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EUROPEAN STUDIES ON TIME

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Editorial

Working time in the retail sector has seen many changes over the last four years. The opening hours of shops have been, and remain, a major issue in some countries. The growth of the '24-hour society' has led to a reconsideration of the regulations governing the extension of shop opening hours in the evening, at night and on Sundays.

The retail sector provides a good example of the development of working time flexibility in response to round-the-clock customer demand. It also illustrates the conflict of interests which can sometimes exist between employees, who may be required to work unsocial hours, and citizens, who may also be workers, with their need for adequate, extended shopping hours.

The present bulletin provides an update on developments in working time in the retail sector in Europe, highlights the issues at stake and offers practical information on the organisation of time.

Two additional articles give, firstly, an overview of the consequences of the increase in part-time working in Europe, and secondly, the labour market prospects and preferences of those not currently in paid employment.

At the end of 2000 the Foundation's Administrative Board adopted a new four-year programme for the period 2001-4. A key element of this programme will be the development of a new communications strategy. A review is being undertaken of current services and products, including BEST, and a new policy on publications, including journals, will form part of the forthcoming communications strategy.

We therefore wish to inform our BEST readers that the present volume will be the last in the current series. However, the subjects of working time and the organisation of time in society continue to be priority themes in the new four year programme and it remains the Foundation's objective to keep its audiences informed of new developments in this area.

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Mia Latta, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, is the author of 'Labour market re-entry and working time preferences'.

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Working time in the retail sector

Alexander Wedderburn

Opening hours in the EU

Changing lifestyles

The phenomenon of the 24-hour, seven-day-a-week society has developed widely during the second half of the twentieth century. One of the most visible expressions of this has been the extension of shop opening times, both in hours per day and days per week. This has affected most countries in the European Union and has enormously changed the lifestyles of citizens.

Fast-changing lifestyles and patterns of working across Europe in the post-war boom meant that often a job had to be combined with care and recreation. Shopping had to fit into this in a flexible way. In addition, the consumer was becoming increasingly emancipated and was demanding a higher level of service on a number of fronts. In short, consumers needed and wanted to decide for themselves when to do what. There was hence pressure to change the restrictive policy on trading hours in order to accommodate these developments.

To take one example of a changing situation, shops in Edinburgh in 1945 normally opened from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., Monday to Friday, and for half a day (closing from lunchtime) on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Now, in 2000, the main shops are open all day every day, Monday to Saturday, and from noon to 6.00 p.m. on Sundays. On Thursdays, many shops stay open until 8.00 p.m. Supermarkets and hypermarkets tend to open from 8.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m., Monday to Saturday, and from 9.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. on Sundays. Some supermarkets have also begun to remain open all night, seven nights a week. In other words, they never close.

The immediate reason for this change is that almost all restrictions on shop opening hours in the United Kingdom were removed in 1994, so that owners are now free to test market demand

at any time or any day of the week. (The one exception concerns the sale of alcohol, which is not permitted until after 12.00 noon on Sundays.) A recent report on consumer demand indicated that younger people are more inclined to use shops outside traditional hours. This could mean that the trend for extended opening will continue to grow, although if it is related to youthfulness alone rather than to an emerging culture change, it may simply stabilise.

Rota systems

The consequence for shop staff is that, like their counterparts in manufacturing industry, they now have to work flexible hours. Since all employees cannot be expected to work all hours, business operating times and individual working hours have to be planned and coordinated by means of rota systems. As trade unions have tended to be more weakly represented in the retail trade, the restrictions imposed by law were often seen as the best way of protecting shop employees as regards working hours. Today opening hours do not equate with or equal working time: several different staff rotas enable extended opening hours. Limitations on working time, eg the EU Working Time Directive, are the main protection against excessive working hours. Flexible working times and the increase in part-time work have disengaged the relationship between working hours and opening hours. The operation of rota systems in retailing is facilitated by the high proportion of female staff, the use of part-time staff, and in some cases, by employing temporary and casual staff. University students and senior school-goers can be an intelligent, attractive, and flexible source of personnel to fulfil the needs of the new flexible hours.

Retail giants

One major driving force behind these changes in retailing has been the need of owners to spread the capital cost of buildings, land and equipment over as long a time as possible. This is a very

familiar practice in manufacturing, but for some reason it has been slower to surface in the retail trade, where it has now surfaced due to the steady increase in car ownership, the arrival of gigantic out-of-town shopping centres and the costs involved in constructing them, as well as the increase in the value of city centre property and high rents pertaining to this.

At the same time, there has been a steady decline in the number of small local shops in the United Kingdom and in many other countries, since individual owners operating with the help of relatives and a few employees have much greater difficulty in extending opening hours. The closure of small shops has also much to do with their inability to compete in unit price with large multiples. Their reaction was often to open more flexibly, eg Asian-run shops in the United Kingdom. The decline in small shops affects the whole cultural pattern of life, making it much harder for older people, for example, or for those without cars, to do their shopping. A self-sustaining circle is thus created, and this trend is likely to continue and even accelerate in the future.

Economic and social change

Globalisation and expansion

The move towards globalisation and increasing competition in the retail sector has had a major impact in the cities and large towns of Europe. Supplies are increasingly bought in a worldwide marketplace. Major shops stock flowers and fruit not only when these are in season locally or near at hand, but also out of season when they often have to be imported from the far side of the world.

Supermarket chains have tended to expand, usually at the expense of small local shops and to the benefit of the motorist. Planning controls have put a brake on this trend, and it has not affected all countries equally. Once a large retail outfit has its buying and delivery systems in place in one country, however, it is tempting to extend them to neighbouring countries.

De Groof, Bos and Jansen note that in the Netherlands there has been a steady move from small-scale to large-scale and integrated retailing (De Groof *et al*, 1997). This has occurred in a

variety of ways: increases in the scale of operations through commercial growth and integrated services and outlets, development of a marketing image through creating a successful formula and franchising chains of shops, as well as by building larger-scale physical structures. The authors state that 'the [retail] sector is becoming more and more professionalised and competition is assuming vast proportions.' Their analysis suggests that there has been less growth in the volume of expenditure in this sector than on goods and services as a whole, with increasing pressure on costs. People do not continually want to eat more: the size of the cake is limited. Small shops have responded to the same pressures by increasingly entering into collaborative partnerships: chains, franchises and dealerships. As a result, the market share of independent small and medium-sized businesses dropped from 24% in 1990 to less than 16% in 1996. The trend is expected to continue. (Hoofbedrijfschap Detailhandel, 1996a).

New technology

In most countries, there are large supermarkets which allow people to order their food supplies via the Internet, usually for a small delivery charge. The system can remember the customer's standard shopping basket for the following week. (This is obviously less appealing for items such as fresh fruit and vegetables, where the shopper may want to inspect the quality.). In addition, De Groof, Bos and Jansen point out that 'it is possible to order and receive an article from another country within 24 hours. Experts in this field predict that as a consequence of this development in particular, thousands and thousands of jobs will be lost in the retail sector in the near future' (De Groof *et al*, 1997).

The use of plastic cards for payment and the increasing use of shops' own loyalty discount cards makes it possible to analyse the details of individual customers' shopping habits and profiles. Optical bar-coding and scanning of shoppers' purchases also substantially enhance material control systems, with Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) triggering automatic re-ordering and central planning. Logistics can thus be much more efficient, and 'just-in-time' deliveries become routine. All this has obvious consequences for supply and delivery traffic.

New technology has played a role in increasing customer demand for longer hours of accessibility but it could also reduce the need for 24-hour opening. For many years now, it has been possible to obtain cash from ATMs at all hours, while telephone banking and other telephone services have spread widely. The opening hours that prevailed up to recent times would be seen today as highly restrictive on busy career-minded people.

The development of policies

The challenge of this process has to be managed by national and local government authorities by adapting the law to meet the changes. Some areas – for example, the legal limits on shop opening hours, or planning policies that allow or do not allow (or adopt a compromise solution to) the building of out-of-town hypermarkets – fall under the direct responsibility of government authorities. Other aspects of the process of change, like international trends in buying and logistics or the development of commercial Internet services, are outside the control of governments and have to be taken into account in developing policies. The next chapter deals with changes in legal regulations and examines the situation in 5 EU Member States.

Legal regulations

In most EU countries, the opening hours of shops are controlled by laws. Such laws exist for many purposes:

- to provide a level playing-field for fair competition;
- to protect employees;
- to maintain cultural values (for example, the tradition of sporting fixtures taking place on Saturdays; or Sunday being a day of common rest, for church and so on.)
- to provide attractions for tourists.

Hours are also regulated by collective agreements.

