



## WORKING CONDITIONS IN ATYPICAL WORK

Recent research reveals that working conditions for all workers in the European Union have generally disimproved over the past few years. However, the number of non-permanent contracts has not increased dramatically. The employment picture is very diverse in the EU: there are huge differences between and within countries concerning the distribution of different forms of atypical work, the way such work is divided between sectors, and the legal frameworks and monitoring mechanisms governing this type of employment. Relevant labour market policies have an important role to play, as adequate protection and prevention systems are key elements in ensuring better employment conditions – ideally covering all forms of employment equally. Recent evidence suggests that there are important differences between permanent and non-permanent employees in aspects such as control over working time, skills-matching and training provision.

Taking into account both structural (sector, occupation and company size) and individual (age and sex) characteristics, the different profiles of workers in atypical employment can be characterised as follows:

### **Non-permanent employment**

Workers on non-permanent contracts tend to be young and employed in areas such as construction, agriculture, real estate or social (education, health and social work) sectors, and in elementary occupations. They enjoy less job autonomy and control over working time than workers on permanent contracts and are likely to be occupied in less skilled jobs.

### **Temporary agency work**

These workers are more often men than women (the exception being the Nordic countries). Workers employed through temporary agencies tend to be young, but there is evidence to suggest that the average age is increasing. They are mainly represented in industry (again the Nordic countries prove an exception) but nowadays they are less likely to be employed in this area than before. The triangular employment relationship of agency, worker and client company seems to involve an increased element of risk with regard to working conditions.

### **Part-time employment**

The vast majority of part-time workers are women. They enjoy more favourable physical environment conditions than non-permanent workers. Although they are less prone to working non-standard hours than full-time workers, they have less overall control over their working time. Part-time workers tend to be occupied in unskilled positions and receive less training. They are concentrated in services and sales professions (but not in managerial positions), and they are most likely to work in the social sector, as well as in catering. They are least likely to work in the construction industry.

### **Self-employment**

The self-employed worker is typically male, older than other kinds of atypical workers, and working in unfavourable ergonomic conditions. These workers experience less psycho-social work demands than dependent workers, but conversely lack social support. They tend to work non-standard hours, but not shiftwork. In general they have more control over time and autonomy, but less task flexibility and less training. They are likely to be managers (a significant number of self-employed defined themselves as ‘managers’) and occupied in skilled trades. They are mainly represented in sectors like agriculture, service and sales, and catering.



## Introduction

Major changes in employment relations throughout the EU took place in the 1980s and 1990s. Although the full-time job with a permanent contract is still the norm in most countries, accounting for the majority of jobs, in recent years there has been a rapid growth in other forms of employment: non-permanent work and part-time work. At the same time, there has been a rapid transformation in the organisation of work and employment relations have become more flexible. These trends have significant consequences for the employees. Many of these new jobs have been termed 'precarious'. Research carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions indicates that the working conditions of these 'precarious' workers are inferior than those of permanent workers (see sources of Foundation research listed at the end of this leaflet). A comparison of the findings from the Foundation's Second and Third European surveys on working conditions (1995 and 2000) conclude that while some of the traditional risks may have become less severe, on the whole working conditions do not seem to have improved. In fact, in recent years, several new negative factors have emerged, such as ergonomic problems and pressures from work demands.

Standard preventative measures in the area of occupational safety and health do not always extend to workers in atypical employment. Those working, for example, on temporary agency contracts can find themselves in a complicated situation regarding health and safety in the workplace. The triangular relationship between the agency, the client company and the individual employee on a temporary agency contract means that it is often not clear who is responsible for the individual worker's social protection, training and health coverage. This situation leaves room for many potential pitfalls in the area of health and safety.

It is important to bear in mind that the Foundation survey on working conditions was not specifically designed to measure the extent of different forms of employment: the focus was on providing information on working conditions for all workers. Comparisons with other data sources, such as Eurostat's labour force surveys, reveal that there are some discrepancies in the figures for different forms of employment, even though the large picture is basically the same. Where differences do emerge, one possible explanation might be the use of different definitions, as is likely in the case of part-time work.

