

EUROPE AT A TIME OF FLEXIBILITY

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Summary

Flexibility practices are many and widely developed, but their effects on the workforce are negative on the whole, despite the complexity of the underlying factors: this is the principal message that emerges from a synthesis of numerous European studies carried out between 1995 and 2000.

The main factors brought out in this report are as follows:

- Flexibility is a controversial and many-faceted concept covering a wide variety of situations, and has been at the centre of the controversies that have fuelled debate in Europe over the past fifteen years.
- Flexible working is generally regarded as taking four main forms:
 - numerical flexibility (variation in the number of employees and in type of employment contract);
 - temporal flexibility (variation in the duration of work and in work organisation);
 - productive flexibility (changes in the organisation of the systems of production, especially via subcontracting);
 - functional flexibility (changes in internal organisation and coordination mechanisms).
- These strategies are usually implemented simultaneously, in response to a number of causal factors, such as coping with fluctuations in demand, reducing labour costs, prolonging the time over which equipment is in use or services offered, or making an organisation more responsive.
- The “Fordist” norm of permanent full-time paid employment is still losing ground. In 2002, only 69.5% of employees in Europe fitted this pattern. Nearly one person in three in the EU (30.5%) is now affected by such special working patterns as insecure employment or self-declared part-time work. This figure rises if a broader definition of part-time work is adopted (i.e. under 35 hours per week).
- Stability of employment can no longer be taken for granted at different ages in working life, even though the proportion of insecure employment in the overall working pattern has been seen as standing still or even slightly decreasing at the end of the decade. In 2000, fixed-term contracts accounted for 10% of employment, temporary agency work for 2.2%, placements 1.7%; 3.7% of jobs were not registered (e.g. subcontracted work and seasonal or “on call” work.).
- One of the major features noted over the past five years is a significant increase in part-time work (under 35 hours per week). In 2000, 17.5% of employees declared themselves as working part-time (5% of men and 33% of women). When a broad definition is used (under 35 hours per week), 28% of the employed population is in part-time work, (14% of men and 44% of

women), compared with 22% in 1995 (10% of men and 37% of women). In this area discrimination between men and women has increased.

- As a specific employment category, part-time working is a less significant indicator than part-time work for women. In this category there is twofold discrimination, firstly between men and women on the labour market in general, and secondly between women in full-time work and women in part-time work in companies. In practice, women's part-time work is particularly concentrated and limited to certain jobs in services, caring, commerce, administration and certain unskilled jobs.
- In parallel, the persistence of long working hours (over 45 hours per week) mainly affects men, with 20% of men affected as against 7% for women and 14% for all employees.
- The relative stability of recourse to non-standard hours has different implications for men and women. Although men are more affected by this kind of flexibility, most working patterns of this type are becoming less common for men, while growing numbers of women are working on Sundays because so many of them work in the service industries.
- These factors are all part of a general pattern of changing working hours, marked by an increase in irregular hours but especially by the greater intensity of work.
- Overall, the decline in the "Fordist" norm of a permanent full-time contract applies more to women than to men. Unlike men, women are faced with a fall in the availability of jobs in the 34- to 40- hour-a-week band, a significant increase in part-time working and a greater variety in working hours, while their share of precarious employment is growing.
- The effects of flexibility on health and working conditions vary, but are generally negative. There are now a number of analytical settings within which these effects can be assessed: the ways in which labour markets function; the effects of new patterns of working hours such as night work, long hours or non-standard hours; strategies for the allocation of manpower; and the types of work organisation. All these signs of the growing interdependence between long and short-term dimensions have to be taken into account when analysing the changing patterns of work and employment in the context of an ever more flexible working environment.
- Looking beyond public policy, these observations are relevant not only to the subjects of collective bargaining but also to the bargaining process within EU Member States. Several approaches are discussed:
 - negotiating flexibility of work and of employment as a whole;
 - bringing the question of living and working conditions into the bargaining process;
 - reconsidering the way norms are elaborated, in terms of both job stability and working hours;
 - adopting a gender-specific approach to the whole range of factors involved;
 - developing public policies to support bargaining, where appropriate bringing local players and civic society into the debate.
- A particular feature of flexible working is that it has introduced a series of departures from Fordism without substituting an alternative model. Common interests still need to be developed, and this will call for active discussion and a search for new compromises.

Introduction

A controversial subject that takes many forms

In April 1997, *the European Commission* published a Green Paper called “Partnership for a new work organisation”. The general objective was to promote the “modernisation” of the ways in which work is organised and to trigger a social debate in this area. The term “flexibility” was intended to describe the general context which, according to the Commission, has made changes in work and employment in Europe necessary:

“[Both the traditional form of organisation and that based on step-by-step improvements still exist and will continue to do so for many years.] But in parallel, a more fundamental change in the work organisation is emerging, a shift from fixed systems of production to a flexible, open-ended process of organisational development, a process that offers new opportunities for learning, innovation, improvement and thereby increased productivity. This new concept of a process of continuous change is sometimes described as ‘the flexible firm’ and the workplaces as high trust and high skill workplaces. There is no one model, but an infinite variety of models, which are constantly being adapted to the circumstances of the individual firm and its workers. The transformation can be explained by three factors, representing change: human resources, markets and technology.” (Introduction)

In the same year, *the European Social Partners* (the Union of Industrial and Employers’ Confederations of Europe (UNICE), the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation (CEEP), and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)) launched a series of negotiations aimed at defining a framework for recourse to special forms of employment such as part-time work, fixed-term contracts and temporary agency work. The aim of this contractual framework was to “obtain a better balance between flexibility and security” and to regulate the new employment practices, especially by ensuring that the principle of non-discrimination is respected and that abusive practices are limited. By this means, those involved in negotiation restated the principle that permanent contracts and/or full-time work were still “the general form of employment relationship”, but recognised that within limits such special forms of employment had a certain value:

“The parties to this agreement recognise that contracts of an indefinite duration are, and will continue to be, the general form of employment relationship between employers and workers. They also recognise that fixed-term employment contracts respond, in certain circumstances, to the needs of both employers and workers. This agreement sets out the general principles and minimum requirements relating to fixed-term work, recognising that their detailed application needs to take account of the realities of specific national, sectoral and seasonal situations. It illustrates the willingness of the Social Partners to establish a general framework for ensuring equal treatment for fixed-term workers by protecting them against discrimination and for using fixed-term employment contracts on a basis acceptable to employers and workers.”

(Preamble to the Framework Agreement on Fixed-term Work)

Although negotiations over part-time work and fixed-term contracts resulted in framework agreements (in 1997 and 1998), negotiations on temporary agency work failed to reach an agreement, after which European directives were formulated for these various areas. Besides

placing the issues on the European institutional stage, the directives highlight two essential characteristics of flexible work and employment:

- this issue has been at the centre of the controversies that have fuelled the debate in Europe over the past fifteen years. Some see it as a sign of the existence of forms of organisation that are more responsive than in the past, better suited to market constraints and having a positive effect on productivity and employment. For others, it is a sign of the growing uncertainty hanging over employees, destabilising learning processes and forms of social interaction and leading to a fragmentation of society – and even detracting from companies' overall efficiency. These points of view represent widely divergent views of the relationship between the enterprise and society, but at the same time they are two aspects of the same movement, which brings both opportunities and risks;
- the implementation of flexible working runs alongside changes in production systems in the Western economies, calling into question all aspects of planning, stability and hierarchy – values that have their roots in the industrial age. This evolution has been gradual but widespread. It has affected companies' competitiveness strategies as well as the way they organise their work or their rules of employment, but also the content of work itself and the elements of working time (pace of work, total hours worked and schedules). Flexibility has developed as a concept that takes many forms, affecting a great many individual and collective realities.

The aim of this review is not to settle the debate, nor to reduce flexibility to one or another of these dimensions. Its objective is more modest: it is to assess the extent of flexible working practices within the EU, drawing on a number of European studies on the subject over the last five years. It will not propose or test particular hypotheses, as the researchers have done in their individual papers, but will note the most prominent developments and sketch out some overall trends. To preserve a measure of homogeneity and overall consistency it has been decided to focus this summary on changes in *employees'* work leaving aside the specific questions that concern the self-employed. This does not mean that the particular issues at stake in this kind of work should be underestimated, especially the problems arising from the emerging relationship between work as an employee and self-employment, sometimes termed "parasubordination". But the data available are not adequate for an in-depth assessment of this subject. The same is true of questions of subcontracting, outsourcing or internal organisational changes, subjects that would require in-depth qualitative data of a kind not available when this text was written. All the data collected and analysed here are to be found in the annex.

This synthesis is therefore not a research paper in the strict sense, but a study aimed at providing an up-to-date picture of a particular issue, drawing on material defined in advance. This is why it brings together factual data, is restricted to setting out the trends emerging in the various studies, and does not refer to other, more in-depth research papers on the subject. It does, however, attempt to underline the diversity of sources and methodologies whenever this is seen as enriching the discussion. In an overall context marked by a general lack of improvement in working conditions in the EU (MERLLIE and PAOLI, 2001), the challenge to a report of this kind is to focus on identifying current movements, in other words as much on the persistence of known problems as on the sources of possible improvements or on new concerns. Drawing on European-wide research, it can help to raise awareness of the issues at stake in flexible working and thus provide a basis for both reflection and action.

I – Definitions

The interaction between different forms of flexibility

Most specialist researchers on this subject have pointed out the diversity of the existing definitions in the area of flexible work and employment. This has meant that flexibility has been approached in negative rather than positive terms, by referring to what the system of production no longer is. In its very diversity, flexibility corresponds to a series of departures from the principles that constitute Fordism.

- the accumulation mode (a move from mass production to “flexible specialisation” or “flexible production ”);
- the organisation of production (a move from Taylorist organisation to multiple forms of organisation – some of which are described as “neo-Taylorist” – that focus on adaptation to the market);
- the rules of employment (a move from one dominant system – the “full-time permanent contract” – to more varied and even fragmented employment situations).

