

Title	Working time in the EU
Author	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
Source	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
Pub Date	2012
Brief Introduction	<p>Key findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ The number of hours worked per week continues to drift downwards, on average – the result of more people working part time, fewer people working long hours, and a fall in the collectively agreed working hours in many countries. ➔ Standard working time arrangements – a five-day week of 40 hours, worked Monday to Friday – is still the norm for most Europeans. ➔ Almost one fifth of European workers are having difficulties achieving a satisfactory work–life balance, a slight decrease since 2000. ➔ The use of flexitime has increased in European companies since 2004. Both managers and employee representatives acknowledge the benefits arising from such schemes: higher levels of job satisfaction and a greater ability for the organisation to adapt to variations in the workload. ➔ Working time accounts, where hours can be banked to allow full days to be taken off, have the potential to further boost flexibility for both employers and employees. However, they are not widely available in all countries, and there is little protection for employees in the event of business failure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Part-time work is widely used across Europe, most notably in the Netherlands. On average, around three times as many women work part time as do men, mainly to facilitate their domestic responsibilities. When their unpaid work in the home is factored in, however, women working part time work nearly as many hours per week as do men working full time. ➔ Overtime, compensated for by monetary payments, is the most traditional company strategy for meeting temporary peaks in demand for products or services. Around half of the European workforce works some form of overtime. ➔ On average, around half of all self-employed workers work long hours – more than 48 per week. People who work more than 48 hours per week have more problems in terms of work–life balance and health. Besides they are also more likely to work intensely, and are more likely to work in their free time. ➔ Over the course of the recession, many Member State extended or introduced publicly financed short-time working and temporary layoff schemes in response to falling demand. Between 2008 and 2009, the number of workers on such schemes tripled to almost two million. ➔ A key element in working time is paid leave, and this varies greatly from country to country. Annual leave and public holiday provisions are substantially more generous in such countries as Germany and Denmark than in, say, Romania, where citizens work the equivalent of another two-and-a-half working weeks each year.