## Trends in employment status

In recent years, according to the Foundation survey, there has been no growth in non-permanent contracts

in the EU. On the contrary, the percentage of non-permanent contracts among employees has decreased from 15% in 1995 to 13% in 2000. In contrast, part-time employment (defined in the working conditions survey as under 35 hours<sup>1</sup>) has continued to grow, the percentage of workers in part-time jobs increasing from 22% in 1995 to 28% in 2000. There has also been a slight increase in the proportion of self-employed compared to employees (from 9% in 1995 to 10% in 2000).

This shift – a decrease in the share of non-permanent contracts and an increase in the share of part-time, permanent contracts – can be found equally among men and women and in all age categories. Although there are large differences between sectors and occupations, this trend is shown to be prevalent in all countries.

The common model for employees in the different employment contracts did not change over the five-year period between the second and third surveys:

- men tend to have full-time jobs;
- men are more likely than women to be self-employed;
- more women work in part-time jobs and in those with non-permanent contracts;
- non-permanent employees are either young (<25 years) or old (65+);
- the proportion of those in self-employment increases with the age of the workers.

There are large differences in employment status between EU Member States, but it is difficult – if not impossible – to compare situations between different countries on account of differences in labour market structures and legal and social security systems. Figures showing the numbers of people engaged in different types of employment across the EU are shown in Table 1.

## Implications for working conditions and employment conditions<sup>2</sup>

Data from the Third European survey on working conditions allow us to look at the relationship between employment status and working conditions. Employment status is not the only variable that may lead to adverse working conditions, and atypical forms of work do not necessarily involve adverse working conditions. The structural characteristics of the job, and even some individual characteristics, are also important factors in determining working conditions.

### *Working conditions*

An analysis of the survey results indicates that no evidence can be found of workers on atypical contracts (whether non-permanent or part-time) being

<sup>1</sup> While it is obvious that this definition, especially the upper limit of 35 hours, is open to criticism, we nevertheless use this definition for comparative purposes.

<sup>2</sup> Working conditions may be defined as the practical conditions under which people work in a specific technical and organisational environment. Employment conditions denote the rules under which people are employed and their status, training provision and pay.



Table 1 *Different types of employment status in the EU (total population)*

%

	B	DK	D	EL	I	E	F	IRL	L	NL	FIN	P	A	S	UK	EU
<b>Small employers (micro firms)</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>5.4</b>
<b>Self-employed</b>																
> 35 hrs	7.8	2.4	3.5	20.1	12.0	13.6	6.4	8.7	3.0	1.3	4.8	10.2	3.2	3.6	5.1	7.0
10-35 hrs	1.7	0.5	1.1	17.7	3.1	2.2	1.2	1.5	0.2	0.7	1.1	2.5	0.7	1.8	2.1	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>37.8</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>9.3</b>
<b>Permanent employment</b>																
> 35 hrs	55.3	65.4	60.7	29.5	57.2	44.9	46.6	53.2	69.1	47.9	63.8	54.0	64.0	62.8	53.4	55.0
10-35 hrs	22.6	20.0	19.8	13.8	12.3	9.4	29.3	18.8	18.2	35.4	11.2	13.7	20.0	18.6	24.8	19.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.9</b>	<b>85.4</b>	<b>80.5</b>	<b>43.3</b>	<b>69.5</b>	<b>54.3</b>	<b>75.9</b>	<b>72.0</b>	<b>87.2</b>	<b>83.3</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>67.7</b>	<b>84.0</b>	<b>81.4</b>	<b>78.2</b>	<b>74.5</b>
<b>Non-permanent employment</b>																
> 35 hrs	4.1	5.2	5.4	3.9	3.8	15.8	5.7	5.4	3.8	5.8	11.1	9.6	4.5	5.8	6.3	6.6
10-35 hrs	3.8	2.0	2.9	3.2	4.1	6.3	6.5	5.2	1.7	6.8	4.4	4.2	2.0	3.9	4.1	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>10.8</b>
<i>Total = 100</i>																

Source: *Third European survey on working conditions, 2000*

exposed to physical hazards. However, there are some differences to be found in this respect between permanent and non-permanent employees – non-permanent employees face worse ergonomic conditions – but these differences can be explained by sectoral and occupational differences. It is also interesting to note that the differences between permanent and non-permanent employees have grown smaller over the period, and this is probably due to an overall increase in the risks faced by permanent employees (see Figure 1 and Table 2).

