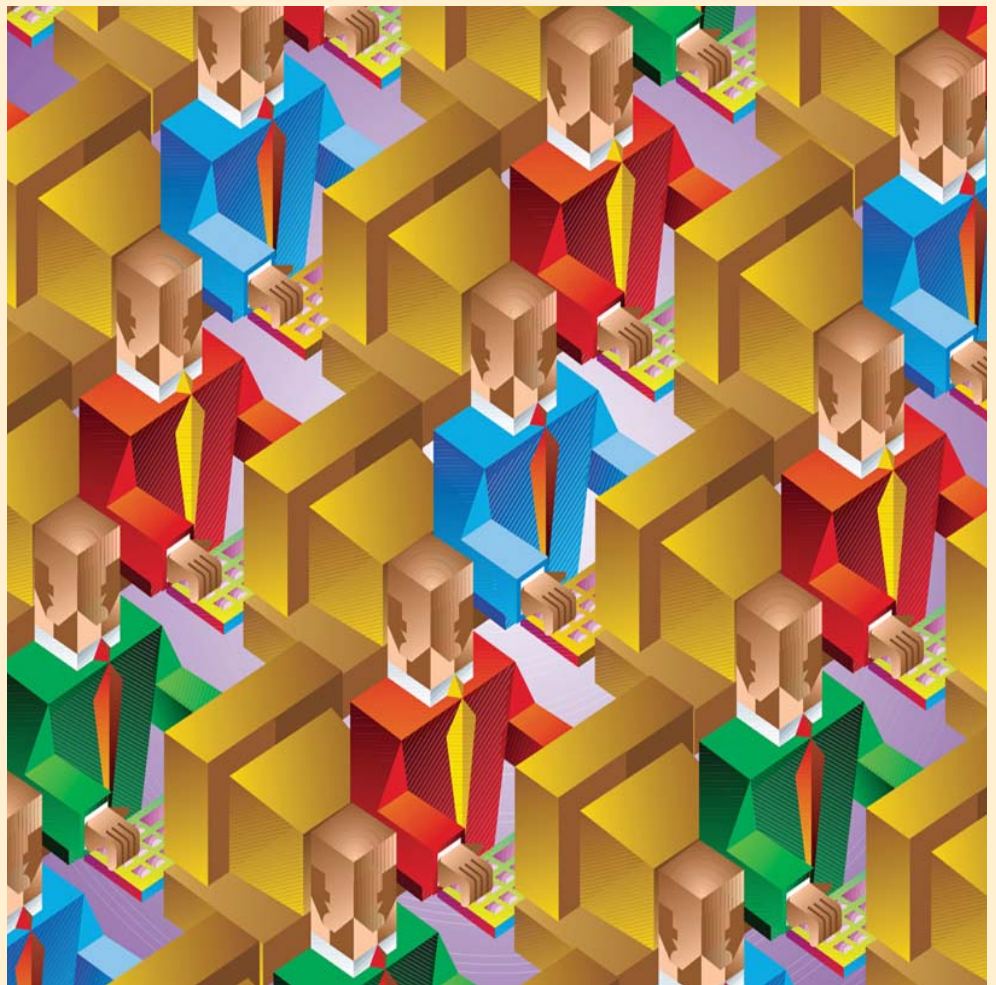




Annual review of working conditions in the EU: 2005–2006



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2005–2006

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European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

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Foreword

Quality of work and employment continued to be a key issue at EU level during 2005, with many developments in terms of career and employment, health and well-being, skills development, and work–life balance. Although there was an overall improvement in working conditions, there are still outstanding issues for concern. In particular, issues impacting on the workplace, ranging from working time legislation to health and safety aspects, from the security of employment contracts to the need for lifelong learning. In addition, Europe will face new challenges in the forms of increasing ICT training needs, an ageing workforce and rising migration in an enlarged Europe.

This third *Annual review of working conditions in the EU: 2005-2005* from the European Working Conditions Observatory examines four key dimensions in working conditions and quality of work and employment: career development and employment security, health and well-being, skills and competences development, and work–life balance. Outlining relevant legislative and policy developments across the Union, it also identifies important trends in the workplace.

We trust this comprehensive report will provide an informative overview for the key actors in the area of working conditions and quality of work and employment.

Jorma Karppinen
Director

Willy Buschak
Deputy Director

Country codes

EU25

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
CZ	Czech Republic
CY	Cyprus
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
FI	Finland
FR	France
DE	Germany
EL	Greece
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
SK	Slovakia
SI	Slovenia
ES	Spain
SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom

EU15

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
DK	Denmark
FI	Finland
FR	France
DE	Germany
EL	Greece
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LU	Luxembourg
NL	Netherlands
PT	Portugal
ES	Spain
SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom

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Introduction

This third annual review of the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO) summarises the main developments, at EU level, in the area of working conditions and quality of work and employment. It mainly refers to the period January to December 2005. The analysis follows the paper, *Quality of work and employment in Europe: Issues and challenges* (2006), compiled by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. The paper identifies four key dimensions necessary for the promotion of quality:

- ensuring career and employment security;
- maintaining and promoting the health and well-being of workers;
- developing skills and competences;
- reconciling working and non-working life.

Further articles on working life and employment are available on the webpage of the European Working Conditions Observatory at <http://www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco/>

Legislative developments

1

Working Time Directive

In 2005, the revision of the Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC) remained on the agenda throughout the year. (See 2003–2004 and 2004 reviews (EU0406AR01, EU0502AR01) for previous developments.) The key issues surrounding the amendment of the directive are the:

- reference period for calculating the maximum weekly working time;
- introduction of the definitions of ‘on-call time’ and ‘inactive part of on-call time’;
- conditions for applying the option of derogating from the provisions concerning maximum weekly working hours (opt-out).

At the March Employment and Social Policy Council Meeting (press release (242Kb pdf)), the opt-out was the main contested issue in the Commission’s proposal for revising the directive.

The European Parliament’s Employment Committee adopted a report (315Kb pdf) on 19 April 2005 (news report: 21 April 2005). In contrast to the European Commission, the committee wants the right of individual workers to opt out of the maximum 48 hour working week to be abolished, and the entire period of any time spent on call, including the ‘inactive part’, to be considered as working time. Working time should be organised in a more flexible way that provides opportunities for lifelong learning, and to achieve the right balance between reconciling work and family life. For workers with more than one contract, the individual’s working time must be calculated as the sum of the periods under each of the contracts.

A report on working time (920Kb pdf) (summary (125kb pdf) was prepared as background material for members of the European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs on a number of social issues related to the Commission’s proposed revision of the directive (Meeting documents, 30 March 2005). The report builds on existing research and available statistical data focusing on the impact of long working hours on family life, and analyses the effectiveness of the proposed reform in reconciling work and family life, and its compatibility with policy on equal opportunities. A total of three databases were used: the European Community Household Panel (ECHP), the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), and the European Working Conditions Surveys (EWCS). One of the conclusions drawn is that long hours are incompatible with reconciliation of work and family life.

In its first reading of the revision of the Working Time Directive on 11 May 2005, the European Parliament adopted a proposal for far-reaching amendments to the Commission’s proposal.

Also on 11 May 2005, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted an opinion (210Kb pdf) requesting amendments to the Commission’s proposal. The EESC sees the Commission’s proposal as a ‘step back’ (56Kb MS Word doc). In the opinion document, the EESC attempts to assess the Commission’s proposal in terms of meeting the goals of the directive:

‘Does the amendment contribute to achieving this fundamental social right through a Europe-wide minimum level of regulation, or is it the case, instead, that room for flexibility will be broadened to the benefit of economic interests, without the needs of employees for protection being taking into account at the same time? In this case, we would be a long way

from an appropriate response to the novelty of the innovations to be achieved in terms of entrepreneurial flexibility and guarantees of security for workers, as called for by a service and knowledge-based society for all businesses, but more particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises and enterprises in the social economy.’

The EESC considers that the individual opt-out runs counter to the protection of health and safety and a balance between work and family life. Although the proposal for a revision of the directive formulates a few additional conditions that may limit misuse, the EESC addresses again the possible consequences of this derogation for work and health protection. The committee doubts that the proposed additional conditions fulfil this purpose. In general, the EESC raises the question whether the retention of the individual opt-out does not run contrary to the very aim of the directive as a European minimum level of regulation to protect the health and safety of workers.

The introduction of a category of ‘on-call time’ or ‘inactive part of on-call time’ is not in harmony with the ruling of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) (see last year’s review EU0502AR01). The EESC emphasises that employees on call are not free in what they do at the workplace, and cannot count it as free time nor can they claim rest time.

In addition, the EESC seeks to retain the four-month reference period for calculating overtime.

The opinion (110Kb pdf) of the Committee of the Regions calls for the introduction of the categories ‘on-call time’ and ‘inactive part of on-call time’, with the inactive part of on-call time not being counted as working time, and for a gradual phasing out of the individual opt-out.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) welcomed the decision of the European Parliament on the Working Time Directive and is pleased that the EESC has adopted a report on working time that moves in the same direction. The Union of Industrial and Employers’ Confederations of Europe (UNICE) deplored the European Parliament decision (press release 11 May 2005).

On 31 May 2005, the European Commission presented an amended proposal (155Kb pdf). It included some amendments proposed by the European Parliament, such as references to increasing the rate of employment among women, to the compatibility between work and family, and to the aggregation of hours in cases involving several employment contracts. Although the Commission – which has the right of putting forward proposals to which both the European Parliament and the Council have to agree in order to adopt the directive – emphasises that it is prepared to explore a possible compromise, it cannot accept the amendments proposed by the European Parliament regarding the two contested issues: the individual opt-out and on-call time.

The Commission’s amended proposal maintained the distinction between on-call work and the inactive part of on-call time. It includes a new formulation:

‘The inactive part of on-call time may be calculated on the basis of an average number of hours or a proportion of on-call time, taking account of experiences in the sector concerned, by collective agreement or agreement between the social partners, or following consultation of the social partners.’

‘The inactive part of on-call time may not be taken into account in calculating the rest periods laid down in Article 3 (daily rest period) and 5 (weekly rest period).’

The reference period to calculate the maximum weekly working time can be set by the Member States at a period not exceeding 12 months under certain conditions. Such reference periods can be set by collective agreements or agreements by the social partners, by legislative or regulatory provision, provided that the Member States take the measures necessary to ensure that:

- the employer informs and consults the workers and/or their representatives in good time concerning the introduction of such a reference period;
- the employer takes the measures necessary to avoid or overcome any risk relating to health and safety that could arise from the introduction of such a reference period.

The amended proposal states that the opt-out shall be removed three years after the revised directive becomes effective.

The June Employment and Social Policy Council (press release (315kb pdf)) examined the Commission’s amended proposal to the Working Time Directive, following the opinion delivered by the European Parliament at first reading. The main points under discussion remained the opt-out and the issue of on-call time. (See also EIRO article EU0506204F for discussion highlights.)

At the December Employment and Social Policy Council Meeting (press release (252Kb pdf)), the United Kingdom EU Presidency suggested a set of compromise texts. However, extensive discussion of these texts did not lead to an agreement. The key issues of controversy, still to be resolved, relate to the opt-out provision as well as to the question of whether the maximum weekly working time is calculated per contract or per worker.

The European social partners, who did not see any grounds to conclude an agreement, express divergent views on a revision of the Working Time Directive.

At their meeting of 5–6 December 2005, the ETUC Executive Committee adopted a statement on the revision of the directive. Key demands are to:

- consider time spent in on-call duties in the workplace as working time in the sense of the Working Time Directive and to be taken account of for daily and weekly rest periods;
- phase out the individual opt-out;
- provide for genuine measures to reconcile work and family life, and to protect the health and safety of working parents and carers;
- only allow for longer reference periods for calculating the average 48-hour working week on the basis of collective bargaining or with additional legal safeguards.

According to the position of UNICE, a revised directive should:

- explicitly include provisions for opt-outs by two independent means: by collective agreement or by individual consent;

- average the reference period for calculating weekly working over 12 months and provide the option to extend it beyond 12 months by collective agreement;
- ensure that the inactive part of on-call work is not considered as working time. (UNICE @News November 2005; UNICE Position Paper 10 October 2005)

In the opinion of UNICE, it would be impractical and unacceptable to link the responsibilities between different employers in the case of multiple contracts (UNICE @News January 2006; UNICE Position Paper 10 October 2005).

On 1 December 2005, a further judgement was made by the ECJ in relation to on-call work. The Court confirmed its ruling that on-call work has to be regarded as working time. According to this ruling, night duty carried out by a teacher in an establishment for disabled persons must be taken into account in its entirety as working time.

‘... the classification as working time within the meaning of Directive 93/104 of a period during which the employee is present at his workplace cannot depend on the intensity of his work but follows solely from his obligation to be at his employer’s disposal.’

Directives on health and safety at work

A report from 7 February 2005 by the European Parliament on promoting health and safety at work is a response to the Commission’s Communication (COM(2004) 62 final) on the transposition into national law and the implementation of the 1989 framework directive, and on five directives on health and safety at work (EU0406AR01). The report notes that the communication analyses the practical implementation of the directives beyond a description of the transposed legislation. A number of critical issues are discussed. The framework directive could be more ambitious and specific. A highly effective prevention policy is required, guaranteeing access to preventive services, as fewer than 50% of workers are covered. The EU directives are poorly implemented in the new Member States.

The area of psychological conditions should be dealt with more clearly and comprehensively, and could be inspired by the European agreement on work-related stress. Revisions are required in Directive 90/270/EEC on the minimum safety and health requirements for work with display screen equipment and in Directive 90/269/EEC on the minimum safety and health requirements for the manual handling of loads, as research shows that the legislation and practice in this area often diverge, leading to continuing high levels of muscular and spinal disorders. Special attention should be paid to the situation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and to high-risk groups such as temporary workers, or short-term workers affected by an excessively high rate of accidents.

The European Parliament resolution (P6_TA(2005)0056) on promoting health and safety at the workplace welcomes the Commission’s plan to launch a study to analyse and assess the practical implementation of Directive 91/383/EEC, and supports the proposal to present a single report covering the practical implementation of all the directives in the 25 Member States (EU25) (see below).

The resolution highlights discrimination suffered by women in the labour market and points to the latest figures, which indicate an increase in accidents in sectors mainly employing women. It recommends examining more closely the possibility of presenting a global approach to health in the workplace, including risks such as stress, bullying, harassment and violence.

The European Commission consulted the social partners on a simplification of health and safety at work directives, with regard to preparing reports on their practical implementation. In the first consultation (30Kb pdf), the Commission proposes to present a single report covering the practical implementation of all the directives in the EU25. On 26 October 2005, the Commission launched its second consultation (36kb pdf), analysing the replies to the first consultation and stating a consensus on the need to simplify provisions concerning the practical implementation reports. Views differ on the content and scope of any amendments to be made to the current provisions of the directives, particularly regarding certain aspects of a possible streamlining of the legislation.

The Commission plans to: propose a directive that would amend the existing provisions of the directives concerned; harmonise intervals for submitting the national practical implementation reports; and introduce the provisions also in the biological agents directive (2000/54/EC) and the carcinogens or mutagens directive (2004/37/EC).

Musculoskeletal disorders at work

On 12 November 2004, the European Commission launched a consultation (242Kb pdf) of the European social partners on the protection of workers from musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). (See last year's review (EU0502AR01).)

In the Community strategy on health and safety at work 2002–2006 (210Kb pdf), the Commission had announced the intention to adapt existing legislation to the emerging problem of MSDs.

Based on data from the European Working Conditions Surveys (EWCS), the consultation outlines that MSDs are the work-related health problems most commonly reported by European workers. MSDs are related to poor ergonomic conditions for both women and men. The consultation emphasises that women 'often work in conditions associated with musculoskeletal disorders – work requiring awkward postures, monotonous and repetitive tasks, inappropriate work methods and organisation and, more often than is commonly recognised, heavy lifting'.

The consultation paper states that there is no specific legal provision focusing on work-related MSDs. It summarises existing recent legal provisions that have an impact on the prevention of MSDs in a number of directives:

- Council Directive 90/270/EEC on the minimum safety and health requirements for work with display screen equipment;
- Council Directive 90/269/EEC on the minimum safety and health requirements for the manual handling of loads;
- Council Directive 89/655/EEC on the minimum safety and health requirements for the use of work equipment by workers at work;

- Council Directive 89/654/EEC on the minimum safety and health requirements for the workplace;
- Council and Parliament Directive 2002/44/EC on the minimum safety and health requirements regarding the exposure of workers to the risks arising from physical agents (vibration);
- Council Directive 93/104/EC concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time;
- several directives regulating machinery, for example, Directive 98/37/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the approximation of the laws of the Member States.

The Commission Recommendation concerning the European schedule of occupational diseases (120Kb pdf) includes 11 musculoskeletal conditions that are linked directly to occupation.

In its response (190Kb pdf), ETUC emphasised the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach regarding a new directive aimed at the prevention of MSDs. The new directive should summarise specific elements of the existing Community legislation, be complemented by the necessary provisions to fill gaps, and eliminate any ambiguity. The regulations of all existing directives should be retained, updated and made feasible for companies to implement. A strategic approach towards MSDs should be comprehensive, multidisciplinary and participative, and should consider all parts of the human body and also biomechanical factors and specific work organisation factors, particularly time pressure. The need to make the vocabulary more precise particularly refers to the term ‘ergonomic principles’, and to the concepts of ‘repetition’, ‘weight’ or ‘force’.

ETUC also seeks to harmonise the recognition of occupational diseases in the EU, which could also be an incentive for the implementation of more proactive prevention policies.

UNICE emphasises that prevention and management of MSDs must be taken seriously and that progress on prevention is desirable. It rejects further Community action in the legislative field, as it believes that the current legislative framework provides for wide coverage of MSDs through general and specific provisions, and that further progress cannot be made by the legislative route.

The employer organisation calls for the elaboration of sector and workplace-oriented ‘toolkits’ with a view to closing the knowledge gap and enabling companies to develop well-adapted solutions. Additional efforts should be made in awareness raising, exchange of experience and good practice.

UNICE questions the evidence of a rise in MSDs against the background of the available databases used. The data used in the consultation are essentially based on two reports: a factsheet from the European Agency on Safety and Health at Work and the Foundation’s *European Working Conditions Survey* (2000). The organisation considers this data as insufficient for a thorough analysis of the current situation and of differences at EU Member State level.

Further, UNICE emphasises that considerable progress in terms of ergonomic factors at the workplace has been achieved over the years (UNICE, Position Paper, 19 January 2005).

Directive on optical radiation

On 18 April 2005, the European Council adopted a common position (608Kb pdf) for a Directive on minimum requirements for the protection of workers from risks to their health and safety arising, or likely to arise, from exposure to optical radiation during their work. It pertains to risks due to adverse effects caused by exposure to the eyes and to the skin. The proposal relates to the nineteenth individual directive within the Framework Directive 89/391/EEC. (See last year's review (EU0502AR01) for previous developments.)

The recommendation of the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee for a second reading (A6-0249/2005 (187Kb pdf)), adopted on 12 July 2005, provides the amendment that the Member States can decide if employers have to assess health risks to workers from exposure to natural sources of radiation (sunlight). Consequently, in the second reading on 7 September, the European Parliament excluded natural sources of radiation (solar radiation) from the scope of the directive. It covers only damage to eyesight from artificial radiation and lasers. As provided for in the July recommendation, Member States are free to decide whether to oblige employers to assess the risks of exposure to natural UV radiation to workers' health (P6_TA-PROV(2005)0329).

ETUC emphasised that this amendment undermines the scope of the directive and underlined that exposure to sunshine can damage the health of workers in many sectors (press release). UNICE was in favour of national regulations regarding natural sources of radiation (sunlight) (UNICE @News, October 2005).

The directive was approved by Parliament and Council at the meeting of the Conciliation Committee on 6 December 2005 (text of agreement). The Council accepted the European Parliament's key demand to exclude natural sources of radiation, such as sun, from the directive (news service 7 December 2005).