With this approach, it is clear that special or non-standard forms of employment, in other words all the forms of employment that do not correspond to the Fordist norm of a full-time permanent contract, are continuing to gain ground. As we shall see, the decline of the Fordist norm can be looked at in several different ways. An initial indicator is given below, comparing types of precarious employment and self-declared part-time work. However, we shall see that this development is more marked if a broader concept of part-time work is used (ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD, 2002; BURCHELL and FAGAN, 2002). In the same way, if aspects of flexible working such as irregularity and intensity are taken into account, the phenomenon tends to be further accentuated. It should be remembered that reference is made here to a former agreed “norm of employment”, rather than to a set of stable practices. It should be noted here that special forms of employment affect more than 30% of employees in the EU (see Table 1):

Table 1: Precarious employment and part-time working among European employees in 2000

Employment status Working hours	Permanent contracts	Fixed-term contracts	Temporary work	Work experience/ placements	Other	Total
Full time	69.5	7.2	1.7	1.6	2.4	82.4
Self-declared part-time	12.8	2.8	0.5	0.1	1.3	17.6
Total	82.3	10	2.2	1.7	3.7	100

Source: Merllié and Paoli (2000)

The forms taken by flexible working have been analysed in number of studies, reviewed by GOUDSWAARD and de NANTEUIL-MIRIBEL (2001). These studies usually distinguish between two sets of qualifiers: quantitative/qualitative, and external/internal. These qualifiers are often set in the context of a dualist approach to flexible working, in which quantitative and external indices are regarded as signs of “defensive flexibility”, focusing on the volume of output, reduction of labour costs, and short-term adjustments; whereas qualitative and internal indices are seen as leading to “offensive flexibility”, which focuses on the pursuit of quality and innovation, skill development and long-term commitment. This long-dominant reading is now being questioned. Many studies now stress the growing interaction between different forms of flexible working, implemented at the same time. In a globalised market, price competition and non-price competition strategies complement each other, and companies are subject to both strong pressure on costs (short term) and demand for high quality and innovation (long term). Symptomatic of this is the fact that in practice, many agreements relating to flexible working include both defensive and offensive measures.

Figure 1: Forms of flexibility

<i>FLEXIBILITY</i>	<i>QUANTITATIVE</i>	<i>QUALITATIVE</i>
<i>EXTERNAL</i>	Employment status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fixed-term contracts • temporary work contracts • placements and apprenticeships • “other kinds of employment” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . subsidised employment . seasonal work . “on call” work • redundancy / layoffs <i>numerical and contractual flexibility</i>	Systems of production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subcontracting • outsourcing • self-employment <i>productive and geographical flexibility</i>
<i>INTERNAL</i>	Working hours and remuneration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction / adjustment in working hours • part-time working • overtime / extra time • shift work / night work / weekend work • irregularity / unpredictability of working hours • changes in remuneration <i>temporal and financial flexibility</i>	Work organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • autonomy / constraint • job enrichment • multi-tasking / multi-skilling • delegation of responsibilities • team work / semi-autonomous teams • project groups / networking • functional coordination <i>functional and organisational flexibility</i>

Productive flexibility changes the way the system of production is organised. It is thus a qualitative change, but it directly affects the distribution of the volume of employment by different employers. Financial flexibility may be associated with flexible hours, insofar as the number of hours worked determines the overall basis for remuneration. But it can also be analysed independently when it affects specific ways in which wages and salaries fluctuate (individual wage bargaining, performance-related and other bonuses, stock options, etc.). It should be remembered in this context that there is not a great deal of information available about modes of productive and functional flexibility and that this study will focus mainly on

types of numerical and temporal flexibility. It should be noted that when temporal flexibility changes the way working hours are organised (for instance irregular or non-standard hours, or the pace of work) it has a powerful qualitative dimension.

A variety of reasons for choosing flexibility

This initial assessment highlights the fact that companies are influenced by a variety of motives in their choices regarding flexible working. They usually include the following:

- adapting to fluctuations in the demand for goods or services;
- reducing labour costs, linked to short-term adjustments;
- increasing the time during which the equipment is used or services offered;
- increasing employees' job mobility;
- improving coordination mechanisms within the organisation;
- changing in the system of job relations.

These call for some comment. As already mentioned, they are often implemented simultaneously. A decision to use non-permanent contracts (e.g. fixed-term contracts or temporary agency work) reflects a strategy of reducing labour costs and immediate adaptation to fluctuations in demand, but it can also be accompanied by changes in the way work is organised with the aim of increasing multi-tasking and the functional coordination of the employees as a group. These changes may be considered beneficial for the employees, but they can cut both ways. For instance, although multi-skilling often involves a learning element, it may also serve as a stopgap solution and can undermine front-line skills. Furthermore the work demanded in return is often more intensive, which may lead to a deterioration in working conditions. Finally, it should be added that in some cases the implementation of flexible working is also motivated by a desire to change the former structure of employer-employee relationships by weakening union representation.

The main issues at stake for employers, employees and society

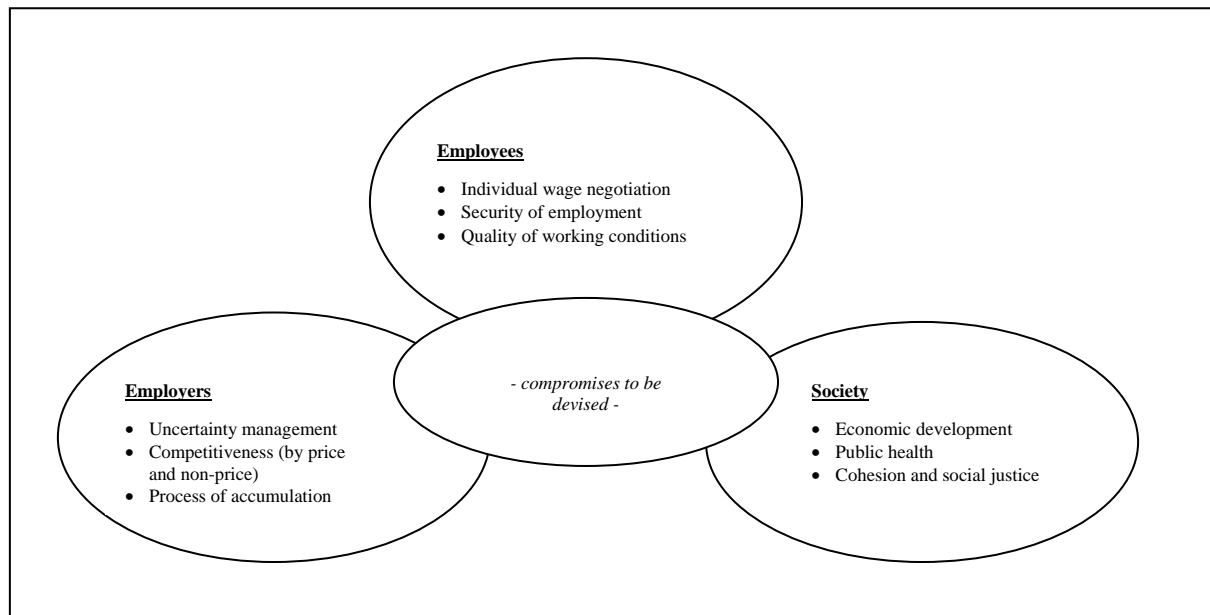
The issues arising from the implementation or limitation of flexible working, whether at national or European level, come up against the interests of the three different parties: the employers, the employees and their representatives, and society as a whole. To give a general picture, the issues at stake can be summarised as follows:

- for *employers*, increased competition on a globalised and uncertain market brings three main challenges: the ability to guide organisations in a context of great uncertainty over the medium and long term; developing a form of competitiveness that relies on both price and non-price variables; and reinforcing the process of accumulation and profit-making, under the pressure of growing financialisation;
- in a context marked by both the rise of individualism and an increase in different forms of job insecurity, *employees* are confronted with three major issues: a closer individual relationship with their company, which enables them to organise their time in a way more easily reconciled with their private life, and perhaps even reduced working hours;

stability of employment; and good working conditions, enabling them to maintain or improve their physical and psychological health;

- as productive organisations evolve and work patterns change, three specific challenges to *society* emerge: how to maintain or improve economic prosperity; how to promote health at work, despite the appearance of new risk factors; and how to maintain social cohesion and combat inequality, given the weakening of the process of integration into working life and the existence of excluded groups.

Figure 2: Flexibility: devising compromises



A particular feature of flexible working is that it has introduced a series of departures from Fordism without substituting an alternative model. For this reason, the development involves a loss of balance, a dislocation of concerns that were previously common ground, against the background of an economy based on production and mass consumption. Sometimes complementary but often divergent, these concerns are now specific to each side. New common interests will have to be arrived at, requiring active discussion and arriving at *new compromises* (Fig. 2). This study, it is hoped, will contribute to a better understanding of the various dimensions of flexibility in work and employment in the EU. Bringing together a variety of papers written over the last few years, it is not claimed that it covers every aspect, but the aim is that it should serve as a basis for reflection and action by providing material drawn from Europe-wide studies and focused on changes in work and employment.

II – Precarious employment and numerical flexibility

Instability of employment: different meanings across the EU

Numerical flexibility involves the volume and differentiation of types of employee status within the working population. Besides any rise or fall in numbers employed, the main characteristic of this kind of flexibility is that it relies on instable or insecure employment. Such an indicator affects both the structure of employment and the ways in which companies function, as well as the individual's working conditions. Because of this it provides important information about the employment relationship and the forms of social inequality that underlie the emergence of new kinds of employment.

In 2000, the European working population stood at 159 million, of whom 83% were employed and 17% self-employed. The figure was 147 million in 1995, with a practically identical ratio of self-employed to employed. For the employment categories covered by the term insecure employment, we adopt the distinctions put forward by MERLLIE and PAOLI (2001a, 2001b) and used in the second and third European surveys on working conditions. Insecure employment covers the four following sub-categories:

- fixed-term contracts;
- temporary or agency work;
- placements and apprenticeship schemes
- “other” contracts, which are increasingly difficult to classify, including “assisted” jobs in the public sector, “seasonal” work in agriculture, “on call” jobs in certain retail services, etc.

The definition adopted here is thus fairly broad, but remains dependent on the legal nature of the work contract. It is important here that acceptance of instability or more broadly speaking insecurity varies considerably between Member States and according to the current socio-institutional regulations. Briefly, there are two main approaches:

- *contract precariousness* refers to jobs that depart from the norm of job stability but also forfeit the social rights that stability confers. Precariousness is all the more significant when there is marked instability of employment, but also when it entails forfeiting the substantial system of guarantees – whether general or contractual – attached to permanent employment;
- *income precariousness* refers to jobs in which income is low or threatened, irrespective of the actual employment contract. Precariousness is all the more significant where these jobs offer a very low standard of living even though they may at the same time be part of a legally stable employment relationship (*bad jobs*).

