



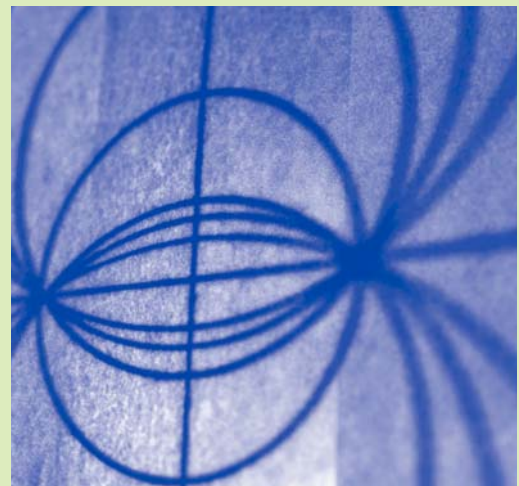
Working conditions in candidate countries and the European Union

Résumé

In 2001, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions carried out a survey on working conditions in 12 candidate countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia (extended to Turkey in 2002). This questionnaire-based survey is identical to the three working conditions surveys carried out in the EU Member States in 1990, 1995 and 2000, allowing for comparisons to be drawn between these two groups of countries. The survey addresses a wide range of issues related to the quality of work and employment, such as: physical risk factors (noise, vibrations, etc.); working time patterns (working hours, working time arrangements, etc.); work organisation features (job content, pace of work, autonomy, etc.); social relations (consultation, support, etc.); and work-related health outcomes (stress, muscular pain, etc.). This leaflet presents the main findings of the 12 candidate countries' survey.

Main findings

- In comparison to EU Member States, a higher proportion of workers in candidate countries are employed in agriculture and a lower proportion in the services sector.
- There is a higher proportion of self-employed workers in the candidate countries (22 % compared to 17 % in EU Member States). However, there is a wide variation in the different types of employment status to be found in candidate countries.
- A lower proportion of workers belong to the higher skilled job categories: 31 % compared to 35 % in the EU.
- Gender segregation is less prevalent in candidate countries, and a higher proportion of women work: 46 % compared to 42 % in the EU.
- Exposure to physical risk factors, such as noise, vibrations and painful positions, is higher.
- Work is less client-oriented than in EU Member States, and less reliant on computer technology.
- Work organisation in the candidate countries tends to be: less client-driven; less decentralised (less worker responsibility and autonomy); more hierarchical;
- Fewer workers in the candidate countries receive training and work does not provide as many learning opportunities.
- Job demands, although of a different nature, are higher and job control (worker autonomy) is lower. However, in the candidate countries workers receive more support from colleagues.
- Working hours are longer and tend to be less gender-differentiated (the level of female part-time work is low). Unsocial working hours, such as shift and night work, are more prevalent. Part-time work is less frequent (7 % in candidate countries, 17 % in the EU).
- The dual workload (combining paid work with unpaid household/caring work) is more balanced between the sexes, although it is still far from being evenly distributed.
- More workers consider their health and safety to be at risk because of work (40 %, in candidate countries, 27 % in the EU)
- Work-related health problems are reported to be higher in the candidate countries, in particular overall fatigue and musculo-skeletal disorders.



Background

The total population in the 12 candidate countries surveyed currently stands at 105 million and the total working population is 43 million. However, there are wide differences between countries, with two countries – Poland (total population 38 million) and Romania (22 million) – accounting for nearly half the total population of the candidate countries. It is important, therefore, to be aware of the fact that since average figures from the survey are weighted according to the total active population of all countries, the results for Poland and Romania tend to have a stronger influence on average figures. This explains why these two countries generally come close to the average figure for the candidate countries.

When comparing results between countries or groups of countries, it should be noted that results will be influenced by structural and cultural differences prevailing in individual countries or groups of countries. Some of these differences are presented below. And, although the methodology and questionnaire in both the third survey in EU countries and first candidate countries' survey were identical, it is important to bear in mind that the former was carried out in 2000 and the latter in 2001.

The survey conclusions documented in this leaflet are based on *average* figures. However, this can mask significant differences, in particular differences prevailing between countries. Therefore conclusions drawn on the basis of the survey may not always reflect the particular situation of a country within the group of candidate countries. Obviously, the same also applies to national comparisons within the group of EU Member States.