On 14 February 2006, the directive was approved in plenary session (TA A6-0026/2006; news headlines 21 February 2006; A6-0026/2006 (154Kb pdf)). The legislation lays down minimum standards for the prevention and early diagnosis of damage to the eyes and skin from optical radiation, and for the prevention of long-term health risks. It sets exposure limit values and includes provisions on employee rights to information, training, consultation and health checks.

Employers are obliged to carry out risk assessments, adapt working methods to reduce risk from optical radiation (i.e. limit the duration and level of exposure), examine the layout of the workplace, and provide appropriate protective equipment.

Optical radiation is understood as any electromagnetic radiation in the wavelength range between 100 nanometres and one millimetre. The spectrum of optical radiation is divided into ultraviolet radiation, visible radiation and infrared radiation. Ionising radiation like x-rays or gamma rays, electromagnetic fields such as microwaves, and radio frequencies are not covered by the directive (news service 7 December 2005; press service – background 13-16 February 2006).

The directive on optical radiation is the last of a series of four directives designed to protect workers from the dangers of physical agents. Previous directives dealt with vibration, noise and

electromagnetic fields. (A6-0026/2006 (153Kb pdf); see previous years' reviews (EU0406AR01; EU0502AR01).)

Exposure to chemical, physical and biological agents at work

On 5 October 2005, the European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs considered a text regarding a draft directive establishing a second list of indicative occupational exposure limit values. This draft directive follows from Art 3(2) of the Council Directive 98/24/EC, which provides that the Commission is to propose European objectives in the form of indicative occupational exposure limit values (IOELVs) for the protection of workers from chemical risks, to be set at Community level after consulting the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work. In light of evaluating the latest available scientific data, it is deemed appropriate to review the IOELVs.

REACH

REACH stands for 'Registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals'. This regulation will replace 40 existing legal acts, create a single system for all chemical substances, and introduce a new European Chemical Agency. There has been intensive debate on REACH in EU institutions and among the social partners throughout the year, against the background of a proposal by the European Commission in 2003 (COM(2003) 644).

On 13 July 2005, the EESC adopted an opinion (135Kb pdf) on the chemicals legislation of REACH. The EESC expects that, in extending the information available, REACH can support the protection of health and safety of workers. The EESC noted that the impact assessments conducted have concentrated mainly on the costs and feasibility of the REACH system, while there is a lack of research on the impact for health and safety in the workplace and for health in general. The Committee welcomed that some specific studies have been scheduled.

The School of Health and Related Research at the University of Sheffield carried out a study (642kb pdf) on the impact of REACH on occupational health. The study was undertaken at the request of the European Trade Union Institute for Research, Education and Health and Safety (ETUI-REHS), and its focus was on skin and respiratory diseases. It examines the following issues for the workforce of the EU25:

- prevalence and incidence of occupationally-related respiratory and skin diseases that could be affected under REACH;
- proportion of cases of diseases preventable under REACH;
- costs of respiratory and skin diseases;
- cost savings and health benefits due to REACH.

The report concludes that REACH clearly provides an opportunity to reduce the number of chemical-related occupational diseases and the associated costs for both industry and society. The study estimates that, in the EU25, 50,000 cases of occupational respiratory diseases (asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases) and 40,000 cases of occupational skin diseases from

exposure to hazardous chemicals could be avoided each year. The cost saving due to REACH over a 10-year time horizon is estimated to be around €3.5 billion.

The report also discusses the links between REACH and the worker protection legislation that will exist in parallel. Two directives, the Chemical Agents Directive (98/24/EC) and the Carcinogens Directive (2004/37/EC), compel employers to carry out a risk assessment for all chemicals present at the workplace and to take necessary prevention and protection measures.

On 17 November 2005, the European Parliament adopted its first reading of REACH (P6_TA-PROV(2005)0434; P6_PV(2005)11-17), based on a report (A6-0315/2005 (4.8Mb pdf)) by the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.

Some key issues are that the:

- burden of proof lies on industry, obliging employers to provide information on the hazards and risks of chemicals and on risk reduction measures;
- principle of compulsory substitution is guaranteed for 'substances of high concern';
- chemical substances produced at an amount of one to 10 tonnes a year are not covered by testing requirements.

The Council reached political agreement (15168/05 (Presse 333 – 161kb pdf)) on the draft regulation for REACH and establishing a European chemicals agency, and adopted a common position.

The European Commission welcomed the political agreement achieved and expects that REACH will fill the gaps in existing information on the hazardous properties of some 30,000 chemicals, and ensure that the necessary information on the safe use of substances is transmitted along the industrial supply chain, leading to reduced risks for workers, for consumers and for the environment (IP/05/1583 (90Kb pdf)). The formal common position of the Council should be approved under the Austrian Presidency in May 2006 and pave the way for the second reading of the proposal by the European Parliament. The Commission expects the regulation to be enforced by spring 2007. About a year later, the REACH Agency would be operational (*EUROPA Newsletter*, Issue 71, 20 December 2005).

UNICE believes that the common position reached at the Council is a step forward in achieving a reasonable agreement, as it goes halfway towards the fully risk-based approach advocated by UNICE (press release 13 December 2005; position paper 14 September 2005).

ETUC welcomes the political agreement reached but believes that a better balance between economic demands and the health protection of workers could have been achieved. The principle of obligatory substitution, which was included in the first reading in the European Parliament, is lost in the agreement adopted by the Council. This is seen as a significant retreat compared with REACH's initial ambitions in terms of workers' health. The other issue of concern relates to tests on substances produced in low volumes that had already been considerably reduced during its passage through the European Parliament (press release 13 December 2005; press release 18 November 2005).

A special issue of the *HESA* (Health and Safety at Work) *Newsletter* considers the impact of REACH in the workplace.

Machinery Directive

On 18 July 2005, the Council unanimously adopted a common position (1.5Mb pdf) on a harmonised machinery directive. The Commission's Communication (177Kb pdf) states that the Commission supports the common position.

On 15 December 2005, an agreement was reached in the European Parliament to streamline the Machinery Directive (IP/05/1612 (92Kb pdf); P6_TA-PROV(2005)0517; A6-0338/2005). The so-called new approach directive promotes harmonisation through a combination of mandatory health and safety requirements and voluntary harmonised standards. Such directives apply only to products that are intended to be put on the EU market for the first time.

Gender equality in employment and occupation

A key legislative development is the ongoing recasting of Community gender equality legislation. (See last year's review (EU0502AR01) for previous developments.) The Commission proposal (418Kb pdf) for a directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of women and men aims to incorporate seven existing directives into a single coherent directive (see also: SEC(2004) 482 (153Kb pdf)).

On 15 December 2004, the EESC adopted an opinion (112Kb pdf) on the Commission's proposal. The recast process is supported, as it will modernise, clarify and simplify the seven directives into one directive, by reducing the overall length of the texts and incorporating one set of definitions, including direct and indirect discrimination and harassment, and reflecting well established case law.

The European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted an opinion (186Kb pdf) on 1 April 2005 and a report (A6-0176/2005 (524Kb pdf)) on 2 June 2005 requesting comprehensive amendments to the Commission's proposal. The opinion states that it is necessary to reassess some of the basic criteria for achieving equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupation. Regarding pay equity, evaluating jobs by means of a job classification system – based on objective and non-sexist criteria, including guarantees against all forms of discrimination – is considered to be an important tool for achieving a transparent labour market. The opinion emphasises that increased participation in employment depends directly on the possibility of reconciling work and family life. In general, efforts are needed to improve the effectiveness of the measures taken by Member States to ensure improved application of the principles of equal pay and equal treatment.

On 6 July 2005, the European Parliament delivered its first-reading opinion on the proposed recast directive (P6_TA-PROV(2005)0283), and adopted 98 amendments to the Commission's proposal from 2004.

On 25 August 2005, the Commission submitted an amended proposal (183Kb pdf) for a directive on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast version), accepting a number of amendments by the European Parliament in full, and some in spirit, or partially.

The Employment and Social Policy Council reached political agreement on the directive (14878/05 ADD 1 (363Kb pdf)) at the December meeting (15201/05 REV 1 (Presse 336) – 252Kb pdf). The agreed text will be formally adopted as a common position and sent to the Parliament with a view to its second reading. The text of the political agreement has been negotiated with the European Parliament. It is emphasised that the proposal aims at contributing:

‘...to legal certainty and clarity by bringing together in a single text the main provisions existing in this field, as well as reflecting certain developments arising out of well-established case law of the European Court of Justice.’

A key question of the political agreement is the issue of parental leave, which is highlighted as being of prime importance by the European Parliament. A draft statement in relation to parental leave was agreed (14878/05 (113Kb pdf)):

‘The Council shares the European Parliament’s commitment to improving the situation regarding reconciliation between work and private life in order to achieve equality between women and men in working life. It is therefore pleased that the European Commission plans to take up the theme of women’s employment and work–life balance as the central part of its Third Annual Report to Heads of State and Government on equality between women and men, to be presented to the Spring European Council in March 2006.’

In the period June 2004–May 2005, the Commission’s network of legal experts in the fields of employment, social affairs and equality between men and women published a report (113kb pdf) on developments in EU gender equality law. The report provides information on developments in EU legislation, on case law of the ECJ, and at national level in the EU Member States, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, and acceding and candidate countries.

Anti-discrimination law

Several countries have failed to implement Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons, irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. The deadline for the former EU15 countries to transpose this directive was 19 July 2003, while the 10 new Member States had to ensure that their legislation complied with the directive by EU accession on 1 May 2004.

The ECJ ruled that Finland and Luxembourg, Germany (IP/05/502) and Austria (IP/05/543) had breached EU law by failing to transpose the directive fully.

Violence in the workplace

The Commission consulted (63Kb pdf) the European social partners to obtain their opinion regarding the protection of the health and safety of workers at work against all forms of violence in the workplace, including bullying. The Community strategy on health and safety 2002–2006 (210Kb pdf) had announced that the Commission would ‘examine the appropriateness and scope of a Community instrument on bullying and violence at the workplace’.

The consultation emphasises a wide variety of forms of violence in the workplace, ranging from verbal aggression, through various form of harassment, to physical aggression resulting in death or serious injury. All forms of violence in the workplace imply an attack on a person’s dignity, and are likely to constitute a risk to their health and safety. (See 2003–4 and 2004 reviews (EU0406AR01; EU0502AR01) for previous developments and information.)

The consultation refers to the social partners’ joint work programme 2003–2005 (130Kb pdf), which included plans for a seminar aimed at negotiating a voluntary agreement in this area. The document is seen to contribute to this process by providing additional elements for discussion.

Violence in the workplace can have devastating consequences for the well-being and physical and emotional health of workers. The consultation emphasises the result of studies that estimate a 1%–2% fall in productivity due to psychological violence.

The document refers to results of the third *European Working Conditions Survey* (2000) revealing that 9% of workers report having been a victim of intimidation at their workplace. Similar results were found in the 2001 survey on working conditions in the acceding and candidate countries. These data suggest that EU workers seem to be increasingly exposed to violence in the workplace. A Community initiative on this subject would strengthen prevention.

The Commission points to the research conducted by the Foundation on violence in the workplace:

- a specific research project on violence and harassment at work and the report, Preventing violence and harassment in the workplace (summary);
- two events in 2003 concerning violence and harassment in the workplace;
- and the contribution (TN0406TR01) by the European Working Conditions Observatory on the issue.

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work provides comprehensive information on violence in the workplace on its website.

The Commission states that, currently, no specific European legislative provision refers explicitly to violence and bullying at work. The consultation asks for the position of the social partners on the usefulness of an initiative in the field of violence in the workplace, including bullying. The social partners should analyse preventive measures and possible instruments for action and the impact of measures in the area of work organisation.

On 7 February 2006, the European social partners – UNICE, the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (*Union Européenne de l'artisanat et des petites et moyennes entreprises*, UEAPME), the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP) and ETUC – started negotiations on harassment and violence with a view to concluding a voluntary agreement by the end of 2006. UNICE emphasised that it is striving for a practical agreement, helping employers to deal with harassment and violence issues at workplace level (UNICE Headlines No. 2006-05).

Draft directive on services

In 2005, the disputed proposal (425Kb pdf) by the European Commission for a directive on services in the internal market remained on the political agenda. (See last year's review (EU0502AR01) for previous developments.) The key contentious issue is the so-called country-of-origin principle.

The EESC adopted an opinion (160Kb MS Word doc) in February 2005 on the Commission's proposal. The Committee notes that the explanatory memorandum to the proposed directive does not provide any reliable statistical basis to quantify the cross-border provision of services and the cross-border establishment of businesses. Such data should be provided with the assessment report from the Commission.

The EESC makes a series of suggestions for amendment of the draft directive. Regarding the country-of-origin principle, the EESC warns that an immediate application would lead to a watering-down of standards. The Committee recommends a two-stage transition period, and rejects a weakening of existing social protection, wage or safety standards at the workplace as a result of the directive. Member States should still be entitled to lay down employment conditions that would apply in their countries to relevant employees, immigrants or posted workers. As temporary work represents a particularly problematic area, it should be explicitly excluded from the entire field of application of the directive.

The country-of-origin principle, as it stands, involves the risk of systems competing with one another, thereby weakening employment, environmental and consumer protection standards, given that differing legal, welfare and healthcare systems continue to exist within the EU.

In April 2005, the European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) proposed the exclusion of labour relations and services of general interest from the directive.

In May 2005, the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL) voted in favour of extensive amendments (e.g. PE357.591 (345Kb pdf); PE 359.873v01-00 (467Kb pdf); PE 360.094v02-00 (834Kb pdf); PE 360.093v02-00 (584Kb pdf); PE 360.092v02-00 (600Kb pdf); PE 360.091v02-00 (624Kb pdf)), including the reversal of the country-of-origin principle.

The justifications of the EMPL draft opinion (345Kb pdf) state that the directive should not deal with the field of labour law and social security. The country-of-origin principle cannot be the basic principle in the absence of a minimum level of harmonisation.

ETUC criticised the vote of the European Parliament's IMCO committee on 22 November 2005 on the proposed directive. Although labour law is to be excluded from the directive, ETUC insists on the exclusion of services of general interest, the exclusion of certain sensitive sectors such as private security and temporary work agencies, and the withdrawal or fundamental modification of the country-of-origin principle. (*ETUC Newsletter* No. 3-2005 (270kb pdf))

The European Parliament considered the services directive on 14 February 2006 in its first reading (press service 15 February 2006). On 16 February, the Parliament adopted a legislative resolution on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on services in the internal market (P6_TA-PROV(2006)0061; A6-0409/2005 (2Mb pdf); press service 16 February 2006; Newsletter - Issue 75, 23 February 2006; Background – Directive on services)

The key issues of the revised proposal are that:

- the 'country-of-origin principle' has been replaced by the 'freedom to provide services principle';
- labour law is excluded from the scope of the draft directive;
- several sectors, in particular services of general interest, have been excluded from the adopted text;
- temporary agencies are excluded from the scope of the draft directive.

ETUC declared the outcome of the first reading as a 'major victory for European workers' (press release 16 February 2006).

UNICE emphasised that the only positive achievement is with regard to the freedom of establishment. It rejects the exclusion of labour law, and the exclusion of many sectors and of temporary agencies from the scope of the directive (press release 16 February 2006).

Portability of supplementary pension rights

The European Commission proposed a directive on improving the portability of supplementary pension rights (SEC(2005) 1293 (174Kb pdf) preliminary version; Annex (468Kb pdf); IP/05/1329 (73Kb pdf); MEMO/05/384). The Commission presented its proposal to the Employment and Social Policy Council at the December meeting (15201/05 REV 1 (Presse 336 – 252Kb pdf)).

The proposal for a directive aims at reducing the obstacles to mobility within and between Member States in relation to restrictive supplementary pension scheme provisions that limit the opportunities for mobile workers to build up sufficient pension rights. Key obstacles concern:

- the conditions of acquisition of pension rights (such as different qualifying periods before which workers acquire rights);
- the conditions of preservation of dormant person rights (such as pension rights losing value over time);
- transferability of acquired rights.

The proposal also aims to ensure that workers receive appropriate information in the event of professional mobility and to improve the information given to workers.

Initial work on the examination of the proposal by Member State experts, at the initiative of the UK Presidency, showed that, while the objective was welcomed in itself, extensive technical work would be required on this proposal, due primarily to the diversity of situations in the various Member States.

ETUC concludes that the Commission's proposals can contribute to a reduction but not to a removal of obstacles to freedom of movement, and that the proposed directive establishes only some common principles (press release).

UNICE supports the aim of facilitating cross-border labour mobility within the EU but warns that the positive impact on cross-border mobility is uncertain due to major tax obstacles, which are the biggest problem for cross-border portability of supplementary pensions. UNICE is concerned that the Commission's proposal could lead to an increase of costs in operating supplementary pension systems (UNICE@News, December 2005).

Social Agenda

The European Commission presented a Communication (151Kb pdf) on a new Social Agenda on 9 February 2005 (IP/05/152 (77Kb pdf); MEMO/05/41 (97Kb pdf); Social Agenda 2005–2010 (2.4Mb pdf)). The review of the Social Agenda is regarded as vital in promoting the social dimension of economic growth, and it supports the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy. The Social Agenda presents key measures under two major headings covered by the Commission's strategic objectives 2005–2009 (191Kb pdf): employment, and equal opportunities and inclusion.

With regard to employment, both the quantity and quality of jobs and the productivity of work, as well as the issue of economic migration, need to be addressed. The Commission intends to adopt a Green Paper on the development of labour law, which will analyse current trends in new work patterns and the role of labour law in tackling these developments. An initiative is planned concerning the protection of personal data of workers and a new strategy on health and safety at work for the period 2007–2012. In addition, efforts to remove obstacles to labour mobility have been announced.

Among the measures pertaining to equal opportunities and inclusion are:

- modernising social protection;
- an initiative on minimum income schemes;
- initiatives on integration of people excluded from the labour market;
- initiatives on promoting diversity and non-discrimination;
- measures to tackle the situation of people with disabilities.

Despite a long-standing tradition of determined action in the area of gender equality and the progress made, the Social Agenda 2005–2010 states that 'significant problems remain in areas such as the gender pay gap, women's access to and participation in the labour market, training, career advancement, reconciliation of family and working life, or participation in decision making' ((COM2005) 33 final, 147 Kb pdf, p.10).

The Commission will draw up a communication on future policy developments, proposing action aimed at tackling these weaknesses.

The EESC adopted an opinion (140Kb pdf) on 13 July 2005. In the view of the EESC, the Social Agenda does not, in all respects, meet the special expectations associated with the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy. The committee criticises the fact that, in contrast to the previous social agenda, the new agenda is not guided by a belief in the role of social policy as a productive factor. The EESC points to the report (555Kb pdf) by the High Level Group on the Future of Social Policy (see last year's review (EU0502AR01) and draws attention to the fact that European countries scoring high in the competitiveness ranking of the World Economic Forum all have a high level of investment in social policy and social protection, showing high employment and low poverty rates.

The EESC expresses disapproval over the fact that the new Social Agenda stipulates fewer concrete measures than did its predecessor. The political direction in which the proposals are heading is not

always clear. The Committee expects the strategic framework to be complemented by concrete measures and calls for an action programme covering the next five years.

Lisbon Strategy mid-term review

On 2 February 2005, the Commission launched a revamped Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs. A Communication to the Spring European Council, *Working together for growth and jobs – A new start for the Lisbon Strategy* (491Kb pdf) (IP/05/130 (85Kb pdf); MEMO/05/34 (81Kb pdf)), presents policy recommendations for the mid-term review of the so-called Lisbon Agenda. The Commission warns that the Lisbon Strategy is not on track to deliver the expected results.

Key issues as part of the objective of creating more and better jobs are:

- revising the European Employment Strategy in 2005 as an integral part of the new Lisbon Strategy;
- increasing efforts to attract more people into employment and raising employment levels through active labour market policies and appropriate incentives;
- decreasing unemployment;
- exploiting the huge potential of women in the labour market;
- ensuring the commitment of the social partners to further eliminate the gender pay gap;
- tackling high youth unemployment and high drop-out rates from education;
- keeping older workers in employment for longer;
- providing better and affordable childcare facilities;
- enabling legal migration to avoid shortages of specific skills.