Even when structural (sector, occupation, company size) and individual (age and sex) characteristics are taken into account, part-time employees have jobs with more favourable physical environment conditions. Structural and individual characteristics do not account for the fact that the self-employed face less favourable ergonomic conditions than other workers.

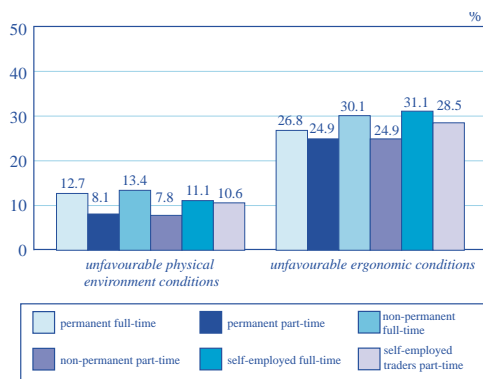
**Employment conditions**

It is not possible to fully explain the differences in employment conditions (eg. working time and skills development) between groups of employees. Differences in working hours (for example, non-standard hours) and differences in social support or task flexibility are no longer significant when other aspects of the job are taken into account. Even when structural and individual characteristics are taken into account, we find that employees on non-permanent contracts have less control over their working time and perform less skillful tasks. However, workers on non-permanent contracts who work part-time are in a worse situation, since employees on part-time contracts tend to have a low level of control over their working time, perform less skilful tasks and receive less training (see Figure 2).

Being self-employed has a direct bearing on employment conditions. The situation is, however, varied. When structural and individual characteristics are taken into account, we find that the self-employed receive less training, have less task flexibility and less social support, but enjoy greater control over their working time, a higher level of job autonomy and face less job demands than employees.

In terms of the relationship between employment status and psycho-social pressure, permanent employees face higher job demands than do non-permanent workers and full-time employees face higher demands than do part-time employees. However, when structural characteristics are taken into account, there are no longer significant differences between part-time and full-time employees in the area of job demands and job autonomy. There are no differences between permanent and non-permanent employees in relation to job demands, but non-permanent employees have less autonomy than do their permanent counterparts.

Figure 1 *Unfavourable physical environment and ergonomic conditions, by contract*



Source: *Third European survey on working conditions, 2000*

Table 2 Working conditions in the EU by type of contract

Non-permanent contracts	Unfavourable conditions	Favourable conditions
Excluding structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– poor ergonomic conditions</li> <li>– discrimination</li> <li>– low job autonomy</li> <li>– low time control</li> <li>– low skills level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– good physical environment conditions</li> <li>– low job demands</li> <li>– social support</li> </ul>
Including structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– low job autonomy</li> <li>– low time control</li> <li>– low skills level</li> </ul>	none
Part-time contracts	Unfavourable conditions	Favourable conditions
Excluding structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– poor ergonomic conditions</li> <li>– discrimination</li> <li>– low time control</li> <li>– low skills level</li> <li>– lack of training provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– good physical environment conditions</li> <li>– low job demands</li> <li>– high job autonomy</li> <li>– fewer non-standard hours</li> </ul>
Including structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– low time control</li> <li>– low skills level</li> <li>– lack of training provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– good physical environment conditions</li> <li>– fewer non-standard hours</li> </ul>
Self-employed	Unfavourable conditions	Favourable conditions
Excluding structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– poor ergonomic conditions</li> <li>– non-standard hours</li> <li>– no task flexibility</li> <li>– poor social support</li> <li>– lack of training provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– good physical environment conditions</li> <li>– no discrimination</li> <li>– low job demands</li> <li>– high job autonomy</li> <li>– no shiftwork</li> <li>– high time control</li> </ul>
Including structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– poor ergonomic conditions</li> <li>– non-standard hours</li> <li>– no task flexibility</li> <li>– poor social support</li> <li>– lack of training provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– low job demands</li> <li>– high job autonomy</li> <li>– high time control</li> <li>– no shiftwork</li> </ul>