These two forms of insecurity do not relate to the same economic and social realities ¹. The *feeling of insecurity itself* must also be taken into consideration: whatever the legal status of a job and the level of earnings that goes with it, a job is said to be precarious or insecure if it risks disappearing in the short or medium term. This is particularly the case when, for a variety of reasons (for instance the size of a firm or the type of industrial sector, but also inadequate statutory protection), there is a recurring threat of redundancy or of the work coming to an end. One of the main elements that help to explain why any one form predominates is the nature of the legal system. Whereas in the United Kingdom permanent employment offers little protection against redundancy and the associated social rights are weak or non-existent, in France a fixed-term contract brings with it most social rights and is better protected by the law. This makes it difficult to put forward a European definition that takes account of all the national dimensions. The concept of insecure employment used here broadly describes non-permanent jobs, that is to say those whose formal status does not offer stability or in which there is a pervasive feeling of uncertainty about the future. To put it in a different way, this concept includes all categories of employment other than the permanent contract that is supposed to guarantee, legally speaking at least, some stability of employment. In this context, the findings of the third European survey on working conditions, taken further in various secondary analyses (ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD, 2002; BENACH *et al*, 2002; BOISARD *et al*, 2002; BURCHELL and FAGAN, 2002; DHONDT *et al*, 2002; LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY, 2001; MOLINIE, 2001), demonstrate three main tendencies, clarified in the following points:

- insecure employment levelled out or even fell slightly 1995 and 2000, at a time when there was greater diversification of such jobs;
- there is a phase of instability at any age in a person's working life when moving to a new job;
- the trend towards a higher percentage of women in insecure jobs is continuing, and such jobs are becoming polarised in certain sectors or at certain levels of qualification.

The levelling out and diversification of insecure jobs

Of interest here is the difference in interpretation depending on the use of the sub-categories of insecure employment. According to ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2002) who have constructed a statistical comparison between permanent and temporary jobs without using either the two sub-categories of “forms of apprenticeship” and “others”, or employees working fewer than 10 hours per week, primarily because these are not representative, insecure employment has decreased between 1995 and 2000, mostly in favour of part-time

¹ A person in the United Kingdom in permanent employment but who is obliged to work no more than a few hours a week, and who therefore does not have an adequate subsistence income, is considered to be in precarious employment. In France on the other hand, the concept of job insecurity covers all types of employment status that do not offer stability, the level of earnings being of secondary importance in assessing this instability. It should be noted that “marginal” part-time work (under 20 hours per week) is very widespread in the United Kingdom (BURCHELL and FAGAN, 2002), although the proportion of people in insecure jobs is substantially lower than the European average – precisely the reverse of the situation in France. France is characterised by an essentially legal approach to job insecurity, while in the UK it is essentially a question of pay. More detailed studies distinguish between countries according to the regulatory authority which (whether by contract or by law) promotes access to social rights.

work. Insecure employment has fallen from 14% to 11% of the working population in general and from 15% to 13% of wage- and salary-earners. For MERLLIE and PAOLI (2001a, 2001b) who present the raw data, this decrease seems less significant, with the share of non-permanent employment declining from 19% to 18% over the same period. The global view is one of a slight longer-term increase in permanent employment on the average across Europe, in other words independently of the legal aspects of this kind of contract and the parallel changes in the duration of working hours.

MERLLIE and PAOLI (2001a, p. 5), however, cite supplementary data on changes in the distribution of non-permanent jobs. The levelling out of this distribution is accompanied by greater *diversification*, although that diversification is not very pronounced and needs to be backed up by other statistics confirming the trend that seems to be emerging from the third European survey. According to the authors, the “fixed-term employment” and “temporary agency work” categories are declining slightly while the “others” category is growing. In 1995-2000, the following changes are seen: fixed-term contracts (11% – 10%), temporary agency work (3% – 2%), apprenticeships (2% – 2%), others (3% – 4%). However this diversification should be interpreted with caution. In particular it is hard to know exactly how the commonest insecure categories (fixed-term contracts and temporary agency work) are changing. In certain countries and/or sectors, they may overlap with the “others” category, mainly because of the way they are classified. Furthermore, such a sub-category is by definition very heterogeneous and its significance may differ from country to country. Given its considerable share of the distribution of insecure jobs in 2000, it is still justifiably regarded as important. Seen from this angle, the data on insecure employment coming out of the third European survey seem to support the idea that *the borderlines between types of non-permanent job are becoming blurred*. In 2000, the number of employees who no longer regarded themselves as belonging to the commonest categories of insecure work (fixed-term contracts and temporary agency work) represented more than a fifth of these jobs (22% in 2000 compared with 15% in 1995) on average across Europe.

An increasingly uncertain career path?

These different elements can be complemented by an analysis of the career path within a job and/or the organisation. The second and third surveys on working conditions consistently highlight the gap between structural data on employment, and data on entry into the labour market or on changing jobs during working life. This difference is related to the nature of insecure jobs themselves, as these are an important tool in labour management in the climate of market uncertainty, and are often used as a “filter”, either at the point of entry into the labour market or when job mobility is required. By implication, such jobs are far more common at the beginning of working life than at the end. All the same, the data available show up a number of points in relation to these general trends: the difference between stock data and flow data, changes observed over the period and the breakdown by age groups. Here too, the data vary depending on the statistical analysis used.

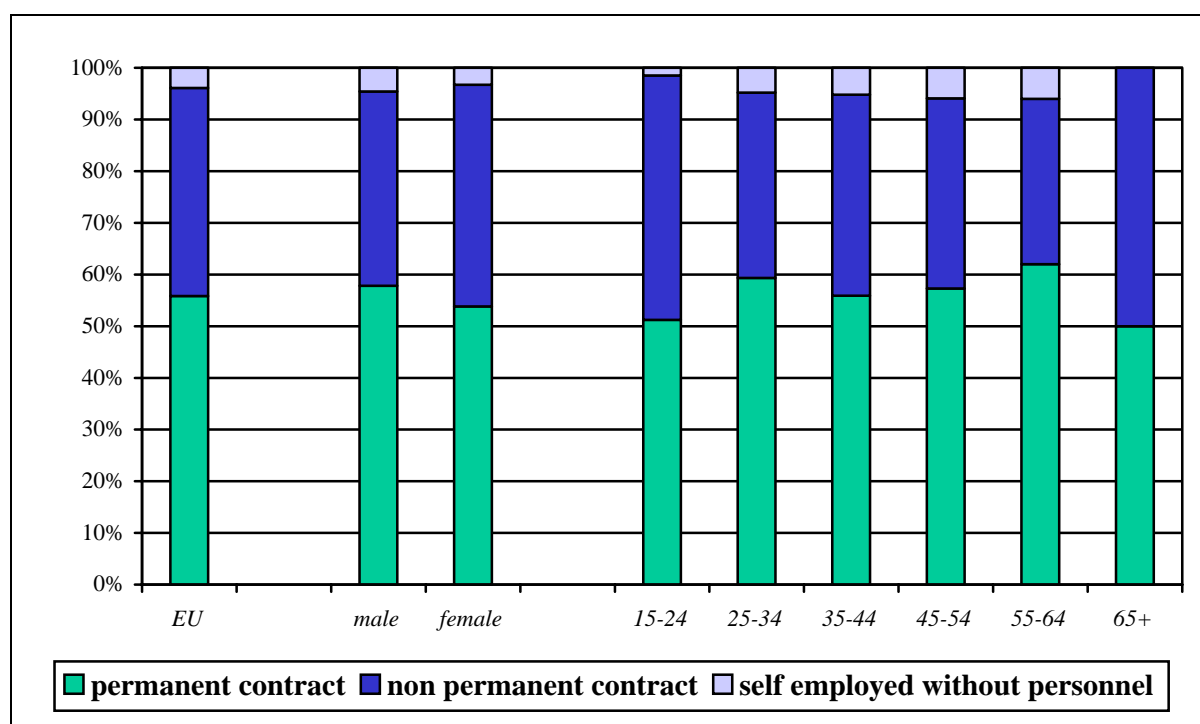
According to MERLLIE and PAOLI (2001a, 2001b), the 2000 data do not differ significantly from those for 1995. As far as seniority is concerned, the overall proportion of employees recruited into insecure jobs during the course of the previous year was almost one in two (48%), but this increased if the number of years worked in the same organisation was taken

into account, in which case the figure was more than one in two (51%)². But for ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2002), the figures from the latest survey indicated a significant decrease in instable or insecure employment at the point of entry onto the labour market or when job mobility is required. They found that recruitment through this kind of work over the previous year involved less than half of employees recruited, in contrast with a majority five year earlier. Although the gap between stock and flow data was confirmed, according to these researchers the figures showed a resurgence of recruitment to stable jobs. “If we only consider newcomers in jobs [recruited during the past year], the share of non-permanent contracts is more important [than the distribution shown by the stock data], but here we also see a decrease: in 2000 the majority of employees have started a job with a permanent contract, which was not the case in 1996.” (*ibid.*, p. 31).

Although the share of insecure employment is assessed rather differently depending on the statistical treatments used, analysing the breakdown of this kind of recruitment at different ages in working life is rewarding. ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2002) report two concomitant trends in this respect. On the one hand, the 15-24 age group differs clearly from other age groups in terms of employment structure: more than a third of this group have insecure jobs, and the proportion then decreases steadily with age (stock data). But remarkably the data are very different for recruitment (flow data). *At least a third of people in all age groups go through a stage of insecure work.* In other words, analysing job flows by age group shows that at least a third of employees in each age group are recruited into a job whose legal status differs from that of the permanent contract, whether it is a fixed-term contract, temporary agency work, apprenticeship or other special kinds of work. What distinguishes age groups depends not on the use of insecure jobs at the recruitment stage or job mobility stage, but on the relationship between instability and stability. This relationship is weak for those under 24 and becomes stronger with age, but it does not rule out limited but genuine periods of uncertainty at all stages of working life.

It seems that this observation could be interpreted in two different ways. The recurring differences between structure and flow in employment highlight the nature of developments in the labour market and the frequency of movement from insecure jobs to more stable jobs. But they also underline *the role played by companies in structuring the flow of employment.* These factors seem to indicate that the various kinds of employment contract are actively used as part of labour management policy throughout employees’ working life cycle. Far from being a purely passive phenomenon, insecure employment seems to be an important tool in organising and selecting the flow of labour, in contexts where firms are facing significant variability in the markets. In another study, GOUDSWAARD and de NANTEUIL-MIRIBEL (2000) show that in many cases these jobs are used as a “selection filter” within organisations and play a role in the social division of labour, with employers reserving the privilege of stability for a limited number of employees and imposing special conditions on access to this. While the situation described is not uniform or static, recourse to job instability at different stages of working life highlights the greater role being played by companies in determining the conditions of recruitment and mobility on the labour market.

² The difference between these two statements is explained by the fact that the employees questioned may have had a precarious job before their main job during the current year.

