

Industrial relations and social dialogue

Working time in 2021–2022



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When citing this report, please use the following wording:

Eurofound (2023), *Working time in 2021–2022*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

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Research project: Regular reports for EurWORK – developments in working time

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023

Print: ISBN 978-92-897-2353-4 doi:10.2806/4266 TJ-09-23-442-EN-C

PDF: ISBN 978-92-897-2352-7 doi:10.2806/677895 TJ-09-23-442-EN-N

This report and any associated materials are available online at <https://eurofound.link/ef23007>

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The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency established in 1975. Its role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies according to Regulation (EU) 2019/127.

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Contents

	Introduction	1
	Key findings	2
1.	Developments in working time regulation	3
	Legislative developments	3
	Collective bargaining developments	8
	Major debates concerning working time	9
2.	Weekly working time	13
	Statutory maximum weekly working time	13
	Collectively agreed weekly working hours	14
	Weekly working hours in selected sectors	15
	Usual weekly working hours	19
3.	Annual working time	23
	Paid annual leave	23
	Annual working hours	24
	References	27
	Annexes	29
	Annex 1: Network of European correspondents	29
	Annex 2: Notes to figures	30

Introduction

This review – published every second year – covers the most important developments resulting from legislative reforms and changes from collective bargaining at national or sectoral level in the EU and Norway in 2021 and 2022. It also more specifically investigates the average weekly working hours set by collective agreements, both across national economies and in five specific sectors of activity: chemicals, metalworking, banking, retail and public administration. It examines in some detail the following aspects of working time regulation:

- statutory limits on weekly working time
- average usual weekly working hours
- annual leave entitlements, as set by law and collective agreements
- estimates of average collectively agreed annual working time

After providing a brief overview of the major developments that took place in 2021 and 2022, the report discusses the present status of the duration of working time as a result of collective bargaining. The report complements the EurWORK database of wages, working time and collective disputes, which provides information about the systems in place defining working time, as well as some of the other main outcomes of these systems, from 2000 onwards.¹ This report updates and complements the report on developments in working time in 2019–2020 (Eurofound, 2021) and preceding publications on working time (Eurofound, 2017, 2019), which cover data on some aspects of working time, including collectively agreed working hours.

The current report relies primarily on data provided by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents. Figures provided in this review should be interpreted with caution, and the various notes and explanations taken into account. Making international comparisons regarding the length of collectively agreed working time is problematic. This is because not all countries collect data, and, even if they do, available data from different

sources may not be strictly comparable. Additional factors that prevent such direct comparison include:

- the use of different reference periods (annual, monthly, weekly) for calculating working time
- the reduction of working time in some countries due to extra days off or cuts in annual hours, leaving the normal working week relatively unchanged
- the increasing use of schemes whereby weekly hours may vary considerably but an average must be maintained over different reference periods
- the treatment of specific groups such as part-time workers
- the differing roles of collective bargaining and legislation, with legislation having a direct impact on actual hours in some countries but setting only a maximum ‘safety net’ in others

Comparing working time in different countries is also challenging, as the figures for normal weekly working hours do not consider factors such as overtime, the duration of annual leave (and other forms of leave) or flexible forms of working time organisation.

This review follows the methods of previous editions of the annual review of working time for calculating averages for three groups of EU Member States:

- EU27: the current 27 EU Member States
- EU14: the group of 14 Member States that were part of the EU before its 2004 enlargement – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden
- EU13: the group of 13 Member States that joined the EU in 2004 (Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania) and 2013 (Croatia)

The average figures provided for these groups of countries are weighted in order to reflect the relative sizes of the population aged 15 years or over who are employed full time, according to Eurostat’s European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS).

¹ Available at <http://eurofound.link/wagedatabase>

Key findings

According to the information collected for this report, the most important changes in the regulation of working time in Europe in 2021 and 2022 were related to the transposition of two European directives: the Work–life Balance Directive and the Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive. In the same period, the reduction of working time and more specifically the four-day working week have also been increasingly debated in many EU Member States.

In 2022, the average collectively agreed working week in the EU stood at 38.1 hours. Of the sectors analysed, agreed working hours were shortest in public

administration, at around 37.7 hours – still longer than the overall average – and longest in the retail sector, at 38.5 hours. The average collectively agreed paid annual leave entitlement stood at 24.3 days in the EU, and was higher in the Member States that were part of the EU prior to its 2004 enlargement (EU14), at 25.3 days, than in the other Member States, at only 20.9 days.

All things considered, if working collectively agreed hours, full-time workers in the EU27 would have worked, on average, 1,726 hours in 2022, with an average of 1,698 hours in the EU14 and 1,822 hours in the other Member States.

1 Developments in working time regulation

This chapter gives a brief account of some of the most important developments in the regulation of working time that have taken place across the EU in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. These developments are grouped into three main categories: legislative developments, collective bargaining developments and major debates around the duration of working time.

Between 2021 and 2022 there were many developments in working time across the EU. In legislative terms, it is noteworthy that several Member States took action to transpose the Work-life Balance Directive and/or the Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive. There was also some progress towards the implementation of a four-day working week, although not necessarily associated with a reduction in working time. In terms of collective bargaining, a few agreements reduced normal working hours in specific sectors, and some initiatives were implemented to increase the flexibility of the duration and organisation of working hours. Finally, most of the ongoing debates highlighted by the Network of Eurofound Correspondents were about reducing working time and, more specifically, the four-day working week.

Legislative developments

Transposition of EU directives

Some of the most important developments in terms of working time legislation that took place in 2022 were related to the transposition of two EU directives in national laws.

- Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers establishes that all workers who have an employment contract are entitled to take parental leave, paternity leave or carers' leave and to make use of flexible working schemes. The directive sets minima for those entitlements.
- Directive (EU) 2019/1152 on transparent and predictable working conditions provides all workers with the right of information in writing on the essential aspects of their work, limits to the length of probationary periods, the opportunity to take up jobs with other employers, information in advance about when work will have to be done, prevention of abuse of zero-hour contracts (contracts without a fixed amount of working hours) and free mandatory training.

Through the transposition of both directives in national law, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland and Slovenia implemented important changes in the regulation of working time.

Bulgaria's National Assembly adopted amendments to the Labour Code, effective from 1 August 2022, to transpose both directives. One of the most important changes in terms of working time was the introduction of the opportunity for employees to request from their employer, in writing, an amendment to the employment relationship to transition from part-time to full-time work. The changes also regulate the right to parental leave for fathers (or adoptive fathers) with children up to the age of eight years, guaranteeing their right to financial compensation from state social insurance. They can take up to two months of leave either at one time or in smaller durations.

In **Croatia**, amendments to the Labour Act, which regulates working time, were adopted by the parliament on 16 December 2022. The most relevant to working time are the amendments providing additional protection of certain categories of workers, namely parents of children up to eight years of age, in the case of irregular working hours or overtime work. Since then, after extensive debates, the government have prepared amendments to the Labour Act to transpose the two abovementioned EU directives into Croatia's legislation. The amendments will introduce changes to permanent seasonal jobs, including giving workers the opportunity to work for an open-ended period and to work out of season. They also regulate fieldwork, working from home and other remote work in more detail. The right of workers to unpaid leave of five days a year to provide personal care to a family or household member and their right to be absent from work for one day due to urgent family matters are also being introduced.

Hungary also modified its Labour Code, with the amendments effective from 1 January 2023. Paternity leave was one of the most relevant changes. According to the amended Labour Code, a father is entitled to 10 working days of leave, to be granted by the end of the second month following the birth (or adoption) of the child, which is to be taken in two instalments at the time of his request. However, whereas during the first five working days of paternity leave the worker is entitled to a full absence allowance, for the next five working days they only receive 40% of this allowance. The Labour Code also provides for 44 working days of parental leave

up until the child is three years old, while the directive establishes a total of four months of parental leave up to the child's eighth birthday. The employees are only entitled to 10% of the absence allowance (reduced by the amount of the childcare allowance paid to the employee for that period). Flexible working arrangements for parents of children up to the age of eight are another addition to the code, with parents being able to request part-time work, telework or flexible working hours. According to the revised Labour Code, the workers may also request a change of place of work and working hours, telework or part-time work, except during the first six months of employment.

In terms of the transposition of the Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive in national legislation, the changes to the Hungarian Labour Code have to do with the employers' obligation to inform employees about their working conditions. The new provisions require much more detailed information to be provided to the worker and a shorter deadline for the information to be handed over. Concerning working time, in addition to the duration of daily working time, the written information must indicate the days of the calendar week on which the employee must work, the deadline by which the employer must communicate the employee's work schedule, the possible duration of extraordinary working time and the specific nature of the employer's activities.

In **Ireland**, the directives have been incorporated through the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act and an amendment to the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. The work-life balance act introduces a right to request flexible working arrangements for parents and carers, and a right to request remote work for all employees. It also introduces the right of mothers to breastfeeding/lactation breaks, from 26 weeks to 104 weeks. Parental leave and benefits were extended from five to seven weeks in July 2022. A further extension to nine weeks' leave and additional benefits are expected in 2024. The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 now provides that work assignments must take place within the hours and days communicated to the employee as part of their written terms of employment. Where notice of a work assignment provided to an employee is not within the minimum period of 24 hours or the work assignment is to take place outside the specified hours and days, the employee has the possibility to refuse the work assignment and cannot be penalised for doing so.

In **Slovenia**, the Employment Relationships Act was implemented to transpose the two EU directives in national legislation (MDDSZ, 2022a). Compliance with the Work-life Balance Directive led to two provisions regarding working time. The first provides parents and carers with the right to request short-time work, which must be answered by the employer, in writing, within 15 days. The second provides each worker with the right

to carers' leave of five working days a year. In accordance with the Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive, time spent on education and training is now considered regular working time.

Cyprus also introduced legislative changes in 2022 transposing the Work-life Balance Directive in national law. A new law on paternity leave, parental care, *force majeure* and flexible working arrangements was passed in early December 2022, and revoked previous laws (Cyprus Bar Association, 2022). Now every working father is entitled to paternity leave of two consecutive weeks, which can be taken from the birth of the child up to two weeks after the end of maternity leave (the benefit – in lieu of wages – is 72% of the benefit covering maternity leave). Moreover, every working parent who has completed 6 months of continuous service with the same employer is entitled to 18 weeks of paid (through a benefit from the Social Insurance Fund) parental leave for each child under the age of 8 or each adopted child under the age of 12 or each disabled child under the age of 18. Parental leave is extended to 23 weeks for widowed parents. In addition, every worker is allowed five days of unpaid care leave (to provide personal care or support to a relative or person living in the same household as them) and seven days of unpaid leave for reasons of *force majeure* (to deal with urgent family matters involving an illness or accident that require immediate personal care to be given by the employee) per year. The new law also allows for flexible work arrangements, that is, employees who have children up to eight years of age have the opportunity to request the adjustment of their work through telework, working flexible hours or reducing their working hours.

Italy also incorporated the Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive through Legislative Decree 104/2022, known as the Transparency Decree (*Decreto Trasparenza*). It is mandatory in contractual agreements for employers to inform employees of their working hours and scheduling. Where working hours are predictable, the employer is obliged to inform the employee about normal working hours and overtime conditions, including remuneration. If, however, the organisation of working time is difficult to predict, the legislation provides that the employer must inform the employee of this, indicating the minimum number of paid hours they must work and the remuneration they will receive for overtime, and the hours and days on which the work is to be performed (QuiFinanza, 2022).

On 16 June 2022, the **Latvian** government also adopted several amendments to the Labour Law (valid from 1 August 2022) concerning the organisation of working time and leave (Latvijas Republikas Saeima, 2022). The employer was given more responsibility in the organisation of working time: an employee whose work schedule is not completely or mostly predictable may ask to, after the end of their probationary period, be

transferred to a job where the work schedule is completely or mostly predictable. This is possible if there is such a role in the organisation or firm and the employee has worked for the employer for at least six months. The employer has an obligation to provide a justified response to the employee in writing within one month from the day of receiving the request.

In the **Netherlands**, the Transparent and Predictable Terms of Employment Act (*Wet transparante en voorspelbare arbeidsvoorwaarden*) was introduced in August 2022. The aim of this law, based on the similarly named directive, is to strengthen the position of the employee vis-à-vis the employer. While Dutch legislation already included many of the requirements set out in the directive, some important changes were introduced, for example regarding the provision of written or electronic information to new and existing employees, the provision of compulsory training by the employer, the prohibition of the performance of ancillary work by the employee and the opportunity for the employee to request more predictable working conditions.

Option to work a four-day week

The **Belgian** Labour Deal of 3 October 2022 introduced, among other things, the possibility of a four-day working week for full-time employees in the private sector. When the actual weekly working time is equal to or less than 38 hours, the maximum daily working time can be increased to 9.5 hours per day through an amendment to employment conditions. When the actual weekly working time exceeds 38 hours (with a maximum of 40 hours), a collective agreement may provide that the daily working time is equal to the actual weekly working time divided by four. Employees have the right to request a four-day working week and employers must justify their refusal.

Similarly, in **Greece**, Law 4808/2021 provides for the possibility of a four-day working week but without a reduction in working time. Subject to an agreement between the employee and the employer, in the case of full-time contracts, employees are given the opportunity to work a four-day week on a full-time basis for 40 hours a week and 10 hours per day. This working time arrangement system may be applied for a certain period in one calendar year. When this system is applied, employees are not permitted to work for more than 10 hours per day or 40 hours per week across 4 days.

Flexibility of working time

The **Belgian** Labour Deal also introduced provisions regarding the organisation of working time. The deadline for announcing the work schedules of part-time employees with variable schedules changed from five to seven working days in advance. This deadline may be amended by a collective labour

agreement declared universally binding by royal decree, but it can never be less than three working days. Full-time employees now have the option to arrange their working time according to a cycle over two consecutive weeks. During that cycle, employees can work up to 9 hours per day and up to 45 hours per week provided that their working hours in the first week is directly balanced by their working hours in the second week, or vice versa, to comply on average with normal weekly working hours. For example, if full-time employees, normally working 38 hours per week, work 45 hours in one week, they must work 31 hours in the next. Similarly, employees have the right to request this arrangement and employers must justify their refusal.

In **Finland**, an amendment to the Working Hours Act of 2020 entered into force on 1 January 2022. It allows for more flexibility in collective agreements to agree on working times beyond regular working hours in cases where the work is carried out only occasionally, for example during shifts when employees are required to be available for work (typically the case in emergency and rescue services). Collective agreements can now provide for the possibility of employees working 24-hour shifts and their weekly working time exceeding 40 hours per week on average, as no statutory upper limit was set. According to information gathered by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, key players in the emergency services sector considered 42 hours per week to be an average suitable for the sector's needs. The party liable for breaches of the emergency work provision was also clarified: employers breaching the limits are liable to a fine.

In October, the **Romanian** parliament passed a new law (Law 283/2022) that allows employees to request individual work schedules based on their personal needs. Flexible working arrangements may be agreed for a short or long period and may include remote working, working to a flexible schedule or part-time work. The employer is obliged to communicate responses to requests in writing within five days in the event of a refusal. The law also clarifies the meaning of working time by stating that employers use work schedules to organise work activities in terms of the hours and days when the work should begin and end.