In many countries, these laws have been changing over the past few years. We will examine the current situation regarding opening hours in five EU Member States: Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Belgium

Subject to the obligatory Sunday rest, employers can neither compel workers to work on Sunday against their liking, nor recommend them to do so, and a refusal to carry out Sunday work cannot constitute a serious justification for making a worker redundant. (For legal purposes, ‘Sunday’ here refers to the entire 24-hour astronomical day – Article 11, Law of 16 March 1971.) Moreover, an employer cannot even allow workers to carry out their activity on Sunday on their own initiative. Employers must in fact take all necessary measures to ensure that workers do not have access to the company’s premises to carry out their normal activity there, and that Sunday rest is therefore respected.

Exemptions from the law

Since the provisions concerning the prohibition of work on Sunday are legally binding, the parties – employers and workers – cannot withdraw themselves from them even by agreement. Certain exemptions are made, however. Persons employed in a family company are not subject to the obligation of Sunday rest. This concerns companies where the only people usually working are parents, partners or young people attached to the household.

Léonard in his study on working time in Belgium gives details of a range of exemptions to the law in Belgium which do not require prior authorisation: cleaning work; retail outlets from 8.00 a.m. to midday; shops in holiday resorts and tourist centres during the summer months; the Christmas period; and those retail shops whose opening and closing hours are determined by particular joint committees. He also describes the complex arrangements for compensatory rest (Léonard, 1997).

Germany

The control of shop closing times has a long tradition in Germany. By 1891 regulations were laid down in the ‘Law on Employees’ Protection’ (*Arbeiterschutzgesetz*). After the Second World War, Parliament passed a law governing the hours of trading (*Ladenschlußgesetz, LSchIG*), with opening hours that stayed unchanged until November 1996. This law was increasingly criticised as being outdated and thus hindering competition. Many stores, especially in big cities, consciously contravened it, e.g. by letting

customers in a minute before closing time. Furthermore, it had been amended by numerous special provisions, thus becoming less clear-cut.

Main provisions of the law

After long political disputes, on 1 November 1996 a new law finally came into force in Germany, replacing the 40-year-old law and extending shop opening hours in the evenings and on Saturdays. Shops can now open from 6.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m., Monday to Friday, and to 4.00 p.m. on Saturdays. On Sundays and public holidays, however, they must stay closed as usual. Bakeries are allowed by the same law to open at 5.30 a.m., and they may also sell their goods for three hours on Sundays and public holidays. The regulations make certain exceptions e.g. for pharmacies, newspaper and magazine shops, filling stations, stores at railway/ferry stations and airports. Knauth and Hornberger give details on the changes in their study of the retail sector in Germany (Knauth & Hornberger, 1997).

It should be noted that the opening hours provided for in the law refer to the *maximum* possible range: each store can make its own decision on its necessary opening hours. In fact, the possibilities offered by the new law are not availed of by all companies, and on average they have extended their hours only within a narrow range compared to the maximum permissible. The Institute for Trade Research at the University of Cologne surveyed a sample of 730 specialist retail shops. This showed that current average weekly opening hours have increased by only two hours and 26 minutes, although the new law enables retail businesses to increase their hours by 12 hours and 30 minutes. Behind the average numbers, however, lies a more complex picture which shows differences depending on the size of enterprise, the location and the particular branch of the retail trade.

HDE survey

Altogether 2,500 retail businesses were questioned by the main association of German retailers, the HDE or *Hauptverband des Deutschen Einzelhandels* in their 1997 enquiry. The analysis of these data showed that motivation to exploit the possibilities of the new law increases as the size of the enterprise increases. Seventy-three per cent of companies with more than 100 employees intended to keep the new opening hours, but this

was the case in only 25 per cent of companies with less than 15 employees.

As regards location, companies based in trading estates and shopping centres in bigger towns are more highly motivated to continue with the new opening hours than smaller companies in smaller towns; while in terms of the branch of retailing, many department stores, self-service stores, pharmacies, perfumeries, textile/clothing/shoe shops, furniture showrooms and do-it-yourself outlets have changed their opening hours, whereas food shops have hardly reacted at all to the new law.

The HDE study classified the different opening hours according to the following models:

1. The optimistic model: The shop is open from Monday to Friday up to 8.00 p.m. and on Saturdays up to 4.00 p.m. This was the pattern of choice of 32% of businesses.
2. The cautious model: The shop closes at between 6.30 p.m. and 7.30 p.m., Monday to Friday, and between 2.00 p.m. and 3.00 p.m. on Saturdays. This model is in use in 22% of the shops.
3. The compromise model: from Monday to Wednesday, closing time remains unchanged, i.e. at 6.30 p.m. On Thursdays and Fridays the shop closes at between 6.30 p.m. and 8.00 p.m., and on Saturdays at 4.00 p.m. This model has been adopted by 10% of the merchants.
4. Finally, the remaining 36% of businesses have more complex models with prolonged opening hours.

Italy

In the last decade there has been a great debate about Sunday opening in the retail sector in Italy. The problem can be viewed from different points of view: ethical ('is it right?'), economic ('is it profitable?') and legal ('is it lawful?'), and involves not only employers and employees, but also economists, politicians, jurists, sociologists, philosophers and representatives of the church, with contrasting opinions (Costa, 1997). On the one hand, there are those in favour of a complete 'liberalisation' of society, who believe the ban on trade activities on Sunday is in contrast with the needs of citizens/consumers and the rights and interests of entrepreneurs, as well as market

requirements. On the other hand, there are those who believe that Sunday should be the emblem of a more humane society based on more than material values alone – a day to be devoted to family, cultural, social and religious activities.

Responsibility of the regions

National Law No. 558 of 1971 on 'the discipline of working hours of shops and practice in the retail sector' delegates to the regions the task of defining opening and closing times, taking into account 'consumer requirements and the leisure time of workers'. However, it makes total closure compulsory on Sundays and bank holidays, with some exceptions for the Christmas period, local festivities and in tourist resorts. Each region successively passed specific laws enlarging or restricting opening periods or providing derogations in accordance with particular local conditions, but generally leaving to the majority of towns the final regulation of business hours. In a national referendum in 1995, a majority voted against an indiscriminate deregulation of business hours, and a decision of the Court of Justice of Luxembourg of 12 November 1996 confirmed that the Italian Law is not in conflict with Community Directive 93/104/CE. It rejected the case of some Italian shopping centres which argued that the Italian norm restricts international trade and violates the principles of the 'single market'.

In practice the present situation is quite controversial. On the one hand many outlets, mainly supermarkets or large commercial centres (which include both small and large shops) started opening on Sundays, beginning with the Sundays preceding Christmas and then extending to other local holidays during the year, or at times of special events (fairs, sporting events, specific celebrations, and so on). On the other hand, most of the small shops decided to stay closed on Sundays, with the sole exception (and not in all cases) of the two or three Sundays before Christmas.

The Catholic Church has always officially opposed Sunday opening for religious reasons, both by means of the formal position taken at national level by some of its important representatives (e.g. the Italian Conference of Bishops), and at local level as preached in the Sunday sermon by priests.

Conflicts over Sunday opening

In many Italian cities there have also been quarrels and conflicts between public administrators, who are in general encouraging Sunday opening for the promotion of tourism, and many shopkeepers' organisations. The latter are opposed both because of the increased costs which are not sufficiently compensated for by income, and the difficulty or impossibility for firms under family management of increasing working hours or taking on other employees. These organisations, in agreement with the trade unions, also assert that any eventual opening of shops on Sundays should be seen in a wider context and supported by the parallel provision of services (post-offices, banks, transport), since otherwise, they maintain, Sunday opening is not beneficial but acts only in favour of the large organisations, with consequent further negative effects on small shops. They do, on the other hand, declare themselves more willing to consider an extension of opening hours on weekday evenings.

Nico opposition campaign

Over the past year some major supermarkets started limiting the number of Sundays worked, and some started a campaign against Sunday opening. In particular, the management of Nico, a well-known international company selling clothes and shoes, with 700 employees and 22 vending points in Italy, Austria, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, ran a very aggressive campaign in agreement with its employees in Autumn 1996 for keeping shops closed on Sunday (Gruppo Nico, 1997). It advanced ethical and social as well as economic reasons, targeting both entrepreneurs and customers by means of leaflets and folders, advertisements in local and national newspapers, and on radio and TV. The main arguments put forward in favour of Sunday closing of commercial centres, as emphasised in the advertisements, were expressed as follows:

'As always Sunday is the weekly day of rest, to be devoted to ourselves, to leisure activities and above all, to the family.'

'Sunday opening requires economic and professional efforts on the part of operators which are not justified by the profits (on Sundays, clients tend to look more than buy).'

'Sunday opening jeopardises the relationship of confidence with custo-

mers, since in order to meet the increased management costs, prices must be increased (less convenience) or staff numbers reduced (lower quality of service).'

'Despite what some people want us to believe, it is not true that in other European countries the norms regulating Sunday opening are less rigid. On the contrary, in Austria and Germany there is no Sunday opening.'

The campaign had two slogans, the first ('Do not buy the Sunday of others') addressed to customers; the second ('Do not sell our Sunday') addressed to the commercial operators. A folder explained that 'these two messages make it clear that Sunday opening is a bondage to which workers are to be submitted, one which also forces customers to adopt a bad habit without being accountable'.