On 2 March 2005, the Commission presented an action plan (300Kb pdf), including recommendations to Member States for inclusion in their national Lisbon programme.

The Spring Council debated the mid-term review of the Lisbon Agenda and welcomed the Commission's communication (Presidency conclusions (242Kb pdf)).

A working document of the Luxembourg EU Presidency provided a different view on relaunching the Lisbon process and refocusing on growth and jobs. The document discusses a 'Package of Actions' addressed to the target groups – young people, job seekers, families, people wanting to adapt their skills to a changing labour market, workers in industrial sectors, entrepreneurs, innovators and researchers – and includes a number of concrete actions for each of the target groups.

The March EPSCO Council (for Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs) 6479/05 (Presse 38 (242Kb pdf)) pointed out that the strategy on economic growth and quality job creation must be combined with the promotion of social objectives. It also confirmed the open method of coordination. The Council emphasises that the employment aspect of the Lisbon Strategy must

concentrate on four action priorities: attracting more people to and keeping them in the labour market; increasing the adaptive capacities of workers and undertakings; investing more – and more effectively – in human capital and making lifelong education and training a reality; and ensuring the effective implementation of reforms through better governance.

In a working document on the future of the Lisbon Strategy from the gender perspective (150Kb pdf), the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality expressed the view that the proposed measures of the revised Lisbon Strategy must be assessed in the context of fundamental persistent gender discrimination. A chapter is omitted on the subject of the gender dimension and the impact of the proposed measures on gender equality, with particular regard to the lifecycle approach to work.

The future of the Lisbon Strategy from a gender perspective was again the issue of a report (185Kb pdf) by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, adopted on 8 December 2005. In view of achieving the Lisbon objectives, the report emphasises the great economic potential in involving more women in employment, and expresses concern at the continuing disparities between women and men, especially regarding the pay gap, access to employment, segregation in the labour market, and access to lifelong learning and training.

On 9 February 2005, the EESC adopted an opinion (8.2Mb pdf) with recommendations for the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. The committee emphasises that priority should also be given to promoting employability, overcoming skills deficits, and integrating disadvantaged groups in the labour market, instead of calling for more and more labour market reforms. Full employment in Europe must be tied to good wages, social security and high standards of labour law (press release 22/2005 (47Kb MS Word doc)).

The European social partners support the Commission's Lisbon Strategy (IP/05/353 (66Kb pdf)). On 15 March 2005, they released a Joint declaration on the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy (67Kb pdf) (EU0504201F).

European Employment Strategy

The European Employment Strategy (EES) is the employment pillar of the Lisbon Strategy and is based on three targets: full employment; productivity and quality at work; and social and regional cohesion.

In March, the European Council endorsed the new streamlined approach to the growth and jobs strategy. The Commission's Communication, *Working together for growth and jobs – A new start for the Lisbon Strategy* (see above), calls for an integrated approach to employment and economic policies (IP/05/130 (85Kb pdf); MEMO/05/34 (81Kb pdf); SEC(2005) 193 (190Kb pdf); COM(2005) 97 final (224Kb pdf)).

In the working document (108Kb pdf) on the 2005 employment guidelines, the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs emphasises the need to give priority to four categories whose participation rates are 'abnormally low': women, elderly people, young people, and persons with disabilities. The document seeks to promote a new culture that will

encourage the sharing of family responsibilities. It also underlines quality of employment, including measures such as training or the problem of workplace accidents.

‘Vocational qualifications, promotion and career development, equality between men and women and non-discrimination are other areas which should be given special consideration, together with health and safety at the workplace.’

In July, the European Commission presented a Communication, *Cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs: community strategic guidelines, 2007–2013* (1.9Mb pdf).

The *Integrated guidelines for growth and jobs* (244Kb pdf), published in June, cover the employment guidelines and the recommendation on the broad economic policy guidelines. These integrated guidelines include the new set of eight employment guidelines, which should be fully reviewed every three years (IP/05/850 (95Kb pdf); EU0504203F).

The guidelines highlight three priorities:

- attracting and retaining more people in employment and modernising social protection systems;
- improving adaptability of workers and enterprises, and the flexibility of the labour market;
- increasing investment in human capital through better education and skills.

In January 2006, the Commission presented the first annual progress report (216Kb pdf) (IP/06/71 (111Kb pdf); Annexes (646Kb pdf); Summary (62Kb pdf); MEMO/06/22 (211Kb pdf); MEMO/06/23 (129Kb pdf)) in line with the revised Lisbon Strategy (SEC (2005) 622/2 (212Kb pdf)).

Community programme for employment and social solidarity

The *Community programme for employment and social solidarity*, ‘Progress’ (275Kb pdf), aims at implementing EU objectives in employment and social affairs, and at contributing to the Lisbon Strategy (Article 1). The five sections of the programme are:

- employment – support for the implementation of the European Employment Strategy;
- social protection and inclusion – support for the method of open coordination; pensions and health and long-term care are included in social integration;
- working conditions – support for activities to improve the working environment and conditions, including health and safety at work;
- anti-discrimination and diversity – support for the implementation of the principle of non-discrimination and efforts to promote the mainstreaming of anti-discrimination in all EU strategies;
- gender equality – support for the application of the principle of gender equality and the promotion of gender mainstreaming in all EU strategies (PE 353.738v01-00 (145Kb pdf)).

The programme will replace the four current specific action programmes. In the proposal (see also: SEC(2004) 936 (248Kb pdf)) for the programme, the Commission emphasises explicit objectives such as a high level of employment and of social protection, improved working conditions, anti-discrimination, gender equality, free movement of workers and social dialogue, without which the Lisbon policy goals will not become a reality. 'Progress' is considered an important instrument for implementing the Social Policy Agenda.

The financial breakdown in Article 17 reveals an uneven distribution of the financial framework between the different sections for which the following lower limits are set:

- employment – 21%;
- social protection and inclusion – 28%;
- working conditions – 8%;
- anti-discrimination and diversity – 23%;
- gender equality – 8%.

The European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) expressed its opinion on the Commission's proposal in a working document (145Kb pdf). The committee underlined its opinion 'that the appropriation earmarked for Progress does not represent any increase in the appropriations so far set aside for these areas; it considers therefore that the financial framework of Progress must be increased if the European Union is really serious about implementing the Lisbon Strategy and the Social Policy Agenda'.

The EMPL committee further questions whether the allocation to the individual sections is appropriate. In the case of gender equality, the Commission cut the funding.

The Employment and Social Policy Council (6479/05 (242Kb pdf)) reached a partial general approach at the March meeting on a draft Decision (275Kb pdf) establishing the Progress programme.

An opinion (128Kb pdf) of the EESC, adopted on 6 April 2006, questions the Commission's plans to maintain the budgetary status quo in the policy areas covered by Progress, considering the broad scope of the programme. The EESC strongly recommends providing adequate resources in the projected budget for Progress. The Committee asks for specific clarification and justification of the proposed division of funding between the different sections, not least as the gender equality section receives a considerably smaller appropriation. The EESC argues against restricting resources in the sphere of equality and equal opportunities policy in view of the Lisbon objective on female employment, the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market, wage discrimination and gender mainstreaming.

Comprehensive amendments (PE 353.740v01-00 (263Kb pdf); PE 357.554v01-00 (130Kb pdf)) were requested by the EMPL committee and in the opinion (219Kb pdf) of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. The European Parliament adopted 72 amendments in the first reading on 6 September 2005 (11954/05 (197Kb pdf)). In October, the European Commission presented an amended proposal (209Kb pdf).

Common European area of knowledge

By a large majority, the EESC adopted an exploratory opinion on *The road to the European knowledge-based society* on 14 December 2005. The opinion suggests that the Member States and the EU institutions commit themselves, beyond 2010, to establishing a ‘common European area of knowledge’. This is seen as an important step in relaunching the Lisbon Strategy and in underpinning the European model of society. The common area of knowledge must be based on well-defined targets, benchmarks, timetables and clear responsibilities. The Committee calls for an overall and comprehensive approach, a long-term perspective and determined policies. The social partners should strive for agreements to promote the knowledge society.

The EESC reiterates its call for a charter on lifelong learning to be implemented at all levels, as lifelong learning is key to a knowledge society. The Committee emphasises that,

‘In order to restore confidence in the European project, policies must first of all be refocused on their original aims of economic and social progress and improving working and living conditions. ... Central to such a reorientation are policies to achieve sustainable growth, create more and better jobs and raise real incomes through the realisation of a knowledge society based upon human resources, learning, research and innovation...Enterprises are in a key position for this reorientation.’

The opinion discusses a number of important shortcomings of the Lisbon Strategy:

- the European Commission plays only a minor role;
- it is too abstract;
- it is a top-down process.

The EESC proposes to achieve the Lisbon objective through increased European cooperation in learning, innovation and research. It emphasises that there must be adequate conditions for lifelong learning, giving everybody the opportunity to participate, and rejects the suggestion of a knowledge society as being only for an elite group who are convinced of the benefits of new technologies.

High quality basic education and quality childcare facilities are fundamental to the objective, ensuring equal learning opportunities in the earliest phases of life.

The Committee emphasises policy requirements to implement the common area of knowledge. These are increased funding, improved governance, and the participation and contribution of major stakeholders.

The Integrated Guidelines set down by the Council in March 2005 are criticised as being too fragmented and not reflecting cohesion between the areas for reforms. The EESC suggests that the Council should consider a reformulation to integrate the different policy initiatives that can establish a common area of knowledge.

The opinion underlines the potential contribution of social dialogue, the social partners and collective bargaining, and emphasises that businesses are key actors in creating more and better jobs in the common area of knowledge.

The Committee recommends four priority proposals: the creation of a positive macroeconomic policy framework; a framework and resources for lifelong learning; user-friendly innovation and technology policies; and social protection that facilitates the transition to a knowledge society.

Action programme on lifelong learning

In February 2005, the EESC adopted an opinion (128Kb pdf) on establishing an integrated action programme on lifelong learning against the background of a Commission proposal (COM(2004) 474 final (396Kb pdf)). The Commission's proposal is generally assessed as positive but the EESC suggests a few modifications. In particular, there should be a single approach to education, training and youth policies, since lifelong learning is a single process from nursery school through to retirement and after.

Education and training 2010

A conclusion (103Kb pdf) by the Council on education and training, in the framework of the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy, emphasises the key role of the knowledge society. In terms of the development of human capital, the Council recommends focusing reform and investment on the key areas for the knowledge-based society, making lifelong learning a reality, and establishing a European area of education and training.

A Council conclusion on new indicators in education and training (69Kb pdf) recognises a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks to monitor performance and progress as a contribution to the Lisbon Strategy and beyond.

Training and employability

The Luxembourg EU Presidency, in cooperation with the Foundation, organised a conference on training and employability (programme). The conference presented the Foundation's topic report, *Impact of training on people's employability*, based on data from the European Working Conditions Surveys and data from national working conditions surveys provided by the European Working Conditions Observatory.

The conference investigated the relationship between training and employability, with a particular focus on fixed-term and temporary agency workers, and presented experiences at European, national and company level (conference report).

Framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass)

The European Parliament adopted a legislative resolution (40Kb pdf) on the Council common position (311Kb pdf) for adopting a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single Community framework for transparency of qualifications and competences.

Health and safety at work strategy

In the Communication on the Social Agenda (147Kb pdf) (COM(2005)33 final), the Commission announced a new health and safety at work strategy for the period 2007–2012. This new strategy should focus on new and emerging risks, safeguarding minimum levels of protection, and on the inclusion of workers not adequately covered. The evaluation of the current programme should support the identification of these new situations. There should be increased efforts to monitor the transposition and implementation of legislation.

Trade unions want the strategy to focus on two major risks: musculoskeletal disorders and chemicals (*HESA Newsletter 27*, June 2005 (1.9Mb pdf)).

On 25 November 2005, the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work (EU0310NU01) adopted its first annual activity report (697Kb pdf).

Green paper on mental health

The European Commission presented a Green Paper (259Kb pdf) on improving the mental health of the population. Workplaces are mentioned as being crucial for preventive action. Good mental health is considered to increase work capacity and productivity, whereas unfavourable working conditions lead to poor mental health, sick leave and increased cost. Based on data from the third European Working Conditions Survey, 28% of employees in Europe report stress at work. Preventive interventions to reduce stressors in the work environment are seen as increasing health and economic development. Some successful actions identified through EU projects are:

- a participative workplace and management culture;
- the identification of mental ill-health among the workforce;
- working arrangements that match workers' needs (e.g. flexible working hours).

Framework Strategy on Gender Equality

The final year of the Framework Strategy on Gender Equality, established in 2000, was 2005. The Commission had proposed (233Kb pdf) extending the programme for one year and announced plans to draw up a communication on future developments in 2006 (Work programme for 2005 (470Kb pdf)).

The European Commission's Advisory committee on equal opportunities for women and men submitted an opinion on key elements in future EU strategies on gender equality (122Kb pdf), and

an opinion on the forthcoming Commission Communication on future developments for equality between women and men (roadmap) (166Kb pdf).

Demographic change and worklife cycle

On 16 March 2005, the European Commission presented a Green Paper (309Kb pdf), *Confronting demographic change: A new solidarity between the generations* (IP/05/322 (75Kb pdf); MEMO/05/96 (96Kb pdf)). The Green Paper and the report (555Kb pdf) by the High Level Group on the future of social policy examine the worklife cycle. Extending working life refers to both entry and exit of the labour market. The Green Paper provides statistics on a predicted decline in the working age population (15–64 years) by 20.8 million people between 2005 and 2030 (EU0511NU02).

A contribution by the Foundation to the European Commission's Green Paper uses its research knowledge base to present ideas for policy and practice, in response to the issues raised in the Green Paper. It discusses the role of flexible organisation of working time and age diversity in companies.

In a position paper (5 July 2005), UNICE warns that the Green Paper approaches the issue of demographic change primarily from the perspective of individuals and does not take sufficient account of companies' needs. The Green Paper is seen to be biased by over-emphasising work–life balance policies. UNICE supports the inter-generational and the working life-cycle approach.

The ETUC Executive Committee adopted a resolution on the debate initiated by the Green Paper. The resolution warns that the figures presented in the Paper must be interpreted with caution. It points at other factors influencing demographic growth and demographic decline, and feels that some of these factors are not adequately addressed in the Green Paper. The first example is the issue of reconciling work, family and social life. Further issues are working and living conditions, which are key determining factors. ETUC calls for an integrated approach, which must focus on lifelong training, promoting quality employment, and negotiated adaptability of working conditions.

Youth

On 21 February 2005, the Youth Ministers of the EU Member States adopted conclusions (91Kb pdf) concerning the position of young people within the framework of the Lisbon Strategy. The European Council of 22 and 23 March 2005 adopted the European Youth Pact as one of the instruments to achieve the Lisbon objectives of more growth and jobs in Europe. The Youth Pact aims to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans, and to facilitate the reconciliation of working life and family life (Annex I of the Presidency conclusions; EU0511NU02).

At the end of May, the European Commission adopted a communication (190Kb pdf) (IP/05/631 (83Kb pdf)) on youth policies (EU0506201N), as a follow-up to the European Youth Pact. Some of the key actions in terms of employment are to reduce youth unemployment, build employment pathways, and develop personalised action plans, with job search assistance, guidance and training.

A resolution (91Kb pdf) of the Council, and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, addresses the concerns of young people in Europe and the implementation of the European Youth Pact.

UNICE emphasises the importance of embedding specific actions targeting young people in a truly intergenerational approach, in order to avoid a negative effect on other categories of workers (Position Paper, 6 July 2005).

Mobility

The European Commission has named 2006 as the European Year of Workers' Mobility. (IP/05/817 (64Kb pdf); MEMO/05/229 (157Kb pdf); EU0508202N; conference launch) A new Commission website provides information on questions related to mobility.

Equality and non-discrimination

The European Commission presented a proposal (308Kb pdf) for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007). A Commission staff working document (271Kb pdf) provides additional background information on the state of policies in the field of equality and non-discrimination. The Commission's proposal followed on from the Green Paper on Equality and non-discrimination in an enlarged EU (3.2Mb pdf), adopted in May 2004. (See last year's review (EU0502AR01) for previous developments.)

In a Position Paper (19 October 2005), UNICE emphasises its commitment to equal opportunities and points to the important initiatives in European social dialogue. However, it rejects any additional EU anti-discrimination legislation, and opposes any proposals for increased monitoring and data collection that impose new requirements at company level.

A Communication from the Commission, *Non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all – A framework strategy* (167Kb pdf), develops an approach to promote non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all in the EU. This proposal for a framework strategy aims at complementing the current legal framework and ensuring effective legal protection against discrimination, at mainstreaming non-discrimination, promoting good practice, and raising awareness.

A comparative analysis, *Developing anti-discrimination law in Europe* (1.3Mb pdf), by the European network of legal experts in the non-discrimination field investigates the situation in the EU25.

Migration

On 11 January 2005, the European Commission adopted a Green Paper on an EU approach to managing economic migration (186Kb pdf) (IP/05/16 (83Kb pdf)) (see last year's review (EU0502AR01) for previous developments). This launched a process of in-depth discussion over the year on the most appropriate Community rules for admitting economic immigration. The responses from the European Economic and Social Committee (opinion 9 June 2005 (137Kb pdf)), the European Parliament (A6-0286/2005 (233Kb pdf), UNICE (Position Paper 13 May 2005) and

ETUC (resolution; response (147Kb pdf)) show general support for a common EU policy on economic immigration, but differing views on the policy approaches. A public hearing hosted by the Commission (IP/05/724 (66Kb pdf); MEMO/05/206 (73Kb pdf)) in June offered the stakeholders the opportunity to present their view on the EU approach to managing economic migration.

The Commission presented a series of communications on the issue in the second half of the year:

- monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the third countries in the field of the fight against illegal immigration (154Kb pdf) (28 July 2005) (Annexes (280Kb pdf));
- a common agenda for integration (207Kb pdf) (1 September 2005);
- migration and development (287Kb pdf) (1 September 2005);
- Green Paper on the future of the European migration network (164Kb pdf) (28 November 2005);
- priority actions for responding to the challenges of migration (135Kb pdf) (30 November 2005).

The European Council considered the question of adopting a global approach to migration at its meeting on 15–16 December 2005 (15914/05 (199Kb pdf); EU05122004F).

As announced at the public hearing in June, the Commission presented a Policy plan on legal migration (322Kb pdf) at the end of the year (IP/05/1664 (70Kb pdf)). This Communication builds on the existing framework, and lists actions and legislative initiatives that the Commission intends to take within a coherent development of EU legal migration policy. The Commission proposes a general framework directive and four specific directives:

- Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of highly skilled workers;
- Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of seasonal workers;
- Directive on the procedures regulating the entry, temporary stay and residence of Intra-Corporate Transferees (ICT);
- Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of remunerated trainees.

Framework for the open coordination of social protection and inclusion policies

In December 2005, the Commission presented a Communication (166Kb pdf) on a new framework for the open coordination of social protection and inclusion policies in the EU.

European Working Conditions Survey

The European Working Conditions Surveys (EWCS) provide an overview of trends in working conditions and quality of work throughout Europe. Fieldwork for the Foundation's fourth *European Working Conditions Survey* (2005) was carried out during September and November 2005. The survey involves face-to-face interviews with 1,000 individuals in each of the EU25 countries (600 in five smaller Member States). In total, over 23,000 workers were interviewed. Further survey documentation (including the questionnaire) gives information on the survey processes, including a detailed quality assurance framework.

Community statistics on income and living conditions

The European Community Household Panel (ECHP), an annual survey that came to an end in 2001 after eight years in operation, has been replaced by the Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) survey. A first set of data from EU-SILC covering the EU25 will be available in December 2006.

A working paper on the continuity of indicators during the transition between ECHP and EU-SILC (1.8Mb pdf) examines the transition and its impact, as there are considerable differences in the design of the surveys. The ECHP was a pure panel survey, i.e. the sample of people selected for the first year of the survey was followed up in the following annual surveys. The cross-sectional and longitudinal data were gathered in the same survey and were collected and processed at the same time.

The EU-SILC will provide two types of annual data – cross-sectional and longitudinal – that will be treated according to different timetables. This will improve timeliness as the longitudinal dimension takes more time in data production.