Structure of the workforce

The survey reveals some important structural differences between candidate countries and EU Member States, most notably in the distribution of the workforce between sectors and job categories.

Job category

The proportion of workers employed in the higher skilled job categories is lower in candidate countries than in EU Member States (31 % of people are employed in managerial, professional and technical jobs compared to 35 % in EU Member States).

Sector

The proportion of people employed in agriculture is higher in candidate countries (21 % compared to 5 %), but there are wide differences between countries: 45 % in Romania, 19 % in Poland, 18 % in Lithuania, 14 % in Latvia, 5 % in the Czech Republic and 2 % in Malta. The pattern is reversed in the services sector: as

many as 66 % of workers in EU Member States work in this area compared to 47 % in the candidate countries.

Gender

The proportion of women in the workforce is higher in candidate countries than in EU Member States (46 % compared to 42 %). The highest rates are found in the Baltic States (Lithuania 51 %, Latvia 49 % and Estonia 49 %) and the lowest in Malta (30 %). The proportion of women employed in managerial occupations is also higher in candidate countries: 38 % of managers in candidate countries are women, compared to 34 % in the EU.

Employment status

The proportion of self-employed persons is on average higher in candidate countries (22 % compared to 17 % in the EU). There are wide variations between countries: the highest rate is to be found in Poland (33 %) and the lowest in Slovenia (9 %).

As regards employees, a higher proportion has a permanent contract in candidate countries (85 % compared to 82 %). However, average figures regarding employment status tend to mask wide differences between countries. For example, 92 % of employees in Romania are employed on a permanent contract, compared to 55 % in Cyprus. Similarly, while 25 % of employees are on a fixed-term contract in Bulgaria, this is the case for only 3 % of employees in Romania. Finally, 7 % of employees in Latvia are on a temporary agency contract, while there is no temporary agency work in Slovenia.

Company size

A greater proportion of workers in the candidate countries work in companies with less than 50 employees (69 % compared to 61 % in EU Member States).

Age

Relatively more workers over the age of 40 are found in candidate countries (51 %) than in EU Member States (47 %). The average age of employees in candidate countries is 40 years, compared to 39 years in the EU.

Second job

Workers in candidate countries are more likely to have a second job (10 % against 6 % in EU Member States) and to work longer hours in this job (an average of 17.8 hours a week compared to 12.1 hours in the EU).

Gender segregation

Gender segregation, whether horizontal (where women are over-represented in a limited range of

occupations, sectors and employment contracts) or vertical (where women are under-represented in the higher status and higher paid jobs), is not as common in the candidate countries as in EU Member States.

As indicated above, although segregation remains, there is a more even distribution of women between the different job categories and in the occupational hierarchy.

Women in candidate countries are also more likely to be in management positions than their EU Member State counterparts. For example, 71 % of employees report having a man as their immediate boss (75 % in the EU) and 27 % a woman (23 % in the EU), while 18 % of male employees report a woman as their boss, compared to 9 % in the EU.

In candidate countries, 17 % of male employees declare that they are responsible for supervising staff (25 % in the EU), as do 14 % of female employees (14 % in the EU).

The nature of work

Two dimensions illustrate differences between candidate countries and EU Member States: the use of information technology and the worker-client interface.

Information technology

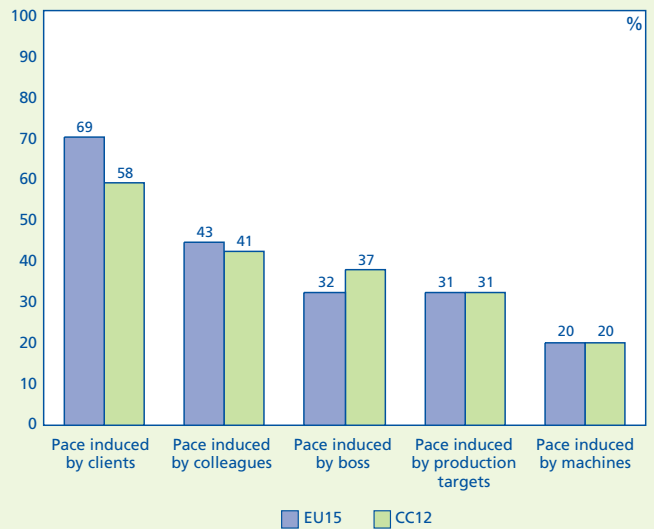
Working with computers is less widespread in the candidate countries than in the EU (12 % report using a computer all of the time compared to 19 % in the EU). Slovenia, Hungary and the Czech Republic have the highest user rates, while Romania and Lithuania have the lowest.