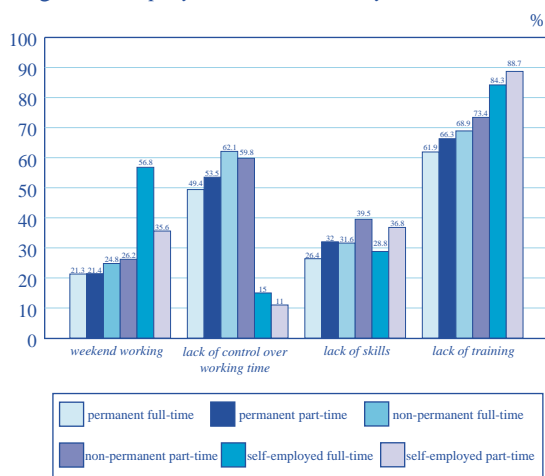
Source: Third European survey on working conditions, 2000

### Health problems and outcomes

The Third European survey on working conditions provides information on several health problems and outcomes. In terms of some of the physical variables

(eg. vibrations, noise and repetitive tasks) to which individual workers have been exposed, one can see that there are no substantial changes to the situation in the five years between the second and third surveys.

Figure 2 Employment conditions by contract



Source: Third European survey on working conditions, 2000

For more refined analysis, six health indicators were developed. First, three health problems were selected: fatigue, backache and muscular pains. Secondly, in order to assess the overall well-being of employees, three health-related outcomes were selected: stress, job dissatisfaction and absenteeism.

A closer look at the six indicators shows that while there has been a slight increase in job dissatisfaction (from 12.9% in 1995 to 14.6% in 2000), as well as in both backache (from 29.6% to 31.7%) and fatigue (from 19.6% to 21.9%), the increase has been more significant in the area of muscular pains (from 18.6% to 30.8%). There has been a substantial reduction in health-related absenteeism over the period. Even though the findings on this indicator are open to question (reduction of absenteeism does not mean that workers are healthier, as there are also many external factors – such as paid sick leave – which

Table 3 *Distribution of health indicators by type of employment*

Type of employment	Dissatisfaction	Health-related absenteeism	Stress	Fatigue	Backache	Muscular pains
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Permanent employment	13.6	14.8	29.2	19.9	31.0	30.3
full-time	14.1	15.4	30.2	20.6	31.6	31.1
part-time	12.1	13.1	26.3	17.8	29.2	28.0
Small employers	8.3	8.7	33.7	27.0	32.2	30.3
Self-employment	18.5	7.7	30.4	32.5	36.0	34.0
full-time	17.3	8.0	30.7	31.2	25.9	33.5
part-time	22.0	6.7	29.5	36.3	36.5	35.2
Non-permanent employment	20.3	12.3	23.8	21.2	30.6	30.5

Source: Third European survey on working conditions, 2000

Note: Percentages are based on the numbers of people interviewed in the survey.

influence attendance levels), the results make for interesting reading.

An analysis of these indicators also shows that employment status does have a close bearing on health consequences and outcomes, as can be seen in Table 3. For all types of employment, with the exception of self-employment, full-time employees usually suffer more from work-related health problems and outcomes. This is – to a certain extent – understandable, as full-time employees spend a longer time at work than part-time workers. The table also shows that small employers (less than 10 employees) and the self-employed score high in five out of six of the indicators – the exception being job dissatisfaction. Finally, it is clear from the table that those in non-permanent employment express the highest levels of dissatisfaction, yet have the lowest levels of stress.

