in Italy survey, 2002

www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco/surveys/IT0503SR01/IT0503SR01.htm

Working and employment conditions in Germany

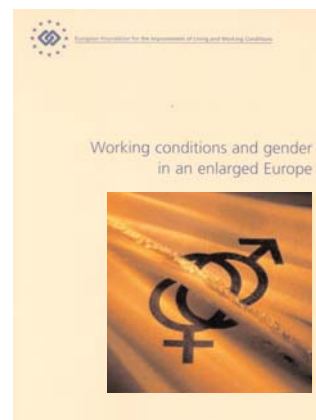
www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco/surveys/DE0503SR01/DE0503SR01.htm

Working environment risks and other job-related stress factors in Austria

www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco/surveys/AT0503SR01/AT0503SR01.htm

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Publication of the month



Working conditions and gender in an enlarged Europe

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/EF04138.htm