Figure 3: Employment status by sex and age in 2000 (less than one year in the job)

Source: Andries and Goudswaard (2002)

The second part of this observation relates to employees' career paths. Looking beyond a term-by-term comparison with the 1995 data, which offer different perspectives depending on the statistical processing, the data assembled in these two studies bring to light a continuing and tangible uncertainty in the way a career path can be constructed at different stages in working life. We can speak of a recurring career path uncertainty for employees in Europe. This term reflects the idea that at all ages employees seem to face the risk of periods of instability when they change jobs. These periods do not affect the majority, nor are they permanent: generally speaking they affect one employee in three, and moving over to stable employment is common, at least for those over 24, as is shown by the differences between stock and flow data. But at the same time the fact that such periods still exist at very different stages in working life indicates that employees are increasingly losing control of the conditions in which their careers develop, and therefore the conditions of their future and the stability of their own identity. What recent data suggest is not so much that instability of employment (often associated with the issue of job insecurity, though this is not validated here) is becoming widespread as that *employees can no longer take job stability for granted*. All age groups find themselves facing continuing uncertainty over the planning of their career paths, even if the risks remain limited and are far from leading to a large-scale generalisation of instability. This development would tend to suggest that employees' perceptions are that they are being deprived of control over the conditions of access to job stability, at least in some cases, but that greater use is being made to numerical flexibility and the differentiation of employment contract at different ages in working life. Nevertheless these factors are bound to be subtly different depending on the country, the sector and the characteristics of the work force.

Gradual feminisation and the polarisation of occupations

According to ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2002), the overall decline in instable employment applies to women too, even though they are more affected by job insecurity than men. Over the period of the study, the proportion of insecure jobs dropped from 14% to 11% among men and from 17% to 15% among women. These figures are far lower than those recorded for part-time work. So although the figures are slightly affected by the exclusion of some sub-categories, they do indicate that where instability is concerned the gender gap has widened a little. For this reason it is useful to look at the data presented by MERLLIE and PAOLI (2001a, 2001b) comparing changes in women's employment rates in the various types of precarious work. While the proportion of women in paid employment remained stable for the second half of the 1990s (44%), logically enough women's share of the commonest categories of insecure jobs is increasing: for fixed-term contracts, the proportion of women went up from 48% (1995) to 49% (2000), and for temporary agency work from 47% (1995) to 48% (2000). However the most striking development is in the "others" sub-category. Representing over a fifth of insecure jobs, this category has by far the highest proportion of women, with more than half of jobs (54%) being taken by women. Across Europe as a whole, then, women's participation in the labour market is accompanied by a *gradual weakening of their employment position*, particularly affecting categories of employment that are disparate and difficult to classify.

Alongside this first trend, a relative polarisation of types of instability by sector and qualification level has been maintained. Here too, contrasting results would be produced as regards increases and decreases in some sectors, depending on whether or not the sub-categories excluded by ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2001) are taken into account. But the general trends remain very similar. In fact the most recent data seem to confirm the idea that there is, if not a dualism, at least a tendency to maintain *certain polarities between various sectors*. The hotel and catering trade (20%) and agriculture (18%) are still far above the European average, closely followed by the social services (16%), the property sector (15%) and the construction industry (14%). On the other hand, as in 1995, finance (7%), the manufacturing industries (9%) and transport (9%) are still well under the average. Even though these figures are less characteristic than for part-time working, they still show certain regular sectoral patterns connected with the modes of accumulation, production processes and labour management methods deployed in these sectors.

As far as skills are concerned, the trend towards polarisation seems less pronounced, however, since *instability affects a fairly varied levels of skills*. With the exception of the armed forces, the groups most affected by the various forms of job instability are agricultural and fishery workers (20%), people in unskilled occupations (18%), and employees in the service sector, retailing and distribution (15%). But employees in administrative services (12%), middle-ranking occupations (12%) and academic and scientific professions (13%) are also affected, being roughly at the level of the cross-sector average (13%). On the other hand, it is quite striking that executives and senior management form the only part of the working population that is more or less spared (5%). Lastly, the "others" category is strongly represented among agricultural workers (9%), unskilled personnel (7%) and employees in services, retailing and distribution (5%). There seems to be a significant diversity in types of employment in all these job sectors, while the people with industrial skills seem to be far less affected. The differences between fixed-term contracts and temporary agency work show up most clearly at different skill levels, as shown in Box 1. These factors have also been highlighted by national research on temporary agency work, brought together into a European survey by D. STORRIE (2002).

Box 1 - Fixed-term contracts and temporary agency work in Europe - Different populations

It is possible to use the various information given above to pinpoint the main traits characteristic of the fixed-term contract and temporary agency worker populations in Europe, according to the following variables: gender, age, sectors, qualification levels.

- the temporary agency worker population is mainly male (52% M, 48% F) but the proportion of women is larger than in the population in employment (44%) and has increased since 1995 (47%), to a lesser extent, however, than for fixed-term contracts (where the proportion of women increased from 48% in 1995 to 49% in the year 2000). The temporary agency worker population is particularly young since over one third of this population is aged under 25 (34%) and close on two thirds (65%) is aged under 35; similar proportions are to be found among fixed-term contracts where the 25-34 age-group nevertheless continues to account for the largest numbers (35%);
- the industry/services divide is a factor of differentiation between these two forms of employment. Fixed-term contracts are, for instance, used on a massive scale in services (73%) whereas the temporary agency worker population is 41% in industry, 57% in services and 3% in agriculture. These two populations have different sectoral peaks: one out of four temporary workers works in the manufacturing industries while close on one out of three workers on fixed-term contracts works in the social/ "other services" sector;
- lastly, qualification levels show very different profiles. Close on one out of four temporary agency workers (23%) is in an unskilled job, one out of three (33%) is a manual worker (industry or small businesses) and one out of four (26%) is a white-collar worker (service workers or clerical personnel). The proportion of white-collar workers is much greater (28%) among workers on fixed-term contracts, but there are marked differences for the other qualification levels: less than one out seven workers on fixed-term contracts is in an unskilled job (13%), less than one out of five (19%) is a manual worker (industry or craft firms, whereas middle-ranking employees and academic and scientific professionals account for 31% of this population.

In general, the European temporary agency worker population is more male, younger, more industrial and less qualified than the population of workers on fixed-term contracts, which covers a wider range of qualification profiles, is predominantly employed in the service sector and includes a larger number of women. Unlike fixed-term contracts, which are significantly represented at certain highly-qualified levels, the proportion of temporary agency workers is very closely linked to the evolution of qualifications and the services/ industry divide: the lower the qualification level and the more industry is concerned the higher the proportion of temporary agency work. These differences are due to the nature of the contracts themselves, the ways in which they are used in sectors or in organisations, the populations on which they are targeted and the rules that determine their use. (MERLLIE and PAOLI (2001a, 2001b, STORRIE, 2002)

The emergence of insecure employment has been one of the major sociological events of the last decade, and has occurred in most European countries. There are, however, marked differences between Member States, connected with the kind of socio-institutional exerted in the various countries, and therefore with the way the borderline between stability and instability itself is defined. It is not the aim in this summary to enter into comparisons between countries, but we must recall at this point that in the period 1995-2000 a significant gap remains between the countries where instability is high (Spain, Portugal and Finland) and those where it is relatively low (Sweden, Austria and Germany). The gap recorded in 2000 Between Spain and Germany was over 20 percentage points. That said, and looking beyond the increase and then slight decrease observed in the latest European survey on working conditions, the various tendencies described in this section indicate a slow but profound

change in the overall structure of employment and the processes of social integration operating in the workforce. Some researchers refer to these developments using the term “social vulnerability”. While it does not describe a homogeneous situation that affects a majority, the term evokes a dismantling of previous modes of social interaction; it describes the forms that uncertainty and instability may take within the framework of the development of “flexible capitalism”, both globalised and financialised. Nevertheless, changes such as these have little significance if they are disconnected from the time-related characteristics of employees’ work and employment patterns in the EU, and especially the continuing advance of part-time work over the last ten years. More than the instability of employment in the sense already defined, it is the changes observed in the area of working time patterns that seem to be the central characteristic of the way working life is changing. They are evidence of a restructuring of the frameworks of working and social time in which individuals and companies find themselves. It is therefore important to be able to analyse the way these various dimensions interact, to the extent that each one is part of the overall dynamics of the flexibilisation of the employer-employee relationship, and the emergence of atypical forms of work that depart from the Fordist norm of legal stability and full-time work.

III – Part-time work and temporal flexibility

Length of the working week and temporal flexibility

Having described the main trends associated with the use of numerical flexibility, we will now highlight the most striking aspects of the changes observed in the flexibility of working time. To define more clearly the ideas discussed in this section, two preliminary remarks should be made:

- as several researchers have noted (especially BOISARD *et al.*, 2002), the length of the working week in the EU has been *steadily decreasing for several decades* in all Member States except the United Kingdom. The average working week in the EU as reported in the various European surveys on conditions of work was 40.7 hours in 1991, 38 hours in 1995 and 36.7 hours in 2000. The underlying reasons for the decision to reduce the working week have been analysed by several researchers as part of a Europe-wide comparative study (TADDEI, 1998). According to the authors, the length of the working week is one of the areas in which the interests of companies are much the same, whereas employee expectations are more and more diverse. Several factors contribute to the reduction in collective working hours, in particular the imposition of a mainly legislative or contractual standard, financial prompting by the public finance institutions, or most commonly companies' own strategies, aimed at increasing the time during which equipment is in use or services offered, while at the same time reducing labour costs. However, according to the authors, the effects in terms of jobs are very difficult to pin down, in particular because collective negotiation takes into account many different qualitative variables (organisational or social, etc.). What is more, this general trend masks a number of major difficulties, especially in a context of varying working hours and the blurring of borderlines between work and non-work in some occupations (BOISARD *et al.*, 2002). In fact, subjective interpretation of the various aspects of working time may vary considerably, depending on the general work organisation and the kinds of constraints connected with it;
- the problem already mentioned of the *diversity of national trends* must also be considered. As with insecure employment, the differing trends in the length of the working week in each Member State reflect the diversity in the methods of social and institutional regulation obtaining in each country. This diversity in turn is the result of each country's political, economic and social history, the role played by women in the labour market and the balance of power between the negotiating partners. Far from converging, there are still quite wide discrepancies within the EU in the length of the working week and in the way work is organised. "The discrepancies between the 15 EU Member States show no sign of disappearing. One group of countries, including Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and France, stands out with average weekly working hours of less than 40, while others - Ireland, Finland and the United Kingdom - still have long (over 40) weekly working hours." (BOISARD *et al.*, p. 15). It is not the aim of this summary to give a detailed account of national differences, so we shall merely set out the main average trends observed in the EU.