Part-time work

In June 2022, the **Czech** parliament approved Act No. 2016/2022 Coll., proposed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The act favours part-time work for certain groups of workers. The law introduces social insurance relief for employers who employ – for between 8 and 30 hours per week – workers from economically inactive groups, including individuals older than 55, workers with disabilities, students, workers caring for children under 10 or other dependants, or recent graduates.

The amendments to **Lithuanian** Labour Code No. XII-2603, which came into force on 1 August 2022, introduced important changes regarding working time. One of the most important changes is the expansion of the cases in which an employer is obliged to grant an employee's request for part-time work. The following employees are included: (a) employees with children up to the age of eight (before, the age was three); (b) employees caring for a person they live with, where the employee submits a statement from a healthcare institution to that effect (before, the code referred to family members only). Provided that employees' requests to work remotely or work flexible hours do not entail excessive costs, employers are obliged to grant the requests when they are made by (a) an employee who is pregnant, who recently gave birth or who is breastfeeding; (b) an employee who is raising a child up to the age of eight; (c) an employee who is a single parent raising a child up to the age of 14 or a disabled child up to the age of 18; or (d) an employee whose request is based on the conclusion of a healthcare institution on their state of health or their need to care for a family member or a person living with them.

Recording working time

In Germany, Greece and Slovenia there were important developments regarding the recording of working time.

In early September 2022, the **German** Federal Labour Court ruled that employers must introduce a system for recording working time regardless of the company's size (BAG, 2022). On 3 December 2022, the court published a statement describing what a legally secure time recording system must look like and underlining that the employers are obliged to introduce an accurate system and ensure its correct use. The system must be able to record the start and end of working time (duration of working time), break times and overtime. In principle, all employees have to record their working time. The only exceptions are executive employees, who have a high degree of freedom to make decisions in their area of responsibility (Personio, 2023).

In July 2022, **Greece** introduced a digital job card through Law No. 4808/2021 (Article 74). Employers are thereby obliged to operate an electronic system for measuring working time, which is connected in real time to the ERGANI II information technology system of the Ministry of Labour. The system was introduced in 2013 to record (in real time) all employment flows in the private sector of the economy, including recruitment, voluntary departures and dismissals, and data on overtime, part-time work and job rotation, firm-level agreements and annual leave. The digital labour card is used by the Labour Inspectorate to check companies' compliance with working hours and to combat undeclared work, underdeclared work, unpaid overtime and social contributions evasion, and protect workers and businesses that comply with the rules from unfair competition. In a pilot phase, the measure was applied

to establishments with more than 250 employees in the banking and supermarkets sectors. The second phase of digital job card implementation concerns insurance companies and security companies, and started in February 2023. It will be extended in 2023 to manufacturing and public utility companies and gradually to all enterprises in the country, regardless of their size or sector of activity.

In **Slovenia**, the amended Labour and Social Security Registers Act was adopted as a policy response to reports of foreign workers' exploitation. In June 2022, the Counselling Office for Workers disclosed a story about 12 Indian migrant workers in fish processing factories. They worked exceedingly long hours, slept in the factory, were under video surveillance and, if they slowed down, would receive a phone call from management telling them to speed up. They were recruited by a Portuguese temporary work agency that had failed to register in Slovenia and was therefore illegal. The scandal prompted the Labour Inspectorate to propose that all employers be required to provide electronic evidence of working time. The amended legislation obliges employers to keep detailed evidence of working time, including the exact times employees start and end shifts, rest periods and overtime, unevenly distributed working time, and the total number of hours employees work over weeks and months (MDDSZ, 2022b).

New rules for on-call workers

In **Estonia**, a change in the Employment Contracts Act regarding on-call working time entered into force in December 2022. Now, daily and weekly rest time requirements no longer apply to full-time employees whose duties are to ensure the continuous functioning of information and communication technology services, infrastructure and information security. The rest time requirements do not apply on condition that the employee can perform duties that are required of them during on-call time without having to go to their place of work. This change in legislation was first proposed by the Estonian Employers' Confederation in April 2022, with the aim of introducing flexibility in employment contracts to better accommodate the specific needs of workers in information and communication technology in public and private services. As the demand for critical information services in fields such as public administration and energy has increased in the light of the current international security situation in the country, it is important for information and communications technology workers to be reachable outside the workplace. According to the employers' confederation proposal, flexible contracts that allow workers to be on call for longer without requiring them to be physically present in the workplace help ensure public access to critical information and communications technology services (ETKL, 2022).

The change to on-call working time legislation was also discussed in a tripartite meeting, including the Estonian Employers' Confederation, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation and the Ministry of Social Affairs, in the wider context of debates regarding updating employment contracts to increase their flexibility.

New rules for telework

In Croatia, Norway, Poland and Portugal, regulatory changes related to telework and remote work were implemented, with implications for working time.

In **Croatia**, new regulations regarding working from home were introduced in 2022 through amendments to the Labour Act. Work can be performed from home on a permanent, temporary or occasional basis if the employee and the employer agree on the working arrangement, provided that the nature of the work allows it and that there is a low risk in accordance with the regulations on occupational safety. The main reasons to be considered are (a) the protection of health in relation to diagnosed illnesses or established disabilities, (b) pregnancy or parental obligations of workers with children under eight years old and (c) the provision of personal care by workers to a member of their immediate family or a member of their household. However, in extraordinary circumstances, such as epidemics, earthquakes or floods, the employer may require employees to work from home without changing their employment contract to enable business activities to continue, and to protect the health and safety of employees and other people.

In **Poland**, the 2022 Labour Code revision introduced and amended several working systems, including remote working, flexible working time schedules (flexitime, individual working schedules, weekend working time, shortened working week and intermittent work) and part-time work.

Some of the most important changes, which came into force in April 2023, set out the legal grounds for working outside the employer's premises. Employers should set their own rules regarding who can work remotely and on what conditions, in dialogue with trade unions or other employee representatives. Caregivers (parents of small children or people taking care of family members with disabilities or illnesses), pregnant workers and employees with disabilities are priority groups when deciding who can work remotely. Employers can deny an employee's request to work remotely but must justify their decision based on the organisation of work or the specifics of the employee's position. The responsibility for protecting employees' health and safety falls mostly on employees themselves, but the employer must provide all the necessary equipment and training and reimburse the costs of electricity,

connectivity and so on. In addition, employees can ask to perform 'occasional remote work' for up to 24 days per year, which involves a lighter regulatory burden but no compensation for expenses.

In **Portugal**, an important change resulted from an amendment to the Labour Code provided by Law 83/2021 regulating telework, which entered into force on 1 January 2022. The law establishes that the implementation of telework regimes always requires a written agreement to be signed between the employee and the employer/company. Written teleworking agreements can define a regime of alternating periods of distance work and face-to-face work and must contain the normal period of daily and weekly working hours. Such agreements may be included in the initial employment contract or in a separate contract (Portuguese government, 2021).

In **Norway**, an amended administrative regulation, with effect from 1 July 2022, was implemented covering work that is carried out in employees' homes; it strengthens the regulation of working hours in addition to implementing other changes. The regulation applies when employees' actual weekly working hours are more than three hours on average during a period of four weeks. The new regulations on 'home office' work (as it is called in Norway) replaced earlier regulations with special rules on working hours and state that the same rules for working time must apply to work carried out from home/telework as to work conducted at the workplace (Regjeringen, 2022).

Legislation to combat time poverty

In **Spain**, in 2022, the government prepared legislation on time use, with the objective of combating 'time poverty', that is, having difficulty in reconciling work and family life and having little or no free time. The Ministry of Labour and Social Economy commissioned a group of experts to prepare a report analysing the issue and outlining proposals to tackle it (Congreso de los Diputados, 2013). This document opened a debate and will lay the foundations for regulation that will affect people's lives and how they spend their time. It discusses three measures to empower workers in their workday: agreed working time flexibility and methods of compacting the workday; a bank of hours available to employees; and plans to improve workers' use of time. However, the impact of the legislation on time use is expected to go far beyond the workplace, affecting other areas of life. For example, it proposes that, in municipalities of a certain size, plans could be made to adapt public services such as transport and nurseries to the rhythms of citizens and their needs. In this context, public administrations could make proposals based on their knowledge and experience of their environment to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants.

Collective bargaining developments

The most significant developments in working time in 2022 resulting from collective bargaining were related to the reduction of working time or the flexibilisation of working hours. Some agreements introduced variable working hours; others extended existing limits on working hours for shifts, or increased workers' leave entitlements.

It is noteworthy that, while the Member States mentioned above used legislation to implement the provisions of the EU Work–life Balance Directive of 20 June 2019, the Belgian social partners used a collective agreement to do so. On 27 September 2022, the National Labour Council approved Collective Agreement No. 162 establishing a right to request a flexible working arrangement (CNT-NAR, 2022), which introduced the right of private sector employees to request flexible working arrangements for the purposes of fulfilling caring responsibilities.

Reduction of working time

In **Austria**, working time was reduced from 38 to 37 hours per week in the private social care sector (a sector with demanding working conditions), a change which had already been negotiated in the three-year collective bargaining agreement signed in spring 2020. As of 1 January 2022, employees' working hours were reduced by one hour per week, with their pay remaining the same. Besides the large sectoral agreement, which covers around 120,000 employees, Caritas – a social aid organisation of the Catholic Church – implemented a 37-hour working week as of 2023 through a collective agreement covering around 15,000 employees.

In **Portugal**, a reduction in normal working hours was provided for in a company-level agreement between INOVA-EN, a local municipal company in Cantanhede, whose main activities are the capture and distribution of water for public consumption, and the Union of Workers of Public Administration and Entities with Public Purposes. This agreement, covering around 150 workers, includes a provision on the progressive reduction of normal working hours, from 8 to 7 hours a day and from 40 to 35 hours a week, until 2024.

Flexibilisation of working hours

In **Italy**, several national collective agreements have introduced changes to working time. The national collective bargaining agreement (NCBA) for the public health sector (signed in November 2022) provides for derogations and allowances in relation to working time: the normal working time is 36 hours per week and can be carried out through various flexible arrangements for the organic distribution of workload. Shift scheduling,

to facilitate distribution, must be formalised by the 20th day of the previous month. Additional flexibility is provided to parents with young children, and an additional break of 30 minutes is included if daily working time exceeds 6 hours. Employees working night shifts are entitled to a special allowance.

Also in Italy, the chemical–pharmaceutical NCBA (signed in June 2022) recognises that workers who perform management functions are not subject to time limitations and do not receive overtime bonuses. However, it establishes special bonuses for these workers if they are required to perform additional work on Saturdays or at night (Bollettino ADAPT, 2022).

The NCBA for the metalworking industry (signed in February 2021) provides for various possibilities for the employer in terms of reorganising working time, including the possibility of unilaterally planning the daily division (including in a non-uniform manner) of the ordinary 40-hour working week, after consultation with the trade unions, or the possibility of unilaterally defining the changing working patterns from 'day' to 'shift' hours in particular cases (Malandrini, 2022).

Finally, an NCBA for agricultural and floricultural workers signed in May 2022 provides for the possibility of making normal working hours, overtime, holidays and night working hours more flexible for various types of activity. Special work organisation requirements for agritourism activities can be established by territorial agreements.

Variable hours agreement in the retail sector

In **Estonia**, the Employment Contracts Act was amended through a variable hours agreement, according to which a part-time employee may perform up to eight hours of work in addition to their agreed working time over a period of seven days (variable hours). The agreed working time and variable hours combined should not exceed full-time working hours. A goodwill agreement between social partners and the Ministry of Social Affairs was signed to pilot the working of variable hours in the retail sector, and the change in the Employment Contracts Act was enforced in December 2021. Normally, part-time employees who wish to work additional hours would need to sign additional contracts, namely contracts under the Law of Obligations Act. However, as the retail industry experiences great seasonal variation due to promotions and holiday periods, the demand for labour in this sector can be volatile. The change was aimed at reducing the need to use contracts under the Law of Obligations Act and allow regular employment contracts to be used by employees working flexible hours, as these are more beneficial to workers because they provide more social protection.

Extension of working time

In **Finland**, in April 2022, a collective agreement between the Paperworkers' Union (Paperiliitto) and the paper and forest industry company UPM resulted in a 30-minute extension of weekly working time for employees in shift work in graphic paper production, as per a proposal of the National Conciliator's Office. Depending on the contractual working time, the agreement will result in an increase in working hours by between 24 and 32 hours per year. The former universally applicable agreement for the paper industry of 2020–2021 had five different standard working time agreements for five categories of contractual working time arrangements. In factory departments where uninterrupted operation is necessary for technical production reasons, regular working time is 8 hours per day and an average of 34.5 hours per week across a 1-year period. The Paperworkers' Union organised 2,000 members in industrial action across nearly 4 months, targeting 12 UPM units. For UPM, it was a priority to negotiate five different collective agreements for five industries, and an extension of working time for graphic paper production. For the union, a unified front in all industries was key. The union also refused to accept the working time extension until proper reimbursement was included in the agreement. UPM managed to negotiate five separate agreements, but it only signed them once all had been agreed, thus aiming to harmonise working conditions (Helsingin Sanomat, 2022a). The paper industry is closely followed in collective bargaining rounds in Finland, as employers announced in 2020 that they will no longer negotiate nationwide collective agreements.

Additional harmonised leave

In line with the family leave reform in **Finland**, JUKO (the negotiation body for the peak-level trade union the Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland in the public sector), Trade Union Pro and the Trade Union for the Public and Welfare Sectors (Julkisten- ja hyvinvointialojen liitto) negotiated for an equal number of days of paid parental leave for both parents in the collective agreement for university employees. Employees have the right to 40 days of paid pregnancy leave, and now both parents are entitled to 32 days of paid parental leave. Employers were represented by the Finnish Education Employers (Sivistystyönantajat) (Helsingin Sanomat, 2022b).

In **Lithuania**, at the end of 2021, a national collective agreement for the public sector was signed for the year 2022. In this agreement, the government and the social partners agreed on additional paid rest or holiday days for training or self-education (up to 2 days per year) and for education or study leave (up to 10 working days per year, with payment based on average remuneration; or up to 20 working days, with payment equating to 50% of average remuneration) or healthcare (up to 5 working

days) for employees that are members of signatory trade unions.

Major debates concerning working time

Four-day week

The four-day week was the most debated issue in 2022 in the EU, being discussed in Austria, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain.

The topic of implementing a shorter working week has been in discussion for about a decade in **Austria**, mostly triggered and supported by organised labour. More recently, the four-day working week got some media attention, mostly initiated and pushed by the Chamber of Labour (AK). In several collective agreements, the possibility of a four-day working week is already provided for by the implementation of a works agreement in the companies (or through individual agreements if there is no works council in the company). In those cases, when working hours are regularly and evenly distributed across four days, normal daily working hours may be extended to 10 hours. However, for workers with care duties, this may not seem attractive, as it means working four very long days.

In **Spain**, there is also debate on the introduction of the four-day working week. The government launched a pilot project to evaluate the impact of the four-day working week. The project was aimed at small and medium-sized industrial companies that would reduce working time by at least 10%. The objective was to analyse the influence of a four-day working week on productivity. A precondition for a company participating in the project was that the proposal and implementation of the work arrangement is based on social dialogue between worker representatives and the company (Government of Spain, 2022).