Worker-client interaction

This interaction, which can have a considerable influence on the organisation of work, is more prevalent in EU countries. On average, only 36 % of workers have direct contact with the client in the candidate countries (compared to 43 % in the EU), and there are wide variations from country to country (from 57 % in Cyprus to 31 % in Slovakia).

When considering the factors determining the pace of work, it is clear that customer demands exert a bigger influence in EU countries (see Figure 1). While 69 % of workers in EU Member States say that their pace of work is client-driven, only 58 % do so in the candidate countries. Conversely, the influence exerted by hierarchical demands is higher in candidate countries (37 % compared to 32 % in the EU).

Figure 1 Factors influencing pace of work

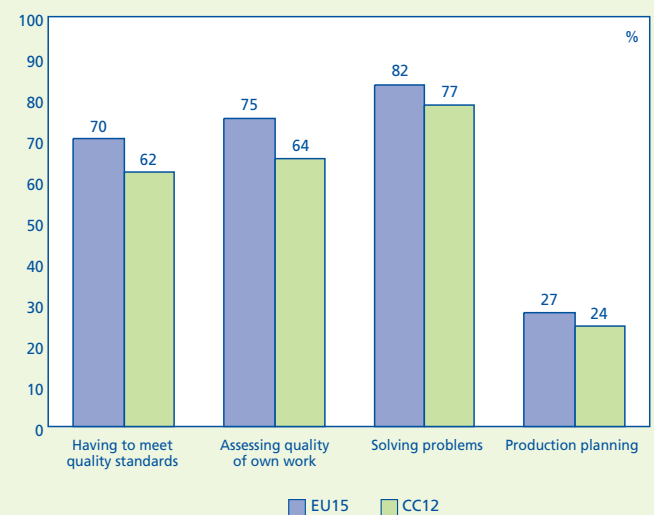


Work organisation

Overall, work organisation in the candidate countries can be described as the more traditional, industrial variety and less service oriented. As shown above, the interaction between workers and clients is not as widespread in the candidate countries. The pace of work is also less likely to depend on external demands and more likely to depend on orders from within the hierarchy (see Figure 1 above).

The organisation of work is also less decentralised and more hierarchical than in the EU: responsibility for quality control and work autonomy is not as developed, while hierarchical control is greater (see Figure 2). Fewer workers are given responsibility for production planning and staffing. Task rotation, which is both a feature of flexibility and multi-skilling, is also less widespread.

Figure 2 Job responsibilities

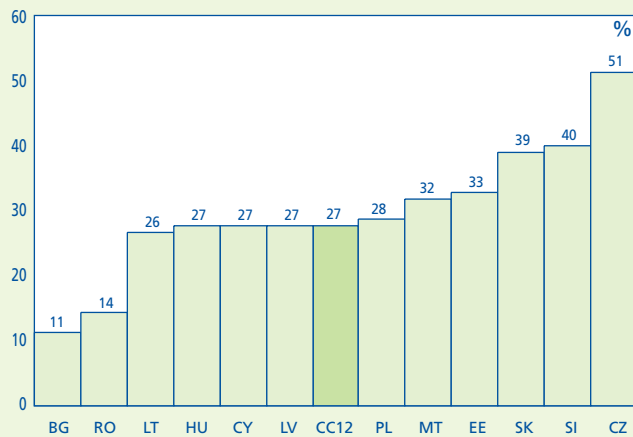


Learning opportunities

There are fewer opportunities for learning on the job in the candidate countries: an average of 65 % of workers claim to benefit from this compared to 72 % in the EU Member States. The highest rates are to be found in Estonia and the Czech Republic (both 77 %), Malta (74 %) and Slovenia (73 %), while the lowest rates are in Lithuania (42 %) and Romania (55 %).