We should therefore specify what is covered by the question of time flexibility, quite apart from the overall changes affecting the various aspects of working time. The first factor is connected with the observation that a relatively *broad spread of time bands* has been maintained, as confirmed in the most recent study of working conditions (MERLLIE and PAOLI, 2001; BOISARD *et al.*, 2001). The general trend towards a shorter working week (36.7 hours per week for employees as a whole), and a narrowing of the range of working hours to around 40 hours per week (27% of employees say they work a 40-hour week), is accompanied by two complementary trends: 17.2% of employees work over 40 hours, and 16.7% under 29 hours per week. Compared to 1995, this indicates a reduction in both long hours (over 40 per week) and the intermediate band (36 to 39 hours), with a corresponding strengthening of the 40-hour week and part-time work (under 35 hours). This is shown in the table below (Table 2):

Table 2: Distribution of employees by working hours (%)

	29 hours and under		30 to 35 hours		36 to 39 hours		40 hours		41 to 44 hours		45 hours and over	
Year	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000
Employees	14.52	16.75	9.97	12.46	31.44	26.91	23.31	26.66	4.68	2.99	16.08	14.24

Source: Boisard et al. (2002)

On an average across Europe, employees' working hours are moving in the direction of a shorter working week, with a reduction in long hours and fewer people working between 36 and 39 hours, but the 40-hour week and part-time work (under 35 hours) have gained ground. In other words, the shortening of the European working week has been accompanied by a significant diversification of working hours and greater temporal flexibility according to this definition. This diversification varies from one country, sector or skill level to another, but it gives a first glimpse of the management practices that have developed around the trend towards reduced working hours.

Nevertheless, temporal flexibility can be understood in terms of the gradual emergence of both working hours and the ways of organising time, which depart from the standard of an average working week and organisation into regular working hours. As BOISARD *et al.* write (2002, p. 9), this kind of flexibility covers more widely "variation in the rhythm and duration of working hours, the work organisation in more or less regular cycles and irregular organisational procedures which disrupt living conditions." But this broad definition does not necessarily bring any common practices to light. The changes observed in working hours are mostly caused by the tensions and compromises that have marked the changing employer-employee relationship over the decades, taking into account each country's particular cultural and institutional contexts. In this they reflect a series of gradual crystallisations, one significantly different from another, and including a variety of different ingredients. Even more than for insecure employment, the main characteristic of flexibility in working hours is that it can take a wide variety of forms.

Analysing the various component parts of working time flexibility can thus help in understanding the ways the employment relationship are worked out and decided. In this context, the diagnosis of working time made by these researchers suggests we should be cautious as to the procedures involved and the effects of reducing the working week.

According to BOISARD *et al.* (2000, p. 9), “It is more likely that there has been an improvement for some employees who benefit from the reduced working hours under favourable conditions, and a deterioration for others who are subject to more intense rhythms and unpredictable and irregular time schedules”. The main data available (MERLLIE and PAOLI, 2001a, 2001b; ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD, 2002; BOISARD *et al.*, 2002, BUCHELL and FAGAN, 2002) highlight out three main trends which, when combined, determine the nature of temporal flexibility in the broadest sense:

- the continuing development of ever more varied forms of part-time working and the persistence of gender segregation on the labour market;
- the continuance of long hours of work, especially in certain sectors and occupational groups;
- relative stability in the use of non-standard hours, associated with increasingly irregular hours and an intensification of work.

Given that part-time work appears to be a central feature of temporal flexibility, its different dimensions will be analysed in this section. The following section will discuss other characteristic trends in temporal flexibility. For each trend, we will highlight the interactions observed with insecure jobs, placing the developments observed in temporal flexibility against the broader background of changes in what have been called ‘social temporalities’, in other words the kind of relationships that individuals and companies now entertain with regard to time.

The progression of part-time work: several possible approaches

Although part-time work appears to be one of the most characteristic features of temporal flexibility, we must still pay attention to various factors that may give a clearer understanding of the phenomenon. For several reasons that it would take too long to explain here, even structuring the “part time” category is a complex process. It varies from one country to another depending on the methods of institutional control and national cultures, and depending on women’s role on the labour market and the division of roles between the sexes at home and in society. This concept thus covers a great many different definitions, each one a different description of changes in the working world, and rarely entirely separate from normative judgments about the changes taking place.

Nevertheless, the most recent data assembled here, and the analyses carried out by the various researchers (ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD, 2002; BURCHELL and FAGAN, 2002; BOISARD *et al.*, 2002), give us a better grasp of the complexity of the phenomenon and indicate possible lines of interpretation. On this subject the third survey of working conditions (2000) suggests two possible definitions:

- part-time as stated spontaneously by the interviewees (“self-declared”);
- the number of hours actually worked per week, below a reference figure arbitrarily chosen by the analysts (e.g. 35 hours).

This approach can be used to gather more complex data than in the second European survey (1995), which tackles part-time work only in terms of the second definition, but it also introduces new factors into the discussion. If the revised definitions are used, the interpretation of the characteristics of part-time work and its development over the past ten years changes somewhat. For BOISARD *et al.* (2002), the most appropriate definition of part-time work is that based on *self-declaration*. These authors feel that “Working part-time means working fewer hours than the hours agreed collectively at the enterprise in question. The situation regarding part-time work is therefore related to belonging to a given organisation. Thus what constitutes part-time work in one enterprise may be regarded as full-time work in another.” (*ibid.*, p. 56) The self-declared approach would thus make it possible to grasp both the diversity and the relativity of the phenomenon. By measuring part-time work according to whether or not employees regard themselves as belonging to this category, the approach takes account of the *diversity* of contexts in which production takes place, since employees define themselves not in terms of a general criterion but in terms of the definition of full-time work that applies in the company they work for. This approach brings in situations in which full-time work involves fewer hours than the statutory or national working hours, for instance as a result of specific agreements. Considered in this manner, part-time work is a *relative* concept, since it also depends on employees’ own assessment of the gap between full-time and part-time workers in each occupational situation considered. If the gap is too narrow, the interviewee may not consider it to be significant.

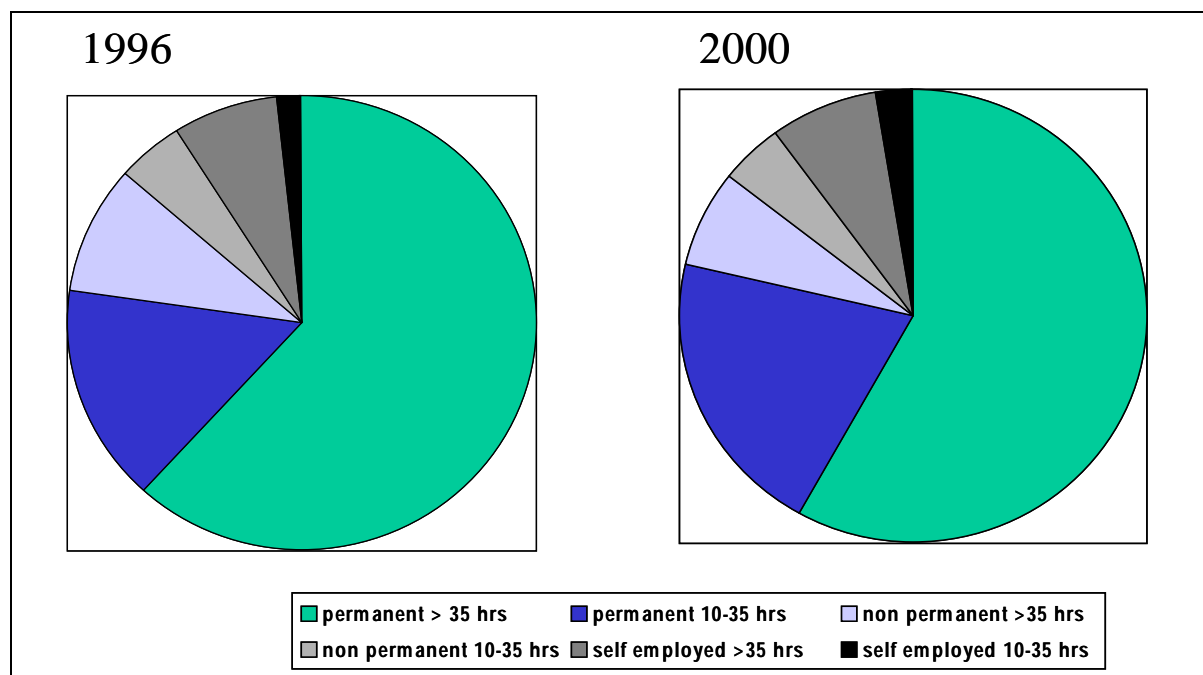
From this point of view, what counts is the perceived work status: it is a question of how many employees regard themselves as having the status of part-time workers. At the same time, in this approach subjective assessment becomes an important element in the way the category is established. Furthermore, a definition such as this also means that the *statutory* differences connected with part-time work can be taken into account. Depending on the country or even the sector, the recognised legal status of part-time work may or may not entail the loss of some social rights compared with full-time workers. Employees who declare that they work part time may therefore also indicate that, irrespective of the number of hours they work, their legal status causes them to declare themselves and to be socially recognised as part-time workers under current statutory instruments.

Given these details, *17.5% of employees in the EU declare themselves to be working part time*. There are far greater differences between rates for women and men than in the case of insecure work. Part-time work affects 5% of the male working population and 33% of the female working population (BOISARD *et al.*, 2002, p. 56). It is difficult to measure the changes over the period from 1995 to 2000 because this definition was not used in the second survey. Nevertheless the closeness noted in the third survey between self-declared part-time work and a working week of under 30 hours would seem to imply, to judge by the changes in this latter category (up by 2 percentage points between 1995 and 2000), that part-time working under the self-declared definition may have changed only slightly over the period. In any case the changes seem less significant than those observed when a broader definition of part-time work (under 35 hours per week) is adopted. In other words, the perceived change in part-time work is far more limited when this category is assessed subjectively than when it is taken to mean a working week of under 35 hours.

It should be added that this kind of approach leads to different assessments of a number of points. Looking at the length of the working week, BOISARD *et al.* (2002) note that “If full-time employees only are taken into account, the breakdown of working times changes considerably. There is, logically enough, a considerable reduction in the proportion of employees working fewer than 29 hours. They number only 4%, whereas 20.5% of employees

work over 40 hours and the 40-hour week is the lot of over one-third (38%) of employees.” (*ibid.*, p. 13). Furthermore, this leads them to classify different countries together, compared to researchers who use actual hours worked, principally because of the position held by “reduced full time” (30 to 35 hours). When a self-declared definition is used, part-time work “is low in the Mediterranean countries (3.5% in Greece, 10.5% in Italy, and 9% in Portugal), and very high in some northern European countries (34% in the Netherlands, 22% in Sweden, and 22% in the United Kingdom)” (*ibid.*, p. 58). Finally, when assessing the gap between men and women in the length of the working week, such an approach leads the authors to lay more stress on the *differences between full-time employees*. “Women’s working time is shorter than that of men in the 15 Member States and in every socio-occupational category. In the case of full-time employees, the gap is smaller. Thus, for the average working time indicator, the gap between men and women when all employees, including those who are working part-time, are considered is 7.2 hours. When full-time employees only are taken into account, the gap narrows to 2.9 hours.” According to these researchers, overall control over the length of the working week seems to be a major factor of discrimination between the sexes; a process in which women are assigned shorter working times than men, including for full-time employees, with obvious implications in terms of income, job responsibility and work content. The authors see self-declared part-time work as just one of the factors that can explain these distinctions. On the other hand, approaches in terms of sector and level of qualification are fairly similar across all the studies, a point to which we shall return later.