The Four Day Week Ireland campaign in **Ireland** was renewed in late 2022 (having been quiet since late 2021) when the results of the first national trial were revealed. The trial in Ireland, taking place between February and July 2022, involved 12 companies employing 188 people and was conducted by University College Dublin, the University of Cambridge and Boston College (backed by Fórsa, the public service trade union, and carried out in partnership with Four Day Week Ireland). A compressed working week of 32 hours gained the approval of many employers, and unanimous support from employees (Industrial Relations News, 2022). Most companies opted to cut Friday out of the workweek, but some companies chose other days. The trial was particularly successful for women, who reported a significant improvement in life satisfaction, saw gains in sleep time and reported feeling more secure in their employment than they did in their regular working arrangement.

The overall average satisfaction rate among employers was 9.2 (on a scale of 0–10). They gave a company performance rating of 8.1 and a productivity rating of 7.6. Three-quarters of the firms said that they would continue with a four-day week, while the rest plan to continue with a four-day week but have not committed to it yet. The trial also showed statistically significant reductions in burnout and anxiety, and an increase in job satisfaction among employees.

One of the most discussed issues in **Lithuania** in 2022 was the draft amendment to the Labour Code that was initiated by the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania at the end of 2021. The amendment proposed the shortening of the working week to four working days (32 hours) for employees of state and municipal enterprises, institutions and organisations who have returned early from parental leave. The objective of this measure is to encourage employees to return to work earlier, without losing their skills and their connection to the workplace, and, at the same time, allowing them to care for young children. The draft amendment to the Labour Code proposes the introduction of a four-day working week for public-sector employees with children up to the age of three years, without reducing their salary (PRL, 2022). This proposal has aroused a strong reaction not only among Members of Parliament but also among employer representatives. The opposition, while broadly supportive of the idea, argued that the same provisions should be applied in the private sector, to avoid discriminating against parents working in the sector (tv3.lt, 2022). The proposal of the opposition was supported by trade union representatives but opposed by employer representatives. Despite the fierce debate, the amendments to the Labour Code were adopted on 21 April 2022, and came into effect on 1 January 2023. The reduced working time of 32 hours per week applies to parents (including adoptive parents) or guardians working in state and municipal institutions, enterprises and the Bank of Lithuania until the child reaches the age of three years in the case of employees' early return from parental leave (PRL, 2022).

In **Portugal**, the four-day workweek was a topic of debate in the context of a government programme and the Decent Work Agenda. A pilot project is being implemented involving companies that do not reduce workers' wages, involve most workers in the project and effectively reduce weekly working hours. The pilot project, starting in June 2023, has a duration of six months and will not receive public funding. The project will end in the second quarter of 2024, with the completion of a survey by the companies and employees involved (Citeforma, 2022).

On the one hand, the General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers rejected a four-day working week with any increase in daily working hours to longer than eight hours, because implementing a four-day week

with eight or fewer daily hours has been a goal of workers for more than a century. The confederation stated that it will continue to fight for a reduction in weekly working hours in the private sector, from 40 hours to 35 hours (Dinheiro Vivo, 2022a).

On the other hand, the Portuguese Tourism Confederation considers the discussion of a four-day working week 'premature'. The confederation, representing companies in the tourism sector, says that it is impossible to combine wage increases with a reduction from five to four days of work per week, stressing that 'the project is inopportune and starts badly' by predicting a possible drop in productivity as a result of a reduction in workload, for which companies will have to face without any support. The confederation also states that tourism 'is not a sector that will benefit' from the four-day working week, indicating that 'most companies operate seven days a week, 24 hours a day'. Sharing the same opinion, the Confederation of Portuguese Business said that 'the timing is not appropriate', as companies are currently facing the effects of both COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine (Dinheiro Vivo, 2022b).

The discussion around a four-day week recently started in **Latvia**. In December 2022, the Social and Labour Affairs Commission of the Saeima (the Latvian parliament) started discussing a four-day, 32-hour work week. The Chairman of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, Egils Baldzēns, was the only one who supported this proposal. In general, employers do not support this idea.

Working time reduction

In Luxembourg, Norway and Poland, debates took place around the reduction of working time, although not specifically referring to the four-day week.

In **Luxembourg**, shortly after taking office in January 2022 the new Minister for Labour, Employment and the Social and Solidarity Economy, Georges Engel, put forward a proposal to reduce working time. Engel stressed that the regular working week of 40 hours in Luxembourg is longer than the legal working weeks in Belgium (38 hours) and France (35 hours), and that there is a need to increase the attractiveness of Luxembourg's labour market. While trade unions welcomed Engel's proposal, the Prime Minister, Xavier Bettel (of the Democratic Party), declared that implementing a general reduction in working time was not a good choice in the context of increasing labour market shortages.

The Chamber of Employees (Chambre des salariés) announced its support for the reduction of weekly working time. The chamber put forward results from its recurrent Quality of Work survey, in which workers, especially those aged 35–44 years, self-declare increasing difficulties in balancing family and work. Workers also report an increasing risk of burnout.

The Luxembourg Employers' Association highlighted obstacles to the general reduction of working time, in particular the current labour market shortages, and advocated the flexibilisation of working time organisation to grant employers more freedom. The sectoral employer organisation Federation of Craftsmen (Fédération des artisans) also stated its opposition to an overall reduction of working time by law. The federation said that it would be better to negotiate the flexibilisation of working time at company level. Working time will certainly become an issue during the campaign for the general election in October 2023.

In **Poland**, there was also a political debate on shortening working time. The left-wing opposition party Left Together (Lewica Razem) submitted a legislative proposal for a 35-hour working week. The leader of the major opposition force Platforma Obywatelska proposed that some sort of experimentation be conducted on this. Several polls on the subject showed that the proposal of 'less work for the same pay' is widely supported by Polish society, so it is likely to be a widely discussed topic in the upcoming election campaign.

In **Norway**, working time reduction was also on the agenda of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions Congress held in May 2022. The congress recognised that the unions held different views on the matter, and concluded in the confederation's action plan that the trade unions would defend standard working hours and strengthen the trade union movement's influence on the organisation of working time. The congress added that any reductions in working time or other exceptions to the working time regulation, must, as a general rule, be agreed in collective agreements (LO Norge, 2022).

Regulation of and payment for overtime

In **Bulgaria**, most overtime work is not paid as such because of its system of aggregated working time. The agreement between the partners in the National Tripartite Agreement that the regulation of working time should be permissible only in industries where work needs to be carried out continuously seems to remain unfulfilled. The two trade unions launched a petition signed by 100,000 employees opposing the current regulation. The trade unions demanded the correct application of International Labour Organization Convention No. 1 and the EU Working Time Directive (CITUB, 2022).

In **Finland**, flexible working hours and the problems with working regular overtime gained some attention in 2022. A Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Työterveyslaitos) survey involving 1,300 organisations indicates that in a third of all organisations overtime exceeding the statutory maximum of 48 hours per week is regular. Representatives of the institute commented that working time flexibility has been proven to increase

wellbeing at work. However, increased workloads may pose a threat to employees that have very flexible working hours. Survey results showed that workweeks exceeding 50 hours were slightly more common in large companies than in small and medium-sized enterprises. Large companies were more likely to have agreements around the right to disconnect. One-third of all organisations responding to the survey did not have a policy around the issue (Helsingin Sanomat, 2022c).

In October 2022, a proposal for the amendment of the Working Time Act 872/2019 (proposition 45/2022), with 19 signatories representing the Left Alliance (Vasemmistoliitto), the Social Democratic Party of Finland and the Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset), was handed over to parliament. A problem identified in the proposal is that many workplaces routinely grant the statutory right to working time flexibility without compensating for overtime. The Working Time Act allows a maximum of 60 hours of overtime to be accumulated and establishes that overtime must be compensated before the end of a certain period. The statutory maximum period is four months, but many collective agreements have shorter cut-off periods. The signatory parties argue that the cut-off period in practice often means that the employee is not compensated for overtime either through time off or in monetary terms, as indicated by survey results from the Union of Professional Engineers in Finland (Insinööriliitto). Some 81% of survey respondents reported that their employer had never allowed them to take time off to compensate for overtime. After the cut-off period ended, 32.7% of respondents just kept accumulating overtime whereas 36.5% did not know how the overtime was compensated for, if at all. The amendment to the Working Time Act would increase employers' responsibility to ensure that the workload of employees is proportionate to their statutory and collectively agreed working time.

In **Slovakia**, there was an intensive discussion in connection with unfreezing the wage premiums for night work, overtime, work carried out on weekends and so on, as part of the amendment of the Labour Code in the second half of 2022. The Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic expressed satisfaction with the amendment, especially in the current context of price increases, as a way to increase income and improve the standard of living of employees and their families. In a joint statement, the employer representatives expressed disappointment with this approach. They consider the approved wage premiums to increase company costs without any reasonable justification and consider them to be an irresponsible gamble with the entire economy and the future of Slovakia. For them, the premiums will translate into higher prices of goods and services, possibly leading to the elimination of jobs and a sharp increase in unemployment (SME, 2022). Dissatisfaction was also expressed by professional associations such as the Food

Chamber of Slovakia, the Slovak Agriculture and Food Chamber, the Slovak Alliance of Modern Trade and the Association of Trade of the Slovak Republic, according to which the cost of additional payments for employees will significantly increase the price of goods, decreasing the competitiveness of Slovak agricultural and food producers.

The level of compensation for overtime was also a topic of discussion in the context of the **Portuguese** Decent Work Agenda, being integrated in the Medium-Term Agreement for Improving Income, Wages and Competitiveness (Conselho Económico e Social, 2022). While the trade union confederations requested that the levels of compensation return to those in force before the troika intervention of 2011–2014, employer confederations insisted on keeping the cuts established in the period of austerity. In the end, the four employer confederations and the General Union of Workers agreed with the Social Concertation Standing Committee that overtime pay should be increased, but only for overtime exceeding 100 hours per year (workers would be paid an additional 50% of their wage in the first hour, 75% in the following hours, and 100% on weekends and holidays). The General Confederation of Portuguese Workers opposed this decision, claiming that the increase should cover all overtime hours.

Value of being off on Sundays

A ban on work in the commerce sector taking place on Sundays has been an unresolved issue in **Croatia** for more than a decade. According to the Commercial Trade Union of Croatia (CTUC), this measure is needed because most shop assistants do not want to work on Sundays and would prefer to be with family and friends. The option to take a day off on another day of the week is not nearly as valuable, because Sunday is usually a day when family members and friends are free, and children are not in nursery or school. Moreover, the provision of services needed to make it easier for people to work on Sundays is not great. Nurseries are closed, while social workers and field nurses who provide care for the elderly are also off work. According to the CTUC's opinion, working on Sundays jeopardises the harmonisation of private and working life and causes frustration, stress, psychophysical fatigue and serious health problems.

The CTUC successfully lobbied the government to legally ban working on Sundays in the commerce sector twice. However, on both occasions, the Constitutional Court subverted newly enacted legislation, stating that it undermines free market competition. The consequences of the Sunday trading ban could include less efficient concentration of shopping activities over a shorter time, greater capital intensity, higher prices and lower sectoral activity levels. Furthermore, many other employees regularly work on Sundays, such as those in

hospitals, public transport workers, police officers, firefighters, and those who work for newspapers or TV stations, so there is an obvious question about putting a (relatively small) group of employees in a privileged position. As a consequence, the government prepared draft legislation on amendments to the Trade Act, which was in public consultation until 7 November 2022. The draft legislation proposes that there would be 16 working Sundays in a year. The Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia and the sectoral CTUC support the proposed changes to the Trade Act, which stipulate that Sundays and holidays are non-working days in trade, with clearly defined exceptions, but also provide for sanctions for those who violate the act (SSSH, 2022). However, representatives of the Croatian Employers' Association stress that the prohibition of work on Sundays could have adverse effects on economic growth and employment opportunities. They recall that Croatia accepted the market economy, meaning that only the market, and not the state, can determine who can and cannot work (HRT, 2022).

Bonuses for full-time work

Given the relatively large share of the population working part time in the **Netherlands**, extending working hours could compensate for some of the severe labour shortages felt in many sectors. In September 2022, the government announced a pilot project introducing bonuses (*voltijdsbonus*) to attract teachers to work fulltime in schools. The aim was to assess the effects of a bonus and the best way to implement it. In November 2022, schools willing to participate in the scheme were invited to contact the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. In 2020, the Minister for Education, Culture and Science asked the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (College van de rechten van de mens) for advice on the introduction of bonuses in long-term care and the education sector. The advice was sent to the House of Representatives in April 2022. A major consideration was that employees working full time before the bonus was implemented would not receive it. This could constitute an indirect form of gender discrimination, as more women than men work part-time. This issue could be partly solved if all full-time employees received the bonus.

In the meantime, other initiatives are being set up to stimulate part-timers to work more. An example is the foundation 'Catch the potential' (Stichting Het Potentieel Pakken), which supports employers in the care and education sectors wanting to introduce bonuses to encourage employees to work more hours. The Rijnstate hospital, for example, was one of the first to introduce a bonus for nurses to increase the number of hours they work. Trade unions criticised this measure, arguing that healthcare personnel are already working more hours than they are paid for and that the workload in the sector is already high (NU.nl, 2022).

2 Weekly working time

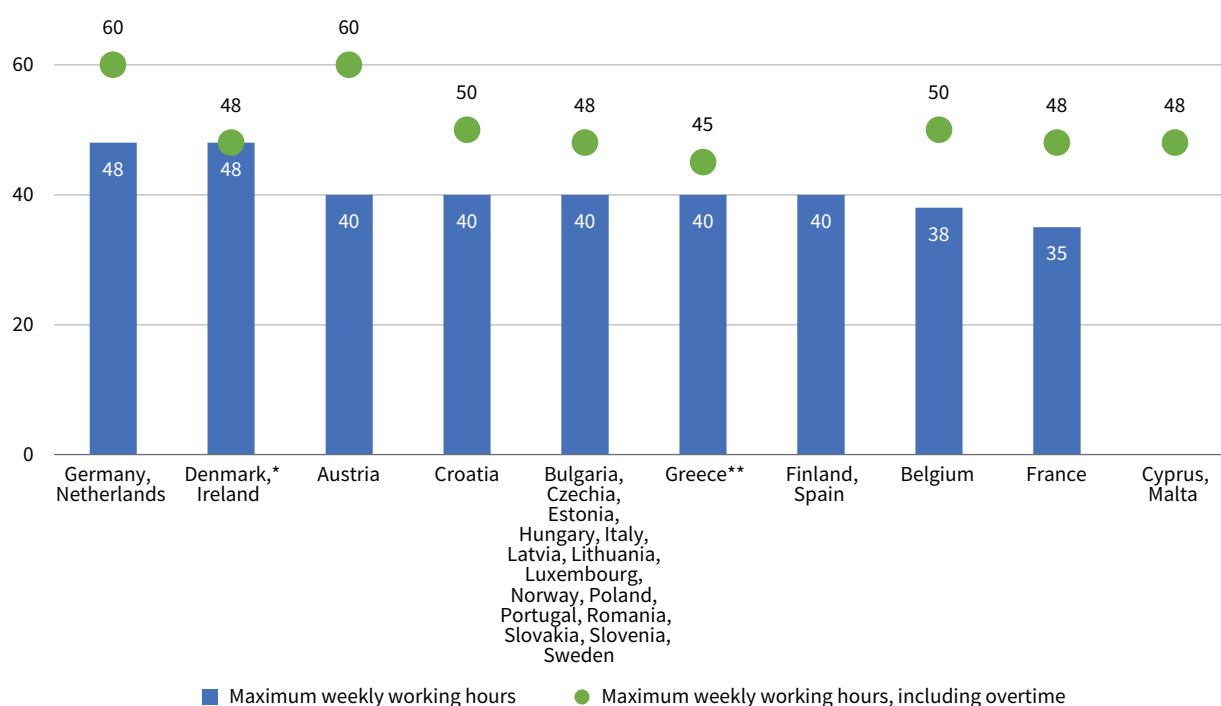
Statutory maximum weekly working time

The duration of working time in the EU must be in line with the provisions of the EU Working Time Directive, which include an average maximum working week of 48 hours (over a period of up to 4 months), a minimum daily rest period of 11 hours and a minimum uninterrupted weekly rest period of 24 hours, in addition to the daily rest period of 11 hours. The duration of working time is also determined by national legislation and collective bargaining.