With regard to training provided by companies to their staff over the last 12 months, on average 24 % of workers received training for 3.2 days per person in the candidate countries, while 31 % of workers in EU Member States were trained for an average of 4.4 days. These figures mask wide differences between countries, as is illustrated in Figure 3, with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Estonia reporting the highest levels of training among employees. In the candidate countries, skills are more likely to match the demands of the job than in EU Member States (90 % compared to 84 %).

Figure 3 Training provision over the last 12 months (employees only)



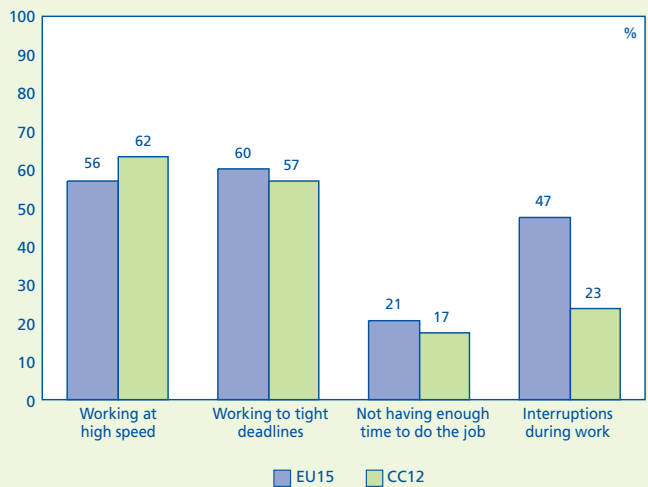
Work intensity

The intensification of work has been a feature of work in the EU over the last ten years. In the candidate countries, while a greater number of workers report working at high speed (candidate countries 62 %, EU Member States 56 %), fewer workers report having to work to tight deadlines (candidate countries 57 %, EU Member States 60 %) and more report having enough time to do their job. In addition, workers from the candidate countries report fewer interruptions in their work (24 % are interrupted 'often or very often', compared to 47 % in the EU). These features are reflective of the more traditional organisation of work to be found in the candidate countries, referred to earlier.

Manual workers, both skilled trades and factory workers, experience the most time constraints in their work. Cyprus, Malta, Poland and Romania are the countries with the highest number of workers reporting high-speed work. Cyprus, the Czech republic and Malta are the countries with the highest number of workers reporting tight deadlines.

Workers working under time pressure tend to report more health problems, in particular musculo-skeletal disorders, overall fatigue and stress. Intensification of work tends to bring about an increase in reported health problems.

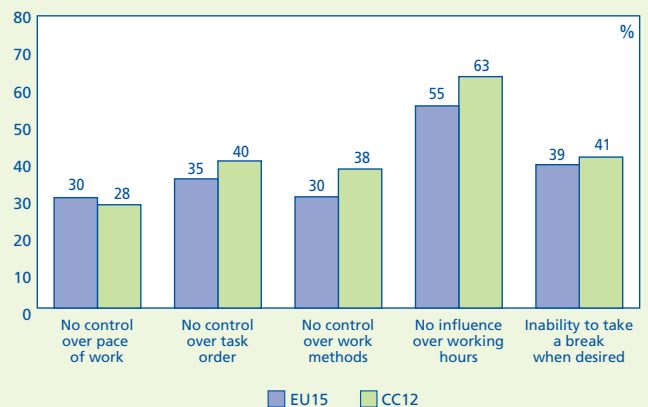
Figure 4 Work intensity



Job control

Job control, signifying either control over work and organisation of tasks, or control over working hours, is considerably lower in the candidate countries (see Figure 5). On the other hand, support from colleagues is reported to be more readily available among candidate country workers (86 %) than their European Union counterparts (83 %).