The other approach (BURCHELL and FAGAN, 2002; ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD, 2002) involves assessing developments in part-time working according to the number of hours worked per week. They prefer this calculation method on the basis that self-declaration gives incomplete information, does not allow comparisons between countries and may result in incorrect subjective assessments (BURCHELL and FAGAN, 2002, p. 57). Despite this, the researchers agree on defining part-time work as a working week of less than 35 hours. This criterion does not have all the benefits of the previous approach, but it has the advantage of providing a stable basis for comparisons between countries and above all of showing precisely how part-time work is distributed over the different working-hour bands. With this broader definition of part-time work, developments appear that are much more significant than those described above. For ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2002, p. 22), *the percentage of part-time jobs (between 10 and 34 hours per week) among all employees has grown from 22% in 1996 to 28% in 2000*. Gender segregation has become accentuated, with the proportion of employed men working part time increasing from 10% to 14% over the period, while it has increased from 37% to 44% for employed women, resulting in a gap of 30 percentage points. According to the authors, apart from the growing presence of women on the labour market, these changes are due to the rise of stable part-time employment, apparently at the expense of the precarious forms of employment mentioned earlier. “The share of non-permanent contracts has decreased from 14% to 11% of all workers,” they write, “as it seems for the benefit of the part-time permanent contracts. The percentage of part-time employees with a permanent contract has increased from 15% to 21%.” (*ibid.*, p. 18). This is shown in the following figure (Fig. 4):

Figure 4 : Employment status in 1996 and 2000 (all workers, excl. small employers)

Source: Andries and Goudswaard (2002)

As far as the progression of part-time work is concerned, BURCHELL and FAGAN (2002) give figures similar to those just quoted¹. For them too, the increase in employee numbers below the 35-hour-per-week threshold is characteristic of current developments. Defined like this, part-time work is probably one of the most conclusive indicators of the segregation of men and women on the labour market. Nor is it the only one. Numerous other factors (pay, working conditions, level of responsibility, etc.) demonstrate the differences in treatment. Gender segregation is an overall process caused by both horizontal factors (more men than women tend to work in certain sectors or types of job) and vertical factors (certain positions of responsibility tend to be given to men rather than to women). But part-time working is a significant marker because it is at the meeting point of “labour supply and demand factors that are rooted in the existing pattern of gender inequalities in society” (*ibid.*, p. 57).

Part-time and insecure work: a cumulative process?

For BURCHELL and FAGAN (2002), there are no particular signs of gender segregation in certain categories of employment – access to stable employment for the whole population in work, or the opportunity to have several occupations. On the other hand, this kind of segregation does affect self-employment (more men) and insecure employment (more women, especially in fixed-term contracts and in the “other” category) (*ibid.*, p. 16). But it is in part-time working that the most striking developments appear. In the authors’ words, “Part-time work is increasing in most countries in Europe, largely associated with women’s work ... The gender difference in rates of part-time work is more pronounced than that of either self-

¹ According to these authors, as a proportion of the overall working population, 10% of men, 41% of women and 24% of the group as a whole work part time.

employment or the different forms of temporary contracts. The gendered pattern of part-time work also cuts across self-employment and temporary contracts; for the rates of part-time work among the self-employed and temporary employees are almost twice as high for women than for men.” (*ibid.*, p. 17). On the other hand, “Part-timers of either sex are also more likely to be in the precarious position of holding a temporary contract than full-timers (16% of women part-timers and 21% of male part-timers have a fixed-term contract or are temporary agency workers compared to 11% of women and 9% of men employed full time)” (*ibid.*, p. 17).

Tableau 3 : Répartition du temps partiel par statut d’emploi, en % de la population salariée, en 2000

Working hours	Permanent Contracts	Fixed-term contracts	Temporary Agency work	Placements/ Apprenticeships	Other
Declared part time	16	28	25	5	35
Part time under 30 hours	15	26	24	5	34

Source: Merllié and Paoli (2001)

Table 3 considers these various factors by looking at the interaction between part-time work and employment status in general. Insecure jobs are shown to be markedly more affected than permanent jobs by the development of part-time working. In this respect, the position of the “other” category is significant. The proportion of part-time work in this category is more than twice as high as it is for permanent jobs. The “others” category seems to cover a particularly varied and disparate group of jobs, in terms of both contract and hours worked.

Disparate working hours and job segregation: forms of discrimination between the sexes

As we have seen, approaches that define part time in terms of a working week of under 35 hours indicate a significant increase in this form of employment over the past decade. The increase represents a strengthening of gender segregation, since this kind of employment shows by far the greatest differential in employment rates between men and women among non-standard forms of work. Apart from the crystallisation of a specific form of employment in relation to the balance of power and the phenomena of gender segregation that affects the labour market, this growth is also due to the trend towards reduced working hours within the EU. To reach a better understanding of the significance of part-time work, we need to look at the changes in each of the working hour bands below 35 per week, paying particular attention to the different changes in the rates of men’s and women’s employment for each band considered. On the basis of the data collected by the different researchers, (ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD, 2002; BURCHELL and FAGAN, 2002; BOISARD *et al.*, 2002), the following table can be produced:

Table 4: Percentage distribution of employees by working-hour band and by gender between 1995 and 2000

Hours per week	M		W		Total	
	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000
< 10 hrs	0	1	1	2	1	2
10 – 19 hrs	2	2	9	12	4	6
20 – 29 hrs	3	3	17	17	10	10
30 – 34 hrs	6	8	12	15	8	12
35 – 39	34	30	30	25	32	28
40 hrs	26	32	19	20	23	27
Part time (10-34 hrs) ²	11	14	38	44	22	28
Employees working between 35 and 40 hrs	60	62	49	45	55	55

Source: ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2002), Boisard et al. (2002)

The categories suggested by BURCHELL and FAGAN (2002, p. 57) have been used to make the analysis easier. They suggest naming the intermediate part-time bands as follows: “marginal” part time (under 20 hours per week), “substantial” part time (between 20 and 29 hours) and “reduced full time” (between 30 and 34 hours). As already mentioned, the latter band includes hours that are only slightly less than full time, including in some cases those that could even be considered as full time, depending on the agreed norms in effect in the various companies. In contrast, marginal part time describes job situations with the least favourable income and employment conditions. Comparing the way the various job bands have changed for men and women brings out the following points:

- the first point concerns changes seen in the composition of part-time work since 1995. It has grown in parallel with a greater diversification of hours. It is noticeable that “substantial” part time remains unchanged, while there has been a marked increase in “marginal” part time and “reduced full time”. Put another way, the changes in the “part time” category according to the broader definition (ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD, 2002; BURCHELL and FAGAN, 2002) highlight the growing diversification of working hours that accompanies this process. Part-time working is growing “at both ends”, i.e. at both of the more extreme working hour bands, rather than in linear fashion for all the bands available;
- these changes are clearly differentiated by gender. While both men and women are experiencing an increase in “reduced full time”, although in different proportions, only women have seen an increase in “marginal” part-time work. This is a particularly significant effect (up by 4 percentage points between 1995 and 2000). Men working part time are thus for the most part in the “reduced full time” category, while women working part time are divided more or less equally between “reduced full time” (15%), “substantial” part time (17%) and “marginal” part time (14%). Generally speaking it seems that nearly a

² According to the definition used by ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD, 2002.

third of women working part time (under 35 hours) are in the marginal part-time band (under 20 hours) while this is true of only a fifth of men working part time;

- finally, as BURCHELL and FAGAN(2002, p. 59) point out, these changes must be seen in terms of the overall changes in working-time bands, so as to better identify the share still held by the Fordist norm of full-time work (here, between 35 and 40 hours). Once again the differences between men and women are particularly striking. While men seem to be “settling” into this pattern of working hours, with the 40-hour week gaining ground strongly at the expense of the 35-to-39-hour band, for women on the other hand this pattern has seen a marked decrease, despite slight growth for the 40-hour week. The case of the 40-hour week is quite revealing, as it was for many years the objective of trade union demands. Contrary to what has been seen with “marginal” part time, about a third of men have this working-hour pattern compared to only a fifth of employed women. One particularly important feature stands out in these developments: a growing majority of men now work full time (an increase from 60% to 62% between 1995 and 2000) while this is the working-hour norm for a shrinking minority of women (down from 49% to 45% between 1995 and 2000). In other words, the ratio between full-time and part-time work is changing in the opposite direction for men and for women. With the weaker growth of part-time working for men, they are consolidating their position in the Fordist full-time norm (35 to 40 hours), especially because of the expansion in the 40-hour week; for women the very significant growth in part-time working is accompanied by a marked drop in full-time work (35 to 40 hours), always remembering that long hours, which are mainly but not exclusively worked by men, were becoming less common in the period in question.

Obviously these general changes will be subtly different from one country to another. But once again, taking the intermediary bands into account means that existing differences between Member States can be discerned more easily. It is a question not just of identifying the levels of self-declared part-time work but of analysing the differences between types of part-time work according to the distinctions suggested by BURCHELL and FAGAN (2002). Certain countries stand out as having predominantly long part-time working hours³ (e.g. France and Sweden), others as having predominantly short part-time hours⁴ (e.g. the Netherlands and the UK). It is not the aim of this study to give a detailed comparison between Member States, but criteria of this kind can help to refine connections that may be made, by avoiding the inclusion of clearly different situations in the same category.

Looking at different sectors and qualification levels, the various researchers give detailed information which we will not discuss here. We should simply note that, much more clearly than for insecure employment, most of the differences in distribution between sectors are linked to the proportion of women employed in the various sectors and occupations. ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2002, p. 26/ 27) show that among the sectors in which part-time working plays a major role, the social services are in the lead (41%), followed by the hotel and catering trades (34%) and sales and commercial occupations (31%). Other sectors such as public services (27%), property (25%) and finance (25%) are close to the average across sectors (28%). Generally speaking it should be noted that all sectors except agriculture and the construction industry have seen an increase in part-time working. The situation

³ Comparable to “reduced full time”.