As Figure 1 shows, most countries fall into one of two main groups in terms of the maximum duration of working time: those that set their maximum weekly

hours at 48 hours, as specified by the Working Time Directive, and a larger group that set a lower limit of 40 hours (which may be extended up to 48 hours, or more in certain cases). Belgium and France continue to be the most notable exceptions, with maximum weekly hours of 38 and 35 hours, respectively. When overtime is considered, most countries set the weekly maximum at 48 hours. Exceptions are Belgium and Croatia, at 50 hours, and Austria, Germany and the Netherlands, at 60 hours. In Greece, the maximum is 45 hours for those working five days per week and 48 for those working six days per week. In Denmark, the maximum of 48 hours can also be extended to 60 hours per week as long as the average over a four-month period does not exceed 48 hours per week.

Figure 1: Main statutory provisions regarding maximum weekly working hours, 2022



Notes: * The average over a period of four months cannot exceed 48 hours. ** The limit for a six-day work schedule is 48 hours. Maximum weekly working hours, excluding overtime, are not specified in Cyprus and Malta. Maximum weekly working hours, including overtime, are not specified in Finland and Spain. The Network of Eurofound Correspondents conduct research on the 27 EU Member States and Norway.

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Collectively agreed weekly working hours

The role of collective bargaining in determining the duration of working time varies greatly across the EU. For instance, there are large differences in the coverage of collective bargaining across countries, and the different levels of bargaining (intersectoral, sectoral and company level) have different levels of importance. The importance of bargaining may also differ greatly across sectors of economic activity and groups of workers (Eurofound, 2016).

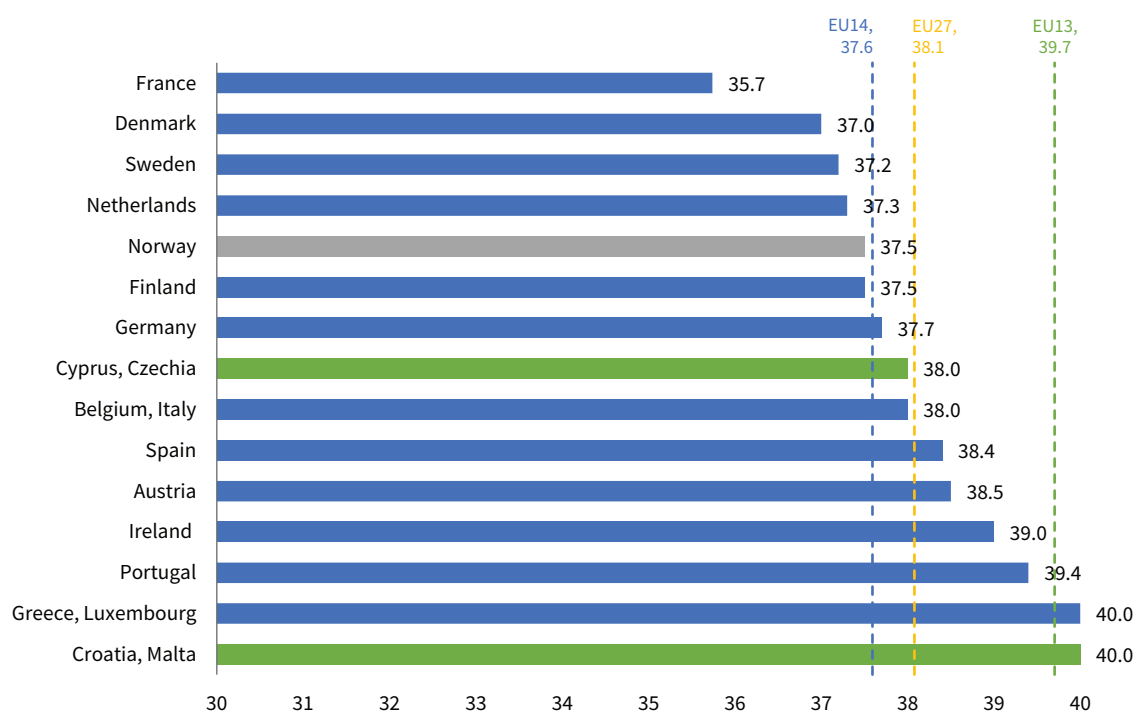
However, some trends have emerged among Member States that were part of the EU before 2004 (the EU14) and those that have joined since (the EU13). In the first group, working time tends to be shorter and collective bargaining tends to play a more important role in determining the duration of working time.

As seen in Figure 2, the average number of collectively agreed normal weekly hours – that is, the weekly working time agreed through collective bargaining,

at sectoral or company level, for full-time workers – tends to be longer in the EU13 than the EU14, with Croatia and Malta matching the statutory maximum working week of 40 hours and Cyprus and Czechia (38 hours) being the only EU13 countries in which collective bargaining reduces working time compared with the statutory maximum.

France continues to have the shortest collectively agreed working week in the EU, with an average of 35.7 hours. This is a consequence of the Aubry law, which established a statutory working week of 35 hours in 2000. Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway also record an average collectively agreed working week below the EU14 average of 37.6 hours. Belgium and Italy, with 38 hours, are above the EU14 average but still below the EU27 average of 38.1 hours per week. While Austria, Spain and Portugal all surpass the EU27 average, the collectively agreed working hours still fall below the statutory maximum of 40 hours per week. In total, the collectively agreed working hours of 14 out of 27 Member States stand below 40 hours.

Figure 2: Average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours, 2022



Notes: The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the notes in Annex 2; figures for the EU27, EU14 and EU13 are the authors' calculations of weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (EU-LFS, 2022).

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Weekly working hours in selected sectors

This section looks at the average collectively agreed weekly working hours for full-time workers, as set by collective bargaining, in five broad sectors of activity: chemicals, metalworking, banking, retail and public administration. The specific sectoral figures presented here tend to be more precise than the overall average data provided in the previous section, as they reflect the specificities of each sector analysed.

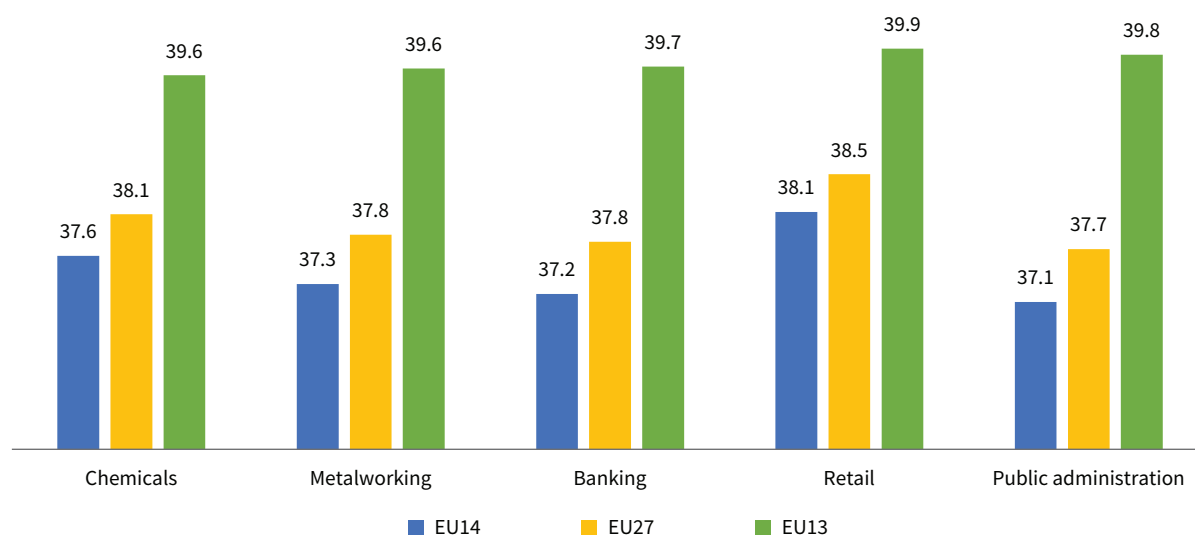
As seen in Figure 3, for all sectors considered, the collectively agreed weekly working hours are substantially longer in the EU13 than in the EU14. The shortest working week in the EU27 is in the public administration sector (with an average of 37.7 hours), followed by the banking and metalworking sectors (both 37.8 hours); the gap between the EU13 and the EU14 is also largest in these sectors. The gap of 2.5 hours between the EU13 and the EU14 in the banking sector amounts to 3 weeks of work over a full year, and the gap is even larger, at 2.7 hours, in the public administration sector.

The sectors with the longest working weeks in the EU are retail (with an average of 38.5 hours) and chemicals (38.1 hours). While in these sectors the gaps between the EU13 and EU14 are smaller, they are still relatively large, with the difference in both sectors amounting to more than two weeks of work over a full year.

Chemicals

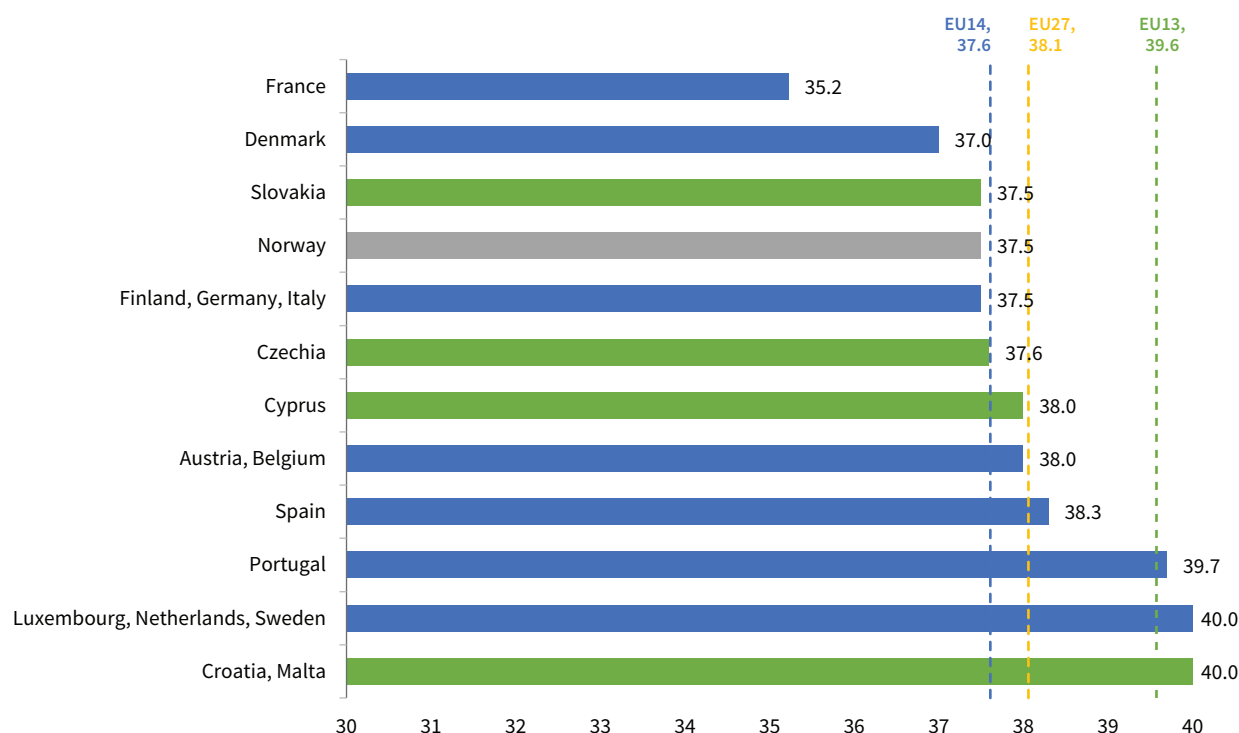
Figure 4 shows the average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in the chemicals sector in 2022. The data were obtained from the most relevant sectoral collective agreements, except where specified in the notes for the figure (see Annex 2). As noted above, a large difference exists between EU13 and EU14 countries, with the EU13 working an additional two hours, on average, in 2022. In France, the average working week is 35.2 hours and in Denmark it is 37 hours; they are followed by Finland, Germany, Italy and Slovakia, all with 37.5 hours. At the other side of the distribution are Croatia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands and Sweden, all matching the statutory maximum of 40 hours per week. The average working week in Austria, Belgium, Cyprus and Spain is close to the EU27 average of 38.1 hours.

Figure 3: Average collectively agreed normal weekly hours in selected sectors, 2022



Notes: Figures for the EU27, EU14 and EU13 are authors' own calculations of weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (EU-LFS, 2020). When hours were not collectively agreed, the corresponding statutory normal weekly working hours were used instead. Norway is not included as this figure refers only to groups of EU countries.

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Figure 4: Collectively agreed weekly working hours in the chemicals sector, 2022

Note: The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the notes in Annex 2.

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Metalworking

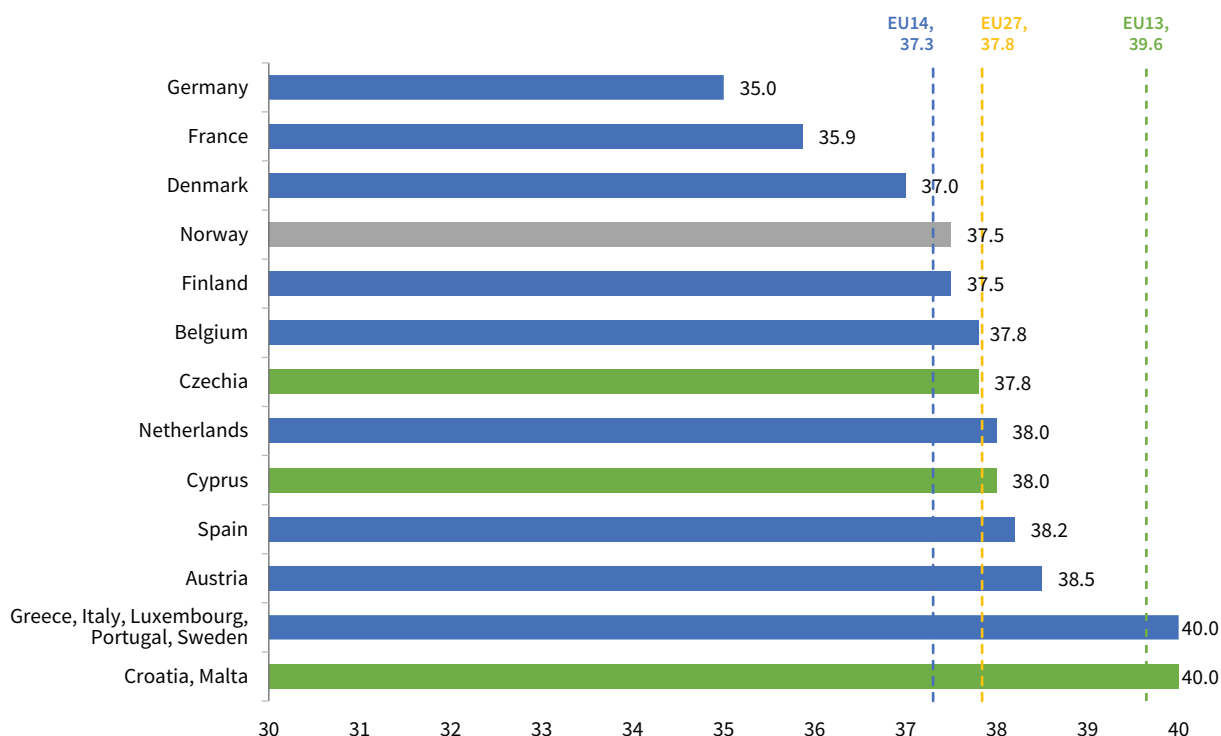
Figure 5 shows the average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in the metalworking sector in 2022. The data were gathered from the relevant sectoral collective agreements, except where specified in the notes relating to the figure (see Annex 2). Germany and France have the shortest working weeks, with 35 and 35.9 hours, respectively, while Croatia, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden match the statutory maximum of 40 hours per week.