The European Commission presented a proposal (168Kb pdf) for a regulation concerning EU-SILC. It refers to the European Parliament and Council regulation on SILC, and specifies particular conditions for Member States regarding the implementation of the survey in their countries.

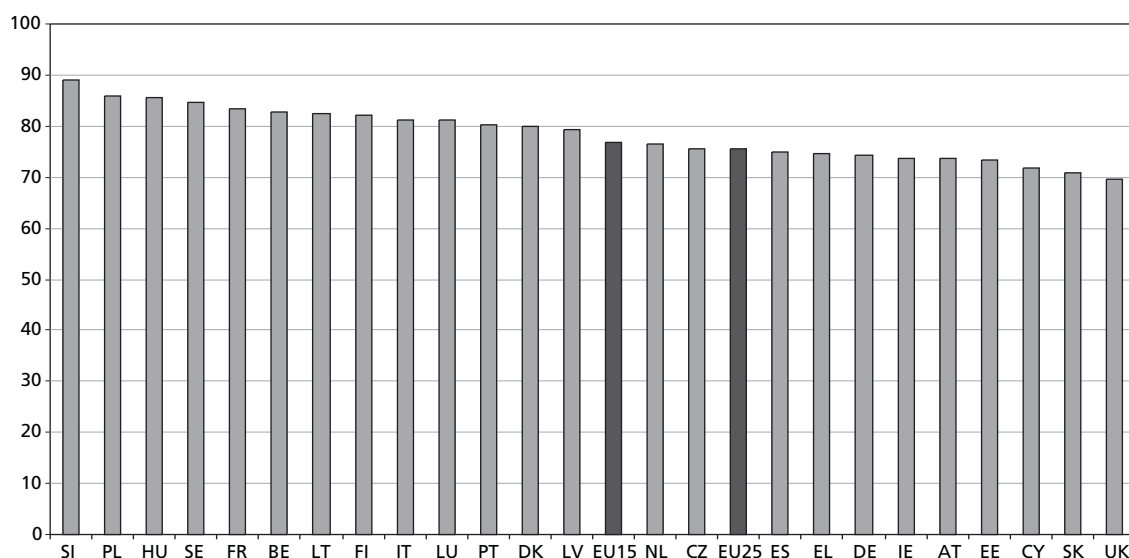
Structure of Earnings Survey 2002

The Structure of Earnings Survey (SES) is conducted every four years and provides data on gross earnings in Europe. It supplies detailed information on the level and structure of remuneration of employees, and individual characteristics. A Eurostat publication outlines the main results (697Kb pdf) of the 2002 survey. The survey provides micro-data on employees in enterprises with at least 10 employees in industry and services (NACE C to K).

The data reveal significant differences in average gross hourly earnings between the EU15 and the new Member States (NMS) across all economic activities. An analysis of average gross hourly, monthly and annual earnings shows that the services sector tends to pay higher than industry does. In the NMS, the number of hours paid per month tends to be higher than in the EU15.

The report provides a first look at the gender pay gap. In all sectors investigated, the average hourly earnings for women are uniformly below those of men. The ratio of women's earnings to men's earnings is higher in the NMS than in the EU15, i.e. the pay gap is smaller (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Women's earnings as a proportion of men's earnings, 2002



Note: Gross hourly earnings, by sex, NACE C–K, 2002 (%).

Source: Eurostat, Statistics in focus, Population and social conditions 12/2005

Minimum wages

The Eurostat overview on minimum wages (287Kb pdf) reveals major differences in the statutory national monthly minimum wage in 2005 in the 18 EU Member States within the EU25 that have such regulations. In most countries, the proportion of full-time employed women on the minimum wage was higher than the corresponding proportion for men. In 2003, the minimum wage was less than 50% of average monthly gross earnings in industry and services in the majority of the countries for which data are available. (See last year's review (EU0406AR01) for previous developments.)

Working poverty

A Eurostat study on in-work poverty (370Kb pdf) outlines methodological approaches to measuring working poverty at EU level, and examines the incidence and distribution of poverty based on data from the ECHP (EU0512NU03). Further details are outlined below under trends in the workplace.

Harmonised European Time Use Surveys

A working paper on comparable time use statistics (438Kb pdf) provides methodological information and data from 10 countries that closely followed the Guidelines on Harmonised European Time Use Surveys (1.9Mb pdf) in their national time use surveys. Time use surveys provide an insight into opportunities to reconcile working and non-working life, and data about the division of paid and household work between women and men.

Lifelong learning

A Eurostat publication focuses on lifelong learning (259Kb pdf), using as a basis the 2003 Eurostat Labour Force Survey ad hoc module on lifelong learning among the 25–64 year old population. The data differentiate between formal education, non-formal education and informal learning. Some 42% of the EU population participated in some form of education, training or learning activity over the 12 months preceding the survey. Participation rates vary significantly between the countries, ranging from 12% in Hungary and 17% in Greece, to 82% in Luxembourg and Slovenia, and 89% in Austria. Further significant differences exist between age groups, varying between 50% participation rates for 25–34 year olds and 30% participation rates for 55–64 year olds.

Two further Eurostat publications provide key statistics (314Kb pdf) and data (16Mb pdf) on education.

Currently, the third wave of the Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) is in preparation and will be conducted in 2006, with 2005 as the reference year. The CVTS 3 will have an extended scope and will include initial vocational training (participant numbers and total costs). A revised section on qualitative questions aims at developing an indicator on 'enterprise professionalism in the pursuit and management of their vocational training activities'. Although microfirms (those with less than 10 employees) are excluded, some participating countries will conduct pilot projects on this category in the CVTS 3.

In preparation for a future CVTS 4, a classification of training activities differentiating between specific categories is being developed that would include all learning opportunities at work, i.e. formal (such as initial vocational training), non-formal (such as continuing vocational training), and informal training (such as conference attendance, quality circles, etc) (See also EWCO Training and employability – Conference report).

The European Parliament adopted a position, at first reading, on 23 February 2005 on statistics relating to vocational training in enterprises (84Kb pdf). Lifelong learning is considered as 'a key element in developing and promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce'. The proposal emphasises that training at the workplace and during working hours is a crucial dimension of lifelong learning. Comparable statistical data on enterprise training are seen as essential in contributing to the development of lifelong learning strategies, and the following information will be collected:

- training policy and strategies of enterprises in developing the competences of their workforce;
- management, organisation and form of CVT;
- role of social partners in ensuring all aspects of CVT;
- access to CVT, its volume and content, in relation to economic activity and enterprise size;
- specific CVT measures of enterprises to improve ICT skills of their workforce;
- effects of public measures on CVT in enterprises;
- equal opportunities to access CVT, particularly in terms of sex and age;

- specific CVT measures for groups that are disadvantaged in the labour market;
- vocational training measures aimed at different types of employment contract;
- expenditure on CVT;
- evaluation and monitoring procedures of enterprises with regard to CVT.

The Task Force on Adult Education Survey presented a report with a proposal for a European Union Adult Education Survey (3.3Mb pdf). The survey should cover all types of learning activities (formal, non-formal and informal), according to the EU definition of lifelong learning.

On 6 December 2005, the Commission presented a proposal for the production and development of statistics on education and lifelong learning (246Kb pdf). The aim is to establish a framework for all current and foreseeable activities in the field of lifelong learning statistics, with the exception of vocational training in enterprises (covered by the CVTS). Lifelong learning is defined as ‘all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective’.

Gender gaps in the reconciliation between work and family

A Eurostat report based on European Labour Force Survey data from 2003 reveals remarkable gender gaps (305Kb pdf) in the reconciliation between work and family life. The employment participation of women aged 20–49 years and the amount of time worked are closely linked to the number and age of their children. The employment rate of women in this age group is 60% when they have children under 12 years, compared with 75% when they do not. In contrast, the employment rate for men in this age group is 91% when they have children under 12 years, and 86% for men without children. The report provides information on the impact of indicators, such as employment rates by age of the youngest child, part-time work by number of children, employment rates by level of education and number of children, and the organisation of work of couples with or without children.

Migration

On 14 September 2005, the European Commission presented a proposal for a regulation on Community statistics on migration and international protection (154Kb pdf). The proposal outlines a breakdown of employment-related data such as employment status, occupation, sector, level of education and training.

EU Labour Force Survey

The Eurostat publication, *Principal results of the European Labour Force Survey, 2004* (290Kb pdf), provides an overview of key results. Quarterly reports on results of the survey also highlight particular aspects of employment (Statistics in focus 1/2005 (493Kb pdf); 3/2005 (317Kb pdf); 6/2005 (363Kb pdf); 16/2005 (322Kb pdf); 20/2005 (165Kb pdf)).

An overview report (2Mb pdf) by Eurostat on the EU Labour Force Survey describes the main characteristics of the national surveys.

Work-related health monitoring in Europe

The report, *Indicators for work-related health monitoring in Europe* (622Kb pdf), is based on the Work health project, which is funded in part by the European Commission and aimed at establishing monitoring indicators in Europe from a public health perspective.

EWCO survey data reports

The European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO) continues to produce a series of survey data reports, extending its original comparative analysis of 18 national working conditions surveys. The report *Quality in work and employment* (EU0502SR01) analysed survey data at EU level on the key dimensions for the promotion of quality of work and employment, as outlined in the Foundation paper on quality of work and employment in Europe.

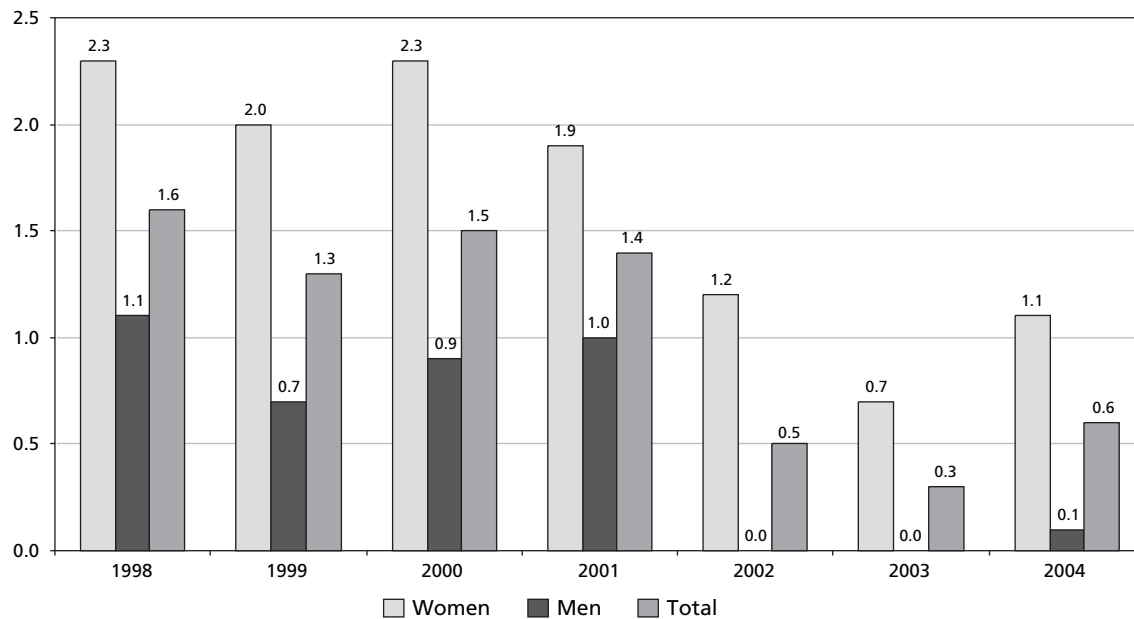
In 2005, the following national survey data reports were published:

- *Working time flexibility in Austria* (AT0511SR01);
- *Working environment risks and other job-related stress factors in Austria* (AT0503SR01);
- *National Working Conditions Survey, Bulgaria* (BG0509SR01);
- *Quality of working life in the Czech Republic* (CZ0502SR01);
- *Working and employment conditions in Germany* (DE0503SR01);
- *Trends for risk factors in the Danish work environment* (DK0512SR01);
- *Working conditions improving in Estonia* (EE0501SR01);
- *Quality of life in the Spanish workplace* (ES0507SR01);
- *Quality of work in Italy survey, 2002* (IT0503SR01);
- *Working conditions in Portugal* (PT0503SR01);
- *Workplace employment practices in Britain survey, 2004* (UK0511SR01).

Employment performance

Figure 2 reveals a decline in employment growth in the EU25 between 1998 and 2003, and a slight increase from 2003 to 2004. The development differs between women and men. In all years, employment growth is considerably higher for women than for men. In 2002 and 2003, there was no employment growth for men, and in 2004, the increase was only 0.1%.

Figure 2 Employment growth, by sex, EU25, 1998–2004 (%)

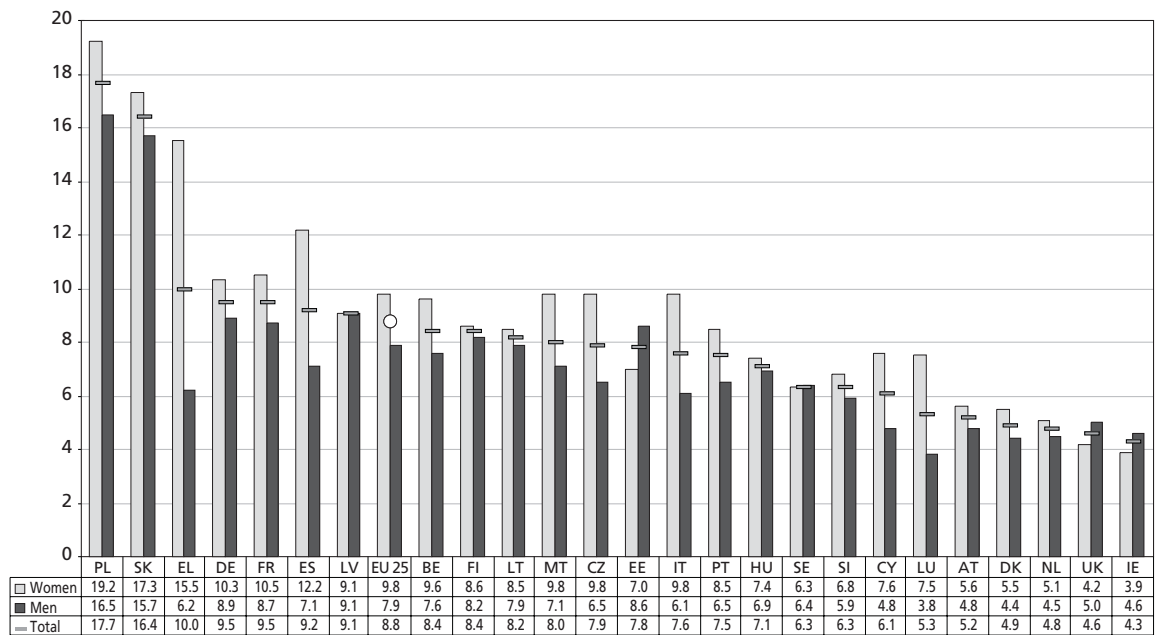


Note: Annual percentage change in employed population.
Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

In 2005, the unemployment rate was 8.8% in the EU25 (Figure 3). Countries with the highest unemployment rates are Poland (17.7%), Slovakia (16.4%), Greece (10.0%) and Germany (9.5%); those with the lowest rates are Ireland (4.3%), the UK (4.6%) and the Netherlands (4.8%). The unemployment rate of women is above the rate of men across the EU25, except in Estonia, Sweden, the UK and Ireland.

Figure 4 shows the long-term unemployment rates in the EU25 for 2004. Long-term unemployment is defined as unemployment of 12 months and more. For the EU25, the rate is 4.1% of the total active population: 5.5% for women and 3.6% for men. Countries with the highest rates of long-term unemployment are Slovakia (11.8%), Poland (10.3%), Lithuania (5.8%), Greece (5.6%) and Germany (5.4%). In the countries with high levels of long-term unemployment, the rates of women exceed those of men. Considerable differences can be seen in Greece, which has a rate of 9.4% for women compared with 3% for men, in Italy (5.5% for women, 2.9% for men), and in Spain (5.3% for women, 2.3% for men).

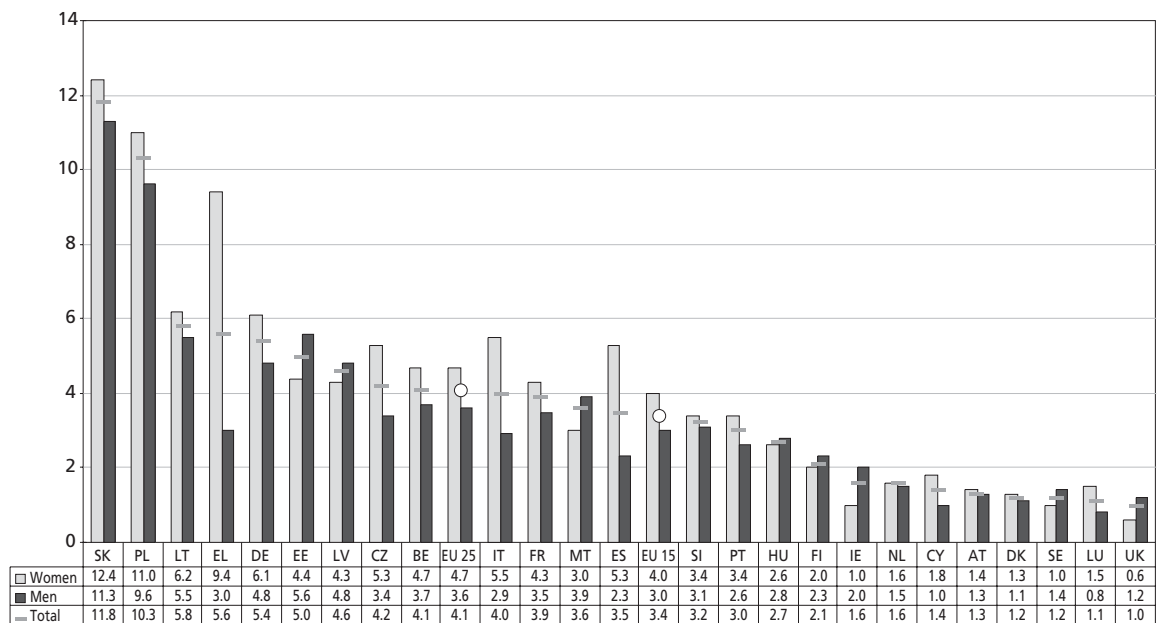
Figure 3 Unemployment rates, 2005 (%)



Notes: EL, IT, SE, UK: provisional values. Unemployment rates represent unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force.

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

Figure 4 Long-term unemployment rates, 2004 (%)



Note: Long-term unemployed persons (12 months or more) as a percentage of the total active population.

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

Table 1 shows EU unemployment figures between 1998 and 2004. In all years, the rates for women were higher than for men. However, a slight decline may be seen in the rates for women.

Table 1 Long-term unemployment in EU25, by sex, 1998–2004 (%)

Long-term unemployment in EU25, by sex, 1998–2004 (%)

	Women	Men	Total
1998	5.5	3.6	4.4
1999	5.1	3.4	4.1
2000	4.8	3.3	3.9
2001	4.6	3.2	3.8
2002	4.6	3.3	3.9
2003	4.7	3.6	4.1
2004	4.7	3.6	4.1

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

A survey of literature on the ‘Economic costs of non-Lisbon’ (516Kb pdf) by the Commission’s Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs concludes that labour market reforms with a focus on attracting more people to and retaining them in the labour market appear to have improved the situation in certain countries. These countries created incentives for employers to hire workers and for workers to become or remain active participants in the labour market, including through preventive and active labour market measures. The report emphasises that improvements can stem from ‘improved working conditions, more gender equality and enhanced possibilities to reconcile professional and family life, including adequate childcare provision’.