The company also stimulated the substantial participation of both commercial operators and customers in the campaign by pressing for opinions and suggestions by means of a freephone service, a fax number and a website. In three months (October–December 1996) it received almost 7,000 replies: 4,496 telephone calls, 2,329 fax messages and 128 emails. The result was 92.5% in favour of the campaign, 5.5% against and 1.9% uncertain. Support came from individual employers and employees in the retail trade, workers in other sectors, trade associations, private citizens, cultural associations (e.g. the 'Cultural Association for the Defence of Sunday' and the 'Trees for Life' association). Within Nico itself, management recorded reduced absenteeism and higher employee motivation after Sunday closing.

The Netherlands

The predecessor of the current Shop Hours Act was the Shop Closing Hours Act of 1976. It prescribed that shops should be closed from 6.00 p.m. on weekdays and 5.00 p.m. on Saturdays. Shops were shut in principle on Sundays except for six Sundays of the year when they were allowed to open. Total trading time was fixed at a maximum of 52 hours per week. This forced shops wanting to offer late-night shopping on one evening per week to be closed for at least half a day weekly. The only alternative for the after-hours customer was the small late-night shop

which was allowed exemption from the provisions of the Act, but this was not an option for those living in small towns as this type of shop tended to exist only in urban areas.

A changing society

From the mid-70s, Dutch society was changing rapidly due to a number of factors: the emergence of the 24-hour economy, globalisation, growing competition, an ageing population, a multicultural society, the changing pattern of labour participation, increased feminisation of the labour force and the increasing number of single households. For example, between 1988 and 1998 the participation rate of women had grown from 36% of the working population to 49% (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 1995). During this period the number of part-time workers also increased from 24% to 30%.

During the years after 1976 an extension of trading hours was frequently brought up for discussion. In 1992 the government decided that these could be increased by half an hour per day, bringing the total maximum up to 55 hours a week (van der Linde, 1996). In this way shops were given the opportunity to remain open until 6.30 p.m. on weekdays, although not until 1994 did a number of outlets, mostly supermarkets, finally begin to avail of it. De Groof, Bos and Jansen in their study on the retail sector in the Netherlands give an excellent account of how the new Shop Hours Act evolved (De Groof *et al*, 1997).

The new Shop Hours Act

On 1 June 1996 the new Shop Hours Act came into effect, with the following main provisions:

- Shops must be closed at night, from 10.00 p.m. until 6.00 the following morning.
- On Sundays and holidays shops should in principle be closed.
- A limitation on trading in the form of a maximum number of shop opening hours no longer applies.
- Exemptions and dispensations are granted by the municipal council.
- The municipal council may grant exemption for late-night and Sunday opening.

- The municipal council may grant exemption for the opening of shops during festive periods.
- The municipal council may grant exemption for Sunday opening in connection with tourism in the municipality, provided this tourism is not focused on the sales activities permitted by the exemption.

In considering the new Act, it should not be forgotten that it deals with compulsory shop hours. Retailers are free to open at whatever hours are convenient for them. Furthermore the Act has extended the role of the local authorities considerably. Municipalities are responsible for granting exemptions while central government confines itself to the domain of public order and security.

Views of government, employers and trade unions

The government's decision-making process relative to the new Shop Hours Act was mainly influenced by the newer patterns of living and working which had to be accommodated. In addition, the Cabinet was of the opinion that the new Act would have a positive effect on employment, and in particular that (part-time) jobs could be made available to individuals without an established position in the labour market, such as women and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, the new hours would provide opportunities for business creation (Emancipatieraad, 1995). The Shop Hours Act was therefore to a large extent built on the same foundations as the Working Hours Act. The government also sought with this Act to address the changes in the socio-economic and cultural environment, which, according to the Cabinet, were requiring 'more flexible working relations and business hours' (Tjeenk Willink, 1996).

As regards the number of extra opening hours availed of by retailers, the Central Planning Bureau expected an average increase of five hours a week initially, mainly in larger-scale businesses. Among small and medium-sized businesses, there did not seem to be many supporters of extended business hours at the time the Act came into effect.

For the main employers in retailing, an important objective of the new Shop Hours Act was the

expected increase in turnover both in the short and long term. Major companies like Ahold (Albert Heijn) and Vendex in particular focused on the market share they wanted to have captured in five to ten years' time. Their basic belief was that where opening hours were concerned, other organisations would have to follow. Those who did not would gradually lose market share to begin with, and in the long run would perhaps lose the battle completely (Baltesen, 1997). Another important issue for employers was that staff costs had to be kept as low as possible. It was therefore important that working hours regulations which involved having to pay overtime premiums should be eliminated. It was hoped and expected that if evening and weekend working became common practice in retailing, the surcharges for these hours could be dispensed with.

Trade unions on the whole were not in favour of extending shop opening hours. They anticipated mainly negative consequences for employees, especially for those in small and medium-sized businesses. They felt that the costs involved in extended opening would tend to outweigh the gains, while an extensive part of turnover would be drained away if they did not keep up with developments. In addition, the self-employed would lose an important form of protection (as offered by the Working Hours Act) against working excessive and inconvenient hours when the new Act became effective. The unions realised that if this group were forced to participate in the new developments, there was a real danger that many working hours would have to be met by the traders themselves in order to keep costs down.

The new Act forced large numbers of employees to work at inconvenient hours. According to the trade unions this was one of the main problems. It must be noted that in general this employee group holds a rather weak bargaining position, often being young people with little education, who are reluctant to speak up for themselves. It was important for the trade unions that employees should be deployed in the evenings and at weekends on a voluntary basis only. Furthermore it was vital that their extra allowance for these hours as a compensation for the inconvenience would be preserved.

The trade unions realised that the new Shop Hours Act and extension of opening hours was irreversible. They did not see it as representative of a wise decision, but since it was the government's choice, felt they would have to live with it. They therefore decided to focus on how the Act would be put into practice, making the protection of employee interests their main priority, ensuring that the extra working hours were filled as efficiently as possible and that overtime allowances be maintained at all costs.

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, all legal restrictions on shop opening days and hours were removed in 1994, after a long debate during which some large chains deliberately challenged the law by opening on Sundays, without being taken to court, as far as is known. The continuing minor restrictions on the sale of alcohol and on the employment of young people under the age of 18 are controlled by other laws. This has not led to universal continuous opening, but has allowed for experimentation and variation in an open market situation.

Conclusion

Increasingly, the countries of the European Union share much common culture and are subject to similar pressures arising from technology and from the market. Similar cultural and social changes can be seen at work in many different national contexts. However, they also have distinctive traditions, and their respective attempts to adjust the law on shop opening hours display many features reflecting these differences. The issue is not as straightforward as it might appear. For example, in large towns in Germany, where conventional shops are closed on Sundays, there are large markets with hundreds of traders and thousands of shoppers thronging the streets, apparently not in breach of the general ban on Sunday shopping.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that, in addition to legal regulations, the working hours and remuneration/benefits of workers in many countries are largely fixed by collective agreements.

Staff management systems

The cyclical and partly unpredictable flow of customers puts a heavy strain on systems for

managing staff in the retail sector. In this era of increasing emphasis on flexibility, there may be lessons for other sectors in how it is achieved. In this section, I have picked some novel and interesting examples from the studies which illustrate this point.

Staff rotas

Knauth and Hornberger give considerable detail on staff management systems in Germany (Knauth & Hornberger 1997). One of the most interesting is a system where the requirement for staff is carefully analysed and then passed on to the staff, who use various systems to allocate the work among themselves, in line with the terms of their contracts as regards working hours, over the medium term.

The amount of advance notice of working hours given to staff is always an important topic. De Groof, Bos and Jansen in their study note the following arrangements applicable in the Netherlands:

'The rosters used by supermarkets have to be published one week in advance, according to the collective labour agreement. The majority of the supermarkets, however, do not seem to comply with this rule. Rosters are often made out on the Friday before the week to which the roster applies, or even on Monday of the week concerned. The same problem is experienced with regard to off-duty days, which in fact should be announced two weeks in advance.' (De Groof *et al*, 1997)

A study on flexible working hours in large retail outlets in France by Prunier-Poulmaire and Gadbois also provides data on advance notice, reporting that flexibility at checkouts seems to rely on the use of part-time staff, who represent 51% of the total workforce. Of these, 93% were female in 1995. A survey of five stores belonging to different chains in the Paris area confirmed the predominance of part-time work, and described the use made of variable working weeks among part-time employees, particularly checkout staff. Full-timers accounted for only one third of checkout operators in one of the stores, one in eight in two others, and one in ten in the last two stores. Contracts were mainly for 30-33 hours per week in two stores (54% and 58%) and for 25 hours or less in two others (62% and 68%).

Contracts for only 8-16 hours applied to 20% of checkout operators in three stores, and to 34% in another store (Prunier-Poulmaire & Gadbois, 1997).