The gap between the EU13 and the EU14 in the average collectively agreed weekly working hours in the metalworking sector was 2.3 hours in 2022, which amounts to almost 3 weeks of work over a full year.

Banking

Figure 6 shows the average collectively agreed normal weekly hours in the banking sector in 2022. The data were obtained from the relevant sectoral collective agreements, except where specified in the notes relating to the figure (see Annex 2). The banking sector features one of the largest gaps between the EU13 and EU14 averages among the sectors selected for this report, with EU13 countries working, on average, an additional 2.5 hours. Among EU13 countries, only Cyprus has a working week shorter than the EU27 average of 37.8 hours, while four EU14 countries' working weeks are longer (Austria, Germany, Luxembourg and Sweden). Belgium and Portugal have the shortest working weeks in the sector (35 hours), followed by France (35.2 hours), the Netherlands (36 hours), and Cyprus, Denmark, Finland and Greece (37 hours). Croatia, Luxembourg, Malta and Slovenia have the longest working weeks in the sector, at 40 hours.

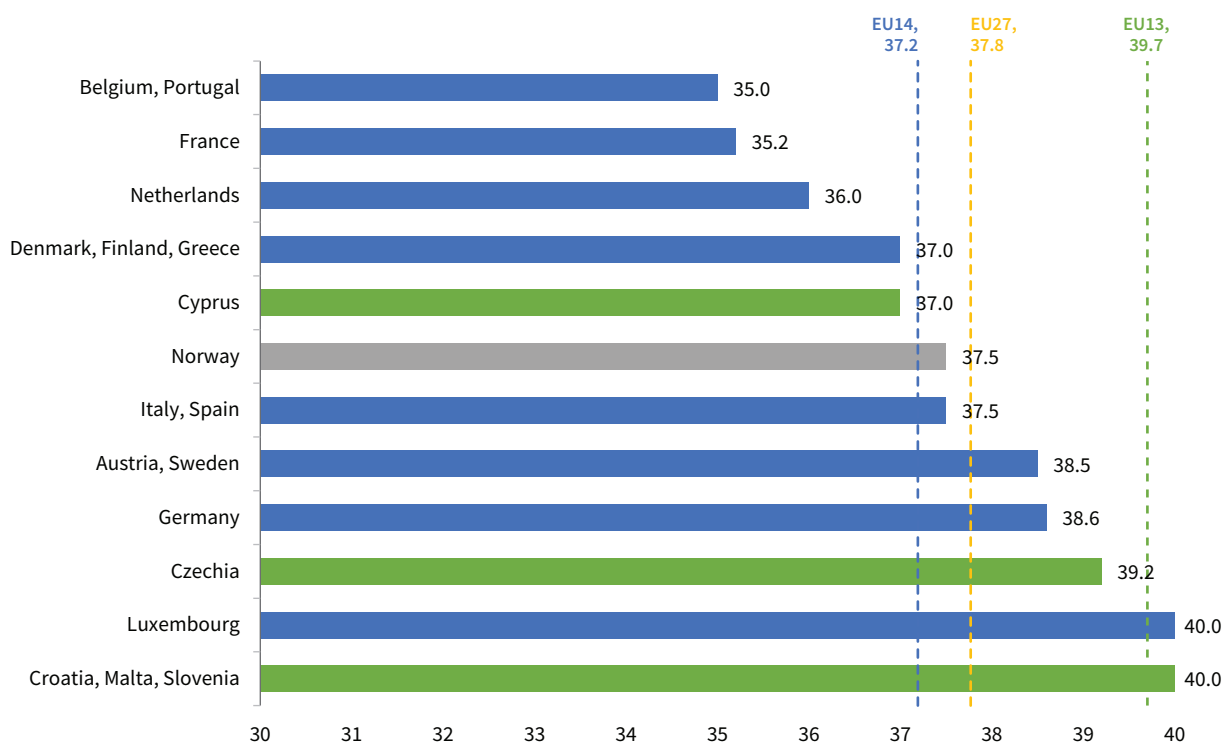
Figure 5: Collectively agreed weekly working hours in the metalworking sector, 2022



Notes: The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the notes in Annex 2; figures for the EU27, EU14 and EU13 are the authors' calculations of weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (EU-LFS, 2020).

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Figure 6: Collectively agreed weekly working hours in the banking sector, 2022



Notes: The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the notes in Annex 2; figures for the EU27, EU14 and EU13 are the authors' calculations of weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (EU-LFS, 2020).

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Retail

In 2022, the average collectively agreed normal working week for the retail sector was 38.5 hours in the EU27 (Figure 7), with the longest working week in the EU27 among the sectors selected for this report. In the EU14, the average weekly working hours for retail workers stood at 38.1 hours in 2022. The longest agreed weekly hours in the retail sector in the EU14 were recorded in Italy, Greece and Luxembourg (40.0 hours) and in Portugal (39.9 hours). The shortest working weeks are in France (35.8 hours) and Belgium (36.5 hours).

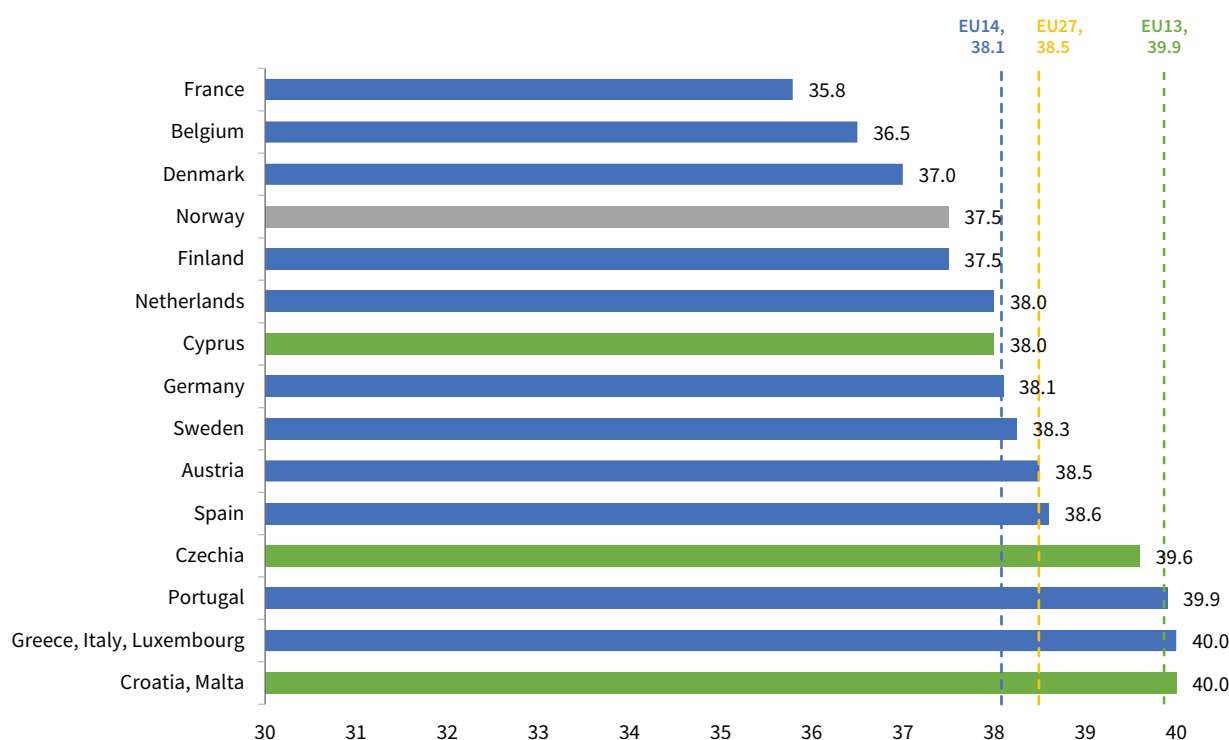
In the EU13, the average working week in retail was 39.9 hours in 2022, nearly two hours longer than in the EU14. Cyprus, with an average working week of 38 hours, is the only country in the EU13 with a working week shorter than the average for the EU27.

Public administration

The public administration sector is distinct from the sectors discussed previously because the state and public institutions are the main employers. In the majority of Member States, working time is unilaterally defined by the state and hence regulated by legislation (Eurofound, 2016). In the EU27, the average collectively agreed weekly working time in public administration was 37.7 hours in 2022 (Figure 8).

In the EU14, the average weekly working hours in the public administration sector stood at 37.1 hours in 2022. The longest weekly hours in the sector were recorded in Austria, Greece and Luxembourg, where legislation establishes a normal working week of 40 hours. The shortest working weeks are in France, Ireland and Portugal (35 hours), followed by Italy and the Netherlands (36 hours).

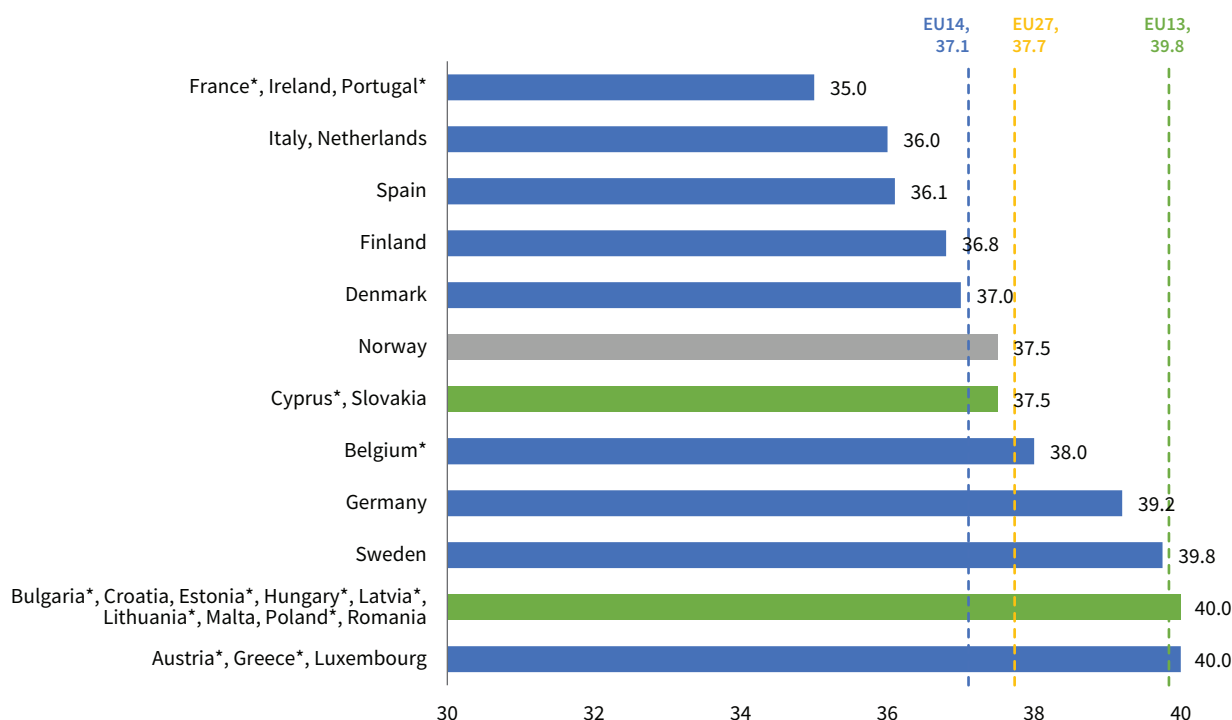
Figure 7: Collectively agreed weekly working hours in the retail sector, 2022



Notes: The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the notes in Annex 2; figures for the EU27, EU14 and EU13 are the authors' calculations of weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (EU-LFS, 2020).

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

Figure 8: Collectively agreed weekly working hours in the public administration sector, 2022



Notes: * As per legislation. The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the notes in Annex 2; figures for the EU27, EU14 and EU13 are the authors' calculations of weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (EU-LFS, 2020).

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

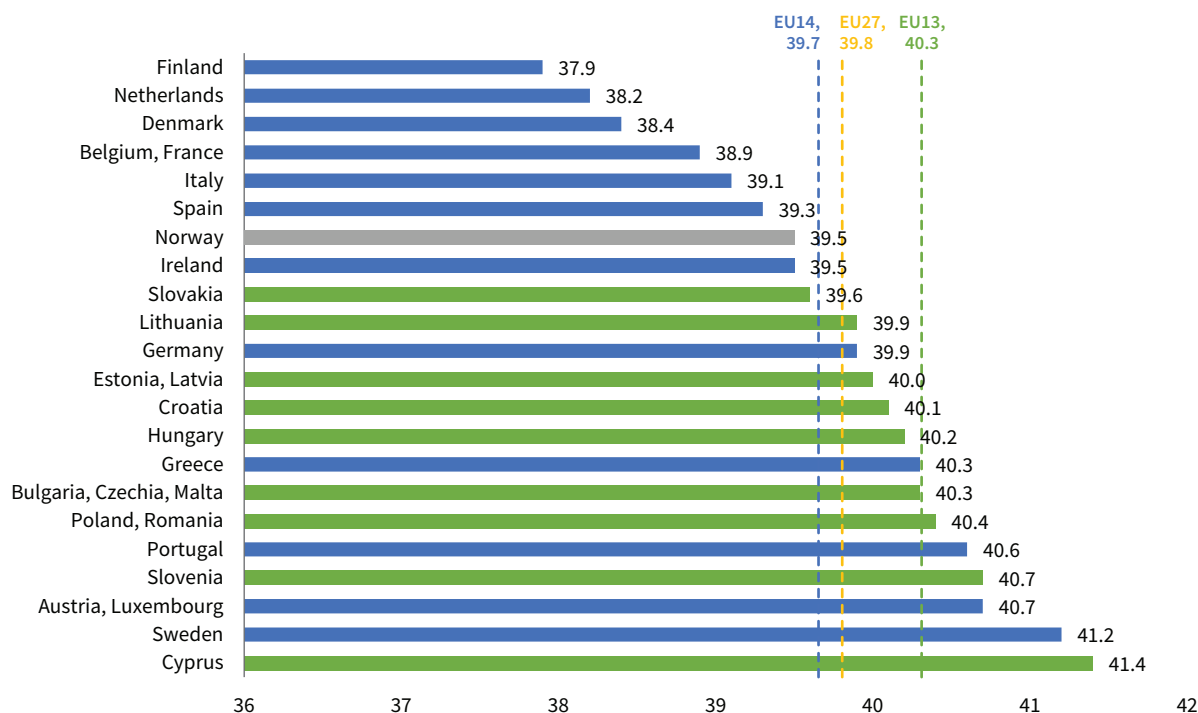
In the EU13, the average working week in the public administration sector was 39.8 hours in 2022, the same as in 2020, and 2.7 hours longer than the EU14 average. Cyprus and Slovakia were the only EU13 countries with working weeks shorter than the EU27 average.