There are also marked differences between countries with regard to these six health indicators, as is shown in Table 4. However, as stated above, on account of differences in labour market structures and legal and social security systems, these figures should be interpreted with caution and direct country comparisons avoided.

### The situation of temporary agency workers

#### *The extent of temporary agency work*

It is not easy to find information in many countries about the extent of temporary agency work within the EU. It can be estimated that between 1.8 and 2.1 million workers were employed in 1999.<sup>3</sup> This amounts to between 1.1% and 1.3% of total employment. France, with over 623,000 temporary agency workers, has more of this type of employment

Table 4 *Distribution of health indicators by country*

%

	Dissatisfaction	Health-related absenteeism	Stress	Fatigue	Backache	Muscular pains
<b>B</b>	11.7	14.6	29.2	22.8	26.8	24.2
<b>DK</b>	5.1	11.9	28.0	10.6	28.8	39.2
<b>D</b>	13.0	17.8	24.5	15.8	34.9	25.9
<b>EL</b>	35.1	5.9	52.4	63.7	42.1	40.6
<b>I</b>	20.1	7.9	35.1	23.3	32.1	24.5
<b>E</b>	22.2	10.6	27.8	35.7	39.3	35.2
<b>F</b>	19.6	12.6	32.5	34.0	39.2	31.0
<b>IRL</b>	8.1	7.7	13.1	8.9	11.3	10.5
<b>L</b>	12.4	16.4	37.7	16.9	35.6	24.5
<b>NL</b>	12.1	20.6	26.1	20.1	27.0	28.9
<b>P</b>	18.1	7.5	19.9	19.8	31.3	26.7
<b>UK</b>	10.9	11.6	23.1	16.5	25.3	22.8
<b>FIN</b>	7.0	23.9	34.3	26.4	39.6	58.1
<b>S</b>	15.3	16.0	39.9	12.8	35.6	47.3
<b>A</b>	9.4	16.0	19.6	4.8	29.6	20.4

Source: Third European survey on working conditions, 2000

Note: Percentages are based on numbers of people interviewed in the survey.

<sup>3</sup> The major uncertainty is due to the conceptual difficulty in defining TAW in the UK. In the research report commissioned by the Foundation, two definitions of agency work in the UK were used: one, based on the Labour Force Survey (Eurostat), which only includes people employed by an agency as their main job (254,000 – 0.9%); and one which also includes people working for an agency on a self-employed basis or as a second job (557,000). The latter is the most accurate estimate of the number of workers involved in this form of employment.

Table 5 *Employment and temporary agency workers, 1999*

	<b>Numbers employed and growth rate</b>	<b>Average age</b>	<b>Proportion of women</b>	<b>Sector</b>
<b>B</b>	62,661 (1.65%) Doubled since 1992	30 years 46% < 25 years	41%	Industry and construction 65% <sup>2</sup>
<b>DK</b>	5,000 (0.2%) Five-fold since 1992	n.a.	70%	Industry and construction 23% Healthcare and clerical 27%
<b>D</b>	243,000 (0.7%) Doubled since 1992	32 years 37% <25 years	22%	Industry and construction 50% <sup>2</sup>
<b>E</b>	109,000 (0.8%) Five-fold since 1995	27 years <sup>1</sup> <25, 51% <sup>1</sup>	43% <sup>1</sup>	Industry and construction 40%
<b>F</b>	623,000 (2.7%) Rapid growth	29 years <25, 28% Getting older	30%	Industry and construction 58%
<b>IRL</b>	9,000 (0.6%) Moderate growth	n.a.	n.a.	Industry and construction 80% <sup>3</sup>
<b>I</b>	31,000 (1.5%) Rapid recent growth	30 years 40% <25 years	38%	Industry and construction. 63%
<b>LU</b>	6,065 (2.3%) Doubled since 1992	n.a.	25%	Industry and construction 53% Construction 30%
<b>NL</b>	305,000 (4.0%) Doubled since 1992	27 years 52% <25 years Getting older	49%	Industry and construction 33%
<b>A</b>	24,277 (0.7%) Four-fold since 1992	n.a.	16%	Industry and construction 51%
<b>P</b>	45,000 (1.0%) Doubled since 1995	n.a. 38% <25 years	40%	Industry and construction 43%
<b>FIN</b>	15,000 (0.6%) 11,000 in 1996	32 years 19% <25 years	78%	Mainly services 22% clerical
<b>S</b>	32,000 (0.8%) Rapid current growth	Average <25 years	60%	Industry and construction 12% Also healthcare
<b>UK</b>	557,000 (2.1%) LFS: 254,000 (0.9%). Doubled since 1992	32 years 31% <25 years getting younger	47%	Industry and construction 26% Financial services 29% Also clerical occupations