Léonard, as well as providing extensive detail on shop schedules in Belgium, points out that some internal flexibility can result from moving staff from shelf-stocking to tills when there is a need (Léonard, 1997). This practice is widely used in some supermarkets in the United Kingdom, where staff are appropriately multiskilled.

SMEs and small traders

De Groof, Bos and Jansen describe the situation for small and medium-sized businesses:

'This is the group in which nothing has changed as a consequence of the new Shop Hours Act [in the Netherlands]. We are dealing here with smaller shops run by self-employed operators with only a few employees. The shop's trading hours often determine when the shop staff have to be present. It can happen that the number of business hours may be much more extensive than the number of shop hours, firstly as a result of activities like stocking and equipping, but also because goods may have to be produced on the premises (e.g. in bakeries).

'In general it can be stated that scheduling is carried out on an ad hoc basis, in so far as there is any scheduling at all. In most cases some full-timers are available (business owners themselves among them), and a number of part-time or standby workers are deployed at peak hours. Many businesses of this type are open five or five-and-a-half days a week, including late evenings and Saturdays. It is mostly the part-time or flexible workers who are deployed during late-night shopping and on Saturdays. They are called 'doza-workers' (donderdag-zaterdag: Thursday-Saturday). These shop hours have been known for years, and the new Shop Hours Act didn't influence this [practice].'

(De Groof *et al*, 1997)

Léonard also gives some examples from small traders, as well as from many larger organisations (Léonard, 1997). Costa in his study on the retail sector in Italy gives many examples of small businesses in that country (Costa, 1997).

In conclusion, the general impression created by the contributions from several countries is that working time in the retail sector is rarely planned systematically. Often the workforce has to put up with very short advance notice of working hours. There are, however, some cases of sophisticated systems planned and controlled by management, and others where dialogue or delegations from the workforce are used as a means of creating staff-friendly rotas.

The impact of the new opening hours

This section provides examples from two EU Member States which illustrate the likely consequences of extended opening hours and new working time arrangements.

Germany

Impact on consumers

Knauth and Hornberger point out in their study on the situation in the Netherlands that very few reports have been carried out on the impact of extended opening hours on consumer behaviour: the common finding is that it takes time to change the behaviour of the consumer (Knauth & Hornberger, 1997).

When the new law on shop opening hours was introduced in Germany in November 1996, a representative study was carried out on the expectations of working customers. Of those questioned, 54% said that the new opening hours made life easier for them. Office and public sector workers in particular (53%) and self-employed persons (51%) welcomed the liberalisation (Allensbach Archives, IfD Survey 3283). A week after the introduction of the new law, the market research institute EMNID asked consumers if they had yet availed of the extended hours; they were questioned again a month later. The first time, 68.8% had not yet made use of the new opening hours, whereas a month later this figure had dropped to 55%.

One major problem is that the closing times of shops differ considerably, i.e. customers do not know whether the specific shops in which they may be interested are open in the evening or not. Meanwhile, shop-owners have observed that not enough customers are shopping in the evening, and they are now inclined to revert to closing earlier.

Impact on employment and employees

One of the hopes behind the new law was that it would result in increased employment in the retail sector. In recent years, many jobs in the sector have been lost (30,000 in 1996). During the ten months prior to the introduction of the new law in November 1996, employment decreased by 1.5%. The Federal Department for Statistics (*Statistisches Bundesamt*) observed however that during the months of November and December of that year, the decline in the number of persons employed ceased. In fact, there was an increase of 1.2% and 0.1% respectively for these two months compared with the corresponding period in 1995. They found that part-time jobs increased by 5.8% in November and 3.1% in December 1996, whereas the number of full-time workers decreased by 3.0 and 2.6%. (In the year before there was a decrease of 4%.)

In a study carried out by the association of German retailers in 1997, only 15% of shops were found to employ additional staff because of the new opening hours. One of the main reasons was that most stores found that turnover had remained unchanged or was even reduced, while costs (heating, electricity, additional bonuses) had increased with prolonged opening hours. Of the newly employed persons, 57% were full or part-time workers, while the remaining 43% belonged to the group earning not more than DM 610 per month (West Germany), i.e. below the level where social security contributions have to be paid.

There have been hardly any studies of the impact of the new working hours on employees. Their attitudes are mixed: whereas some find the new evening working to be disadvantageous to family and social life, others view it positively as it offers more scope for individual preferences. For example, in a sports shop in Augsburg, many employees chose to work 5.00-8.00 p.m., when partners would have returned home from work and could take over the care of children. Results of a survey carried out by the unions showed increased problems for employees feeling unsafe in the evening when setting out for home. They also complained about a deterioration in working conditions (this included commuting times); one-third reported that they accepted the changed conditions only because of the lack of alternatives in the labour market (Knauth & Hornberger, 1997).

Impact on companies

About one third of companies observed no change in their turnover as a consequence of the longer opening hours. For the remaining two-thirds, the change depended very much on the size of the company. Of small companies with up to 15 employees, only about 11-15% achieved an increase in turnover, whereas 37% of those with more than 100 employees did so. Most companies observed a change in the distribution of turnover over the day. Shopping centres in the cities can gain up to 15% of their turnover after 6.00 p.m. KaDeWe in Berlin – the biggest shopping centre in Germany – achieves up to 20% of its turnover in the evening on certain days. This is especially the case in the service-intensive branches of retailing (e.g. sports and high-tech goods) or with expensive and luxury goods. This changed distribution of turnover resulted in improved service in some stores, as shop assistants had more time for customers.

Longer opening hours generally mean increased costs e.g. heating, light, personnel. Some bigger stores with larger staffs are looking for innovative solutions. A sports store in Augsburg, for example, achieved a remarkable reduction in personnel costs by upgrading qualifications and enhancing time flexibility. Employees were trained so that they could competently serve customers in various departments; and new working time arrangements were introduced which were fully oriented towards the daily, weekly and monthly variations in turnover and demand. A high level of time flexibility was achieved by increasing the scope for part-time work, which is particularly popular in the retail sector. In the store mentioned, 35% of employees work part-time. The working-time model introduced was based on a high level of autonomy as regards hours among employee teams.

The Netherlands

Since the new Shop Hours Act came into effect on 1 June 1996, 43% of companies in the retail sector with more than 10 employees have expanded their shop hours (HBD, 1998). Of the smaller shops, only 24% have done so. Food shops have increased opening hours more than non-food shops. By 1998, most shops were opening for 51 hours a week. While this (average) figure does not seem to suggest a significant alteration from the situation that existed before the new regulations came into effect, it conceals the fact that in *some* areas of retailing, there has been

major change. This is particularly the case with supermarkets and DIY shops.

Supermarkets and DIY stores

Approximately 55% of supermarkets avail of the scope to provide extra late-night shopping. All the major chains are involved. In some, the question of which outlets are to remain open in the evening is decided on a per-location basis. Others (e.g. Albert Heijn) regard late opening as an element of the chain's business formula. Supermarkets participating in late-night shopping have extended their business hours by 30-35%. In some cases they are open on certain Sundays too.

The DIY sector is another important sub-group of retailers making use of extended shopping hours. Most DIY stores are open from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. or from 9.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. This sector is currently engaged in marketing initiatives to attract customers in the evening, which would suggest that customer attendance during these hours does not yet meet with expectations. No quantitative data is (yet) available on the results of these activities.

As expected, shop hours have primarily been extended to include the hours after 6.00 p.m. on weekdays. This development has taken place mainly in supermarkets and DIY stores. Table 2 shows the percentage of shops open in the evenings in 1998.

Table 1 *Shop opening hours, evening/night*

	Opening later than:			
	6 p.m.	7 p.m.	8 p.m.	9 p.m.
Non-specialised	44%	34%	5%	0,5%
Specialised – food	11%	6%	1%	0,7%
DIY	11%	10%	7%	0,5%
Furniture	4%	0%	0%	0%
Other non-food	6%	4%	1%	0%

(Source: *Hoofdbedrijfschap Detailhandel, 1998*)

Since 1998 late opening in supermarkets has expanded even further, and large supermarkets are likely to be found open until 10 p.m. Furthermore, it is not just to evening/night-time that the extended hours apply: most supermarkets now open at 8.00 a.m. instead of 9 a.m., as was the case even a few years ago. Also, shops in the Netherlands typically close on

Monday mornings, a time when most supermarkets are now open. Finally, as regards Sundays, most municipalities allow shops to be open on 12 appointed Sundays a year. Only 22% of shops open on all of these Sundays, however, while 53% do not open at all. Large stores avail of the facility more than small ones (Hoofdbedrijfschap Detailhandel, 1998), particularly furniture and other non-food shops (Vieregge, 2000).