Figure 5 Job control



Information and consultation

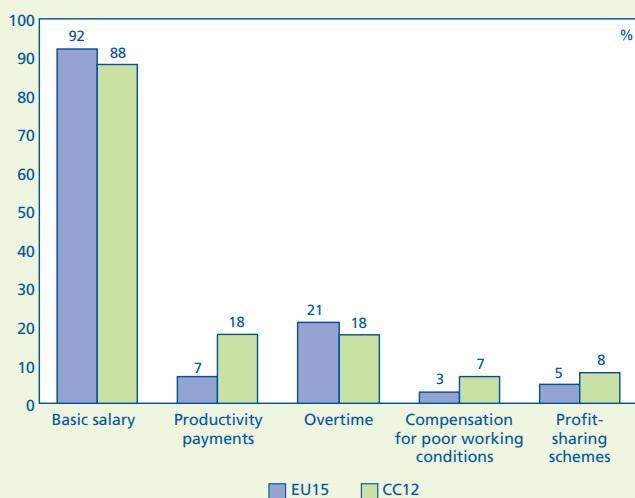
While the proportion of workers able to discuss their working conditions at work is similar in both candidate countries and the EU, the proportion of those able to discuss organisational changes is lower (66 % in the candidate countries, 73 % in the EU). When these discussions take place, staff representatives and outside experts are less likely to be involved in candidate countries than in the EU.

However, when worker consultation does take place, fewer workers in candidate countries are of the opinion that this leads to practical improvements, either at the individual workplace, or in the organisation as a whole.

Payment systems

Fewer employees in candidate countries receive a basic salary (88 % compared to 92 % in the EU). However, a higher proportion is paid compensation for poor working conditions (7 % on average – and 11 % in Slovenia and Romania – compared to 3 % in the EU). Similarly, more workers in candidate countries receive piece rate/productivity payments (18 % compared to 7 % in the EU). These productivity payments are paid to a significant proportion of workers in some countries, with the highest rates being reported in Slovakia (49 %), the Czech Republic (35 %), and Slovenia (28 %). These same countries also score much higher when it comes to the proportion of employees being paid for overtime, weekend work, and payments based on company performance.

Figure 6 Payment systems (employees only)

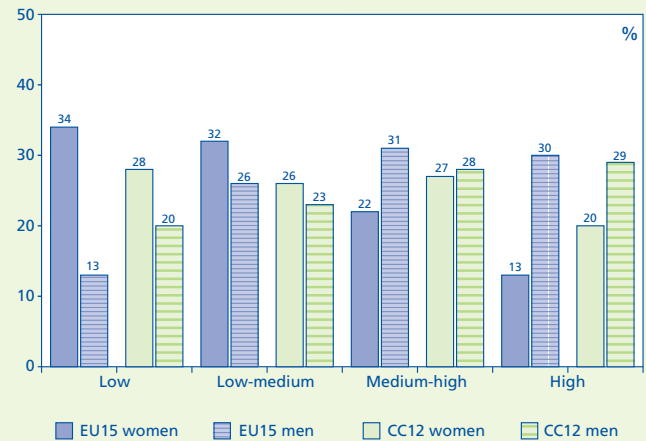


Income levels

The proportion of workers in the lower income bracket is higher in candidate countries (24 %) than in EU Member States (22 %) – see Figure 7. The

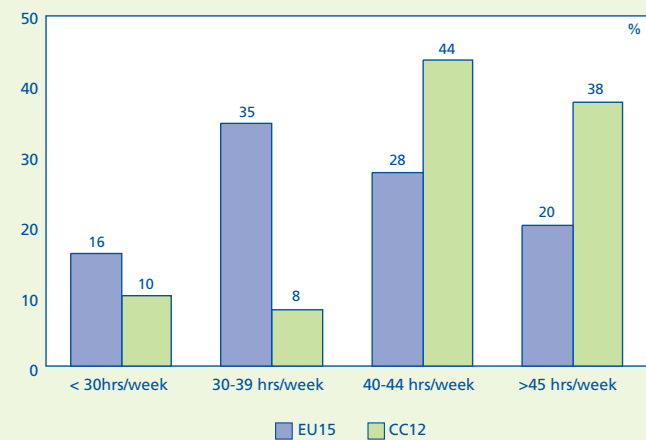
distribution of men and women in the various income brackets is also more equal in the candidate countries.

Figure 7 Income category by gender



An indication of the presence in the candidate countries of less gender segregation, and of less widespread part-time work, is the fact that a higher proportion of women in these countries is found in the higher income bracket and conversely a lower proportion in the lower income bracket.

