Towards better living and working conditions
‘Ensuring a sustained exit from the lengthy economic downturn, a job-rich recovery and a return to the path towards the Europe 2020 targets will require well-designed policies to confront the employment and social challenges.’

*European Commission, Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2013*
Eurofound

A centre of expertise

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social and work-related policies. Eurofound was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) no. 1365/7, to contribute to the planning and design of better living and working conditions in Europe. It is situated in Dublin, Ireland.

Role of Eurofound

By monitoring the latest developments in living and working conditions and providing timely, in-depth analysis and information in these areas to governments and social partners, Eurofound seeks to contribute to improving the lives of citizens in Europe. The working and living conditions of Europeans are changing rapidly. To cope with the resulting impact on individuals and society, the European Union is pursuing a proactive agenda. The Europe 2020 strategy is the EU’s 10-year strategy for growth and jobs, which seeks to create the conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The strategy sets out five headline targets to be achieved by the end of 2020, covering employment, research and development, climate and energy, education, and social inclusion and poverty reduction. Seven flagship initiatives provide a framework for making progress in the fields of innovation, the digital economy, employment, youth, industrial policy, poverty and resource efficiency.

Juan Menéndez-Valdés, Director of Eurofound

‘Eurofound aims to support the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, to ensure that Europe achieves smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. By undertaking research that examines practical experience and identifies factors for successful change, Eurofound seeks both to document and understand change and to develop ideas for the ongoing improvement of the living and working conditions of European citizens.’

Erika Mezger, Deputy Director of Eurofound
The work of Eurofound

The role of Eurofound is to provide information, advice and expertise based on its comparative research and analysis for key actors in the field of EU social policy and for the citizens of Europe. The EU faces a number of key challenges: creating more and better jobs, enabling people to combine work with family life, ensuring better social cohesion and promoting equal opportunities. The central aim of Eurofound is to successfully address these challenges (made sharper by the economic crisis), identify policies and practices that work, and communicate the results. Eurofound’s strategic objective for 2013–2016 is to provide high-quality, timely and policy-relevant knowledge as input to better informed policies in four priority areas:

1. Increasing labour market participation and combating unemployment by creating jobs, improving labour market functioning and promoting integration
2. Improving working conditions and making work sustainable throughout the life course
3. Developing industrial relations to ensure equitable and productive solutions in a changing policy context
4. Improving standards of living and promoting social cohesion in the face of economic disparities and social inequalities.
Eurofound also researches a number of cross-cutting themes: promoting better employment, extending equal opportunities, managing diversity, supporting social inclusion and examining the changing use of time during the life course.

In its research and development projects, Eurofound works together with experts throughout Europe. Organisations from all 28 Member States are engaged to assess current national situations, prepare case studies and reports, analyse findings and give a comparative overview across the EU28 as well as at a wider level.

Debate and exchange are essential components of Eurofound’s work. Its conferences and seminars involve employers and workers, governments and civil society in open discussions on the future of European social policy. Eurofound’s flagship event, the Foundation Forum, is held in Dublin every four years and attracts decision-makers and opinion-formers from across Europe and further afield.
‘The proportion of households in Europe facing financial strain is growing, and there has been an increase in the proportion having difficulty making ends meet, especially among people in the lowest income quartile. Differences in subjective well-being between income quartiles are growing.’

Quality of life in Europe: Trends 2003–2012
Surveys and observatories

Pan-European surveys

Eurofound carries out a number of EU-wide surveys on a regular basis. They provide valuable information on how Europeans work, live and feel about their present circumstances, highlighting how working and living conditions have changed over time.

The European Working Conditions Survey, begun in 1990, is carried out every five years and provides a comprehensive picture of the work situation in Europe. The survey covers a wide range of topics including working time, work organisation, work–life balance, psychosocial factors, physical risks, and job performance and satisfaction. The fifth survey, conducted in 2010, covered around 44,000 workers in 34 countries. The sixth is being carried out in 2015.