⁴ Comparable to “marginal” and “substantial” part-time.

is the same for the professions, where those with the greatest proportion of women are also those where part time is most common. Part-time working mostly affects employees in the service sector, commerce and distribution (39%), intellectual and scientific professions (39%), unqualified workers (34%), administrative employees (32%), and intermediate occupations (30%). Similarly, all levels of qualification are seeing a growth in part-time work, except for agricultural and fishery workers, and executives and senior management.

Even more than the polarisation noted in the case of insecure employment, this kind of distribution suggests a form of *segregation of labour by gender*. BURCHELL and FAGAN (2002, pp. 16-19) have supplemented this approach by looking in detail at the gender distribution of jobs within each occupation, taking account of the relationship between full time and part time. They note that among the occupations in which women are in a large majority, the category of service and commercial employees shows a higher proportion of women working part time than full time. In contrast the category of administrative employees shows more women working full time than part time. As for the occupations in which women and men have arrived at equal shares – intellectual and scientific occupations, intermediate occupations and unskilled jobs – the observations depend on the sub-categories concerned. In health-related occupations, more women are employed full time than part time, while in teaching more of them work part time. For unskilled jobs, women are especially represented in cleaning and homeworking. In this case more women work part time than full time. The special case of service and commercial employees is also highlighted by BOISARD *et al.* (2002, p. 8), who write: “There is a considerable spread of working hours among services/sales employees, almost 30% of whom work 29 hours or less because of the large number of part-time employees in sales professions, while over 20% of them work 40-hour weeks.”. Overall, they note that “Managers work hours that are considerably above the average. Of the other categories, blue-collar workers work the longest hours, slightly over 40, while office workers, sales staff, technicians and middle managers work considerably less than the average hours.” (*ibid.*, p. 9).

These various factors enable BURCHELL and FAGAN (2002) to describe precisely the segregation process noted in part-time work. It is not just a reflection of the general discrimination between the sexes that exists on the labour market – the structure of part-time work for women arises from a specific combination of effects. The authors add two important details to the observations just mentioned:

- they point out that there are few genuinely “mixed” sectors or occupations, i.e. in which participation rates for the two sexes are close. This situation is true of only 17% of the population in employment;
- they also note that, in those occupations in which women are in the majority, the gender differential in rates of employment is far greater for women in part-time work than for women in full-time work. In other words, they highlight the fact that part-time work for women is subject to particular discrimination, including in those occupations that have the highest proportion of women. They note that “women employed part-time are even more segregated into female-dominated jobs than women full-timers in every member state of the EU” (*ibid.*, p. 21). They describe part-time work for women as particularly “concentrated”, unlike part-time work for men which is more “dispersed”⁵.

⁵ This observation holds whatever the ratio of women working part-time or full-time at each skill level. In the category of cleaning and homeworking, in which women part-timers are the majority, 32% are men working

The effect of the workforce dualism seen in part-time working is to give the category of women's part-time work a specific structure. The reality that this reflects is that of a *twofold segregation process*: on the one hand between men and women on the labour market, and on the other between women in part-time and full-time work within organisations. In other words, the development of part-time work reinforces the general segregation already existing on the labour market. This kind of flexibility turns women part-timers into a population destined for a particularly limited group of jobs, specifically care work, teaching, administration, commerce and personal services, and unqualified jobs in cleaning and homeworking. For a number of sectors and skill levels, this form of employment is used as a way of organising the labour markets in which the companies operate. From this point of view, part-time work for women is a particularly typical form of flexibility in that it is situated at the meeting point of strategies of supply and demand for labour – the strategies in which patterns of gender inequality are to a great extent embedded.

Part-time work for women: chosen or imposed?

The question of whether this form of employment is “imposed” or “chosen” should therefore be a central concern but, strange as it may seem, there is little information available to support a reasonably reliable point of view on the subject, given that objective and subjective dimensions are so closely interwoven. The studies available to us are no exception, since the information they contain can be interpreted in several different ways. To judge by the data in the latest European survey of working conditions, 22% of employees describing themselves as working part time would like to work longer hours, the proportions of men and women being roughly similar. On the other hand the proportion of women part-timers who do not want to work more is far greater than for men, as the table below shows (Table 5).

This table can be interpreted in two different ways. The first, proposed by BURCHELL and FAGAN (2002, p. 59), underlines the agreement between these results and those put forward in a previous survey of the working population's preferences as to employment and especially working hours (FAGAN, 2001). This study particularly stressed the overall desire for a reduction in working hours, and the part-time options for women. The table shows that over two thirds of women do not want to work longer hours and change their part-time status. Does this mean, though, that in two cases out of three, part-time work is a deliberate choice? This is by no means an obvious conclusion.

full time, 22% are women working full time, 9% are men working part time and 37% are women working part time. In the category of senior health professionals, 41% are women working full time and 30% are men working full time, while 3% are men working part time and 26% are women working part time.

Table 5: percentage of the population declaring themselves to be working part-time in 2000

% Would prefer to work	Men	Women	All
More hours	24	22	22
Same number of hours	53	67	65
Fewer hours	17	7	9
Don't know	6	4	4
Total	100	100	100

Source: Merllié and Paoli (2001), Burchell and Fagan (2002)

Firstly because, as has already been pointed out, the self-declared nature of part-time work masks numerous differences, especially as far as hours and occupations are concerned. Secondly and in particular, because this result underestimates the extent to which cultural and institutional constraints are implicit in the choices made by women participating or wanting to participate in the labour market. The question that was asked in the survey on working conditions – “would you like to work more hours?” – implicitly assumes that the women questioned are able to make their choice independently of all constraints. But such an approach risks underestimating important facts about gender relations in society. In reality the desire to participate in the labour market and possibly to extend working hours is directly connected to the division of labour in the domestic sphere. But many women cannot question this division of labour, because of their partners’ employment conditions, but also because to do so would imply a profound questioning of established gender roles. Furthermore the response to a question like this depends heavily on the status accorded to women in society and on their own social identity. All these factors will vary depending on the country and local traditions. In this sense it is possible to speak of implicit *cultural norms*. But there are also *institutional constraints*, especially those connected with the development of public policy which may or may not encourage women to participate more in the labour market, in the form of legislation on parental leave or arrangements such as care facilities for young children.

Even though some women would like to work more, the (not necessarily conscious) internalisation of the objective cultural and institutional conditions in which they find themselves can mean they are unable to give a positive answer to the question of whether they would like to work more. And it is impossible to know precisely what proportion of the women who want to work the same number of hours have in fact internalised such constraints. So it is important to take account of this sociological dimension in arriving at a more cautious interpretation of the findings. In contrast, when the desire to work more *is* expressed explicitly, this can be regarded as the expression of a real constraint. In this sense, it would be more accurate to speak of an imposed “minimal” part time. In other words, working part time (under 35 hours per week) represents a constraint for at least a fifth of the female population in work. This constraint may also affect other people expressing the desire to maintain or increase their part-time work, but the current data do not give us precise information about this. More important seems to be the information about the degree of control exercised by employees over their working hours (see below).

This being so, the surveys of the working population's employment preferences that are available (FAGAN and MCALLISTER, 2002; LILJA and HAMALAINEN, 2002) provide important information about preferred working hours. As far as expressed preferences are concerned, the study shows that a great many variables (participation in the labour market, employment contract, place of work, sabbatical leave etc.) do not reflect any discriminatory logic between the sexes: women express the same desires as men in many aspects of working life, especially regarding their wish to enter the labour market. The most significant differences are seen in respect of the desired working week, as Table 6 below shows.

Table 6: Percentage of population of working age (16-64 years) in 1998

Weekly hours	Employed men		Men looking for work within the next 5 years	Employed women		Women looking for work within the next 5 years
	<i>Current</i>	<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Current</i>	<i>Preferred</i>	<i>Preferred</i>
< 20 h	3	8	11	14	14	17
20-34 h	6	18	20	25	42	40
35-39 h	22	32	25	27	25	18
40-49 h	43	33	40	28	16	25
> 50 h	25	8	4	7	2	1

Source: Latta and Parent-Thirion (2001), Fagan (2001)

Generally speaking this survey indicates that 35% of people in employment are satisfied with the number of hours they work, 11% would like to work more and 54% would like to work less. The desired weekly average is 34.5 hours. A significant number of men and women would like to work less, but especially men because they often have to work the longest hours. Many people prefer to work part time, women in particular, and generally speaking the number of hours that women would like to work is lower than for men. Another gender difference is that more women than men cite family reasons when talking about their preferences. Lastly, an important point is that they would prefer an increase in "substantial" part time or "reduced full time", despite the fact that the development of part-time work for women over the period from 1995 to 2000 also stems from an increase in "marginal" part-time work, which has less favourable employment and income conditions.

Part-time working thus appears to be a central aspect of temporal flexibility, especially when the changes observed over the second half of the past decade are taken into account. Seen from this point of view, flexibility practices developed by companies offer the twofold challenge of specific constraints imposed on women, but also an opportunity for time management that is more compatible with the particular features of women's role in life outside work and the relationship between different aspects of social time. All these factors have implications for the procedure and content of collective negotiation, for public initiatives that encourage women to enter or remain in the labour market, and more broadly, for the cultural status accorded to women in the various EU Member States.

IV – Long working hours and non-standard hours of work: the other dimensions of temporal flexibility

Long working hours, time constraints

As we have already pointed out, the relatively wide spread of the number of hours worked per week in the EU is reflected in the persistence of long working hours, even though these have been decreasing since 1995. Overall, more than 17% of employees work over 40 hours a week, in other words almost the same as for self-declared part-time work. Such long hours, however, lead to specific health problems in the workplace, as pointed out on several occasions by research (BOISARD *and al.*, 2002; LANDOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY, 2002). As has already been discussed in the case of part-time work, the reason lies partly in the differences of social and institutional regulation among the Member States. While the duration of work is limited by the imposition of standards, whether legislative or by collective agreement, in certain countries (such as Denmark and France), in other countries hours of work are characteristically more individualised and fragmented (as in Ireland and the United Kingdom). In the latter case, it is the weakness of statutory limitations that produces flexibility management methods centred on the fluctuation of working hours and immediate time adjustments. Long hours of work often result from the second approach, which is conceived as complementing the significant use of part-time work. Other macrosocial factors may also be involved, such as consistent recourse to overtime on top of working weeks that are mainly in the 30-39 hour group. BOISARD *et al.* (2002, p. 11) point out that “three countries have higher ... percentages of employees working longer long hours (45 hours and more): Spain (19%), Portugal (20%) and the United Kingdom (20%)”. The authors add that such hours are generally worked by people of all ages, including the oldest. From the descriptive information they provide, two complementary observations may be made.