Figure 8 Average weekly working hours

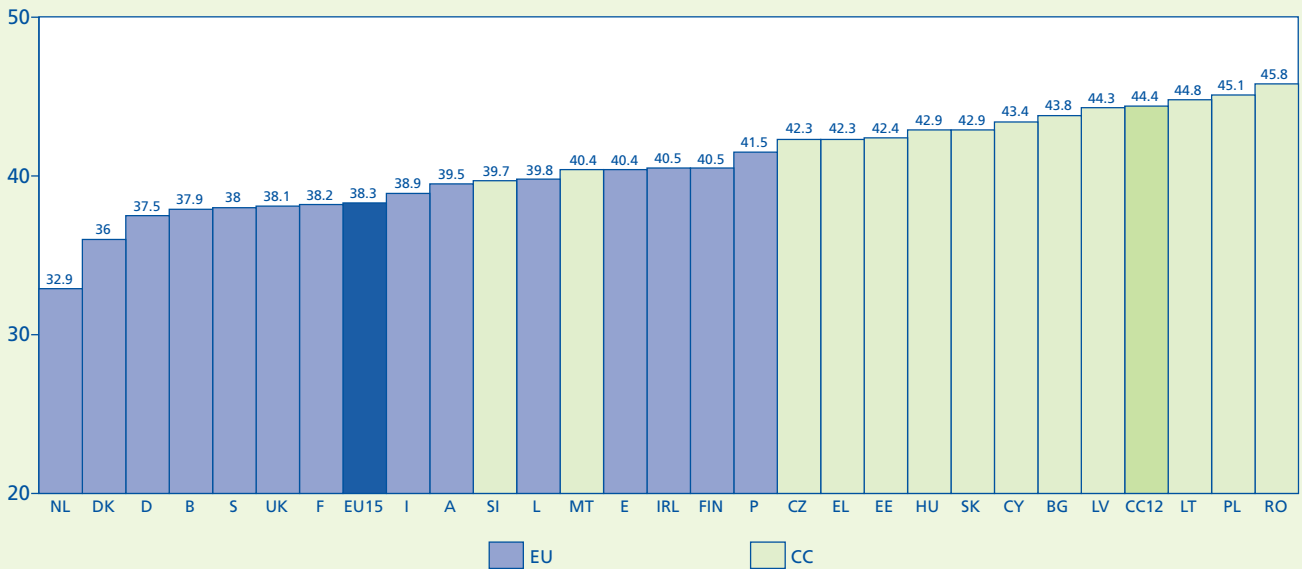


Working time

Workers (both employees and the self-employed) in candidate countries work longer hours, on average 44.4 hours per week (38.2 hours in EU Member States) with little gender difference (men work 45.4 hours per week and women 43.3 hours). Employees work 42.2 hours a week (36.7 hours in EU Member States).

Workers in candidate countries do less part-time work (7 %) than EU workers (17 %), work longer days (44 % over 10 hours a day), and a higher proportion have long working weeks (more than 40 hours): 79 % compared to 48 % in EU Member States.

Figure 9 Weekly working hours by country

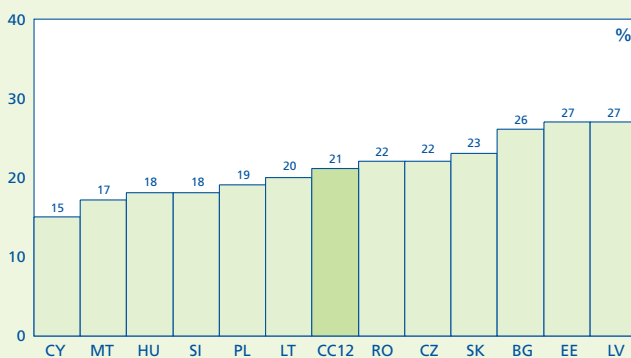


In the candidate countries, not only is part-time work less frequent, it is also more equally divided between the sexes: 6 % of men (7 % in the EU) and 9 % (32 % in the EU) of women work part-time. It also seems to be a less satisfactory option in candidate countries: 46 % of part-time workers report dissatisfaction with the number of hours they work (33 % in EU Member States).