Decline of the local shop

It is often hard for small and medium-sized businesses to decide to what extent they should participate in the extension of shop hours. This is particularly the case where the nature of the business means that there is some overlap with the larger supermarkets: butchers' shops, greengrocers, wine shops, pharmacies and small supermarkets. Here, the operator is placed in the dilemma of having to decide whether to open or not. Weighing up the expense involved against the likely extra income often leads shop-owners to the conclusion that the increased trading hours do not generate enough turnover to pay for extra staff; in other words, it is too expensive. On the other hand, remaining closed means that some of the small operator's turnover will be drained away by the large supermarkets.

The number of local shops forced to close increased from an average of 15 per month to 20 per month in the first year after the new law was introduced. This is expected to increase even more over the next few years. Today, some 10,000 local shops still exist in the Netherlands, but the figure will probably be reduced to around 6,000 within ten years. Despite this, it has been noted that the expansion of large enterprises at the expense of small and medium-sized businesses now seems to have slowed down (Vieregge, 2000).

Consumer buying habits

Meanwhile, the large supermarkets' 3% increase in turnover contrasts sharply with the 30-35% increase in shop opening hours. Consumers do not seem to buy much more, but they shop at different times of the day or week. The usual peaks of Saturday/late-night shopping are less obvious, and turnover is now spread more equally over the rest of the week, including evenings. Furthermore it is obvious that a displacement of turnover is taking place as a result of changes in supermarkets' stock. They are now selling more

ready-to-eat meals and other domestic catering products. The fact that supermarkets are open in the evening is therefore also affecting other sectors: part of the retail chains' turnover, for example, is made at the expense of the lower end of the restaurant sector – the fast food outlets, Chinese restaurants and pizzerias. It is possible that here too a considerable number of businesses may have to close down.

Consumers do not have a particular need to buy durables and other such products during the evening. An experiment in which a Vroom & Dreesmann department store stayed open during the evening did not prove a success. Shopping seems to be a 'fun' activity which requires time, and in the evening time is limited. Sunday, on the other hand, seems to be the perfect time to buy consumer durables and other goods. This has been clearly demonstrated in Amsterdam, where the central shopping area is very well attended on Sunday. Since the consumer sees shopping as a recreational activity, the shopping area must also be attractive. The presence of catering outlets, services and fun elements is a precondition to this. In general, the megastores like *IKEA* and shop conglomerates meet these conditions.

Impact on employees

Turning to employees and how the newer shopping hours affect them, in principle, permanent employees work in the evening on a voluntary basis only. According to an investigation carried out by the Dutch trade union federation, FNV, (reported on in *BondsUPER*, 27 November 1996) on compliance with the collective labour agreement, however, this stipulation is widely ignored. In over 50% of the 112 chain stores participating in the investigation, employees could not refuse to work at night. If this is truly common practice, the extension of shop hours will mean a major change where working in supermarkets is concerned.

Maintaining overtime allowances for working at inconvenient times is very important to the trade unions: firstly, as a recognition of employees' flexibility and willingness to work at night, and secondly, because this is the only means by which supermarket employees can have some say in whether or not they will work in the evenings. The extra allowance therefore represents a crucial tool for negotiations on swapping rotas. A recent report finds that overtime payments for working

non-standard hours are much the same as they were three years ago (Vieregge, 2000). Discussion on this topic continues.

Conclusions

The changes in shop opening hours in Europe have been substantial and are unlikely to be reversed. Several chains of supermarkets in the United Kingdom – where the struggle for market share is relentless – have introduced 24-hour opening in a spirit of competitive initiative, on the basis that if a supermarket is always open, the consumer does not have to remember its opening hours. One supermarket had tried all-night opening on Fridays for about a year, but gave it up before reintroducing all-night opening every night when one of its competitors which offered all-night opening opened a new hypermarket.

Changes in Sunday opening have been more scattered, but the erosion of Sunday as the common day for time off work continues to spread, and can be seen, for example, in the scheduling of major football matches.

Pressures from e-commerce and the internet will continue to grow, and will have no respect for days of the week or hours of the day. Web shopping potentially offers the vision of the perfect universal marketplace, where prices can be compared without leaving home. This is certainly not yet fully realised, and consumers still have considerable cautious distrust of shopping on the Web. In retail areas such as books, however, internet competition has changed the pattern of buying.

One theme that runs through the contributions to this report from the BEST network is that employees in the retail sector only occasionally experience the sophisticated working time systems and autonomy that have evolved in the manufacturing sector. A majority are young, female and work only part-time, and they may not be well equipped to stand up for their rights. Overtime payments and advance notice of working hours are just two examples of areas where the workforce is open to exploitation.

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The growth of part-time work in Europe: for good or ill?¹

John M. Evans and Douglas C. Lippoldt

Introduction

An increase in part-time employment has been one of the main features of employment growth in Europe in the 1990s. This article aims to clarify two key issues:

1. How important has part-time working been for jobs growth, for both women and men?
2. Are part-time jobs as 'good' as full-time jobs?

The second question is a complex one. In recent work at the OECD, we have looked at only a few relevant dimensions, in particular:

- The job tenure of part-time workers, relative to full-timers;
- The relative earnings of part-time workers;
- The degree to which part-timers receive training;
- The movement from part-time into full-time jobs;
- Workers' preference for part-time working, and the job satisfaction of part-time workers.

While these are by no means the only issues that might be raised, they are relevant to other important questions. Information about job tenure, for example, is relevant to the debate on whether part-time working should be regarded as 'marginal employment' or not. Knowing something about training and the transition rates out of part-time employment helps to clarify the debate on the career prospects of part-time workers.

Growth in part-time work

Using the OECD definition of part-time work as a job where the usual working hours are below 30

per week, the European Union Labour Force Survey (EULFS) shows that from 1987 to 1997 half of the employment growth in twelve EU countries (excluding the newest Member States) can be ascribed to part-time working. The average annual employment growth rate was 0.8% per year, of which 0.4% came from part-time working. In both full and part-time work, about three-quarters of the increase was attributable to the increase in jobs held by women.

The figure varies considerably across countries. In Ireland and the Netherlands, where overall employment growth was fastest, full-time working made a greater contribution to employment growth than part-time working. In France and Germany, on the other hand, all of the employment growth, which was smaller overall, came from women's part-time employment. Outside the European Union, part-time employment was responsible for most of the average 1.1% employment growth in Japan, but for none of the 0.7% increase in the United States.

Particular concern is often expressed about the working conditions and prospects of people working 'short-hours part-time'. Taking short hours to be under 20 hours a week, the amount of short-hours part-time working has increased as well. For women, the increase has been at roughly the same rate as in part-time working as a whole, again over the period 1987 to 1997. For men, it has been slightly faster.

Job stability

A comparison of the average length of time in which full-time and part-time workers have been

¹ The material in this article is based partly on Chapter 1 of the 1999 OECD *Employment Outlook*, prepared by the authors with the input of OECD colleagues, Maxime Ladaïque and Pascal Marianna. It also includes unpublished material. The opinions expressed are those of the authors, and should not be taken to be those of the OECD or the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

in their jobs (their 'job-tenure') shows that part-time work does seem to be less stable. In most countries, a majority of part-time workers have tenure of less than five years, while the tenure of full-time workers tends to be above this figure. In addition, part-time workers are more likely to say that their jobs are temporary. On average in EU Member States in 1997, 34% of male and 18% of female part-time workers were in temporary positions. Among full-time workers, the shares were 7% (men) and 10% (women). In Ireland and Italy, over half of male part-timers are employed in temporary jobs. Of course, this relates partly to the fact that many male part-time workers are either at the beginning or approaching the end of their labour market careers.

Earnings

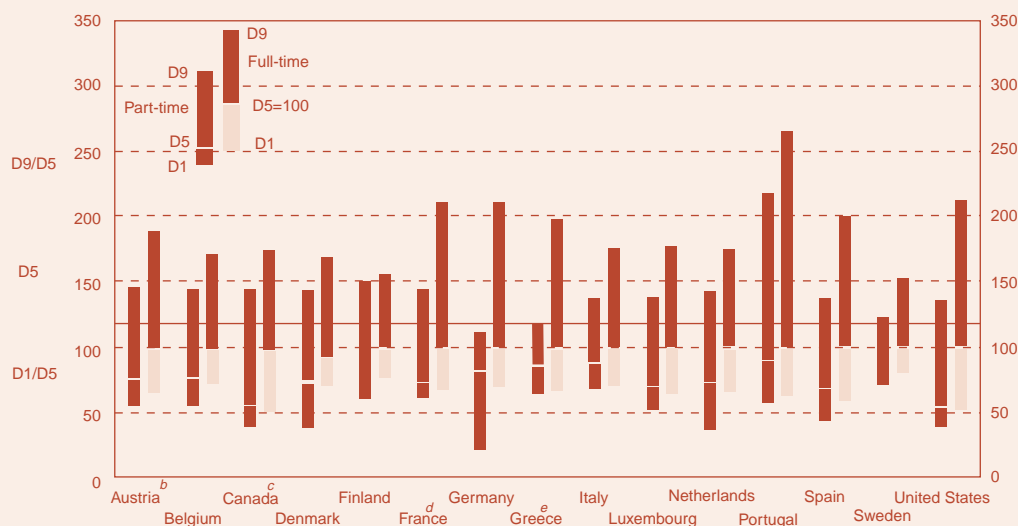
Comparing the earnings of part-time and full-time workers is not a straightforward matter. However, the 1995 Structure of Earnings Survey (SES) coordinated by Eurostat provides a good indication of the differences, even if small firms are systematically excluded and the results for some countries have to be interpreted with particular caution. Figure 1 shows the

comparative earnings of part-time and full-time workers in the EU.

