

Title	Putting a number on job quality? Constructing a European Job Quality Index
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Abstract	<p>The stated goal of the European Union's Lisbon Strategy, launched in 2000, was to create 'more and better jobs' in Europe. Although lagging behind the targets set – an employment rate of 70%, 60% and 50% for total employment, women and elderly workers respectively by 2010 – some progress has been achieved in bringing more Europeans into paid employment. Moreover, unemployment has come down to levels not seen in many countries since the 1980s.</p> <p>But what about the goal of 'better jobs'? This has been part of the European employment policy agenda since the Belgian presidency of 2001, and, most recently, under the German EU presidency in January 2007 agreement was reached on a set of policy principles covering 'good work'. However, there is a widespread perception that many of the new jobs being created are 'bad jobs'. Increasingly workers are being asked, or forced, to work longer and/or more 'unsocial' hours, and to accept fixed-term and other 'precarious' contracts. Employers are widely seen as being more short-term in orientation, cutting back on investing in training the workforce, offering limited career trajectories and employee benefits and being less open to engage with collective forms of worker interest representation. Is it the case, then, that 'more jobs' has been at the cost of 'better jobs'? Is there a conflict of goals at work? To answer such questions it is necessary to go beyond anecdotal evidence and reference to individual aspects, such as part-time or fixed-term work. What is needed is an indicator of job quality that is comprehensive, comparable, European in scope and timely.</p> <p>The ETUI-REHS research department seeks to contribute to this aim by creating a European Job Quality Index. By compiling indicators and creating an index, we hope to assess in a more encompassing way the nature of job quality in Europe. The aim of producing an annual quantitative index of job quality in Europe is to permit a tracking of shifts over time and a comparison between countries at any given time. The JQI should permit an evaluation of the changing labour market that goes beyond the unemployment and employment rates that are the standard indicators dominating the policy debate.</p>