Usual weekly working hours

In order to see how many hours employees actually work in a given week, it is necessary to investigate the data on usual weekly hours worked. These data consider factors such as overtime and absence. They are typically measured through labour force surveys. Eurostat defines 'usual hours worked' as the modal value – the value that appears most often – of the actual hours worked per week over a long reference

period (at least four weeks), excluding weeks when an absence from work occurs (for example, due to holidays, leave or strikes). The 'actual hours worked' are the hours that individuals spend on work activities, including production, ancillary activities, short breaks, and education and training necessary for successfully carrying out the tasks required in their job. This figure does not include the time it takes them to travel between their home and place of work, main meal breaks and absences for personal reasons. Any time employees spend on education and training that is not necessary for carrying out the tasks associated with their job is also excluded from this calculation. Figure 9 provides harmonised EU-LFS data on the average number of usual weekly hours full-time employees worked in their main job in 2022.

Figure 9: Average number of usual weekly working hours in main job for full-time employees, 2022



Note: EU13 and EU14 averages were calculated by the authors.

Source: EU-LFS

The longest usual weekly working hours recorded in the EU27 in 2022 were 41.4 hours in Cyprus. This is 0.2 hours longer than in 2019. After Cyprus, the longest weekly hours were recorded in Sweden (41.2 hours); Austria, Luxembourg and Slovenia (40.7 hours); and Portugal (40.6 hours).

Employees in Finland, who usually work 37.9 hours per week (0.2 hours less than in 2021) report the shortest weekly hours in the EU. This means that employees in Finland reported working 3.5 fewer hours per week than those in Cyprus – equivalent to a total of more than 4 working weeks in Cyprus across a year.

Most EU13 countries registered usual weekly working hours above the EU27 average. The only exception was Slovakia. In Austria, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden, usual weekly working hours are longer than the EU27 average, while in the other EU14 countries they are shorter than the average.

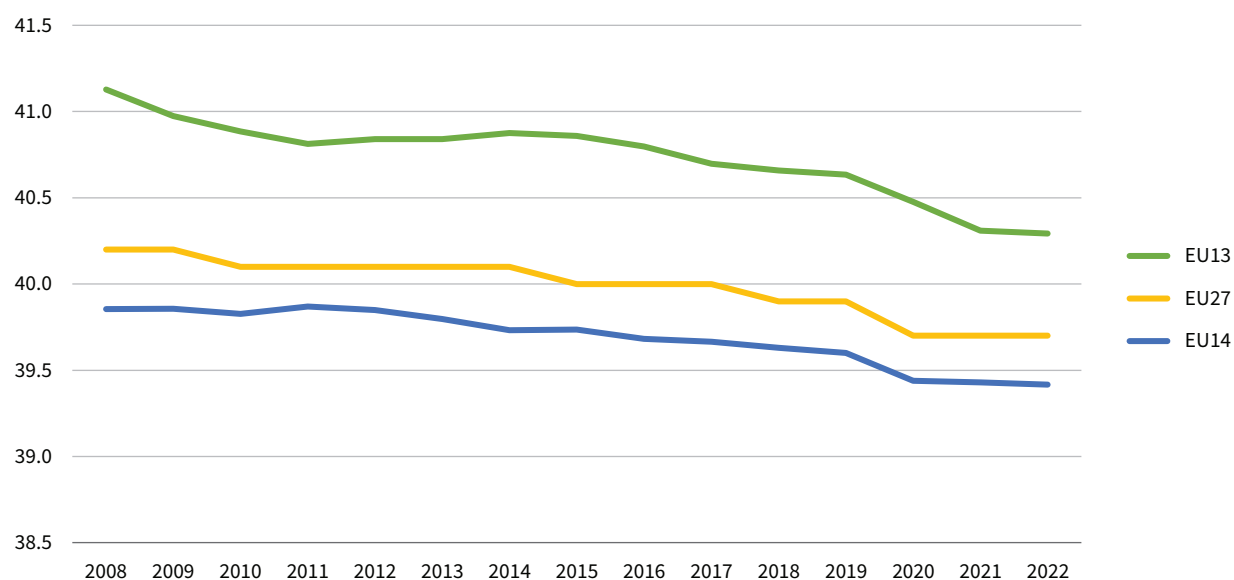
Usual weekly hours worked by full-time employees were longer than the average normal collectively agreed working week in all the countries where collective bargaining plays a role in determining the duration of working time. The extent to which the average usual working hours exceed the collectively agreed normal working hours varies across the EU:

- by 30 minutes or less in Croatia, Finland, Greece, Ireland and Malta
- by more than 30 minutes but by less than an hour in Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain

- by between 1 and 2 hours in Denmark, Italy, Norway and Portugal
- by between 2 and 3 hours in Austria, Czechia and Germany
- by 3 hours or more in Cyprus, France and Sweden

In the EU27, the usual working week was 39.7 hours in 2022, the same as in 2021 and 2020 (Figure 10); this was 1.6 hours longer than the average agreed working hours. In the EU14, the working week was 39.4 hours, the same as in 2021 and 2020 but 1.8 hours longer than the average agreed hours for that group of countries. In the EU13, the working week was 40.3 hours, the same as in 2021 but 0.2 hours shorter than in 2020 and 0.6 hours longer than the average agreed working hours for the group.

Given the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on work, it is important to compare the figures for 2022 with the pre-pandemic figures for 2019. The average usual weekly working hours of full-time employees decreased between 2019 and 2022 in 19 Member States. It remained the same in Lithuania and Slovenia. The largest decreases between 2019 and 2022 took place in Finland (1.5 hours, from 39.4 hours to 37.9 hours), Malta (1 hour, from 41.3 hours to 40.3 hours), Slovakia (0.9 hours, from 40.5 hours to 39.6 hours) and the Netherlands (0.7 hours, from 38.9 hours to 38.2 hours). Sweden and Denmark recorded the largest increases (1.3 hours and 0.8 hours between 2019 and 2022, respectively).

Figure 10: Average number of usual weekly working hours in main job for full-time employees, EU, 2008–2022

Note: EU13 and EU14 averages were calculated by the authors. Norway is not included as this figure refers only to groups of EU countries.

Source: EU-LFS

While the collectively agreed working hours remained relatively stable, the annual figures for usual weekly working hours decreased between 2019 and 2020 in almost all countries and have remained stable since.

The difference in the actual working hours of full-time employees between the older and newer groups of Member States slightly reduced between 2020 and 2021, from 1 hour to 0.9 hours, and remained the same in 2022 as in 2021 (Figure 10).

3 Annual working time

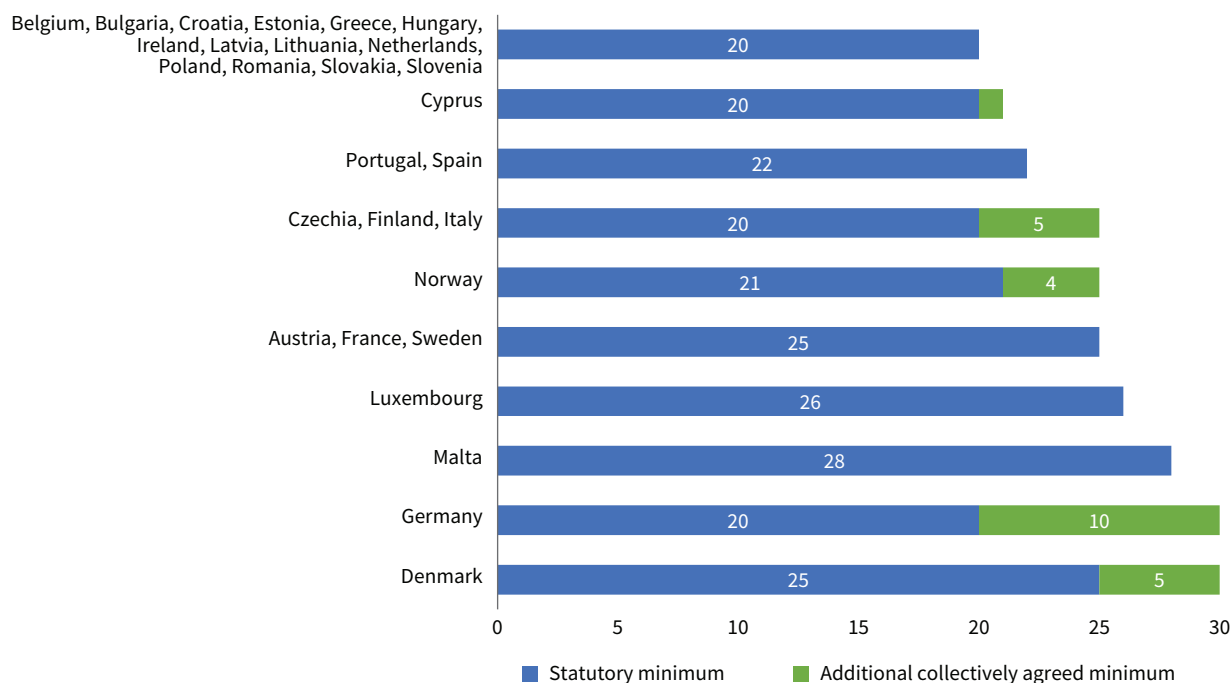
Paid annual leave

An important factor in the overall length of working time each year is paid annual leave. The Working Time Directive states that ‘Member States shall take the measures necessary to ensure that every worker is entitled to paid annual leave of at least four weeks’, which ‘may not be replaced by an allowance in lieu’. All the EU Member States and Norway have a statutory minimum period of paid annual leave, as set out in Figure 11. In the figure, leave is expressed in days and harmonised based on a five-day working week. The majority of countries – 19 out of the 28 studied – have a 20-day minimum entitlement, as set out in the Working Time Directive. This group includes Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands, as well as most of the EU13, except Malta. In Austria, Denmark, France and Sweden, the statutory minimum duration of paid leave is 25 days, while in Portugal and Spain it is 22 days. In Luxembourg, the minimum

duration of paid annual leave is 26 days. In Malta, the basic minimum duration of paid annual leave, 192 hours (equivalent to 24 working days), was increased in 2022 to 224 hours (28 working days) to compensate for public holidays falling on weekends.

The statutory minimum duration of paid annual leave is, in many cases, the basis on which workers’ actual leave entitlement is defined, beyond national public holidays. However, the total number of annual leave days may depend on a number of factors, such as the type of occupation, years of service or sector of economic activity. In many cases, it is defined in collective agreements. However, data on annual leave as provided in collective agreements are extremely difficult to find and interpret. While in some countries no data are available, in others collectively agreed rules on leave entitlements are too complex to enable even a rough estimate to be produced. Figure 11 includes estimates of collectively agreed minimum paid annual leave, where these are available.

Figure 11: Minimum number of days of paid annual leave, 2022



Notes: The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the notes in Annex 2; figures for the EU27, EU14 and EU13 are the authors’ calculations of weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (EU-LFS, 2020).

Source: Network of Eurofound Correspondents

In Bulgaria, collective agreements may provide for longer annual leave than the 20 days set by law. In 2019, for instance, according to the National Institute for Conciliation and Arbitration, on average, collective agreements provided workers with 24 days of paid annual leave.

In Cyprus, most sectoral and company-level collective agreements provide for additional paid leave proportionate to years of service. An average of 21 days is estimated based on the most relevant sectoral and company-level collective agreements.

In Romania, collective agreements usually provide for more days of paid annual leave than the 20 statutory days. Depending on the employee's seniority, paid annual leave varies between 20 and 30 days. In Greece, the duration of paid annual leave also depends on seniority.

The available data in Czechia, Finland and Italy show that, on average, collective agreements provide 5 days of leave per year on top of the 20 days set by law. In the Netherlands, workers who are covered by collective agreements may also have more days of paid annual leave than the 20 days provided by legislation. At 30 days on average, Denmark and Germany have the longest collectively agreed paid leave allowances – well above their respective amounts of statutory leave.

Annual working hours

Working time is often determined and discussed in terms of daily or weekly working hours. However, a more complete picture can only be obtained using an annual timescale and by including other important elements, such as leave and public holidays, which, as shown, also vary by country.

To calculate annual working hours, the figure for average collectively agreed normal weekly hours (presented in Figure 2) is multiplied by 52 to give a total for the whole year. Where the collectively agreed weekly hours are not available, the maximum statutory working week is used instead. From this total annual figure, the average collectively agreed paid annual leave is

subtracted. Where no such figure on collectively agreed leave is available, the minimum statutory annual leave (see Figure 11) is subtracted. Given that this value is only a minimum, when calculated in this way, the estimated figure for annual working hours may be lower than the actual figure.

The number of hours of annual public holiday is also subtracted from the total annual working hours, excluding those falling on Sundays. It should also be noted that additional holidays may be observed locally (based on collective agreements or local customs), while the number of public holidays may vary from year to year, especially in countries that do not award a replacement holiday when a public holiday falls on a weekend. Variations in the number of public holidays are the main cause of year-on-year changes in annual hours in many countries. For example, in 2016, two additional public holidays were introduced in Article 139 of the Romanian Labour Code, on 24 January and 1 June (International Children's Day). Meanwhile, in Portugal, four public holidays that had previously been abolished in 2012 were reintroduced through an amendment to the country's Labour Code in 2016.

The resulting annual figures represent how many hours the average full-time worker in each country should work according to the legislation and collective agreements in place. They do not consider factors such as overtime work, other forms of time off or leave (such as sick leave or parental/maternity leave) or exceptional reductions in normal working time, such as due to short-time working.

Table 1 shows details of the calculation of the average collectively agreed normal annual working time. It shows that the number of public holidays in 2020 (excluding those falling on Sundays) varied significantly by country, from 7 days in Germany and 8 days in Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, the Netherlands and Norway to as many as 12 days in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Malta and Slovakia. In 2022, the average number of days of public holiday in the EU27 was 9, with the EU13 having more days on average (9.7 days) than the EU14 (8.8 days).