1. These figures are probably too high but are the only ones available.

2. Agency work is not permitted in construction.

3. This figure is uncertain.

Note: No data available for Greece. LFS: Labour Force survey (Eurostat)

form than any other country and accounts for 30% of the EU total. The United Kingdom is the other major contributor to the European total. The Netherlands is the most 'temporary agency worker intensive' country, followed by Luxembourg, France, the UK and Belgium. Austria, Germany, and the Nordic and southern European countries have the lowest levels. The countries where this form of employment is currently increasing most rapidly are Italy and Sweden.

Temporary agency workers are young, but there is evidence that they are getting older. In particular, the proportion of under 25 year-olds is declining. Male workers dominate this type of work in most countries (the Nordic countries provide a striking exception) and evidence suggests this is becoming even more the case. Agency work is over-represented in industrial

sectors (again an exception being the Nordic countries) but there is evidence that it is becoming less so.

Overall, there is very little information to be found on temporary agency workers in the Member States. Where country statistics give information on this type of employment, it is by no means clear that these figures reflect the nature and extent of this rapidly transforming form of employment. It is possible nevertheless to arrive at some cautious estimates based on different information sources and these figures are shown in Table 5.

#### *Working conditions of temporary agency workers*

Changing the place of work can often have implications for the temporary agency worker's working conditions and health. The intrinsic nature of



temporary agency work implies potential pitfalls with regard to work and health. The national report on France provides a good illustration of the transitional nature of this kind of work:

The average assignment of temporary workers lasted 1.9 weeks, with each temporary employee performing an average of 6 assignments per year. That same year (1999), temporary placement concerned 1 787 000 people who performed at least one assignment during the year. Thus on average each temporary agency worker worked an equivalent period of 3 months' full-time employment in 1999.

It is clear that this pattern of employment can lead to difficulties in both working and non-working life. In many countries, the relevant external frameworks – for example legal regulations and collective agreements – do not cover persons working on short-term contracts. Furthermore, the lack of clarity of responsibility with regard to the working conditions, health and training of temporary agency workers leaves ample room for negligence. The national reports provide plenty of evidence that temporary agency workers are in a disadvantaged position compared to other workers, as the following examples show (most issues were discussed in more than one country report):

- accidents at work are often under-reported (report on UK);
- working hours are strictly determined by employers, employees have little control over pace (report on France);
- pay discrimination: on average two-thirds of the pay and benefits of full-time employees or workers are not paid because the client fails to pay the agency (report on UK);
- paid holidays and subsidies are only in proportion to the length of the contract (report on Portugal);
- training is minimal or non-existent (report on Germany).

However, temporary agency work does not in itself have to imply a marginalised position within the labour market. In some countries, such as Sweden, temporary agency workers are well protected by the legal framework, working on open-ended contracts and being on average well-educated. They experience sufficient support from their employers and feel themselves visible and needed. There is even some evidence to suggest that temporary agency work can offer certain professions 'more influence over tasks, suitable working hours and higher wages'.