Commuting times are considerably longer in the candidate countries, the average time being 46 minutes a day, compared to 37 minutes in the EU.

Working unsocial hours such as night work and shift work is more frequent in the candidate countries (see Figure 10): 21 % work nights (19 % in the EU), 23 % work shifts (20 % in the EU) and 37 % work on Sundays (27 % in the EU).

Figure 10 Night work by country



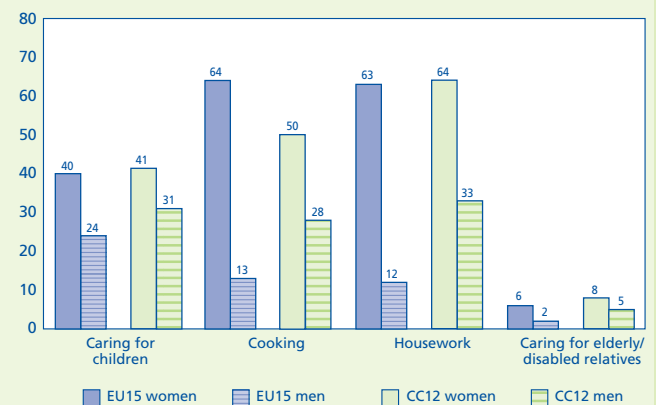
The extent of irregular working hours (not working the same number of hours every day or days every week) is not very different from the EU Member

States. Differences between countries are significant in this regard: the highest rates of irregular time schedules are found in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia.

Dual workload

A comprehensive overview of the total workload should include paid work, (including possible second jobs), time spent commuting to work, and unpaid activities outside work. Men in candidate countries are more likely (often significantly so) than their EU Member State counterparts to be involved in activities such as caring for and educating children, cooking, doing housework and caring for elderly or disabled relatives. This can be explained at least partly by the fact that the proportion of women at work is higher and part-time work is less developed than in EU Member States (see Figure 11).

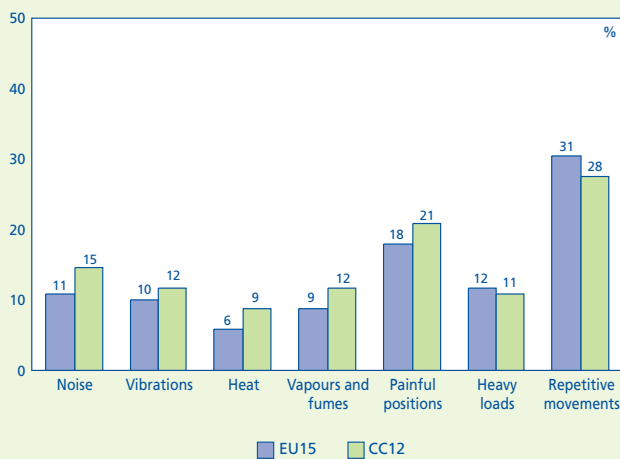
Figure 11 Housework and caring activities



Physical risk factors

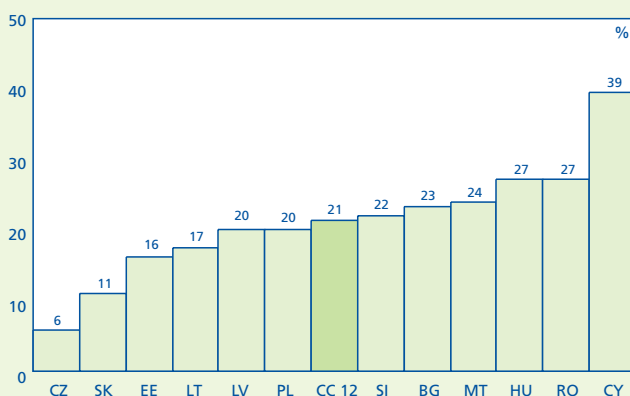
Workers in candidate countries report significantly higher exposure to most of the physical work factors, as shown in Figure 12 below, in particular exposure to noise, heat, and painful positions. However, use of individual protective equipment is more widespread in these countries, especially in Poland, Romania and Slovenia, than in EU Member States. This fact, combined with better information on physical risks in the candidate countries (92 % against 89 % in the EU), particularly in the Czech Republic and Poland, would seem to suggest that there is more individual health and safety prevention in the candidate countries than in EU Member States.