For most of the countries for which data are available, the median hourly earnings of part-time workers are indeed lower than those of full-time workers – lying between 55% and 90%, depending on the country. The shortfall is almost always larger for men than for women. The difference can partly be attributed to the differences in the types of job that part-time and full-time workers tend to do, rather than it simply being the case that part-time workers are paid less than full-timers for each hour of the same type of work. For example, a high proportion of part-time workers work in the wholesale and retail trade, where earnings tend to be relatively low for both full-time and part-time workers. There is a big gap, however, between the salaries of part-time and full-time workers in real estate and other business activities – where women part-timers earn less than three-quarters the hourly pay of their full-time counterparts, and the difference for men is even greater.

Occupation is also important. Part-time workers tend to be concentrated in relatively low-paid

Figure 1 *Dispersion^a of hourly earnings of part-time and full-time workers, 1995*
Percentages of median earnings of full-timers



a) Median earnings of part-time workers are represented by the break in the corresponding bar.

b) 1996. c) 1997. d) 1994. e) industry only.

Sources: Canada: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 1997;

EU countries: Eurostat, Structure of Earnings Survey, 1995;

United States: OECD Secretariat calculations using the 1996 Current Population Survey annual earnings file (outgoing rotations).

Table 1 *Incidence of career or job-related training for part-time and full-time workers, by gender and education attainment, 1994*

Percentage of wage earners and salaried employees aged 25 to 54 years

	Total		Gender				Educational attainment					
	Part-time	Full-time	Men		Women		Less than upper secondary		Upper secondary		Tertiary	
Part-time			Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	
Belgium (Flanders)	13	22	-	22	14	20	-	8 *	-	23	19 *	37
Canada	42 *	37	-	39	43 *	34	-	-	28 *	30	56 *	50
Germany	17 *	21	-	19	17 *	25	11 *	16	-	26 *	-	25
Ireland	18 *	26	-	22	16 *	34	-	18 *	-	27	-	37
Netherlands	24	38	33 *	39	23	36	16 *	27	28	40	31	49
New Zealand	37	52	46 *	48	36	59	29	41	31 *	55	55	66
Poland	-	20	-	20	-	19	-	10	-	28	-	31
Sweden	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Switzerland (French)	28	30	-	32	28	25	-	-	30 *	30	42 *	40
Switzerland (German)	30 *	35	-	35	31 *	36	-	-	38 *	37	-	42
United Kingdom	45	62	-	58	46	69	39	50	-	66	76	78
United States	41	50	-	49	41	51	-	20 *	37 *	38	56	67
Unweighted average^a	30	37	40	44	29	39	24	34	32	38	48	55

.. Data not available.

- Not significant: sample size less than 30, or very high levels of error associated with the estimate (coefficient of variation in excess of 33.3%).

* High levels of error associated with the estimate (coefficient of variation in the range 16.6 to 33.3%).

^a Includes only countries where data are available for both part-time and full-time.

 Source: International Adult Literacy Survey, 1994-95, also OECD *Employment Outlook*, 1999.

occupational areas such as services and sales, clerical work and low-skilled jobs. Within these occupations, the gap between the median hourly earnings of female part-time and female full-time workers is less than 10%.

While the hourly earnings of part-time workers do tend to be relatively low, progress has been made regarding their associated benefits, which are now generally equal to those of full-timers on a pro-rata basis. There are exceptions, however. In some countries, work under a threshold number of hours is much less well covered. For example, eligibility for health, pension, and unemployment benefits in Germany, Ireland, Japan and Sweden is based on minimum hours or earnings. In the United States, where part-time work is less common than in most European countries, comparatively few benefits are offered.

Training

Bearing in mind that the job tenure of part-time workers tends to be of less duration than that of full-timers, that they tend to be in lower paid

jobs, have lower educational qualifications (Eurostat, 1997) and work in smaller firms on average than full-time workers, it is not surprising that they tend to receive less training. All of these factors work against them. In addition, from the employer's point of view, training a part-time worker takes just as long as training a full-time worker, but the part-time worker gives fewer hours of work from which the training investment can be recouped.

In order to make valid comparisons of the incidence of training among part-time and full-time workers, it is best to restrict the age range concerned and the types of training considered. One common reason given by young people for working part-time is that it frees up time for further education and training outside the workplace (OECD, 1998). In order to be relevant to the quality of the job itself, the training concerned should be paid for or provided by the employer rather than by the employee. Finally, it is logical to exclude initial training. This is more likely to be received by workers in less stable employment and may have little long-term job

relevance. Since part-time workers tend to start jobs more frequently than full-timers, they may get more initial training sessions. To include such training thus tends to bias comparisons.

One useful source for making comparisons is the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), coordinated by the OECD and Statistics Canada (1995). This uses a broad definition of training, covering adult education and training through courses, private lessons, workshops, on-the-job training and other forms of structured learning taken over the 12 months preceding the survey. It also facilitates the identification of career and job-related training, as opposed to initial training. Another source is the EULFS, which measures 'specific vocational training in a working environment' paid for or provided by the person's employer; received during the four weeks preceding the survey, and relevant to the current or possible future job of the respondent. Courses taken out of personal interest, for hobbies or general application (e.g. driving lessons), and 'dual system' or apprenticeship-type training, are excluded.

The IALS data show that excluding initial training, part-time workers tend to experience a lower incidence of career/job-related training provided by the employer than do full-time workers in nearly all of the countries and regions surveyed, including the six European countries for which data are available (see Table 1). Furthermore, there is little tendency for the gap between part-time and full-time workers in this respect to narrow as the level of education rises.

A similar pattern emerges from the EULFS data. In nine countries, the incidence of training for women was 25% lower among part-time than full-time workers; this was the case for men also in six countries. Even when a control analysis was undertaken of the EULFS data to allow for the effects of a number of relevant variables – age, education, job tenure, establishment size and broad industrial sector – the differences were still found to be substantial. (It must also be remembered that part-time workers have less scope than full-timers in choosing the type of work they do.)

Transition to full-time employment

A literature survey of recent longitudinal analyses of part-time employment shows that the rate of transition from part-time to full-time working varies considerably from country to country, confirming the impression that part-time working plays different roles in different countries.

In Spain, Smith *et al* (1999) find evidence of the considerable instability of part-time working. Longer part-time job tenure seemed to decrease the probability of entering a full-time job.

In the Netherlands and Germany there is little flow out of part-time working. For women in the Netherlands, Dekker *et al* (1999) find part-time employment is almost as stable as full-time employment. In Germany, Bothfeld and O'Reilly (1999) also find little movement out of part-time working, with almost none into full-time working.

In France and the United Kingdom, there is evidence of a small amount of movement out of involuntary part-time working into full-time employment and voluntary part-time working. In France, Galtier (1998) finds that out of those women part-timers who said in 1994 that they would prefer longer hours, just under a quarter had moved into full-time work two years later, while a similar number were still working part-time but were now satisfied with their hours. In the United Kingdom over the period 1995–96, Smith *et al* (1999) found that 16% of those part-time women workers who said they would prefer full-time work had in fact made this transition.

In Sweden, using part-time work to provide an interlude in a full-time career is a common way for women to combine paid work with family responsibilities. It involves making the transition first from full-time working to part-time, and then back again to full-time work (Anxo *et al*, 1999). These findings are in line with the fact that until recently Sweden was the only country with legislation in place to enable parents to move temporarily from full-time to part-time working (it has now been joined by the Netherlands.)

In the United States, the part-time workforce is dominated by younger and older workers. The option of part-time working is used mainly to

provide short-term jobs during education and the transition to retirement. Movement from part-time to full-time working is rare (Blank, 1994).

Working time preferences

Until recently, the only source of comparable data on the preference for part-time employment in Europe was the 1994 *ad hoc* Labour Market Survey commissioned by the European Commission (1995). (Data from the EULFS are not comparable because the questions used were not the same in the different countries.) The *ad hoc* survey asked the following questions:

- (a) If you are a full-time employee, would you rather have part-time employment with a correspondingly lower salary? (Yes/No)
- (b) If you are a part-time employee, would you rather have full-time employment? (Yes/No)

The results were as follows:

In many countries, substantial numbers of part-time workers say they would prefer to work full-time, but the figure is always less than half (the maximum is 40% in Italy).

In all but one of the countries included, men working part-time show a much higher preference for full-time working than do women. The exception is Spain, where part-time working is very rare among men, and the sample was very small.

