

International Conference: Reassessment and perspectives of labour policies

B) Policies for the quality of work

How to reconfigure working time policies in the new world of work? Evidence from the European Working Conditions Survey (2005-2015)

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In the current context of technological change, post-crisis deregulatory policies and changing employment relations, the quality of work has come under pressure. This paper focuses on two important aspects of job quality – working time and work intensity, both of which has been undergoing substantial transformations. On the one hand, working time is increasingly diversified, fragmented and employers' scope for flexibility has increased in recent years. On the other hand, work has become more intense, with an increasing time pressure and tempo of work. However, little is known about how these developments relate and to what extent non-standard working hours are used by organisations as means to achieve greater productivity and leading to work intensification. This paper fills this gap by exploring the effects of flexible and non-standard working time arrangements for work intensity. The objective is to determine how working time policies should be reconfigured to promote quality of work and advance the decent work agenda.

The empirical analysis is based on the European Working Conditions Survey (2005-2015) and a sample of employees from EU28 countries. It employs multilevel regression models with individuals nested within countries to account for contextual and institutional factors.

Findings reveal that the scheduling of work has a strong and significant effect on work intensity, with a particularly strong effect of part-time work, flexibility and unsocial hours. Moreover, the degree of schedule control has not only independent effect but also shapes the outcomes of non-standard working hours. Employer's control combined with reduced or unsocial hours has the most negative outcomes for the intensity of work.

The findings have important implications for labour policy and reveal important consequences of power imbalances in terms of determining work schedules. Policy measures should be adopted at the company, sectoral and national level that focus on advancing worker choice and influence regarding working time, for instance through allowing collective agreements to implement or amend working time standards. With working time reductions linked to automation, digitalisation and new ways of working, legislation is needed to address the existing dichotomy between full-time and part-time work.