**Conclusion**

During the last ten years the main focus of EU employment policies has been on job creation and

reduction of unemployment. Strategies for this have varied from attempting to increase labour market flexibility through the use of non-permanent contracts and part-time work to creating new jobs in 'new' sectors. Foundation research results show that this is only part of the picture that should be highlighted and that it is equally important to emphasise the quality of work as a cornerstone of a sustainable working life. The creation of better quality jobs which allow for a better balance between working life and personal life will increase the opportunities for individuals to take up jobs and to remain in employment. The priority should be on adapting working conditions to the needs of both individuals and companies, aiming for a balance between security and positive labour market flexibility.

Our results show that there seems to be a trade-off between work autonomy and working conditions. The self-employed provide a good example: these workers have much control over their pace of work and enjoy considerable autonomy, but have little control over their working conditions and career development. Looking at health outcomes, it is also very clear that a low level of absenteeism does not necessarily mean that people are healthier: the self-employed serve as a good example in this case too.

Those employed on temporary agency contracts deserve a separate mention here. Although information sources about this type of employment are rather sketchy, what little information we have seems to indicate that this form of employment could (but not always) lead to more unfavourable employment and working conditions. However, the picture on temporary agency work is very varied: there are large differences between countries, as there are between the individual and structural characteristics of these workers. It is perhaps the diversity of this form of employment that has accounted for its rapid growth – and also can explain the potential pitfalls. In many countries, the lack of adequate legal regulations, up-to-date information and monitoring mechanisms has allowed this form of employment to retain an image of 'greyness' – whether this is founded or not.

Last but not least, there is one important area where all those working on atypical employment contracts are at a clear disadvantage: training and life-long learning. The research results presented in this leaflet show that part-time and non-permanent employees and the self-employed enjoy fewer training opportunities than permanent full-time employees. In the long-term perspective, this could lead to these atypical workers occupying a precarious and marginalised position within the labour market.

## Foundation research into atypical work

### Primary sources

In 2000, following the surveys carried out in 1990 and 1995, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions carried out its *Third European survey on working conditions* in the 15 EU Member States. The sample size was 21,500. The sections on employment status, working conditions, and health problems and outcomes in this leaflet provide an overview of some of the key developments in these areas in relation to different forms of work. Unless otherwise mentioned, all the figures are from the third survey. The primary sources used in this leaflet are the report by Anneke Goudswaard and Frank Andries, *Employment status and working conditions in the Third European survey on working conditions* (sections on employment status and working conditions); and the report by Joan Benach, David Gimeno and Fernando G. Benavides, *Types of employment and health indicators in the European Union* (section on health aspects), both commissioned by the Foundation in 2001. The final section draws on a report from another project on temporary agency work, *Temporary agency work in the European Union* by Donald Storrie, which looks at the structural characteristics of temporary agency

work in the Member States, the specific working conditions and health concerns affecting this group of workers and the attitude and role of social partners regarding this type of employment.

### Secondary sources

Secondary sources of research used to compile this leaflet are listed below. Information about the following publications from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions is available on the Foundation's website at [www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie).

*Flexibility and working conditions: A qualitative and comparative study in seven EU Member States* (report), 2000.

*Precarious employment and health-related outcomes in the European Union (report and summary)*, 1999.

*Precarious employment and working conditions in the European Union* (report and summary), 1998.

*The working conditions of the self-employed in the European Union* (summary), 1997.

*Ten years of working conditions in the European Union* (summary), 2001.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Information about Foundation publications and the surveys on working conditions mentioned in this leaflet is available on the Foundation website at [www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie). For information on Foundation research in this field, you may contact:

**Dimitrios Politis,**

Information Liaison Officer

Tel: (353 1) 204 41 40

e-mail: [dmp@eurofound.ie](mailto:dmp@eurofound.ie)

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European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions  
Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18, Ireland.

**Tel:** (353 1) 204 31 00

**Fax:** (353 1) 282 64 56/282 42 09

**E-mail:** [postmaster@eurofound.ie](mailto:postmaster@eurofound.ie)

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