The European Quality of Life Survey provides data and analysis on issues pertaining to the everyday life of Europeans. The third wave of the survey, carried out in 2012 in 34 countries, looked at people’s views on quality of society and community life as well their employment situation, education, income levels, family life, housing and social networks.

The European Company Survey was first carried out in 2004–2005; the third wave, in 2013, surveyed some 30,000 workplaces in 32 countries. The findings comprise the perspectives of managers and employee representatives on a range of work-related issues, such as human resource management practices, employee participation and social dialogue at the workplace, and performance and innovation.

Exploring data from the third European Quality of Life Survey in the interactive Survey Mapping Tool. (Question: Trust in the government, scale of 1–10.)
Network of correspondents

As part of its knowledge base, Eurofound has at its disposal a network of correspondents, based in research institutes in all 28 Member States plus Norway, who feed information in from the national level, both giving an up-to-date picture of the country situation and informing Eurofound’s pan-European comparative analysis. The network covers the fields of industrial relations, working conditions, employment and industrial restructuring, and social policy.

European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC)

The EMCC seeks to promote an understanding of changes in the world of work, employment and restructuring, looking at the economic and social developments that drive change in European labour markets and identifying emerging and potential labour market trends. Two key activities within the EMCC pursue particular goals within this. The European Restructuring Monitor (ERM) provides up-to-date news and analysis on company restructuring, plus details of relevant legislation and support initiatives. The ERM presents its findings in searchable databases, in the ERM quarterly, and in annual reports. Alongside this, the European Jobs Monitor presents relevant information on the major trends and drivers of change in European labour markets. It uses an innovative jobs-based approach to describe annual shifts in employment at Member State and EU level, showing in which jobs employment is growing, in which it is contracting and the implications of these shifts for overall job quality.

www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/emcc

‘The auto/transport sector is one of the few major manufacturing sectors in which employment levels have grown over the past decade. Nearly all of the net gains have come in eastern European countries, confirming an eastward shift in production.’

ERM annual report 2013: Monitoring and managing restructuring in the 21st century
European Observatory of Working Life (EurWORK)

EurWORK is the point of access to Eurofound’s research findings on working life, including the areas of industrial relations and working conditions. Bringing together the work previously done by the EIRO and EWCO observatories, EurWORK publishes timely findings on developments at national and European level to contribute to the European debate on industrial relations and working conditions. EurWORK monitors – on a comparative basis – key developments in industrial relations and working conditions that affect work in all Member States and at the European level. The work of the observatory seeks to contribute to the development of evidence-based policy and practices that improve the quality of working life. The observatory’s information output includes news updates, comparative studies, annual reviews, annual updates on key issues, thematic and sectoral analyses, and the European industrial relations dictionary, with almost 300 entries, featuring concise definitions and relevant contextual information.

www.europfound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork

‘[One finding] is the observed “countercyclical” aspect of collectively agreed pay. Collectively agreed pay – to a greater extent than actual compensation – seems to act as a kind of “insurance” for employees in times of crisis. It doesn’t follow entirely the “ups and downs” of fluctuations in output … Systems with more decentralised bargaining structures and less bargaining coverage seem to have less of this insurance function for employees, leading to a higher exposure of employees in terms of wages (and jobs) at risk.’

Pay in Europe in the 21st century
The European Parliament ‘welcomes the contribution of Eurofound to the promotion of knowledge about living and working conditions in the EU at a time when these conditions are continuing to deteriorate in some Member States; recalls the launch of the overview report from the fifth European Working Conditions Survey containing important and relevant findings about trends in job quality, sustainable work and ageing workforce, health and well-being, and working time and work-life balance ... welcomes Eurofound’s reaction to the changed policy priorities induced by the economic crisis, by launching new projects linked to priority themes on the social impact of the crisis; recovery and job creation; demographic change; and sustainable public sector.’

Opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs for the Committee on Budgetary Control on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2012

(2013/2210(DEC))

Rapporteur: Pervenche Berès, MEP
A range of issues that the Agency is tackling over the 2013–2016 period have been identified for each of the four policy priority areas. From this broad description, a number of spotlight themes have been selected that will help prioritise activities and group their outputs, providing a focus for Eurofound’s communication strategy:

- Youth in Europe – improving prospects for all
- Public services in Europe – ensuring access, quality, sustainability
- Sustainable work – the future of working life in Europe
- Win–win practices – good working conditions for high-performance workplaces
- Social dialogue in Europe – developing its role in a changing context
- Employment – preserving, creating and sharing jobs in Europe
- Trends in quality of life – the impact of the crisis and Europe’s middle class
- Social cohesion – fighting poverty and social exclusion
- Older people – addressing the challenges of work, care and inclusion
- Mobility and migration – addressing employment and social consequences
In most Member States in the EU28, more young people were living with their parents in 2011 than in 2007, the proportion of 18–29 year-olds doing so rising from 44% to 48% ... this increase is significant for both the younger age group (those aged 18–24 years) and the older group (aged 25–29), for both men and women. Young men are more likely to live with their parents than young women.'

*Foundation Findings: Social situation of young people in Europe*

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**EU-level representation**

Eurofound assures a central presence at the heart of EU affairs through its Brussels Liaison Office. This office has the dual role of strengthening the visibility and impact of Eurofound research at EU level and monitoring developments in policymaking. Set up in 2002, the Brussels Liaison Office keeps in close contact with the EU institutions and contributes to the strategic management and overall communication policy of Eurofound towards key players at EU level.
Mission

Eurofound’s mission is to provide knowledge to assist in the development of social and work-related policies.

Governance

The day-to-day management of Eurofound is undertaken by the Director, assisted by the Deputy Director, both of whom report to a Governing Board. The Board comprises representatives of governments, employers and workers of Member States, as well as representatives from the European Commission. This representation of governments and the social partners reflects the tripartite nature of Eurofound’s work.

Every four years, Eurofound reviews its strategy and the orientation of its work. After widespread consultation with the Board and the EU institutions, Eurofound prepares a work programme. Within the context of the four-year programme, a detailed annual programme of work is then prepared and proposed for adoption by the Board. Eurofound is financed as part of the general budget of the European Commission. Funds are allocated during the official budgetary process between the European Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. In total, Eurofound has a staff of just over 100 specialising in socioeconomic research, communication and public administration. Eurofound also works extensively with external experts from Europe’s leading research institutes.
Information at your fingertips

Eurofound’s website is the easiest way to find information on socioeconomic developments in the EU. Whether you are looking for the latest data on corporate restructuring or want to know the implications of an ageing society in Europe, Eurofound’s website is the gateway to the information you need: www.eurofound.europa.eu

With an easy-to-navigate interface, the Eurofound website offers you the option of accessing information by subject, by sector, by language or by country, drawing on relevant data and analysis from all Eurofound’s surveys and observatories as well as parallel in-depth Eurofound research. The site is optimised for use on tablets and smartphones as well as PCs and includes specialist databases plus a Survey Mapping Tool to explore and visualise survey data. You can register online to receive Eurofound’s monthly newsletter for a regular update on all our activities or stay in touch with Eurofound through social media.

twitter.com/eurofound
facebook.com/eurofound.europa.eu
plus.google.com/+eurofound
youtube.com/user/eurofound
flickr.com/photos/eurofoundimages/
Publications

Eurofound produces a wide range of printed publications, including a monthly newsletter, the twice-yearly magazine Foundation Focus, the Foundation Findings series, résumés, flagship reports and detailed analytical reports. These publications can be downloaded free of charge from Eurofound’s website.

Information centre

In addition to its online facility, Eurofound’s information centre provides access for researchers and visitors to our internal and external information sources. The centre uses specialised library services to ensure ready access to Europe-wide information sources that include bibliographical databases, newspapers and newsletters, electronic journals and a wide range of reference materials. Eurofound’s work is available to all interested parties.

Visitor programme

Eurofound is open to visitors and offers tailor-made programmes in order to meet your information needs. Arranged by prior appointment, the visits are designed to provide an opportunity for direct contact with Eurofound staff on the areas of most interest to each visitor.

To learn more about Eurofound’s activities, email: information@eurofound.europa.eu
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