Table 1: Average collectively agreed normal annual working time, 2022

Country	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Weekly hours	Gross annual hours (A × 52)	Annual leave (days)	Public holidays (days)**	All leave (C + D) (hours)	Annual hours (B – E)
Estonia	40.0	2,080	20*	8	224	1,856
Hungary	40.0	2,080	20*	8	224	1,856
Poland	40.0	2,080	20*	9	232	1,848
Greece	40.0	2,080	20*	10	240	1,840
Latvia	40.0	2,080	20*	10	240	1,840
Lithuania	40.0	2,080	20*	10	240	1,840
Romania	40.0	2,080	20	10	240	1,840
Slovenia	40.0	2,080	20*	10	240	1,840
Croatia	40.0	2,080	20*	11	248	1,832
Ireland	39.0	2,028	20*	9	226	1,802
Luxembourg	40.0	2,080	26*	9	280	1,800
Portugal	39.4	2,049	22*	10	252	1,797
Bulgaria	40.0	2,080	24	12	288	1,792
Slovakia	39.0	2,028	20	12	250	1,778
Belgium	38.0	1,976	20*	8	213	1,763
Malta	40.0	2,080	28*	12	320	1,760
Spain	38.4	1,997	22*	10	256	1,741
Netherlands	37.3	1,940	20*	8	209	1,731
Cyprus	38.0	1,976	21	12	251	1,725
Austria	38.5	2,002	25	11	277	1,725
Italy	38.0	1,976	25*	9	258	1,718
Czechia	38.0	1,976	25	10	266	1,710
Norway	37.5	1,950	25	8	248	1,703
Sweden	37.2	1,934	25	9	253	1,681
Germany	37.7	1,960	30	7	279	1,681
Finland	37.5	1,950	25	11	270	1,680
Denmark	37.0	1,924	30	8	281	1,634
France	35.7	1,858	25	10	250	1,608
EU13 average	39.7	2,064.5	20.9	9.7	243	1,822
EU27 average	38.1	1,980.1	24.3	9.0	254	1,726
EU14 average	37.6	1,954.9	25.3	8.8	256	1,698

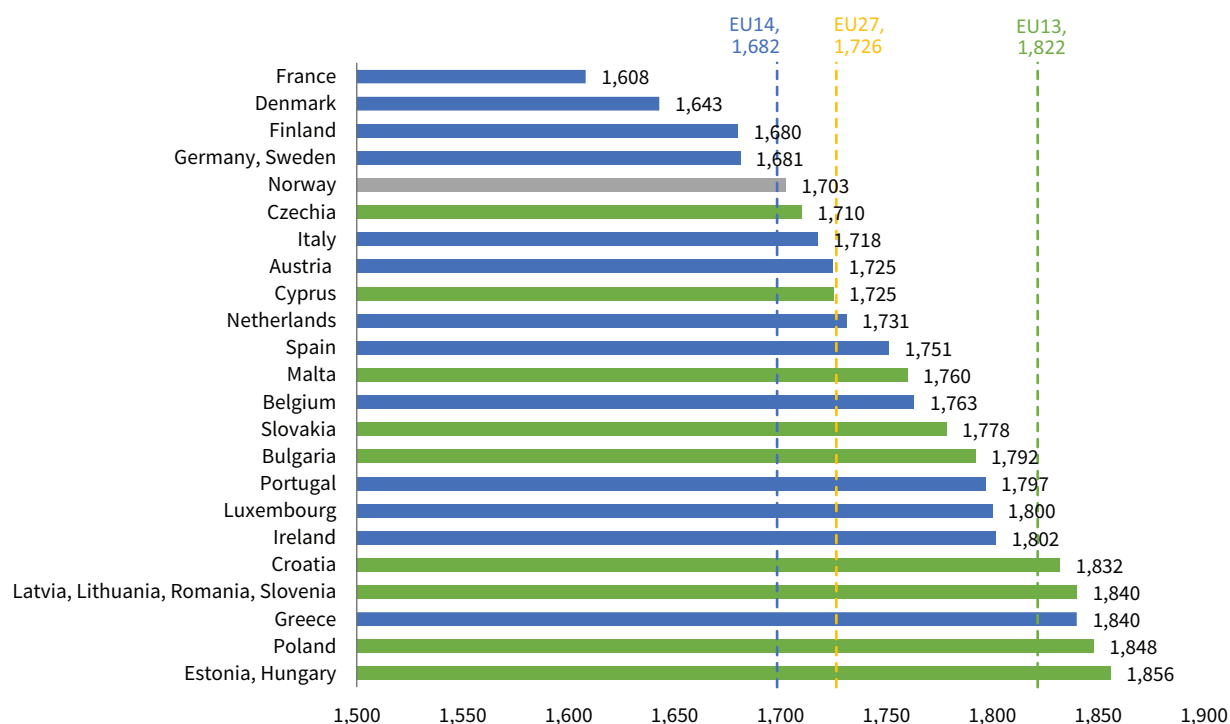
Notes: * Statutory minimum paid annual leave. ** Except public holidays falling on Sundays.

Sources: Network of Eurofound Correspondents and Eurofound's Database on wages, working time and collective disputes (<http://eurofound.link/wagedatabase>)

The combined total duration of agreed annual leave and public holidays varies greatly across the EU. In 2022, it ranged from 28 days in Estonia, Hungary, Belgium and the Netherlands to 38 days in Denmark and 40 days in Malta. The difference between the smallest and largest figures is equivalent to more than two working weeks.

Other countries with notably long durations of leave in 2022 were Germany, with 37 days, and Austria, Bulgaria and Finland, with 36 days. The average figure for the EU27 was 33.3 days (34.1 days in the EU14 and 30.6 days in the EU13).

Figure 12: Average collectively agreed normal annual working hours, 2022



Sources: Network of Eurofound Correspondents and Eurofound's Database on wages, working time and collective disputes (<http://eurofound.link/wagedatabase>)

In 2022, the average collectively agreed normal annual working time was approximately 1,726 hours in the EU27, 1,698 hours in the EU14 and 1,822 hours in the EU13 (Figure 12). This means that the average worker in the EU13 working the collectively agreed normal working time would have worked 124 hours longer than the average worker in the EU14 – the equivalent of 3.1 working weeks in the EU13. Overall, the EU's longest annual working hours (1,856 hours) are found in Estonia

and Hungary, where collective bargaining does not play a substantial role in defining working time regulations. The shortest annual working hours are found in France (1,608 hours), Denmark (1,643) and Finland (1,680 hours). This means that, in 2022, the average worker in Estonia and Hungary would have worked approximately 248 hours more than the average worker in France – equivalent to more than six weeks of work in Estonia.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Network of European correspondents

Country	National correspondent	Organisation
Austria	Bernadette Allinger	Working Life Research Centre (FORBA)
Belgium	Dries Van Herreweghe	KU Leuven
Bulgaria	Vassil Kirov	Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
Croatia	Predrag Bejaković and Irena Klemenčić	Institute of Public Finance
Cyprus	Pavlos Kalosinatos	Cyprus Labour Institute of the Pancyprian Federation of Labour (INEK-PEO)
Czechia	Štěpánka Lehmann	Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs
Denmark	Carsten Jørgensen and Line Schmidt	Employment Relations Research Centre (FAOS), University of Copenhagen
Estonia	Miriam Lehari	Praxis Centre for Policy Studies
Finland	Vera Lindström	Oxford Research
France	Frédéric Turlan	IR Share
Germany	Thilo Janssen	Hans-Böckler-Stiftung
Greece	Penny Georgiadou	Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (INE/GSEE)
Hungary	Nóra Krokavay	Kopint-Tárki Institute for Economic Research
Ireland	Andy Prendergast	IRN Publishing
Italy	Alessandro Smilari	Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini
Latvia	Raita Karnīte	EPC Ltd
Lithuania	Inga Blažienė and Rasa Miežienė	Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences
Luxembourg	Adrien Thomas	Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER)
Malta	Luke Fiorini	University of Malta
Netherlands	Thomas de Winter	Panteia
Norway	Åsmund Arup Seip	Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research
Poland	Agnieszka Górniak	Ecorys
Portugal	Maria da Paz Campos Lima and Paula Carrilho	Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social (CESIS)
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Slovenia	Maja Breznik	Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana
Spain	Oscar Molina	University of Barcelona
Sweden	Nils Brandsma	Oxford Research

Annex 2: Notes to figures

Notes to Figure 2: Average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours, 2022

Austria: The figure is an estimate based on the most important collective agreements. No official calculations are available.

Belgium: The figure is an estimate calculated by the Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue for 2016, and there is no indication that it has changed since then. The calculation takes into account (only) the provisions of sectoral collective agreements in the private sector, which cover a very high proportion of, but not all, the employees in the private sector. For example, company agreements of state enterprises, such as railway companies or postal services, are not included. Furthermore, the sectoral agreements can be amended by company agreements (such as to reduce working time or implement alternative working time regimes).

Croatia: The estimate is based on collective agreements in force, including the collective agreement for state officials (OG 112/17) and the collective agreement for public servants (OG 128/17).

Cyprus: The estimate is based on sectoral and company-level collective agreements. All collective agreements provide for a weekly working time of around 38 hours. Source: Representatives of trade unions and employer organisations.

Czechia: The estimate is based on a regular annual survey of wages and working conditions negotiated in collective agreements, conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The information is based on a sample survey. The figure expresses the average weekly working hours agreed in collective agreements in the private sector. Source: MoLSA, 2022.

Denmark: The estimate is based on weekly working hours provided for in various collective agreements. The number of weekly hours has been stable at 37 since 1990.

Finland: The estimate is from the Confederation of Finnish Industries, and is based on typical provisions of sectoral agreements.

France: The figure for average collectively agreed weekly working hours is based on data from the Ministry of Labour's Directorate of Research, Studies and Statistics (DARES), available at <https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/donnees/la-duree-collective-hebdomadaire-de-travail>

Germany: Source: Institute of Economic and Social Research (WSI) Collective Agreement Archive.

Greece: The figure is from the National General Collective Agreement of 1984.

Ireland: The figure is an estimate based on the Programme for National Recovery from 1987, which set out a framework agreement on the shortening of the working week by 1 hour in cases where the normal working week was 40 hours or more; the implementation of this measure was to be negotiated locally, on an organisation-by-organisation basis.

Italy: The figure is an estimate based on the 36- to 40-hour week provided for in national collective bargaining agreements.

Luxembourg: The figure is an estimate, given that no official statistical average including collective agreements is available.

Malta: While no statistical data exist, the figure is an estimate based on the fact that most collective agreements tend to specify a normal weekly working time of 40 hours.

Netherlands: The figure is an estimate based on the figures for the chemicals, metalworking, retail, banking and public administration sectors.

Norway: The figure is from the Industry Agreement 2022–2024 between the Federation of Norwegian Industries, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise and the United Federation of Trade Unions (Fellesforbundet) (Norsk Industri et al, 2022).

Portugal: The figure is based on the *Annual report on the evolution of collective bargaining in 2022 (Relatório Anual Sobre a Evolução da Negociação Coletiva em 2022)* of the Centre for Labour Relations (Centro de Relações Laborais).

Spain: The figure is a 2018 estimate of weekly working time calculated from the annual figure, assuming a 6-day week and 274 working days. Source: Estadística de Convenios Colectivos de Trabajo (Statistics of Collective Labour Agreements), 2018.

Sweden: Data were taken from the *Working hours in 2023* report from the peak-level blue-collar union the Swedish Trade Union Confederation. The report is based on data from Statistics Sweden's Labour Force Survey.

Notes to Figure 4: Collectively agreed weekly working hours in the chemicals sector, 2022

Austria: Information was obtained from Kollektivvertrag (a platform compiling all collective agreements applied in Austria, available at www.kollektivvertrag.at).

Belgium: Sources: Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, 2023a (blue-collar workers in the chemicals sector), 2023b (white-collar workers in the chemicals sector).

Croatia: The estimate is based on existing collective agreements, for example the collective agreement for the company Saponia d.d., from 10 June 2021, and the collective agreement for the company Neva d.o.o., from 29 October 2019.

Cyprus: This figure is the average collectively agreed working time, calculated by the Cyprus Labour Institute of the Pancyprian Federation of Labour based on provisions from various company-level collective agreements concluded in the private sector.

Czechia: The estimate is based on collective agreements, not only in the chemicals sector, concluded in the private sector by members of the trade union ECHO, which represents workers in, for example, the electricity and heat supply, chemical, pharmaceutical and oil industries. The figure expresses the average weekly working hours agreed in collective agreements without differentiating between working modes. Source: MoLSA, 2022.

Denmark: The figure is based on the Industrial Agreement (*Industriens Overenskomst*) (Confederation of Danish Industry and CO-industri, 2020a) and the Collective Agreement for Salaried Employees in Industry (*Industriens Funktionæroverenskomst*) (Confederation of Danish Industry and CO-industri, 2020b) for 2020–2023.

Finland: The figure refers to regular working time based on the provisions of the main sectoral collective agreement.

France: The figure is the average for the chemical industry across March, June and September 2022, available at <https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/donnees/la-duree-collective-hebdomadaire-de-travail>

Germany: Source: WSI Collective Agreement Archive, including all agreements settled by the chemical workers' union IG BCE and the chemical industry.

Italy: The figure is based on the national collective bargaining agreement for the chemicals industry, renewed in June 2022.

Luxembourg: In the absence of a collective agreement in the chemical industry, the Labour Code applies.

Malta: The estimate was provided by the Chemical and Energy Section of the General Workers' Union.

Netherlands: The figure is based on the collective agreement for the chemicals sector for 2021–2023.

Norway: The figure is based on the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise's agreement for the chemical industry (*Kjemisk teknisk industri*) (Agreement No. 106) for 2022–2024.

Portugal: The estimate is based on collective agreements such as the one between Associação Portuguesa das Empresas Químicas and Confederação de Sindicatos da Indústria, Energia e Transportes for 2018.

Slovakia: The figure is based on a multi-employer collective agreement, which covers the pharmaceutical industry.

Spain: The figure was calculated based on data for 2017 provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, assuming a 6-day working week and 274 working days per year.

Sweden: The figure is based on the collective agreement for the chemical industry.

Notes to Figure 5: Collectively agreed weekly working hours in the metalworking sector, 2022

Austria: Information was obtained from Kollektivvertrag (a platform compiling all collective agreements applied in Austria, available at www.kollektivvertrag.at).

Belgium: Sources: Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, 2023c (blue-collar workers in the metal sector), 2023d (white-collar workers in the metal sector).

Croatia: The estimate is based on existing collective agreements such as a collective agreement for the company LTH Metalni lijev d.o.o. from 11 May 2021.

Cyprus: The figure is based on a sectoral agreement for the metalworking sector concluded between the Federation of Industrial Workers of Cyprus, affiliated to the Cyprus Workers' Confederation; the Cyprus Metalworkers, Mechanics and Electricians Trade Union, affiliated to the Pancyprian Federation of Labour; and the Cyprus Metalworking Industry Employers' Association.

Czechia: The figure is an average based on the collective agreements concluded in the private sector by members of the Czech Metalworkers' Federation. The federation represents workers mostly (but not exclusively) in the metalworking industry. The figure expresses the average weekly working hours agreed in collective agreements without differentiating between working modes. Source: MoLSA, 2022.

Denmark: The figure is based on the Industrial Agreement (*Industriens Overenskomst*) (Confederation of Danish Industry and CO-industri, 2020a) and the Collective Agreement for Salaried Employees in Industry (*Industriens Funktionæroverenskomst*) (Confederation of Danish Industry and CO-industri, 2020b) for 2020–2023.

Finland: The figure refers to regular working time based on provisions of the main sectoral collective agreement.

France: The figure represents the average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in metallurgy and the manufacturing of metal products across March, June and September 2022, available at <https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/donnees/la-duree-collective-hebdomadaire-de-travail>

Germany: Source: WSI Collective Agreement Archive, including all agreements settled by IG Metall and for the metal and electrical industries.