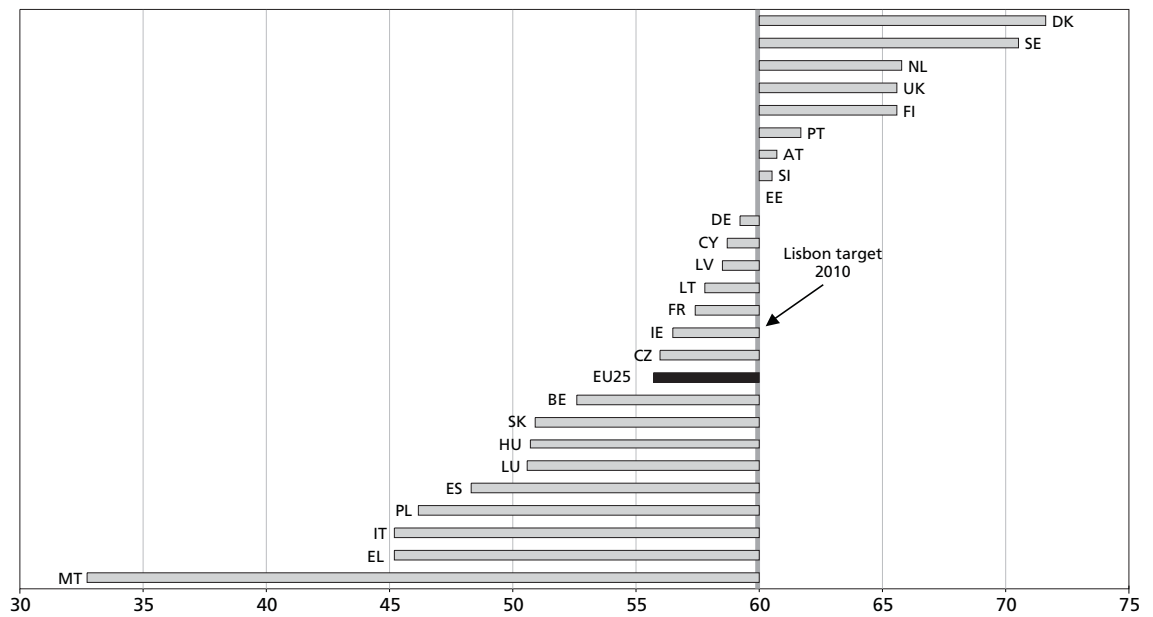
A Commission staff working document (1.3Mb pdf), accompanying the report on the Lisbon Strategy to the 2005 Spring European Council, provides an overview of the progress achieved towards the Lisbon Strategy goals since the launch of the strategy in 2000. One of the main conclusions of the working paper is that EU performance growth has lagged far behind expectations at the time of launching the Lisbon Strategy. The overall employment rate has increased, but not sufficiently to meet the Lisbon target.

The Joint Employment Report 2004/2005 (198Kb pdf) (IP/05/100 (105Kb pdf); Annex (1.2Mb pdf); EU0502207F), adopted on 27 January 2005, points to the static overall employment rates and fall in productivity growth. The EU would need to create 22 million more jobs to reach the Lisbon targets of 70% employment. The intermediate employment rate target for 2005 (67%) will most likely not have been achieved.

Female labour market participation

In 2004, the female employment rate for the EU25 was 55.7%. The specific interim target is an employment rate of 57% for women in 2005. The majority of countries are far behind the Lisbon target of 60% in 2010 (Figure 5), although a few countries are above the target figure: for instance, Denmark and Sweden have female employment rates above 70%, and the Netherlands, the UK and Finland show rates above 65%.

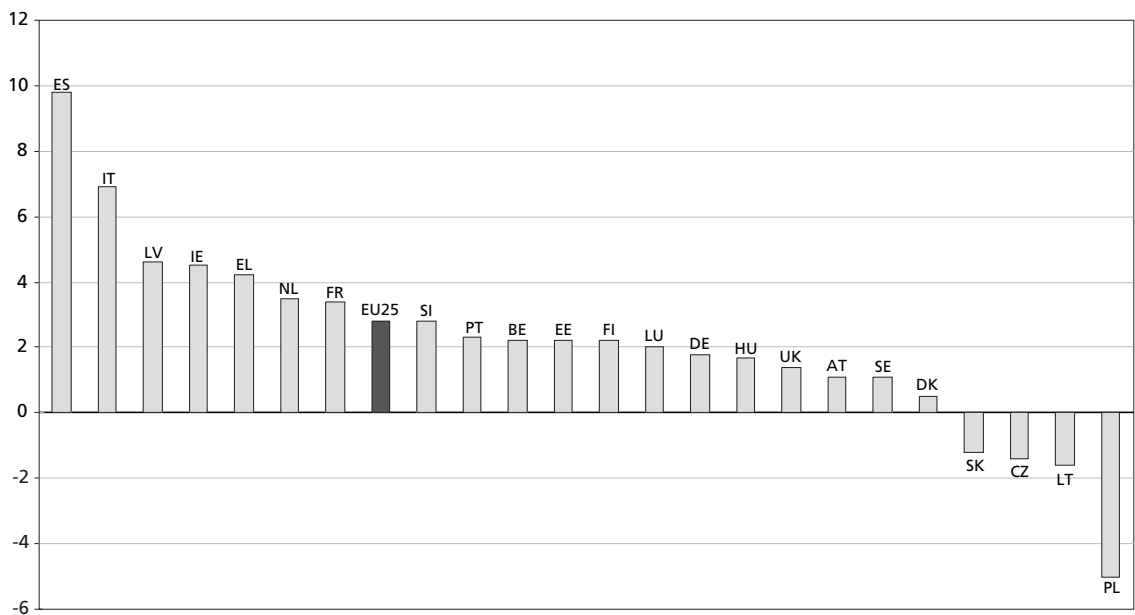
Figure 5 Female employment rates, EU25, 2004 (%)



Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

Figure 6 illustrates the percentage change of female employment rates between 1999 and 2004. For the EU25, the change is 2.8 percentage points. Some countries show a considerable increase, such as Spain (9.8%) or Italy (6.9%). However, four of the NMS showed a decline in employment rates. In Poland, the rate declined by five percentage points.

Figure 6 Change in female employment rates, 1999–2004 (%)

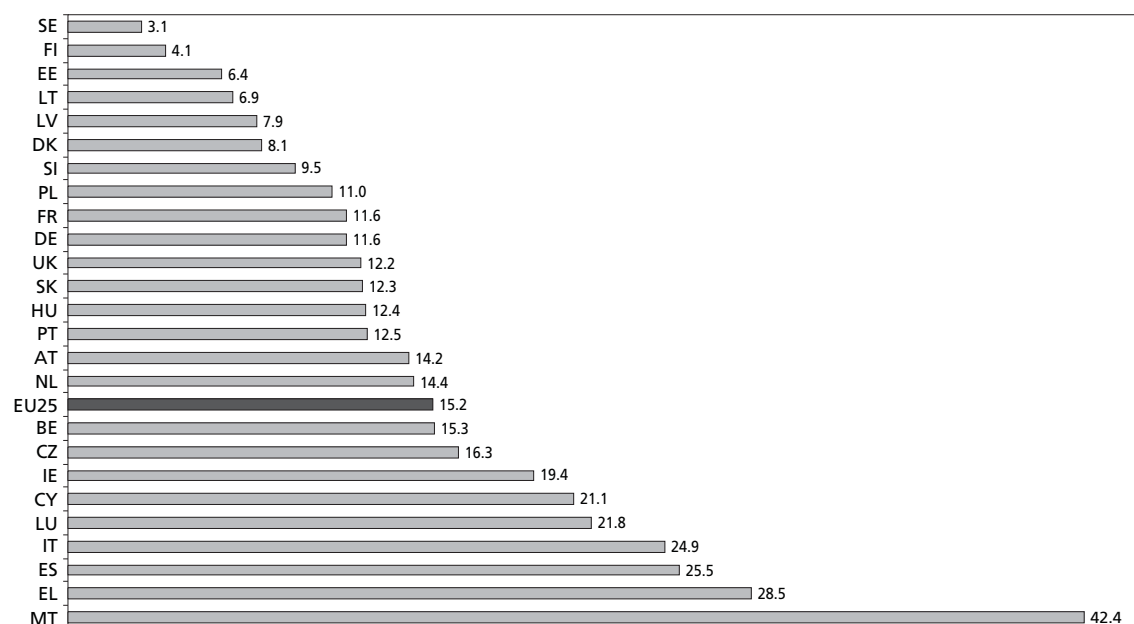


Note: No data for 1999 for Malta and Cyprus.

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

Figure 7 shows the gap in employment rates between men and women. In the EU25, the gap is 15.2 percentage points. While the differences are moderate in Sweden (3.1%) and Finland (4.1%), the gaps are considerable in Malta (42.4%), Greece (28.5%), Spain (25.8%) and Italy (24.9%).

Figure 7 Gender gap in employment rates, EU25, 2004 (%)



Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

Despite progress regarding the employment rates, fundamental differences remain between women and men in the labour market, in relation to the gender pay gap and to persistent horizontal and vertical gender segregation. Indeed, the pay gap is considered as a disincentive for female labour market participation.

The Eurostat structural indicator, 'Gender pay gap in unadjusted form', illustrates the persistence of the pay differentials in the EU25 average, between 1994 and 2004 (Table 2).

Table 2 Gender pay gap in unadjusted form, EU25

<i>Gender pay gap in unadjusted form, EU25</i>										
1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
17	17	17	16	17	16	16	16	16	15	15

Note: Gender pay gap is measured as the difference between men's and women's average gross hourly earnings, as a percentage of men's average gross hourly earnings (for paid work employees working 15+ hours).

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators.

The Commission report on equality between women and men 2005 (233Kb pdf), the first to cover the EU25, called again for the Member States to integrate the gender dimension into all policy fields in order to achieve gender equality. Policies should be directed towards strengthening the

position of women in the labour market, increasing care facilities for children and other dependants, and including men in the agenda on gender equality.

The report has a specific focus on immigrant women and men (see section on migration below), and emphasises that only slow progress is visible concerning gender segregation in the labour market. It remains high at occupational (17.5%) and sectoral (25.2%) level. In 2003, 31% of managers were women, up from 30% in 2002.

The publication, *Equality between women and men in the European Union* (2005) (1.7Mb pdf), outlines EU tools for gender equality, policy areas and future initiatives. In addition, a database on Women and men in decision-making was launched.

A Foundation report, *Working conditions and gender in an enlarged Europe* (2005), gives a comprehensive overview of gender segregation in the labour market, and of developments and policies aimed at gender equality in 10 central and eastern European countries (CEECs). The analysis covers the NMS, except Malta and Cyprus, and also includes Bulgaria and Romania. One trend for all CEECs, detected in the report, is the overall rapid increase in men's private service sector employment, from about 20% in 1990 to 30% in 2001 – exceeding the increase for women. In terms of gender segregation, the position for women is similar to that of western Europe. As regards the gender pay gap, it seems to be slightly larger overall compared with the EU15, and widening in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, while only slightly narrowing in most of the other countries.

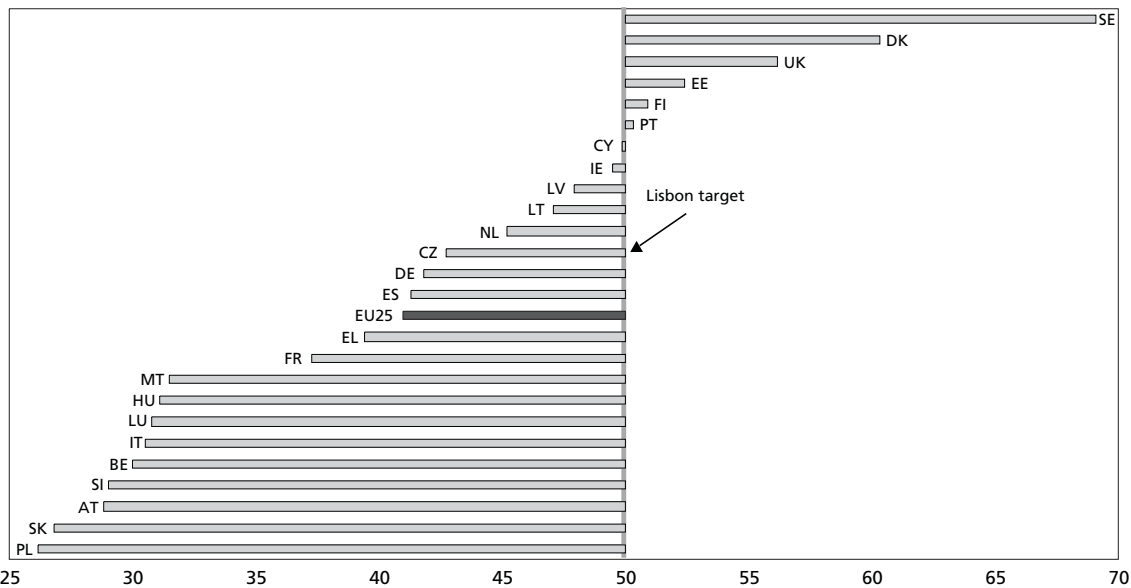
Regarding horizontal (sectoral) segregation, it is not more moderate in the CEECs than in the EU15, but it is different. Women are more present in some traditionally 'male' industries and manufacturing is far more gender-mixed. However, women are more heavily over-represented in the public sector where pay is low and the pay gap is widening. In relation to vertical segregation, smaller proportions of women are in top occupations in most of the CEECs, compared with the EU15.

Worklife cycle and demographic change

The complementary targets to increase the employment of older workers and to raise the exit age for leaving work are monitored by two structural indicators. The Stockholm target aims at increasing the employment level of those aged 55–64 years. This target is monitored by the employment rate and can be achieved by reductions in both unemployment and inactivity rates. The Barcelona target is directed towards delaying the age at which workers withdraw from the labour force into inactivity. This is monitored by changes in the activity rate, which looks only at those who are active in the labour market.

The target set by the Stockholm Council is an employment rate of 50% for older workers, defined as the 55–64 year age group. In 2004, the employment rate of older workers in the EU25 was 41%, a gap of nine percentage points. Only five countries within the EU25 have employment rates above 50% for older workers, while a further two countries are close to the target rate. In the other Member States, the employment rates of older workers are significantly below the target figure (Figure 8).

Figure 8 Gap in employment rates to meet employment target of 50% for older workers, 2004 (%)

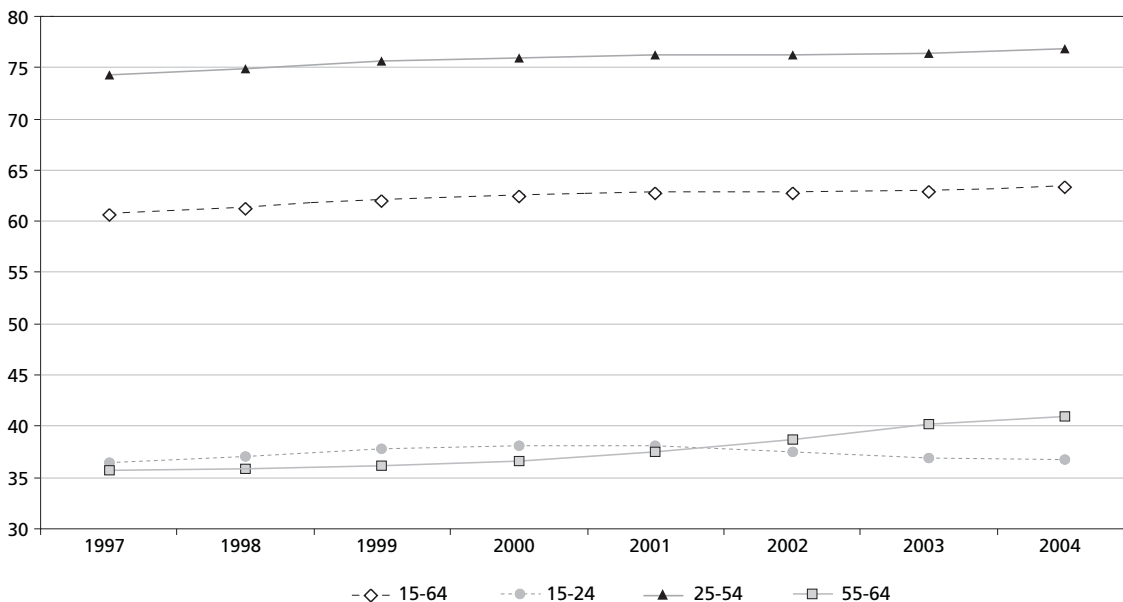


Note: The employment of older workers is calculated by dividing the number of people aged 55 to 64 years who are in employment, by the total population of the same age group.

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

Figure 9 reveals that the employment rates for older workers increased by 5.3 percentage points, compared with 2.7% for all age groups and 2.5% for the prime working age group (25–54 years), between 1997 and 2004.

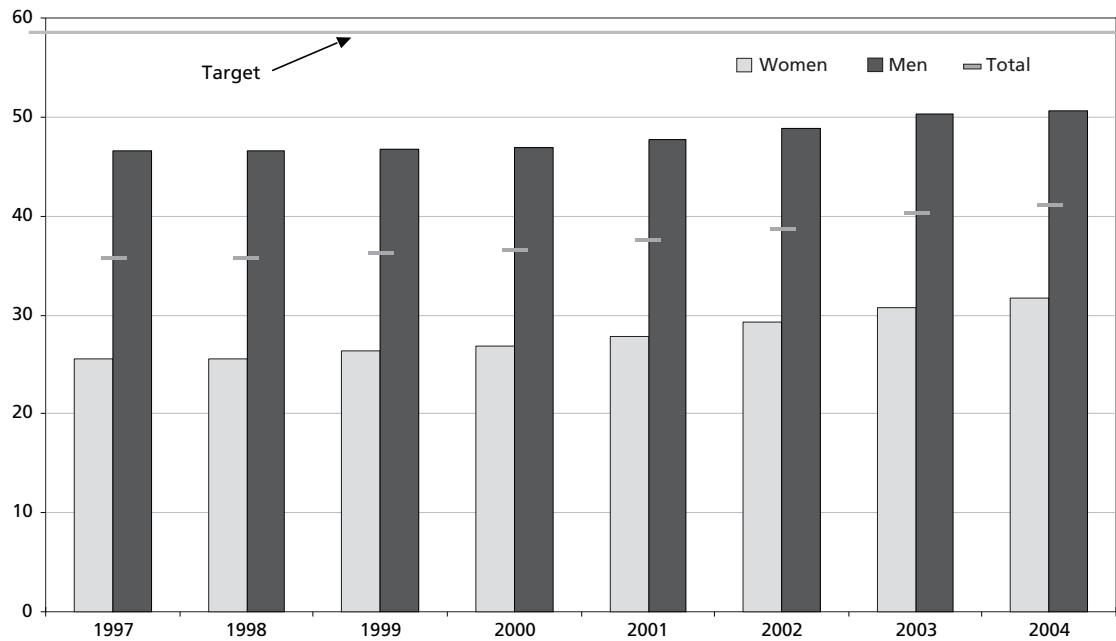
Figure 9 Employment rates, by age group, 1997–2004 (%)



Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on Eurostat Labour Force Survey

In the group of older workers, the employment rates of women increased by 6.2 percentage points, compared with 4.1 points for men, between 1997 and 2004. However, the employment rates of women are at a considerably lower level than those for men (Figure 10).