The higher the proportion of part-time working in a given country, the smaller the proportion of part-time workers who would prefer to work full-time. For example, in Italy, where 40% of part-timers expressed a desire to work full-time, the total proportion of women working part-time was only 12%. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, where 65% of women worked part-time, only 7% said they would prefer to work full-time.

In all the countries, with the sole exception of the United Kingdom, the data indicate that there are more full-timers who say they would prefer to work part-time than there are part-time workers who say they would prefer to work full-time. On average, in the 12 European Member States covered by the survey, 31% of part-time workers

said they would prefer full-time work, while 12% of full-time workers indicated a preference for part-time working. As part-time workers represent only about 15% of total employment, however, the number of full-time workers saying that they would prefer to work part-time was thus around twice the number of part-time workers wishing to work full-time.

More recent data are now available from the 1998 Foundation survey, *Employment Options for the Future*. These confirm the impression of substantial interest in both shorter hours of work and increased levels of part-time working. They also indicate that within part-time working, the main interest is in part-time work involving a fairly substantial numbers of hours – in the range of 20-25 hours a week. The effect of employment patterns moving to the expressed preferences would be that both very long and very short working hours would be less common (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2000).

Many currently non-employed women express a preference for paid work, and the number of women working would increase considerably if their preferences were to be realised (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2000a). Their entry into the labour market would increase the number of couples where one or both partners work part-time, for two reasons. First, the bulk of labour market re-entrants prefer part-time working and, second, as already noted, some full-time workers would prefer to work part-time. If preferences were realised, the number of couples with both partners working full-time would remain roughly at current levels (Bielenski & Kauppinen, 1999, pp. 67-77).

Job satisfaction

The micro-data derived from the Second European Survey on Working Conditions commissioned by the Foundation show gender differences in the level of job satisfaction experienced by part-time workers (see Table 2). On average, women tend to be more satisfied with their jobs as their hours of work decrease, while for men the opposite is true. Of course, these simple averages hide many cases of satisfaction among men with short hours of work

Table 2 *Job satisfaction by hours of work in the European Union, 1995/6*

In %

		Usual hours of work per week in main job				
		10-19 hours	20-29 hours	30-39 hours	40-44 hours	45-59 hours
Men	Very satisfied	(29)	26	27	28	35
	Fairly satisfied	(51)	47	57	58	50
	Not very satisfied	(11)	24	12	11	11
	Not at all satisfied	(9)	3	4	2	3
Women	Very satisfied	36	36	32	29	(28)
	Fairly satisfied	52	52	51	54	(62)
	Not very satisfied	8	10	11	12	(7)
	Not at all satisfied	3	2	5	4	(2)

Notes: The question asked was, 'On the whole are you satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with your main job?'

Figures in brackets are based on small sample sizes.

Columns do not always add to 100% because of the small proportion of employees responding, 'don't know'.

The figures exclude the agricultural sector.

Source: Authors' calculations, based on the *Second European Survey on Working Conditions, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 1996*.

and among women with longer hours. However, the figures are consistent with the data on preferences mentioned above.

Conclusion

Part-time working has been growing rapidly in Europe. Compared to full-time work, part-time work has a number of potential disadvantages. Part-time workers are more likely to regard their jobs as temporary. They tend to receive less pay, even on an hourly basis. They are also less likely to report receiving career or job-related training, though this does not mean that they receive none at all. In most countries (Sweden appears to be an exception) the rate at which part-time workers move into full-time work is low.

On the other hand, a number of indicators suggest that part-time working usually corresponds to the preferences expressed by the women who do it – although this is not often the case for those men who work part-time. These results are corroborated by job satisfaction data, which suggest that, on average, women tend to be more satisfied with part-time jobs and men with full-time jobs.

John M. Evans and Douglas C. Lippoldt are administrators in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

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Labour market re-entry and working time preferences

Mia Latta

Employment Options of the Future survey

The 1998 *Employment Options of the Future survey* carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions concentrates on labour force supply issues. The coverage of the survey is 15 EU Member States and Norway, and the sample size was 30,557 telephone-assisted interviews. Those interviewed were aged 16-64, and the interviews took place in summer/autumn 1998. The focus was on those who were currently in paid employment or who expressed a wish to participate in paid employment within the next five years. The survey provides information on both the actual situations and the preferences of those interviewed.

At the time of the interviews, more than one in six of those not employed expressed the wish not to enter work in the following five years. This group was not included in further analysis. The present article highlights the specific situations and preferences of those who were not in paid employment at the time of the interviews but who expressed an interest in entering the labour market within the next five years.

On the labour supply side, there are two important and overlapping perspectives: the specific and immediate circumstances of the target groups (current and future working time preferences); and the general and longer term factors of age, gender and family circumstance, which influence the extent and character of every individual's participation in paid work, whether in, close to, or altogether outside the labour market (working time realities and preferences over lifetime).

In this analysis, the following three main target groups from the survey are used:

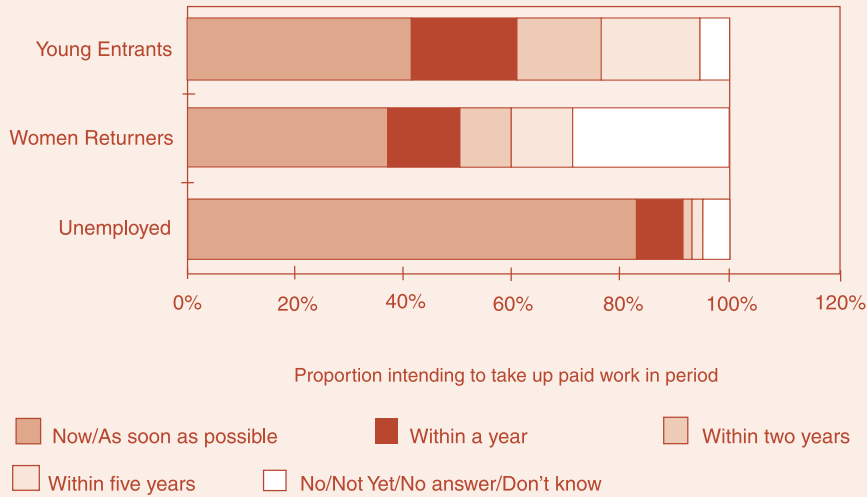
- *Young entrants*: persons at the beginning of their working lives who do not yet have substantial working experience (because they are studying, for example), and who are less than 30 years of age (N=2,713).
- *Women returners*: women who want to take up paid work again after a break in their careers. They have previous work experience and a minimum break from employment of one year. A shorter break is accepted only if the respondent terminated the last job because of giving birth or because she had to take care of elderly, ill or disabled persons (N=3,087).
- *Unemployed persons*: persons who declare themselves unemployed (N=2,537).

Employment plans of the non-employed

While the average unemployment rate is 8%, the survey confirmed that the non-employment rate is much higher: well over a third (39%) of the resident population of working age is not currently in paid work. The currently 'not employed' population in the EU Member States and Norway varies according to several factors (regions, sectors, etc.), but above all, it appears to be very much influenced by age and gender. For example, in the 30-49 age group, only 10% of men are not in paid work, compared to one in three women (35%). However, the will to take up paid employment within five years is fairly equally distributed between those women and men who are not currently in paid employment. Gender is therefore not a determining factor when one looks at the will to participate in paid employment.

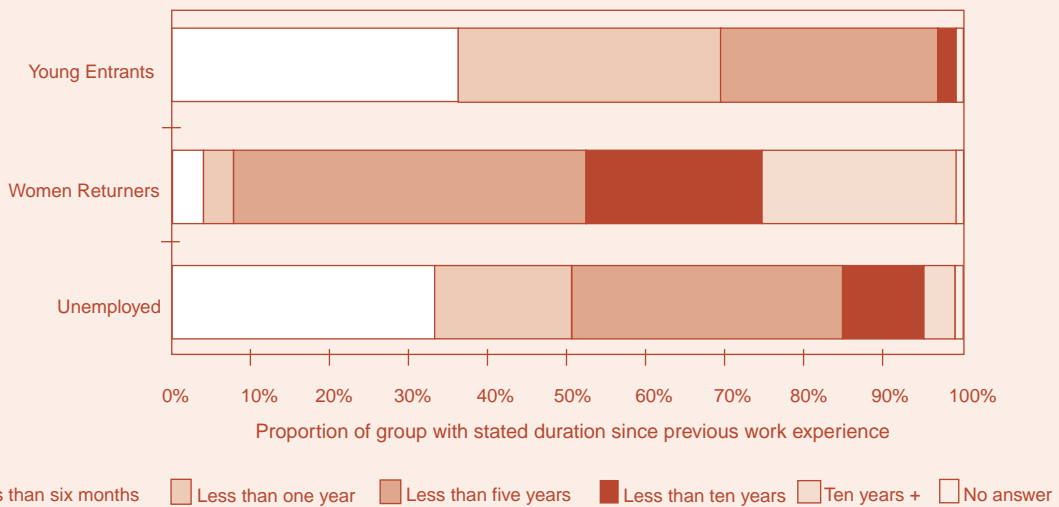
There appears to be plenty of scope to encourage labour market entry, and indeed this would be 'pushing on an open door', as there is a widespread stated intention to take up paid employment within the next five years among all target groups (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Proximity of planned entry/return to work



Source: Employment Options of the Future Survey, 1998

Figure 2 How long ago did your last job end?