Figure 12 Physical risk factors (workers exposed all the time and almost all the time)



There are important country differences noticeable in the levels of exposure to physical risks factors, as is illustrated in Figure 13 in the case of painful positions. Workers in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are the least subject to painful positions in the workplace, while workers in Cyprus are the most subject.

Figure 13 Painful positions (all the time or almost all the time)

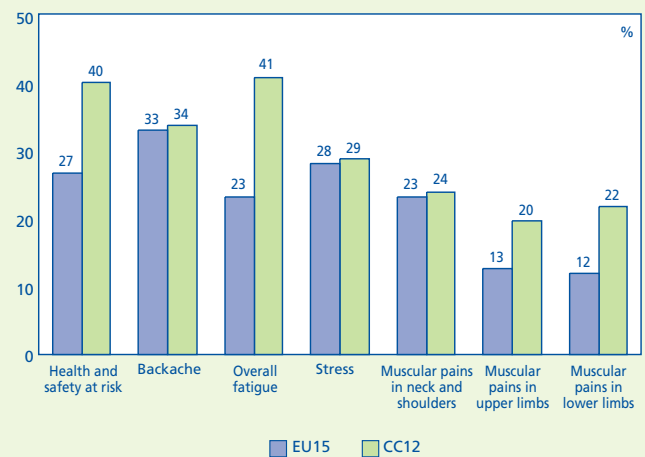


Health and work

40 % of workers in candidate countries consider that their health and safety are at risk because of their work, compared to 27 % in EU Member States. This is reflected in the health problems reported by workers: the problems are significantly more widespread, irrespective of the issue, in the candidate countries than in EU Member States. The most frequently reported work-related health problems are:

- Overall fatigue: 41 %
- Backache: 34 %
- Stress: 29 %
- Muscular pains in neck and shoulders: 24 %.

Figure 14 Work-related health problems



There is only a small difference in the reported prevalence of violence, intimidation and various other forms of discrimination at the workplace between candidate countries and EU Member States. The only difference worthy of note is the rate of exposure to sexual discrimination (more men than women in the candidate countries).

'Work sustainability', indicating the ability to remain in the same job until the age of 60, is lower in the candidate countries. While 58 % of workers in EU Member States think they will be able to do the same job at 60, only 50 % of workers in the candidate countries are of this opinion.

The reported rate of job satisfaction is lower in the candidate countries than in the EU (73 % compared to 84 %). However, it is difficult to draw conclusions from the job satisfaction indicator: the EU working conditions surveys show that a high level of job satisfaction can go hand in hand with over-exposure to risk situations.

Survey methodology

The first survey on working conditions in candidate countries covered a representative sample of the total active population (persons who were either employees or self-employed) in 12 candidate countries, using the 'random walk' procedure. A total of 11,000 workers were interviewed in face-to-face interviews in their own home: 1 000 workers in each of 10 countries and 500 in Cyprus and Malta. The interviews and the data collection were carried out by INRA-Europe.

The interviews were carried out simultaneously during spring 2001. The data was weighted for occupation, sector, sex and age in accordance with Eurostat's Labour Force Survey 2000.

The same questionnaire as for the Foundation's third survey on working conditions, carried out in the 15 EU Member States in 2000, was used. The questionnaire was developed by the Foundation in a working group involving national experts, representatives of employer organisations (UNICE) and trade unions (ETUC) and the European Commission.

Pascal Paoli, Agnès Parent-Thirion and Ola Persson, the authors of this leaflet, are research managers in the area of working conditions at the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Information about the first survey on working conditions in candidate countries or the three surveys on working conditions in the EU mentioned in this leaflet is available on the Foundation's website at www.eurofound.eu.int/working/working.htm. For further information on this subject, please contact John Hurley, Information Liaison Officer, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Tel: (353 1) 204 32 09, e-mail: joh@eurofound.eu.int.

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European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18, Ireland

Tel: (+353 1) 204 31 00 - Fax: (+353 1) 282 42 09 / 282 64 56 - e-mail: postmaster@eurofound.eu.int - website: www.eurofound.eu.int

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