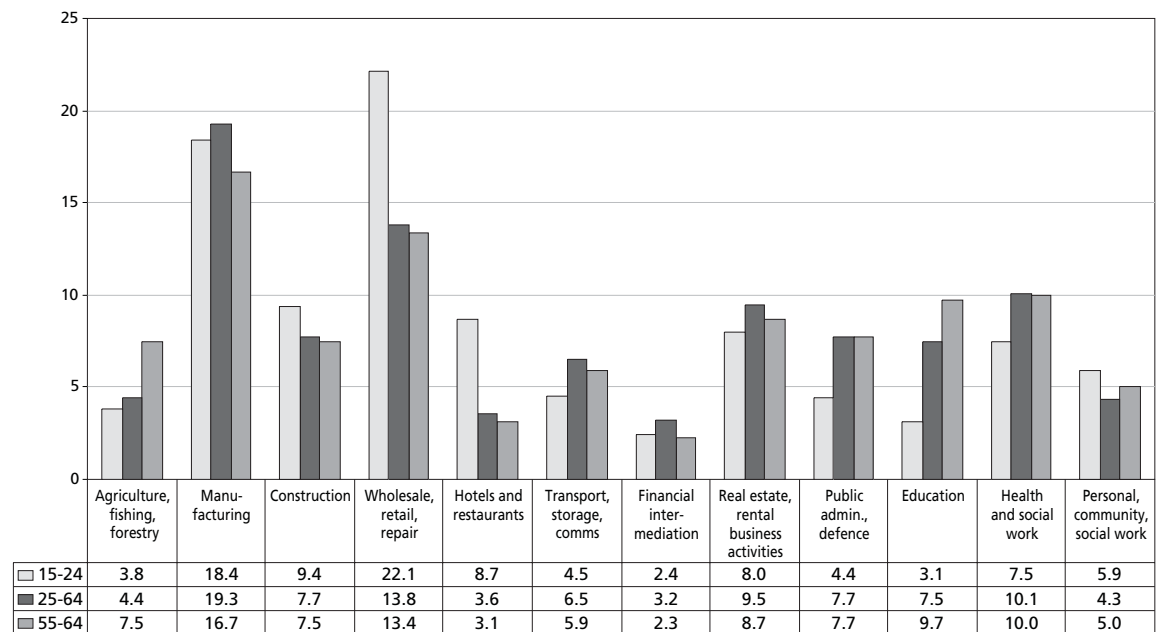
Figure 10 Employment rates of older workers, by sex, EU25, 1997–2004 (%)



Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on Eurostat Labour Force Survey, spring results

The sectoral employment profile for older workers differs significantly to the younger age groups (Figure 11). A relatively low proportion of older workers are employed in wholesale and retail trade, and in hotels and restaurants, but this age group is over-represented in the education sector.

Figure 11 Sectoral employment profile, by age group, 2004 (%)



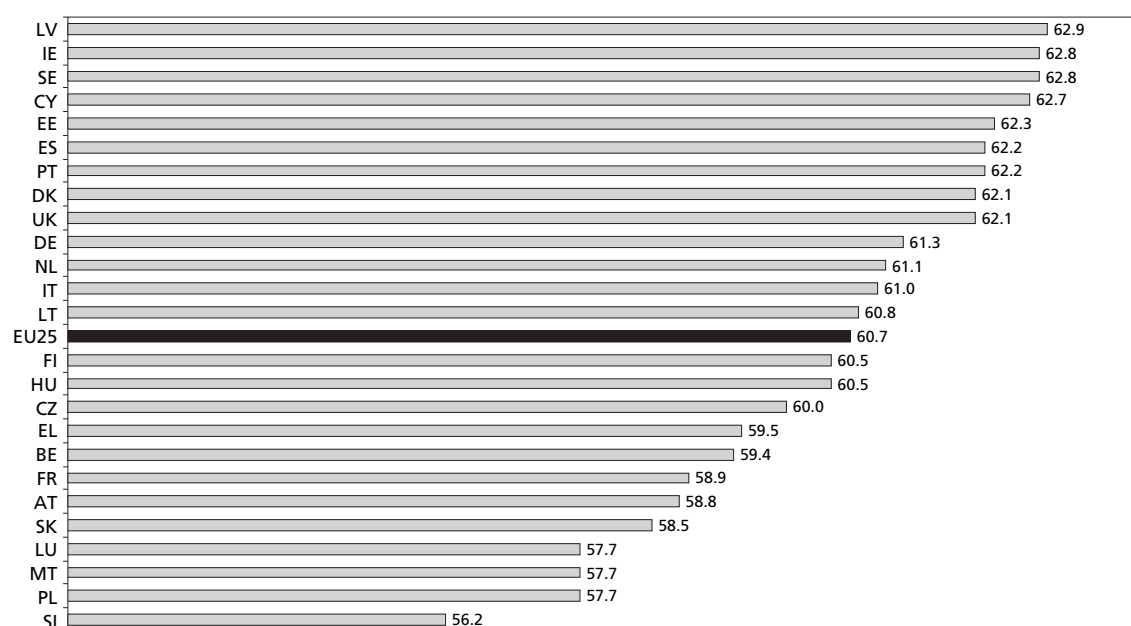
Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on Eurostat Labour Force Survey, spring results

According to the Employment in Europe 2005 report, people in the 55–64 year age group accounted for around 3.2 million of the total increase in the number of people employed between 2000 and 2004. The breakdown by sector was rather broad, with employment of older workers increasing in all main economic sectors.

The second structural indicator is the average age at which people leave work, or the exit age. It is based on a probability model that considers the relative changes of activity rate from one year to the next, at a specific age. The activity rate represents the labour force (employed and unemployed) as a percentage of the total population for a given age.

The Barcelona Council set a target of increasing the average exit age in the EU by five years by 2010. In the EU25, the exit age rose from 59.9 years in 2001 to 61 years in 2003. For 2004, a provisional rate of 60.7 years is given. There are significant differences between the Member States in this respect (Figure 12).

Figure 12 Average exit age from the labour force, 2004



Notes: AT, IT, SI data are from 2003. EU25: provisional value. The indicator gives the average age at which active persons withdraw from the labour market. It is based on a probability model that considers the relative changes of activity rate from one year to the next, at a specific age. The activity rate represents the labour force (employed and unemployed) as a percentage of the total population for a given age.

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

In the European policy debate, the worklife cycle approach became a focus, aimed at extending the working life (see above regarding Green Paper on confronting demographic change (309Kb pdf); Report (555Kb pdf) by the High Level Group on the Future of Social Policy). The analysis considers measures to increase labour market participation for both older and younger workers (EU0511NU02).

Against the background of the expected decline in the working age population and in light of a new intergenerational approach, Guideline No. 18 of the Integrated guidelines for growth and jobs

2005–2008 (60Kb pdf), approved at the June European Council meeting (253Kb pdf), outlines a lifecycle approach to work that seeks:

- to build employment pathways for young people and to reduce youth unemployment;
- to increase female participation;
- improvements in worklife balance, and the provision of accessible and affordable childcare facilities and care for older dependants;
- support for active ageing, including better working conditions, improved occupational health status, as well as adequate incentives to work and discouragement of early retirement;
- modern social protection systems supporting participation and better retention in employment, as well as longer working lives.

Youth employment

In line with the Commission’s Strategic Objectives for 2005–2009, the European Council in March 2005 (242Kb pdf) adopted the European Youth Pact. As a set of policies and measures based on the Lisbon Strategy, it aims at taking action for young people in the fields of employment, integration and social advancement, education and training, mobility, and reconciling family and work life.

The Commission’s Communication *Working together for growth and jobs – A new start for the Lisbon Strategy* (491Kb pdf) proposed the European initiative for young people. The Commission Communication on European policies concerning youth (186Kb pdf) emphasises the need to equip young people with knowledge, skills and competences through high quality and relevant education and training.

Figure 9 illustrated that the employment rates of the 15 to 24 year age group remained at the same level between 1997 and 2004, with slight fluctuations.

Table 3 demonstrates the persistence of youth unemployment in the EU between 1998 and 2004 with only minor progress. The unemployment rates of young women were above those of men in the same age group in all categories.

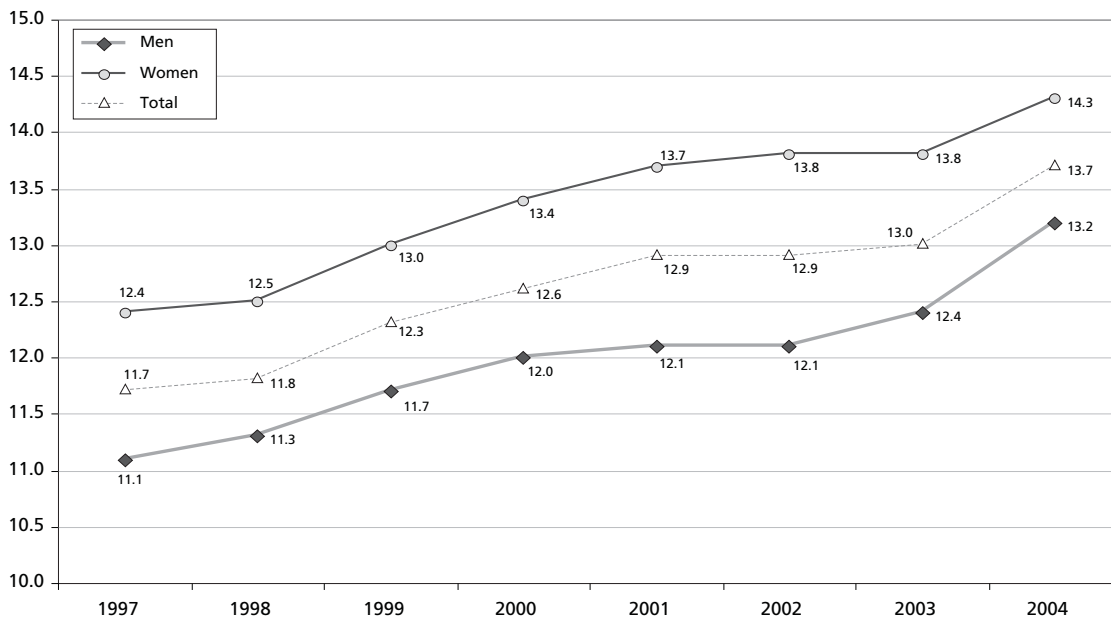
Table 3 Youth unemployment rates, EU25, 1998–2004 (%)

	Youth unemployment rates, EU25, 1998–2004 (%)						
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total	19.4	18.4	17.4	17.6	18.1	18.6	18.7
Women	21.6	20.3	19.0	19.2	19.1	19.2	19.3
Men	17.6	16.8	16.0	16.3	17.3	18.2	18.1

Source: Employment in Europe 2005; based on Eurostat

Temporary employment/fixed-term contracts

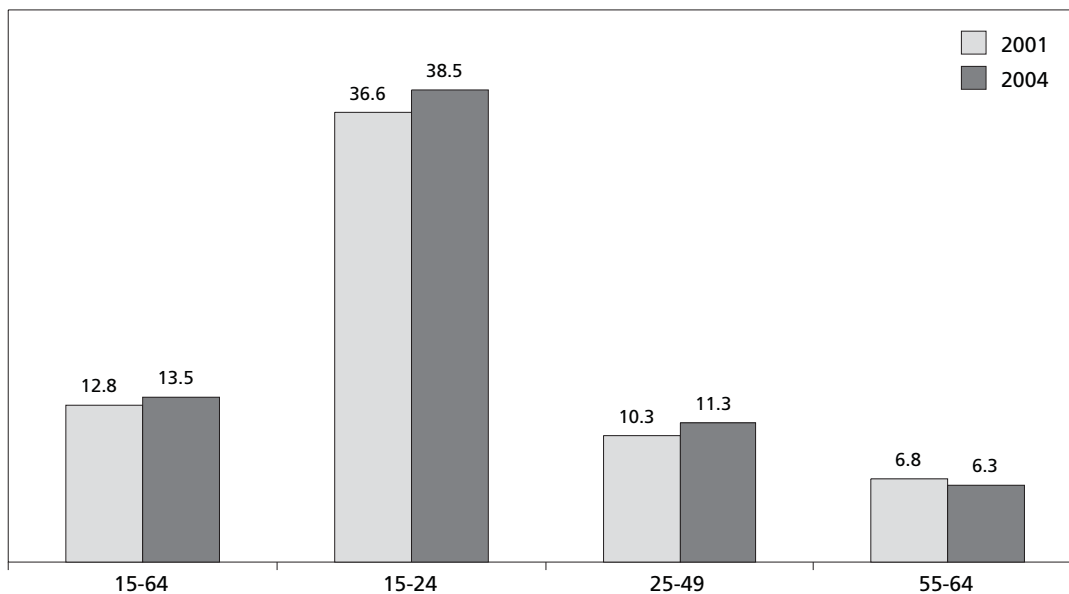
Figure 13 shows a steady increase in fixed-term contracts from 1997 to 2004 for women and for men. The data also indicate the higher level of fixed-term contracts for women.

Figure 13 Fixed-term contracts, by sex, EU25, 1997–2004 (%)

Note: % of total employment.

Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on Eurostat Labour Force Survey

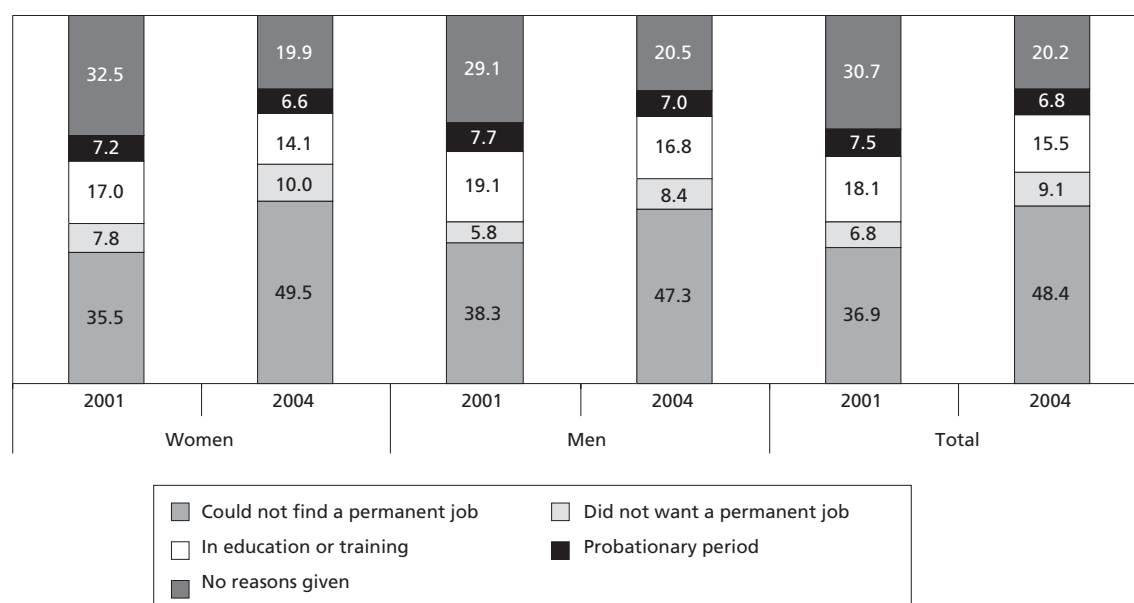
Fixed-term employment contracts are increasingly predominant among young people. In 2004, 38.5% of the 15–24 year age group worked on fixed-term contracts, compared with 36.6% in 2001. Older workers are less likely to hold such contracts. (Figure 14)

Figure 14 Fixed-term contracts, by age group, EU25, 2001 and 2004 (%)

Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on Eurostat Labour Force Survey

In 2004, almost half (48.4%) of workers on fixed-term contracts could not find a permanent job, compared with 36.9% in 2001. This reason was given by more women (49.5%) than men (47.3%) in 2004, whereas, in 2001, more men (38.3%) than women (35.5%) reported that they could not find a permanent job. (Figure 15)

Figure 15 Reasons for fixed-term contracts, EU25, 2001 and 2004 (%)



Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on Eurostat Labour Force Survey

Working poverty

Working poverty (370Kb pdf) in the EU was the subject of a Eurostat study based on harmonised data from the European Community Household Panel (ECHP). The study revealed that employed people are less concerned by poverty than those who are not in employment. Nonetheless, being in employment does not necessarily guarantee an escape from poverty. Working poverty is estimated to affect approximately 14 million people in the EU25. Indicators and variables have been developed by Eurostat to measure the phenomenon. In 2001, 7% of the employed population in the EU25 lived in households with an income below the national poverty line. The risk of working poverty in households is strongly interrelated with the presence of children in the household (EU0512NU03).

Employment and social integration of people with disabilities

Disability is seen as a dynamic process that increases with age and concerns many people with chronic illness. It can affect anyone at any age who develops a health condition that impacts on work capacity. Work disability is understood as the failure to return to work after illness or injury, regardless of the cause.

The report refers to data from the European Labour Force Survey 2002 ad hoc module on disability (335Kb pdf) (EU0406ARO1). In the EU, some 44.6 million people, or 16% of the working age population, report that they have a long-standing health problem or disability. The data do not

distinguish between people with disabilities and those with a long-standing health problem. The employment rate of people with disabilities is 40%, in contrast to 64.2% of non-disabled people; moreover, the inactivity rate of disabled people is twice that of non-disabled people. Some 43.7% of respondents believe that they could work if they had adequate support. (First report (199Kb pdf) on the overall situation of disabled people, with an action plan for 2006–2007; Annexes (274Kb pdf); IP/05/1513 (72Kb pdf); MEMO/05/459 (74Kb pdf))

A Commission communication investigated the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of people with disabilities 2003 (164Kb pdf).

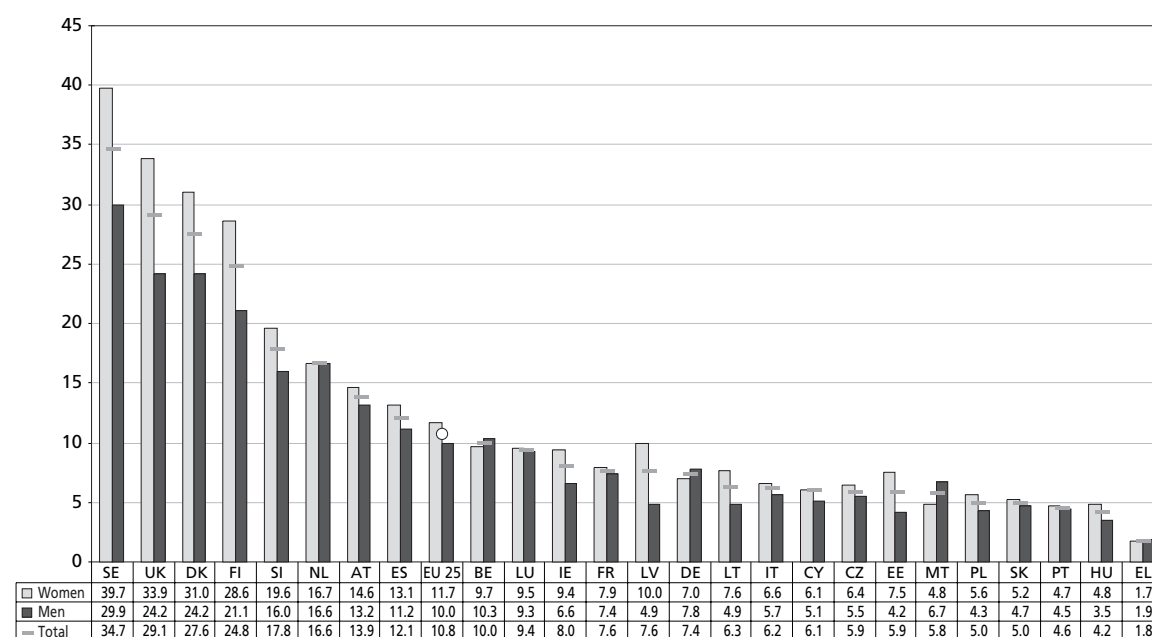
Increased disability mainstreaming (249Kb pdf) in the European Employment Strategy (EES) is considered as an approach for ensuring equality and non-discrimination. A Commission discussion paper (98Kb MS Word doc) emphasised that employment for people with disabilities should be considered within the overall context of the EES.

Skills development and lifelong learning

The European benchmark for 2010 is an average level of participation in lifelong learning of at least 12.5% of the adult working age population (25–64 year age group).

Lifelong learning is a vital element in employment strategies. The relevant structural indicator in the EES includes any learning by the 25–64 year population. Those who stated that they received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey are included, irrespective of whether the education or training is relevant to the respondent's current or potential future job.