Greece: The sectoral collective agreements in the metal sector do not deviate from the statutory 40 hours per week. There is only one exemption: the local collective agreement for the shipbuilding and ship repair sector covering companies in Attica and Peiraeus establishes a working week of 35 hours.

Italy: The figure is based on the 2021 national collective bargaining agreement for the metalworking industry, in force until June 2024.

Luxembourg: The collective agreement is based on provisions of the Labour Code.

Malta: The estimate was provided by the Metal and Construction Section of the General Workers' Union.

Netherlands: The figure is based on the collective agreement for the metal sector for 2021–2023.

Norway: The figure is based on the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise's Industry Agreement (*Industrioverenskomsten*) for 2022–2024.

Portugal: The estimate is based on collective agreements between Associação dos Industriais Metalomecânicos e Afins de Portugal and Sindicato Nacional da Indústria e da Energia, and between Federação Nacional do Metal and Federação dos Sindicatos da Indústria e Serviços.

Spain: The figure was calculated based on data for 2017 provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, assuming a 6-day working week and 274 working days per year.

Sweden: Source: Statistics Sweden, undated.

Notes to Figure 6: Collectively agreed weekly working hours in the banking sector, 2022

Austria: Information was obtained from Kollektivvertrag (a platform compiling all collective agreements applied in Austria, available at www.kollektivvertrag.at).

Belgium: The figure is based on the Collective Agreement of 17 December 1999 for Joint Committee (JC) 310, available at <https://public-search.werk.belgie.be/website-download-service/joint-work-convention/310/310-1999-004399.pdf>

Croatia: The estimate is based on collective agreements for Zagrebačka banka d.d., Erste & Steiermärkische bank d.d. and OTP bank d.d.

Cyprus: The figure is provided in all collective agreements in the sector, concluded between the Cyprus Banking Employees Union and each of the banks. It is a uniform provision in all collective agreements of the sector.

Czechia: The data represent an average based on the collective agreements concluded in the private sector by members of the Trade Union of Banking and Insurance Employees. The figure expresses the average weekly working hours agreed in collective agreements without differentiating between working modes. Source: MoLSA, 2022.

Denmark: The figure is based on the standard collective agreement between the Danish Employers' Association for the Financial Sector and the Financial Services Union on salary and working conditions in the banking and mortgage credit sector (*Standardoverenskomst for pengeinstitut og realkreditinstitut*) for 2020–2023 (Financial Services Union and Danish Employers' Association for the Financial Sector, 2020).

Finland: The figure refers to regular working time based on provisions of the main sectoral collective agreement. Regular weekly working time is 37 hours, but individual working time can be up to 40 hours.

France: The figure represents the average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in financial and insurance activities across March, June and September 2022, available at <https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/donnees/la-duree-collective-hebdomadaire-de-travail>

Germany: Source: WSI, 2023, p. 34, Table 9a.

Greece: The figure is based on a five-day working week and 37 working hours per week, and was established from the sectoral collective agreement for bank employees for 2002–2003 (Article 5).

Italy: The figure was obtained from the national collective agreement of the Italian Banking Association, signed on 31 March 2015.

Luxembourg: The normal weekly working hours are provided in Article 16 of the collective agreement for bank employees signed between the Luxembourg Bankers' Association and the trade union ALEBA, and the Independent Luxembourg Trade Union Confederation and the trade union confederation Lëtzebuerger Chrëschtliche Gewerkschafts-Bond – Syndicat des Employés du Secteur Financier (Luxembourg Bankers' Association et al, 2018).

Malta: Estimate by correspondent.

Netherlands: The figure was obtained from the collective agreement for the banking sectors for 2021–2023.

Norway: The figure was obtained from the central agreement (*Sentralavtalen*) 2022–2024 of Finance Norway (Finans Norge).

Portugal: The figure was obtained from a collective agreement (*Acordo Coletivo de Trabalho do Setor Bancário*) between a group of banks and Federação do Sector Financeiro from 2016.

Slovenia: The working hours were set by the collective agreement for the Slovenian banking sector (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 5).

Spain: The figure was calculated based on data for 2017 provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, assuming a 6-day working week and 274 working days per year.

Sweden: The figure was obtained from collective agreements of the Employers' Association of the Swedish Banking Institutions.

Notes to Figure 7: Collectively agreed weekly working hours in the retail sector, 2022

Austria: Information was obtained from Kollektivvertrag (a platform compiling all collective agreements applied in Austria, available at www.kollektivvertrag.at).

Belgium: The number is an average of the hours in the collective agreements for the five JCs in the sector:

- 35 hours, from the Collective Agreement of 23 November 2021 for JC 311, available at <https://public-search.werk.belgie.be/website-download-service/joint-work-convention/311/311-2021-014163.pdf>
- 35 hours, from the Collective Agreement of 23 November 2021 for JC 312, available at <https://public-search.werk.belgie.be/website-download-service/joint-work-convention/312/312-2021-014129.pdf>
- 38 hours, from the Collective Agreement of 4 September 2017 for JC 201, available at <https://public-search.werk.belgie.be/website-download-service/joint-work-convention/201/201-2017-012166.pdf>
- 36.5 hours, from the Collective Agreement of 23 November 2021 for JC 202, available at <https://public-search.werk.belgie.be/website-download-service/joint-work-convention/202/202-2021-014182.pdf>
- 38 hours, from the Collective Agreement of 1 March 2023 for JC 202.01, available at <https://public-search.werk.belgie.be/website-download-service/joint-work-convention/20201/20201-2023-002578.pdf>

Croatia: The figure is based on the collective agreement signed by the company Fortenova Grupa (formerly Agrokor) (OG 87/20).

Cyprus: Normal weekly working hours in retail are fixed at 38 hours per week, according to the provisions of Law 155(I)/2006 on the operation of retail shops and the terms of employment of retail workers. There are only two single-company collective agreements covering no more than 200 employees. Both provide for 38 weekly working hours.

Czechia: The data represent an average based on the collective agreements concluded by members of the Union of Employees in Commerce, Logistics and Services (Unie zaměstnanců obchodu, logistiky a služeb), which operates in several sectors (commerce, logistics, care services, tourism, etc.). Therefore, the figure does not relate only to the sector of commerce. It expresses the average weekly working hours without differentiating between working modes. Source: MoLSA, 2022.

Denmark: The figure is based on the agreement in the retail sector between the Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees in Denmark and the Danish Chamber of Commerce (HK and DE, 2020).

Finland: The figure refers to regular working time based on provisions of the sectoral collective agreement.

France: The figure represents the average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in the commerce sector across March, June and September 2022, available at <https://dares.travail-emploi.gouv.fr/donnees/la-duree-collective-hebdomadaire-de-travail>

Germany: Source: WSI, 2023, p. 34, Table 9a.

Greece: As specified by law.

Italy: The figure was obtained from the sectoral national collective agreement for companies in the tertiary sector of distribution and services (Aziende del Terziario della Distribuzione e dei Servizi), drawn up by Confcommercio in 2019.

Luxembourg: The estimate is based on a small sample of collective agreements in the sector (involving Adler Mode S.A., Auchan, bofrost*, Bram, Brico, BSH Électroménagers, Cactus, Comptoir des Fers et Métaux, Cora, Courthéoux, Delhaize Luxembourg, Little Smets & Color Center, Hema, HiFi international, H&M, Match, Mister Minit, MPK Luxembourg GmbH, Neuberg, Valora Luxembourg and Villeroy & Boch), including the sectoral agreement of the branch that covers garages.

Malta: The figure is an estimate based on the Wholesale and Retail Trades Wages Council Wage Regulation Order (1989).

Netherlands: The figure is from the collective agreement for the retail sector for 2021–2023.

Norway: The figure is based on the national agreement between the Federation of Norwegian Enterprise and the Norwegian Union of Commerce and Office Employees for 2022–2024.

Portugal: The figure was obtained from the collective agreement between Associação Portuguesa de Empresas de Distribuição and Federação Portuguesa dos Sindicatos do Comércio e Serviços.

Spain: The figure is based on collective agreement statistics from the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, assuming a 6-day working week and 274 working days per year.

Sweden: The estimate was given by a negotiator at the Swedish Trade Federation.

Notes to Figure 8: Collectively agreed weekly working hours in the public administration sector, 2022

Austria: Working hours are set out in the public sector service statute.

Belgium: The figure corresponds to the general statutory rule in the public sector.

Croatia: The figure is based on a collective agreement for state officials and public servants.

Cyprus: Working hours are provided by the Law 1(I)1990 on Public Service and Regulation 395/90 (and their subsequent amendments).

Denmark: The figure is based on an agreement between the Ministry for Public Sector Innovation and the Central Federation of State Employees' Organisations.

Finland: The estimate is based on collective agreements in the local government sector.

France: The figure was obtained from Decree No. 200–815 on the organisation and reduction of working time in the public service of the state (*Décret n° 200-815 du 25 août 2000 relatif à l'aménagement et à la réduction du temps de travail dans la fonction publique de l'Etat*).

Germany: The figure is based on a collective agreement on public service; hours may vary depending on the state.

Greece: The figure represents the weekly working hours of civil servants, as set by law.

Hungary: According to the Law on Public Service Officials (Act 199/2011), Section 89, the normal weekly working time is 40 hours.

Ireland: Public servants' minimum weekly working hours were reduced to 35 hours in 2022, following the acceptance of a review an independent body of working hours in the public sector, including the civil service.

Italy: The estimate is based on various collective agreements for central administration.

Luxembourg: Working hours are set in the collective agreement for state employees.

Malta: The figure was obtained from the Collective Agreement for Employees in the Public Service 2017–2024.

Netherlands: The figure represents the agreed hours for municipal civil servants, which is 40 hours for national-level civil servants.

Norway: The figure is based on the collective agreement covering employees of the state for 2022–2024.

Portugal: Working hours are set by the General Labour Law in Public Functions (Law 18/2016), Article 105.

Romania: The figure was obtained from the Labour Code.

Slovakia: The figure is based on multi-employer collective agreements for civil service.

Spain: The figure is the estimate for 2019 based on collective agreement statistics from the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, assuming a 6-day working week and 274 working days per year.

Sweden: The figure is based on the collective agreement for state workers (*Villkorsavtal mellan Arbetsgivarverket och OFR/S,P,O*).

Notes to Figure 11: Minimum number of days of paid annual leave, 2022

Austria: The minimum is 30 calendar days (including five Saturdays), as per the Annual Leave Act (*Urlaubsgesetz*).

Belgium: The minimum is four weeks; this figure refers to the private sector and differs for white- and blue-collar workers, young workers and artists. The minimum statutory entitlement in the public sector is 24 days (belgium.be, undated).

Bulgaria: The right to leave is a constitutional right of the employee, regulated by law in Chapter VIII of the Labour Code. Every employee who has completed at least four months' service is entitled to regular paid annual leave. The amount of basic paid annual leave should not be less than 20 working days. Greater statutory entitlements apply to groups such as young workers (under 18 years old), workers with reduced work capacity, and workers in hazardous work or working irregular hours, all of whom receive at least five more days of paid leave, as per the Labour Code (Article 155).

Croatia: The minimum is expressed as four weeks, that is, 20 working days, as per the Labour Act.

Cyprus: Workers are entitled to at least four weeks of paid annual leave. This equates to 20 working days for workers/employees with a 5-day working week and 24 working days for those with a 6-day working week (Law 63(I)/2002).

Czechia: The minimum is expressed as four weeks, as set out in the Labour Code.

Denmark: The figure was obtained from the Danish Holiday Act.

Estonia: The figure was obtained from the Employment Contracts Act.

Finland: The minimum is expressed as 24 calendar days, as per the Annual Holidays Act (162/2005).

France: The minimum is expressed as 30 working days for full-time workers, including Saturdays, as per the Labour Code (Article L3141-3).

Germany: The minimum is 20 days in the case of a 5-day week and 24 days in the case of a 6-day week and if Sundays are included, in line with the Minimum Leave Act (*Bundesurlaubsgesetz*) for employees, available at <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/burlg/index.html>

Greece: The minimum is 24 working days for those working a 6-day week; the entitlement increases after one year's service.

Hungary: According to the Labour Code, the minimum is 20 days complemented by additional days depending on workers' age and the number of dependent children. From the age of 25, each employee gets 1 extra day of holiday every two years, eventually increasing to 10 days after the age of 45. In addition, employees get 2 extra days of holiday for each child under the age of 16, but 7 days for three or more children. In addition, Sections 119–121 of the Labour Code state that employees are entitled to an extra five days of holiday if they are under 18 years old, if they have a disability, or if they work underground or in a job exposed to ionising radiation for at least three hours a day.

Ireland: The minimum is expressed as four working weeks, as set out in the Organisation of Working Time Act (1997).

Italy: The minimum is expressed as four weeks, as established by Article 10 of Legislative Decree 66/2003.

Latvia: The minimum is expressed as four calendar weeks, as per Section 149 of the Labour Law (adopted on 20 June 2001) on paid annual leave.

Lithuania: According to Article 126 of the Labour Code, employees must be granted an annual leave allowance no shorter than 20 working days when the employee works 5 days per week or no shorter than 24 days when an employee works 6 days per week.

Luxembourg: The figure was obtained from the Labour Code (Article L233-4).

Malta: The figure was obtained from the Organisation of Working Time Regulations. In 2022, an employee with a 40-hour working week was entitled to 224 hours of paid annual leave (the equivalent of 28 days), that is, 192 hours basic leave entitlement plus 32 hours in lieu of the four public holidays that fell on weekends.

Netherlands: The minimum is expressed as four times the number of weekly working days or hours, as per the Civil Code.

Norway: The minimum is 21 days, as per the Annual Holiday Act of 1988 (Section 5).

Poland: The entitlement increases from 20 to 26 days after 10 years of employment, as per the Labour Code of 26 June 1974 (Articles 154 and 155).

Portugal: The figure was obtained from the Labour Code (Article 238).

Romania: The figure is based on the Labour Code, which allows three additional days for some categories of employees, such as those working in extremely difficult, hazardous or harmful conditions, those with disabilities and those below 18 years of age.

Slovakia: The minimum is expressed as 20 working days or four weeks, as per the Labour Code (Article 103).

Slovenia: The figure was obtained from the Employment Relationships Act (2013).

Spain: The minimum is expressed as 30 calendar days, as per the Workers' Statute (Royal Legislative Decree 2/2015).

Sweden: The minimum is expressed as 25 working days in the Annual Leave Act (*Semesterlag*).

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The most important changes in the regulation of working time in Europe in 2021 and 2022 were related to the transposition of two European directives: the Work-life Balance Directive and the Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive. The reduction of working time and more specifically the four-day working week have been increasingly debated in many EU Member States. In 2022, the average collectively agreed working week in the EU stood at 38.1 hours. Of the sectors analysed, agreed working hours were shortest in public administration, at around 37.7 hours – still longer than the overall average – and longest in the retail sector, at 38.5 hours. The average collectively agreed paid annual leave entitlement stood at 24.3 days in the EU, and was higher in the Member States that were part of the EU prior to its 2004 enlargement (EU14), at 25.3 days, than in the other Member States, at only 20.9 days. If working collectively agreed hours, full-time workers in the EU27 would have worked, on average, 1,726 hours in 2022, with an average of 1,698 hours in the EU14 and 1,822 hours in the other Member States.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency established in 1975. Its role is to provide knowledge in the area of social, employment and work-related policies according to Regulation (EU) 2019/127.