Source: Employment Options of the Future Survey, 1998

There is a high level of previous work experience among the target groups, especially among the women returners and the unemployed – nearly one in two have ten years or more of previous work experience. For many, however, some time has elapsed since the last job ended (Figure 2).

Employment status and working time

Job security remains a significant factor in job search strategies, but access to different working time arrangements is also of key importance.

Entrants and re-entrants generally show a high degree of flexibility in their preferences, but some working time patterns and/or types of employment status are not widely acceptable to some groups, even as a second choice. While young entrants are much more flexible in their preferences, women returners are more decisive about what they want – for example, self-employment (and presumably the insecurity and long hours that go with it) is not an option for this group. In general, women returners say that

Figure 3 Preferences of entrants/re-entrants: form and duration of work



Note: Full-time is defined here as 35 hours or more per week and part-time as less than 35 hours
 Source: Employment Options of the Future Survey, 1998

part-time employment is highly acceptable to them. For the unemployed, the picture is somewhat different. While a majority would accept dependent, full-time or part-time employment, less than 40% would consider self-employment (Figure 3).

Young entrants and women returners are not in a particular rush to find work, but four-fifths of the unemployed (80%) are currently looking for work of some kind. For them, the wish to take up paid work is both a real and an immediate intention. However, looking at the three groups who expect to be in work in the next five years – the unemployed, entrants and re-entrants – the survey indicates that confidence about meeting these different intentions is not widespread, and the take-up of help, information and advice regarding the labour market is generally low (Figure 4). All the groups use a variety of sources of support in seeking work, but there is no agency or source which attracts or serves the majority of women returners.

Conclusions

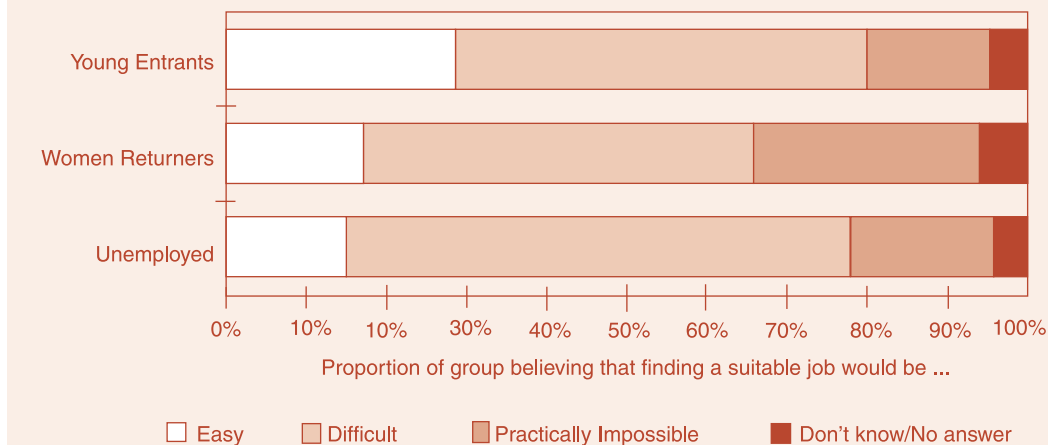
There are two lessons to be drawn from these findings:

1. *There is in general a keen desire among both women and men not currently in a job to take up paid work in the near future.*

Some obvious constraints emerge from the survey that might prevent or inhibit this from happening: the discrepancy between the current dominant working-time model and the wish for substantial part-time work (as expressed by the women returners); the lack of marketable skills among the unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed. Beyond these constraints, however, lies a widespread wish and intention to participate in paid employment. The policy imperative here would seem to be to address and try to minimise these constraints, which impede the potential increase in labour supply. This would have three results:

- a more varied approach could develop in relation to both opportunities and people’s wishes with regard to overall time use within different spheres of life, for both women and men, young and old. In the first instance, this means looking specifically at the links between the wishes of women returners, their effective availability for work (e.g. considering such issues as care of dependents, family duties, etc.), and what the labour market is prepared to offer (e.g. appropriate working-time patterns);
- on-going action to combat long-term unemployment through education, public employment policies, dedicated training and qualifications plans; and

Figure 4 Confidence about finding a job



Source: Employment Options of the Future Survey, 1998

- provision of more accessible guidance and assistance for entrants and re-entrants to the labour market to help them make more informed choices and find suitable employment.
2. *Some of those who are currently not employed might, if offered, consider (or even prefer) working fewer hours, even if this was not always their first choice.* Here the implications for policy development seem to have two dimensions:
- First, the need to find mechanisms by means of which this possibility could be realised on a wide scale without undermining the quality of people's jobs and careers. At present, such mechanisms do not seem to exist. Legal regulation generally only restricts excessive working hours; collective bargaining arrangements do not cover all of the workforce; and effective bilateral arrangements between individual employer and employee seem to be the preserve of only the most valued and well-established workers; and
 - secondly, the need to re-allocate working time so released in order to ensure that those who are at present excluded from work are the direct beneficiaries and are given priority. Here, too, few effective mechanisms exist: productivity gains have often taken precedence. Thus, the need is for new and more imaginative tools of positive intervention in the labour market, not just to prevent excessive working hours, but to promote real individual choice — for all, not just 'insiders'.
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This article is based on the Foundation's report, Employment Options and Labour Market Participation, by John Atkinson, Institute for Employment Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This report is published in DE, EN and FR and is available for downloading on the Foundation website at www.eurofound.ie.



on time 27

ETUC REPORT

European Working Time Policy in the Public Services

This report presents the findings of an EPSU (European Federation of Public Service Unions) project on working time. Based on these findings, it advocates a more unified approach to working time policy for the public sector in Europe. It demonstrates how the current lively European debate on working time issues is related to the changing perceptions of work and time by workers and employers alike. It reaffirms the position that public service trade unions across Europe are in the forefront of this debate and keen to create new initiatives, showing that they attach a great deal of importance to the reorganisation and reduction of working time.

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NEW REPORT FROM THE
EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Implementation of the Working Time Directive by Member States

The Commission adopted a report on the implementation of the Working Time Directive (93/104/EC of 23 November 1993) by Member States on 1 December 2000. The report, which is addressed to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, provides a general overview of the legal situation with respect to the implementation of the provisions of the Directive by the various Member States.

Anna Diamantopoulou underlined the importance of proper implementation of the Working Time Directive for the protection of the health and safety of workers throughout the European Union. In recalling the Directive's fundamental aim of protecting

workers against adverse effects on health and safety caused by working excessively long hours, inadequate rest or disruptive working patterns, the Commissioner called on all parties involved to ensure that the Directive is complied with.

Thirteen Member States have adopted legislation implementing the Working Time Directive. Overall, although most Member States adopted national measures after the expiry of the deadline for implementation on 23 November 1996, many of the provisions of the Directive have now been properly transposed by Member States.

However, there are a number of key issues which the Commission is concerned about. First, legislation in quite a number of Member States goes beyond the exclusions permitted by Article 1(3) of the Directive, by excluding other categories of workers from the scope of the Directive. Second, there are problems in certain Member States that differentiate between working time and overtime. Overtime cannot be used as a means to circumvent the 48-hours per week limit.

Third, several Member States have laid down qualifying periods before a worker may be entitled to annual leave. Such limits may be

particularly damaging for workers on short-term or temporary contracts. Fourth, in a number of Member States there are shortcomings in the manner in which night work is regulated. Finally, in some Member States, it is not entirely clear whether implementing measures guarantee

that that all workers will be able to enjoy all their rights under the Directive.

The Commission is now continuing its detailed assessment, Member State by Member State, of the compatibility of national implementing measures with the

Directive. Final conclusions of this evaluation are expected in the relatively near future.

For further information contact:
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About this issue

Working time in the retail sector has seen many changes over the last four years. The opening hours of shops have been, and remain, a major issue in some countries. The growth of the '24-hour society' has led to a reconsideration of the regulations governing the extension of shop opening hours in the evening, at night and on Sundays.

The retail sector provides a good example of the development of working time flexibility in response to round-the-clock customer demand. It also illustrates the conflict of interests which can sometimes exist between employees, who may be required to work unsocial hours, and citizens, who may also be workers, with their need for adequate, extended shopping hours.

The present bulletin provides an update on developments in working time in the retail sector in Europe, highlights the issues at stake and offers practical information on the organisation of time.

Two additional articles give, firstly, an overview of the consequences of the increase in part-time working in Europe, and secondly, the labour market prospects and preferences of those not currently in paid employment.