Figure 16 Participation in lifelong learning, 2005 (%)



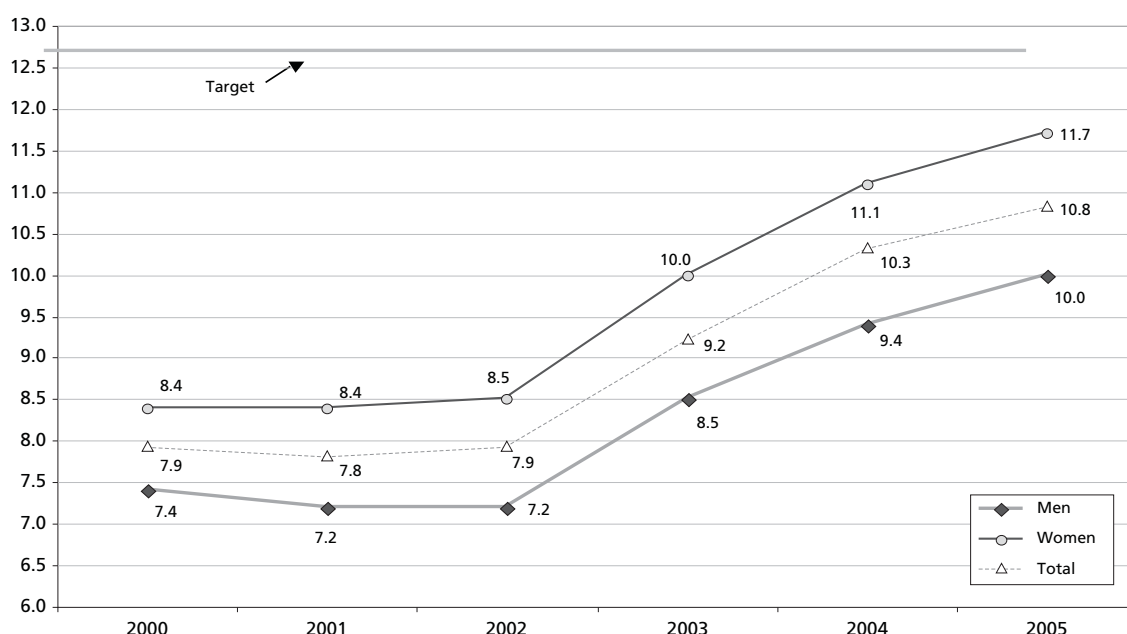
Notes: DE data for 2004. LU, MT, UK: provisional data. EE data for men are unreliable. 'Lifelong learning': the percentage of the population aged 25–64 years in education or training. The information collected refers to all education or training, whether or not relevant to the respondent's current or possible future job.

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

In 2005, the total participation rate in lifelong learning was 10.8%: 11.7% for women and just 10% for men. In the majority of Member States, a higher share of women participated in lifelong learning than men. This applies particularly to countries with high levels of participation in lifelong learning. In Sweden, the total participation rate is 34.7%, in the UK 29.1%, in Denmark 27.6%, and in Finland 24.8%. These figures contrast with the extremely low participation rates of 1.8% in Greece, 4.2% in Hungary and 4.6% in Portugal. (Figure 16)

Between 2000 and 2005, participation rates in lifelong learning increased in the EU25, however, they are still far from the target figure. For women, participation in lifelong learning increased by 3.3 percentage points, while men reported a rise of 2.6 points (Figure 17).

Figure 17 Lifelong learning, by sex, EU25, 2000–2005 (%)



Notes: Percentage of the adult population aged 25–64 years participating in education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey, as a proportion of the total population of the same age group. The information collected relates to all education or training whether or not relevant to the respondent's current or possible future job. 2000, 2001: Estimated value; 2003: Break in series.

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

Table 4 shows the interrelationships between skill levels and inactivity rates. The higher the skill level, the lower the inactivity rate.

Table 4 Inactivity rates by skill level, EU25, 2004 (%)

<i>Inactivity rates by skill level, EU25, 2004 (%)</i>			
Skill level	Low	Medium	High
Inactivity rates	47.0	24.5	13.1

Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on Labour Force Survey

A report for the European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO) on the impact of training on people's employability investigated the interrelationship of the employment contract status, access of workers to training, competence development, and employability. Job security and employment stability are key elements of quality of work and employment. The report concentrated on training during working hours for those who have completed their formal initial education and focused on company-related training initiatives.

Data from national working conditions surveys and other sources cited in the report demonstrate that fixed-term and temporary agency contract holders are at a disadvantage in terms of access to training and competence development in companies. The report examines the impact of factors such as sex, age, qualifications, occupation, sector and company size. Other indicators used in the national working conditions surveys are: job–skills match, involvement in company development plans, opportunities to learn new things, job content and autonomy, complexity of tasks, variety of work, task rotation, team work and quality circles, career prospects, company training initiatives according to contractual status, job security, and employability. The data reveal generally lower rates of participation in training measures for fixed-term and temporary agency contract holders than for permanent workers in the 12 reporting countries and in the different surveys. Within the group of non-permanent contract holders, temporary agency workers receive even less training and competence development than fixed-term contract holders. A worrying finding is that temporary agency workers receive significantly less training on occupational health and safety than do permanent and fixed-term contract holders.

National reports are available for Austria (64Kb pdf), the Czech Republic (393Kb pdf), Denmark (68Kb pdf), Estonia (158Kb pdf), Finland (539Kb pdf), France (98Kb pdf), Germany (625Kb pdf), Italy (867Kb pdf), the Netherlands (282Kb pdf), Portugal (230Kb pdf), Spain (201Kb pdf) and Sweden (145Kb pdf).

The *Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training 2005* report (3Mb pdf) shows that the rate of adult participation in education and training reached 9.4% in 2004. As noted above, the objective set by the Council is to achieve a rate of 12.5%. In order to reach this target, Member States have to develop an integrated, coherent and inclusive lifelong learning strategy.

In November 2005, a European Commission Communication presented the joint progress report, *Modernising education and training: A vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe* (545Kb pdf). This work programme will be jointly agreed with the Council. It builds on the education and training strand of the Lisbon Strategy. The Communication emphasises that there is too little progress towards the European benchmarks for improving young people's qualifications and competences. In support of this report, the Commission launched recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning (183Kb pdf). The eight key competences set out in this framework are: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competence; entrepreneurship; and cultural expression. With reference to 'learning to learn', the text explains the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to this competence:

'Where learning is directed towards particular work or career goals, an individual should have knowledge of the competences, knowledge, skills and qualifications required. In all cases, learning to learn requires an individual to know and understand their preferred

learning strategies, the strengths and weaknesses of their skills and qualifications, and to be able to search the education and training opportunities and guidance/support available to them.’

A Council resolution (92Kb pdf) on the role of developing skills and competences in progressing the Lisbon goals underlines the education and training policies required for a forward-looking approach, in order to anticipate the skills, competence and occupational needs of society and the economy.

The exploratory opinion of the EESC regarding a common European area of knowledge was outlined earlier under policy developments.

A study conducted by London Economics, *The returns to various types of investment in education and training* (883Kb pdf), concludes that internal rates of return to the investment necessary to achieve the Lisbon education targets have been estimated as generally high, exceeding 7%.

A Eurobarometer survey (940Kb pdf) on the Lisbon agenda found that the need for a knowledge-based economy is considered relevant by a large majority of European citizens. Some 63% of respondents feel that improving education and professional training is a top priority.

Work organisation

The UK Presidency of the EU, with the support of the European Commission, organised a conference on high performance workplaces (conference report (805Kb pdf)). The conference addressed a range of employment-related issues in the context of the concept of high performance workplaces.

Two EU-level EWCO news updates considered questions of work organisation during 2005. The study, *High performance workplace practices and job satisfaction* (EU0504NU03), investigated the impact of innovative workplace practices on the quality of work and job satisfaction. The analysis was based on data from the 2000 European Working Conditions Survey. The research reveals that high performance work practices have a positive effect on work satisfaction. Key factors for workers’ well-being are autonomy in the workplace, participation in decision-making, and increased communication with colleagues. However, the study concludes that team work, job rotation and supporting human resource practices have only a limited impact.

A study by the Swedish National Institute for Working Life on the Significance of organisation for healthy work (707Kb pdf) investigates the interrelation between work organisation and health at work. The study concludes that organisational structures and changes have a direct impact on working conditions (EU0509NU01).

Wages and working conditions

The Foundation report, *Wages and working conditions in the European Union* (2005), examines the effects of aligning appropriate pay systems to high performance work organisations. The project analysed the relationship between wages and working conditions as an outcome of managerial

practices and an element of organisational performance. Comparing the impact of work organisation and wage systems, the study demonstrates that characteristics of work organisation have a much stronger impact on quality of working life and on performance outcomes.

The study detects interaction effects between strategy, work organisation and wage systems, and argues that an alignment of these factors shows stronger effects than when considered independently. Therefore, participative work organisation and modern forms of variable pay should be linked.

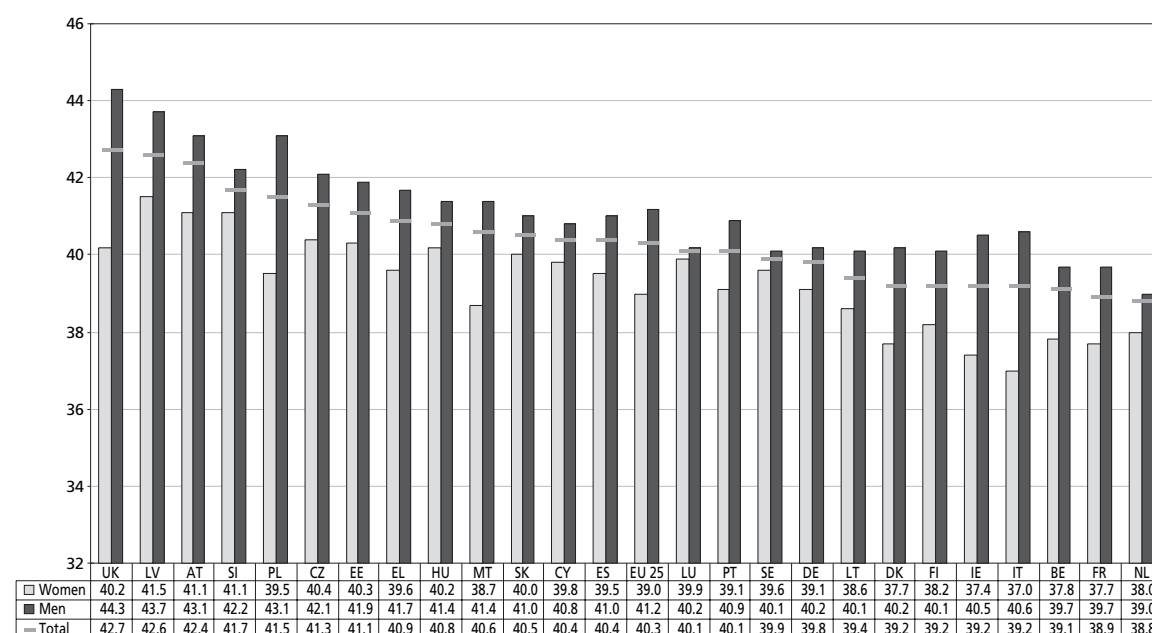
Working hours and working time arrangements

Working hours and working time arrangements are important elements of quality in work.

Data on working time in the Labour Force Survey differentiate between usual and actual working hours. The focus of 'usual working hours' refers to the weekly hours worked over a long period. The number of hours actually worked refers to a specific reference week. The actual figures may deviate from the number of hours usually worked, due to absence, holidays or overtime.

In 2004, the average usual working hours in the EU25 were 40.3 hours: 41.2 hours for men and 39 hours for women. Among the Member States, the range varies between 42.7 hours in the UK and 38.8 hours in the Netherlands. In all countries, the number of hours usually worked is higher for men than for women (Figure 18).

Figure 18 Usual hours worked per week, 2004



Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, principal results, 2004

In the second quarter of 2005, the average actual working hours were 37.9 hours: 33.3 hours for women and 41.5 hours for men, according to Labour Force Survey data. Full-time employed people

worked 41.8 hours, and part-time workers 20.4 hours. Men worked significantly longer hours than women, on average, and in full-time work (Table 5).

Table 5 Average actual hours worked, EU25

	Total	Full-time	Part-time
Women	33.3	39.5	20.4
Men	41.5	43.1	20.6
Total	37.9	41.8	20.4

Source: Romans and Hardason, 2005

A comparative study on working conditions and working time in an enlarged Europe in 10 central and eastern European countries (CEECs) builds on Foundation survey data on working time in the NMS, and contrasts this data with research available from other sources. The study reveals that workers in the CEECs work longer hours (4–5 hours) per week, and that there is a lower incidence of part-time work, and a higher incidence of shift work in these countries.

The Foundation study, *Working time options over the life course* (2006), examines the situation in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK. These countries cover a wide spectrum of the potential societal systems, with variations in labour market characteristics, welfare state regimes, gender relations, level of participation and working time patterns. This divergence among the countries serves to illustrate the impact of the institutional structure on the gender division of paid work and income development over the life course.

Part-time work

In 2004, almost one third (31.4%) of women worked part time, in contrast to just 7% of men. Figure 19 shows that the overall proportion of part-timers increased steadily from 16% in 1997 to 17.7% in 2004. For both sexes, an increase is evident.

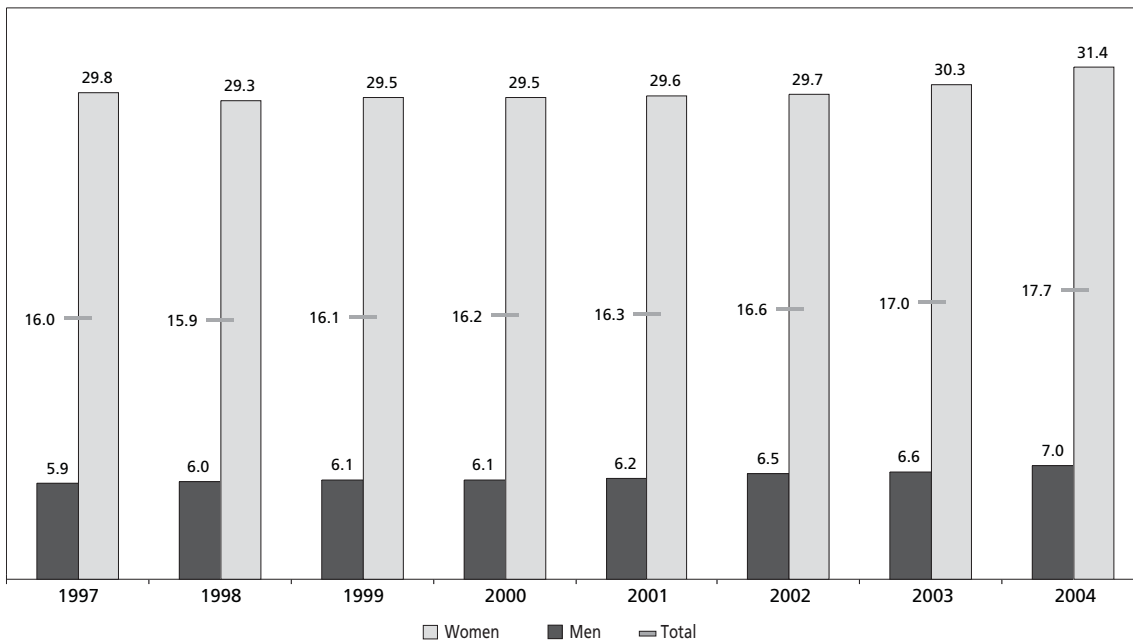
Education level has a strong impact on the proportion of women working part time; however, it does not affect the percentage of men with such working time arrangements (Table 6).

Table 6 Part-time work and education level, by sex, 2004 (%)

	Total	0–2	3–4	5–6	Unknown
Women	31.1	35.8	32.7	23.9	41.9
Men	6.3	6.8	6.2	6.1	n/a
Total	17.3	18.4	18.0	14.6	22.6

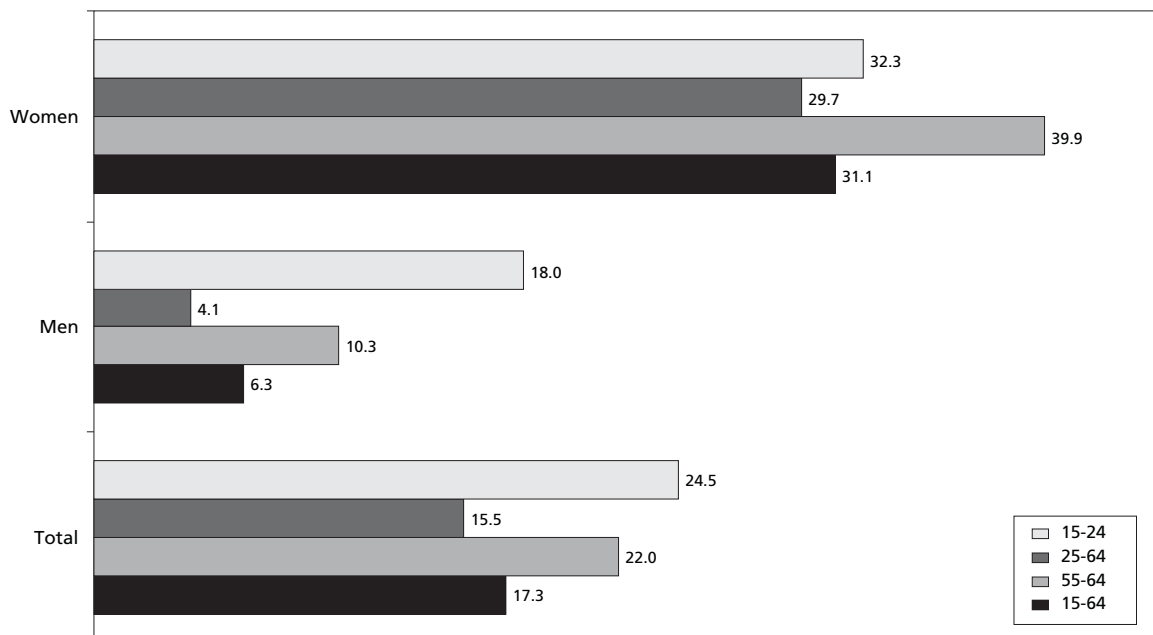
Notes: International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 1997 levels – 0–2: Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education; 3–4: Upper secondary and post-secondary (not-tertiary) education; 5–6: Tertiary education.

Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on EU Labour Force Survey

Figure 19 Part-time employment, by sex, EU25, 1997–2004 (%)

Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on Eurostat Labour Force Survey

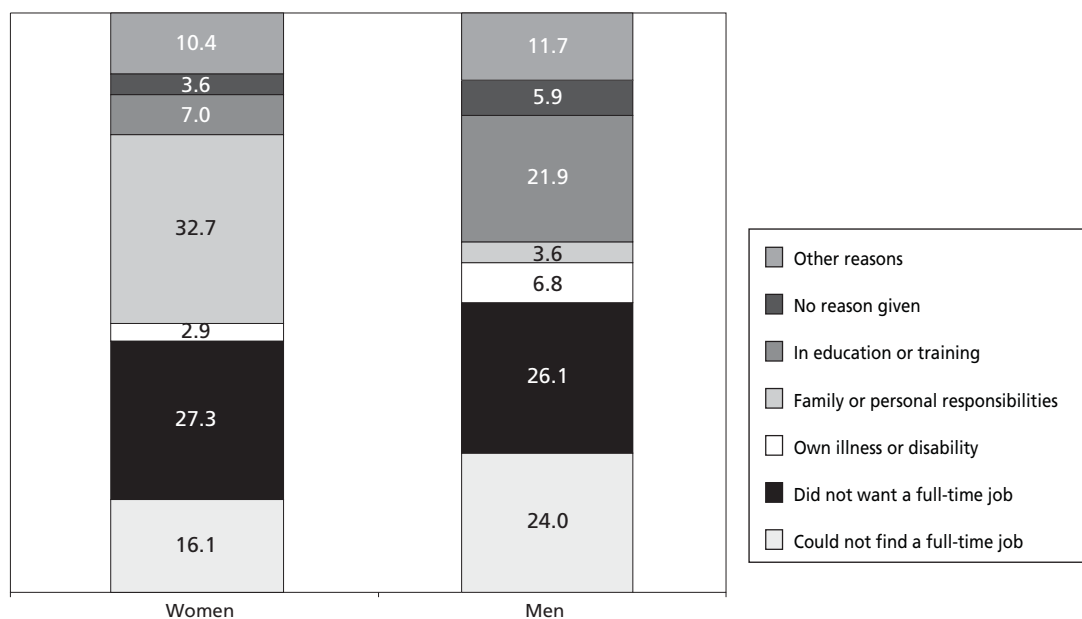
Figure 20 reveals significant differences in the rates of part-time workers, both according to age and to sex. In total, a greater proportion of younger employees (15–24 years) work part time than the other age groups do. Women show higher part-time rates in the 55–64 year age group; for men, the 15–24 year age group shows the highest rates.

Figure 20 Part-time work, by age, EU25, 2004 (%)

Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on Eurostat Labour Force Survey

Looking at reasons given for working part time (Figure 21), 32.7% of women report family or personal responsibilities, in contrast to just 3.6% of men. Some 21.9% of men cite being in education or training as a reason for working part time, compared with 7% of women. A larger proportion of men (24%) than women (16.1%) are involuntarily in part-time work.

Figure 21 Reasons for part-time employment, by sex, 2004 (%)



Source: Employment in Europe 2005, based on Eurostat Labour Force Survey

Work–life balance

A EWCO report on combining family and full-time work (TN0510TR02) focuses on the work–life balance of full-time working parents, based on national working conditions surveys in 12 countries. The study reveals that working time flexibility and opportunities for combining work and family vary significantly between countries and the sexes. The national contributions describe examples of good practice in promoting family-friendly workplaces. National reports are available for: Austria (233Kb pdf), the Czech Republic (523Kb pdf), Denmark (68Kb pdf), Estonia (220Kb pdf), Finland (161Kb pdf), France (122Kb pdf), Germany (194Kb pdf), Italy (371Kb pdf), the Netherlands (379Kb pdf), Portugal (90Kb pdf), Spain (105Kb pdf) and Sweden (191Kb pdf).

A report (142Kb pdf) on equality between women and men in the EU, by the European Parliament’s Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, reiterates the targets for 2010 agreed by the European Council in Barcelona 2002: to introduce childcare for 90% of children between three years of age and the mandatory school age, and for at least 33% of children under three years of age. In addition, the Committee calls on the Member States to put forward similar targets for care facilities for elderly people and sick relatives. The report also recommends publishing statistics on the establishment of childcare services and care for elderly people and dependants, and on access to these arrangements.

A comparative review (European Commission, 2005), prepared by the EU Expert Group on gender, social inclusion and employment, examines the situation regarding reconciliation of work and private life. The study considers childcare facilities, flexible working time arrangements, financial allowances, and reasons for and the effects of employer involvement.

In terms of childcare provision, the report concludes that, on the basis of more or less harmonised and comparable figures, it seems that five EU Member States have reached the Barcelona target of 33% childcare coverage for children under three years of age. However, in several countries, the availability of childcare is below 10%.

An overview on the entitlement and content of leave provision throughout Europe indicates substantial differences regarding the duration of parental leave and the compensation of loss of earnings.

Flexible working time arrangements are primarily settled at company level. Some countries have national legislation with an entitlement to reduce working for all employees, while others have such an entitlement for working parents.

The involvement of companies in reconciliation of work and family issues varies significantly between the countries, ranging from a significant role in helping employees to combine both spheres to hardly any involvement. An explanation for these differences can be found in institutional pressures: public provision, cultural ideology and collective agreements.

Health and safety and well-being

In recent years, serious and fatal accidents at work have decreased. Table 7 gives index figures on serious accidents at work for the EU25. The decrease is greater for men than for women.

Table 7 Serious accidents at work, by sex, EU25 (1998=100)

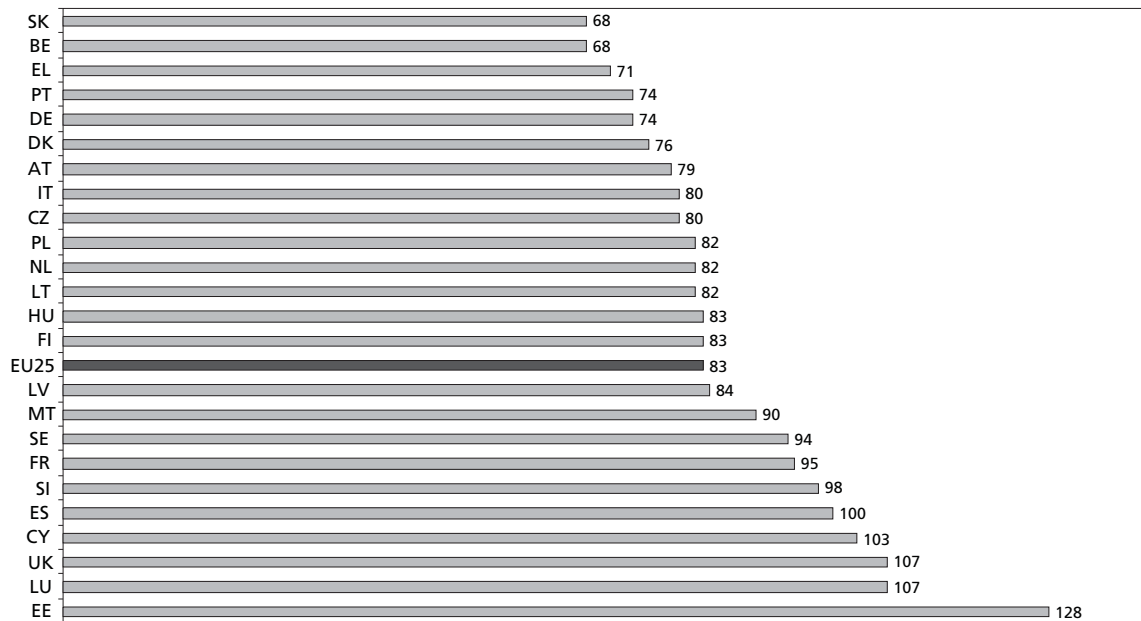
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Women	101	104	101	97	91
Men	100	98	94	89	81
Total	100	99	95	88	83

Notes: Figures for 2003 are provisional. Accidents at work resulting in more than three days' absence and occurring during the year are included; per 100,000 persons in employment.

Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators.

Although the majority of Member States show a decrease in serious accidents at work, some countries reveal an increasing trend in this respect. In six countries, the index figures are above the reference year 1998; in Estonia, the index rose to 128 (Figure 22).

Figure 22 Index of serious accidents at work, 2003 (1998=100)



Notes: per 100,000 persons; EU25: provisional data; IE: no data available; PT: 2002 data.
Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators

The data for fatal accidents at work indicate a strong decline in the index figures (Table 8).

Table 8 Fatal accidents at work (1998=100)

1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
88	87	85	80	77

Notes: Figures for 2003 are provisional; per 100,000 persons in employment.
Source: Eurostat, Structural indicators.

The first report by the Risk Observatory at the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (OSHA) presents the results of a forecast on an expert survey based on the Delphi methodology and on a literature review. The study aimed to identify emerging physical risks related to occupational health and safety. The top emerging risks identified are:

- lack of physical activity;
- combined exposures to MSD risk factors and psychosocial risk factors;
- complexity of technologies and work processes;
- insufficient protection of high-risk groups against long-standing ergonomic risks;
- thermal discomfort at industrial workplaces;
- ultraviolet radiation;
- multi-factor risks;
- vibration.

A publication by OSHA discusses priorities for occupational safety and health research (1.5Mb pdf). The priorities are structured around four major themes:

- psychosocial work environment;
- musculoskeletal disorders;
- dangerous substances;
- occupational health and safety management.

Work-related stress

A EWCO report on work-related stress (TN0502TR01) is based on results of national working conditions surveys from seven countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. It describes causes, risk trends and the consequences of work-related stress, and discusses measures for prevention. The study examines results of working conditions surveys in terms of the impact of quantitative, qualitative and emotional demands, autonomy, learning opportunities and reward, job security, and commitment to work. Stress-related outcomes are found to affect women more than men. In particular, the health, social services and education sectors – which are predominantly staffed by women – are characterised by a high prevalence of work-related stress. In general, stress-related outcomes, such as burnout, fatigue, or back problems, seem to be increasing.

A study on managing occupational stress developed a risk management approach to the evaluation of stress in the workplace. It offers practical guidance on assessing, evaluating and reducing work-related stress, based on international research findings (EU0502NU02).

Anti-discrimination

The Commission's annual report on equality and non-discrimination 2005 (4.2Mb pdf) reports on progress in implementing the racial equality (2000/43/EC) and employment equality directives (2000/78/EC), as well as legal developments at EU level and national level. It concludes that more efforts are needed in the proper implementation of the directives.

A report published by the European Commission deals specifically with age discrimination and European law (694Kb pdf). The report concludes that there is a need for Member States to take age discrimination seriously and to be prepared to carry out an assessment of their policies and legislation.

The report, The business case for diversity (1.6Mb pdf), is based on a survey by the European Commission (IP/05/1483 (505Kb pdf)) on diversity policies in companies. The survey revealed the business benefits of such workplace policies in the form of enhanced employee recruitment and retention, improved corporate image and reputation, greater innovation and marketing opportunities.

Migration

The 2005 report (232Kb pdf) on equality between women and men focuses on the situation of immigrants. In 2003, the employment rate of female non-EU nationals was 16.9 percentage points lower than for female EU nationals. This compares with a gap of 11 percentage points between male non-EU nationals and male EU nationals.

Immigrant women are lagging behind in terms of labour market integration. The gap in employment rates for qualified migrant men (13 percentage points) remains unchanged, in contrast to the gap for migrant women (23.2 percentage points).

The unemployment rate of non-EU nationals is twice the rate of EU nationals. With the exception of the higher unemployment rates for high-skilled women, migrant women and men have similar unemployment rates. Female migrants are concentrated in low-paid jobs and sectors.

While the gender pay gap in the EU was on average 16%, female non-EU nationals earned 10% less than female EU nationals, in contrast to a pay gap of 4% for male EU and non-EU nationals.

Quality of work and employment: role of the social partners

Two studies on trends in labour law (1992–2003) were published by the European Commission in 2005. A general report (692Kb pdf) investigates the interrelation between European and national legislative developments, while the second report examines labour development in 12 EU Member States (national reports and summaries (261Kb pdf)).

European social dialogue

Joint work programme 2006–2008

On 25 January 2006, the negotiation teams of UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC agreed on a proposal for a work programme 2006–2008. The proposal was sent to each organisation's decision-making body for final adoption before the Tripartite Social Summit on 23 March 2006 (joint press release).

Framework of actions on gender equality

A key achievement of the European social dialogue in 2005 was the framework of actions on gender equality (113Kb pdf) (EU0509203F). The social partners propose actions at the appropriate levels, in accordance with national industrial relations practices, such as social dialogue, collective bargaining, joint statements or recommendations helping to create a framework for gender equality.

The four priority actions are:

- addressing gender roles;
- promoting women in decision-making;
- supporting work–life balance;
- tackling the gender pay gap.

The social partners committed themselves to drawing up an annual progress report on the four priority actions identified.

An annex (170Kb pdf) to the framework of actions presents a series of case study examples of good practice among the Member States.

Employment

The second report (550Kb pdf) of the social partners focuses on actions pertaining to the European employment guidelines in the EU25. The report provides an overview of key joint and/or unilateral initiatives relevant for implementing the national policy recommendations.

Lifelong development of competences and qualifications

The third annual report (538Kb pdf) on lifelong development of competences and qualifications builds on a framework of actions adopted in March 2002, and adheres to the commitment to monitor progress on an annual basis. The report covers the EU25.

Some important trends described include the:

- key role of the social partners in defining more coherent lifelong learning policies in their respective countries;
- involvement of the social partners in improving conditions of adult learning;
- greater attention paid to financial regulations in order to facilitate investment in the lifelong development of competences.

A further significant feature is the involvement of the social partners in reducing barriers to competence development for individuals and companies, in order to improve the efficiency and quality of existing tools and to develop tailored solutions.

EU Youth Initiative

In the joint contribution (71Kb pdf) to the EU Youth Initiative, adopted ahead of the 2005 Spring Council, the European social partners advocated an intergenerational approach, i.e. developing active ageing strategies, while also favouring the entry of young people into the labour market.

European social dialogue at sectoral level

Skills development and training

The European social partners in the banking industry – the Banking Federation of the European Union (FBE), the European Savings Banks Group (ESBG), the European Association of Cooperative Banks (EACB) and Union Network International (UNI-Europa) – concluded an EU bank social partners joint statement (247Kb pdf). In the context of training, learning and development, the social partners agreed that training programmes should guarantee that staff and management can effectively integrate the values and objectives into their specific job.

The European social partners in the hairdressing industry, Coiffure EU and UNI-Europa Hair and Beauty, signed a declaration (63Kb pdf) on their conclusions regarding developments in professional hairdresser training in Europe. Short- to medium-term proposals include standardising vocational training programmes, creating a knowledge platform on education in the sector, and expediting the European certificate integration process.

Occupational health and safety

In the call centre sector, the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO) and UNI-Europa agreed on good practice guidelines for the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders (571Kb pdf) within the telecommunications sector. A 2003 survey demonstrated widespread problems with MSDs in the sector. Further research, published in a database, forms the basis for the guidelines. The guidelines discuss MSDs associated with telecommunications work, general principles for the prevention of MSDs, work organisation, and specific tasks and related MSDs.

In the context of the European social dialogue in agriculture, the social partners – the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT), the Employers' Group of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the EU and the Committee of Professional Agricultural

Organisations in the European Union (COPA/GEOPA) – signed an agreement on the reduction of workers' exposure to the risk of musculoskeletal disorders (39Kb pdf).

This framework of actions aims to promote good practice and to support national policies of risk prevention. The agreement considers the definition of MSDs, improving knowledge about the risk in the sector, prevention measures, risk evaluations, implementation of best practice, and the follow-up to the agreement.

Both organisations had already submitted a joint opinion (26Kb pdf) on the protection of the health and safety of workers from MSDs, in response to the European Commission's consultation (242Kb pdf) of the European social partners on MSDs.

The European social partners in the hairdressing industry, Coiffure EU and UNI-Europa Hair and Beauty, signed a covenant on health and safety (104Kb pdf), with particular reference to the use and handling of cosmetic products and their chemical agents. The covenant calls for a European Cosmetics Directive for professional hairdressers, outlines points that should be covered in this directive, and proposes a system for authorisation to use cosmetic products that require safety precautions.

Equal opportunities and diversity

In the EU bank social partner joint statement (247Kb pdf) (see above), the European social partners in the banking industry agree that equal opportunity is a fundamental principle.

Mainstreaming equality and diversity is an objective for the majority of companies. Policies should enhance the prospect of job opportunity and career development.

Work–life balance

The EU bank social partner joint statement emphasises the relevance of work–life balance, and the social partners welcome creative and innovative approaches.

Youth

The social partners in the European hotel and restaurant sector – the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) and the Employers' Federation for Hotels, Restaurants and Cafés in Europe (HOTREC) – prepared contributions (41Kb pdf) for the European Youth Initiative. The hospitality industry is a major employer of young people. The social partners identified challenges faced by the sector and are striving to make the sector more attractive, i.e. by tackling high staff turnover, the lack of skilled labour and recruitment difficulties. Campaigns are targeted at young people, and are aimed at convincing them of the importance of developing their skills within the hospitality industry.

The social partners in the European construction industry – the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers and the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) – published a joint statement on young people. The initiative includes measures for: the provision of adequate information about the sector, promoting education and training programmes, encouraging young people to ensure their employability within the sector through continuous training, supporting young people in obtaining employment in the sector, and raising awareness among employers with regard to lifelong learning.

EuroCommerce and Uni-Europa Commerce, the European sectoral social partners for commerce, support the European Youth Initiative. They announced their intention (170Kb pdf) to start discussions and negotiations on the integration of young people in the commerce sector.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

The European social partners in the postal sector, PostEurop and UNI-Europa, signed a joint statement on CSR. The social partners support a balanced and broad approach to CSR, including economic, social and environmental issues.

The EU bank social partner joint statement (247Kb pdf), concluded by the European social partners in the banking industry (see above), focuses on employment and social aspects of CSR: training, core labour standards, work–life balance, internal communication and equal opportunities.

Demography

The European social partners in the banking sector (see above) have agreed to launch a joint project aimed at managing the challenges posed by demographic developments. The project should include recruitment, retention and retirement, and not focus on any age group in particular. The study will outline the necessary data from the banking industry and identify examples of good practice.

Mobility

The social partners in the European hotel and restaurant sector, the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) and the Employers' Federation for Hotels, Restaurants and Cafés in Europe (HOTREC), wrote a common reply (37Kb pdf) to the Commission consultation on '2006 – European Year of Mobility for Workers – Towards a European Labour Market'.

The joint reply emphasises the positive effects of free movement of workers on growth and employment. The organisations underline their joint interest that the employment of foreign workers does not lead to social dumping in their sector, and reiterate their joint declaration on EU enlargement 'that the same regulations as laid down in laws and/or collective agreements have to be applied to any worker at a given location'.

In the hospitality sector, foreign workers are of great importance. EFFAT and HOTREC decided to monitor, during 2005, the influx of migrant workers in the sector resulting from enlargement of the EU from 15 to 25 Member States on 1 May 2004.

Comparability and recognition of qualifications are an important prerequisite for occupational mobility.

Employee involvement

The EU bank social partner joint statement (247Kb pdf) emphasises that the involvement of employee representatives or employees ensures a broader perspective in the set-up of training programmes and may, therefore, lead to even better results.

Still on the agenda is the issue of the Working Time Directive. The ruling of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has classified time on-call as working time, with a further recent judgement outlining that time during which the employee is present at the workplace cannot depend on the intensity of the work. Thus, distinguishing on-call time according to different forms appears to be problematic. The ECJ confirmed that, due to the employee's obligation to be at the employer's disposal, time on-call counts in its entirety as working time. In the context of the Lisbon Strategy targets – in particular, increasing female employment and achieving gender equality – long working hours are a barrier. The European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs reported on the impact of long working hours on the reconciliation between work and family, and their impact on equal opportunities.

A further key aspect of concern regarding the contested question of the individual opt-out and long working hours is the protection of workers' health and safety, particularly in light of research findings on the impact of long hours (Dembe et al, 2005) on occupational injuries and illnesses. Data, which are a cause for concern, were presented by the Japanese Ministry of Labour (Oda, 2005) at the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in Orlando, Florida, in September 2005. The data revealed the physical and mental health impact of long hours and increasing rates of deaths and suicides due to overwork. Similar research has not been conducted in Europe.

Musculoskeletal disorders remain the most predominant work-related health problem; improved regulations and targeted measures should be put in place to reduce this burden for workers, companies and society.

The European social partners' decision to initiate negotiations on combating violence and harassment is a positive development, in view of the damaging outcome for people who are directly and indirectly concerned by this issue at the workplace and for their families, as well as the negative economic effects for companies. The awareness-raising exercise alone, as part of the process of negotiations and of implementing an agreement, is of value in the context of this issue.

With regard to a directive on services in the internal market, the position of the EESC should guide efforts in achieving quality in work and employment, and a social Europe for all. The EESC view is to consider transition periods and first achieve harmonisation within the countries as a necessary precondition, in order to avoid any dilution of working and employment conditions.

Gender equality received specific attention in several EU policy documents within the general far-reaching approach of EU legislation and, in particular, in relation to the targets of the Lisbon Strategy. There is urgent need for policy responses with regard to 2010 and beyond, as is reflected in the intensive discussion on the persistent gender gaps and on policies needed to tackle barriers to the successful integration of women and men in the labour market and an equal sharing of family work. The new Framework Strategy on gender equality is an opportunity to bring all actors together to develop determined strategic measures targeted at the source of gender inequality and the complex and multi-faceted societal processes. The need to increase the budgetary basis was emphasised by many policymakers in the context of the Progress programme.

Another topic high on the agenda is training, lifelong learning and competence development. Attaining a knowledge society and a highly qualified workforce represents a crucial element for the

success of the Lisbon Strategy; it requires measures at all levels of educational attainment and for all groups of workers, irrespective of age, sex or contract status.

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