Table 7: Gender breakdown of employees by working hour bands (percentage)

	41 to 44 hours		45 hours and over	
Year	1995	2000	1995	2000
Men	5.78	3.49	5.78	3.49
Women	3.27	2.33	3.27	2.33
Men & women	4.68	2.99	4.68	2.99

Source: Boisard et al. (2002)

The first observation is the fact that long hours are mainly worked by *male employees*. Even though there has been a decrease in the hours worked by employees of both sexes, there are still very significant differences between men and women, just as has been observed in the case of part-time work. In 2000, 23.4% of men worked for over 40 hours a week, 20% of them over 45 hours. The percentage of women working more than 40 hours a week is 9.1%, 6.8% of them more than 45 hours, as the above table shows. These differences, however, should be viewed in

the light of trends in hours of work as a whole, as already described in the case of part-time employment. These trends are accompanied by a reinforcement of Fordist models in full-time work (35-40 hours) among men, whereas women in this working-time band seem to be in an ever smaller minority. The general observation, therefore, is that: women are far more likely than men to be employed in the different forms of part-time work (44% work for fewer than 30 hours a week), and this means that they are continuously exposed to flexibility in hours of work, to the point that they are a growing majority in terms of not being covered by the rules of full-time work (55% of women did not work in the full-time bracket in 2000, compared with 51% in 1995); on the other hand, men are more exposed to long hours than women (20% work over 45 hours a week) but at the same time there has been a rise in the number of men in full-time work (from 60 to 62% between 1995 and 2000): full-time employment is now the rule for almost two thirds of the male population in employment in the EU.

It is hardly surprising that long working hours are found above all in private enterprises and in the upper echelons. Senior executives and managers have a high probability of working long hours, since this is the case of 40% of this group. But the intermediate levels (16%) and agricultural workers (17%) come within this time frame too. On this basis BOISARD *et al.* (2002) are concerned with the “*time devoted to work*”, when travelling time from home to work are added to actual working time. For instance, they note that “commuting time tend to increase with working time [even though] the correlation between the two is not very marked” (*ibid.*, p. 12). This means that the proportion of employees with short working hours and having travel times of less than 15 minutes is higher than average. And whereas the commuting time of almost 10% of employees is over 90 minutes, this is the case of 12% of employees working more than 40 hours a week. Long hours of work, then, are often combined with lengthy commuting. More generally, the researchers point out that “one quarter of employees devote at least one hour a day to commuting. The average weekly time devoted to work by all employees (working time + commuting time) is 39.6 hours [42.9 hours for men, 35.4 hours for women] and 43 hours for full-time employees” (*ibid.*, p. 13). From this, the extent to which time flexibility practices affect the whole of living time becomes apparent.

Non-standard working hours, the irregularity and intensity of work: a new factor

Another special characteristic of working time flexibility relates to non-standard working hours. As pointed out by BOISARD *et al.* (2002, p. 17), these working schedules differ from what for a long time used to be the norm in the organisation of industrial employment, which was based around “5 days of 7 or 8 hours, starting between 7.00 and 9.00 a.m., ending between 4.00 and 6.00 p.m., with a midday break lasting from 45 to 90 minutes”. They describe industrial schedules that “consist of work in teams, fixed or alternating, involving shift work either in the evenings or at night, night-work and weekend work. Some service-sector job activities, notably personal services and sales, involve shift work either in the evening or at the weekend” (*ibid.*, p. 17). The emergence of these new working hours was one of the first and more tangible signs of time flexibility.

The third European survey on working conditions, however, notes a *relative stability of recourse to non-standard hours of work*, or even a slight decrease in some cases. BOISARD *et al.* (2002) point out, however, that this “merits attention because of the extent to which it exists: twenty-two per cent of employees work shifts, one-third of whom work two alternating shifts and one third of whom work three or more alternating shifts. Nineteen per cent of employees work at least one a night per month, 47% at least one Saturday and 24% at least

one Sunday” (*ibid.*, p. 24). There are certain specific gender differences: while women are less likely than men to work the different types of night shift, they are nonetheless the only ones who are tending to work at weekends more often. Whereas there is a marked reduction in Saturday and Sunday work for men, the proportion of women working on Saturdays has remained the same, and more are working on Sundays. This factor is highlighted in particular by BURCHELL and FAGAN (2002, p.13), who point out that the rise in Sunday working is one of the most characteristic aspects of the changes that have occurred in women’s employment since 1995.

Although the overall proportions are lower than for men, this trend indicates that *Sunday work may be becoming a more common practice for women*, although it remains to be seen whether this will be confirmed over the years to come: it is with this type of working hours that rates of male and female employment are the closest in 2000. According to these authors, the trend is entirely linked with the figures for the hours worked by women in the service sector. Particular instances are care work, wholesale distribution or homeworking, which are among the activities that make most recourse to weekend work. These differences are set out in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Non-standard hours of work in the population having employment, in 1995 and 2000

Non-standard hours of work	Men		Women		All	
	1995	2000	1995	1995	2000	1995
> 10 hours a day		41			41	
Evening work		51			51	
Night work	26	24	13	26	24	13
Saturday work	59	54	49	59	54	49
Sunday work	33	28	24	33	28	24
Shift work		20			20	

Source: Merllié and Paoli (2001), Boisard et al. (2002)

In addition there are the differences observed between individual sectors and levels of skill: it is mainly industrial workers who do shift work and work nights, whereas it is the executives who work long days and both retail and industrial employees who work weekends. More generally, BOISARD *et al.* (2002) describe the typical profile of employees most exposed to non-standard hours of work and long working days: “the vast majority are middle-aged men, mainly belonging to four categories - services and sales employees, senior managers, technicians and industrial workers” (*ibid.* p. 37). But atypical hours of work are not the only indicators of changes in times of work. Two complementary aspects emerge: the irregularity of work schedules and the intensification of work. There are no major gender differences in these aspects, especially because of the higher rise the intensity of work in the case of women over the period from 1995 to 2000, which tends to narrow the gap between the sexes (BOISARD *et al.*, 2002, p. 28; FAGAN and BURCHELL, p.13). On the other hand, they have very different effects on stable and insecure jobs, as we shall have the occasion to point out further on.

The irregularity of work schedules is a form of flexibility that has gradually been grafted onto non-standard hours of work, to the point of constituting a specific procedure. Since there were no questions associated with irregularity in the second survey, comparisons between 1995 and 2000 cannot be made. The more recent survey, however, paints a fairly specific picture of the form taken by the irregularity of hours of work. Many situations are analysed, ranging from variable schedules of work to the different methods of changing schedules during the day, week or month. Variable work schedules affect 29% of the population in employment, but from our figures we cannot determine who has initiated this variability, “which would obviously completely change the nature of the phenomenon” (BOISARD *et al.*, 2002, p.23). Another finding is that irregular work schedules affect 37% of employees who do not work the same number of hours each day, while 22% do not work the same number of days per week. In addition, the work schedules of 24% of employees change in the course of the month. In general, the authors note that “forty-seven per cent of employees, almost one out of every two, have completely regular work schedules, in other words, fixed day schedules comprising the same number of hours per day and the same number of days worked in the week. All others are affected to differing degrees by some form of irregularity that is to some extent disruptive”.

The intensity of work, for its part, arises from the tightening of production time constraints. In its primary sense it is connected with the accelerating pace of work and more stringent deadlines. But there are several other dimensions to a broader definition of intensity. First of all, the gradual disappearance of “breaks” in which employees can adjust or recuperate. Then there is the more or less marked lack of control over the time and organisational constraints that determine production rates. These are the two senses of the term that we shall be using here in an effort to understand what the phrase “intensity of work” implies. The outcome of a good deal of recent research, this concept has been explored in depth by BOISARD *et al.* (2002), and we shall not discuss it again here except to highlight the main aspects. The first point is that the intensity of work has risen markedly between 1995 and 2000, as is evident in both production rates and production times: these indicators have increased from 54% to 57% and from 59% to 62% of employees from 1995 to 2000. The steadily increasing intensity of work already started at the beginning of the last decade, and it is one of the most characteristic features of the status of working conditions in the EU. In addition to this first acceptance of the term there is the decline in most of the indicators of autonomy whereby workers can exercise control over the time or organisational constraints that determine the pace of their work. Between 1995 and 2000, the trends have been as follows: the possibility of influencing production rates (this has remained stable at 68%), the order of tasks (61% to 60%), working methods (68% to 67%), and deciding when to take a break (58% to 56%). The second part of the decade, therefore, has seen a significant tightening of the time frame for production activity, in parallel with the growing irregularity of work schedules. Other researchers see this concept as coming within the framework of the relations between work organisation and technology (DHONDT *et al.*, 2002).

The “new factor” mentioned in the title to this section, therefore, is unrelated to any change in the structure of non-standard hours of work. Along the same lines as observed in the case of insecure employment and uncertainties along the career paths, here there is a *recomposition of working and social times as a whole*, with the changes being qualitative just as much as quantitative. The relative stagnation in average European recourse to non-standard hours of work is paralleled by the higher incidence of irregular work schedules and the growing intensification of work. These time adjustments, however, have very different effects on stable and non-stable jobs, as shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Non-standard hours of work and time adjustments within the population in employment in 2000: breakdown by employment status

Time variables	indefinite contracts	fixed-term contracts	Temporary	Placements	Other
Non-standard hours of work					
> 10 hours a day	30	25	21	21	23
Evening work	43	44	43	37	42
Night work	18	20	19	15	18
Saturday work	47	47	51	49	48
Sunday work	24	25	24	16	29
Shift work	22	25	26	22	20
Intensity of work					
High working rates	57	54	59	69	53
Short deadlines	62	54	51	65	53
Insufficient time	23	21	26	21	23
Interrupted work (more than once a day)	50	42	27	48	35
Autonomy					
Order of tasks	62	53	37	48	59
Working methods	69	60	49	44	60
Rhythms	68	65	49	57	62
Breaks	57	48	44	47	58
Irregularity of work schedules					
Irregular work (I): variable work schedules	29	30	32	15	37
Irregular work (II)					
- number of differences in hours according to the day	36	40	34	32	40
- number of differences in days according to the week.	22	24	28	17	29
Irregular work (III): change in hours worked per month					
- no change	76	77	79	80	79
- once to 5 times	17	17	19	15	16
- over 5 times	7	6	2	5	5

In general, it is noteworthy that permanent employees are more likely to work long hours per day and the intensity of their work as assessed by production rates is greater, but they enjoy greater independence in controlling the time or organisational constraints by which their work is determined, even though such margins for manoeuvre have lessened over the past 5 years. Quite apart from the forms of discrimination already listed as regards part-time work, people in insecure jobs are less favourably placed in terms of non-standard hours of work, the irregularity of work schedules and the intensity of work assessed as the shortening of deadlines. Furthermore, they are far less independent than are permanent workers, whose situation has clearly deteriorated over the past 5 years. On the one hand, the production pressures exerted on stable employees are evidenced by ever tighter constraints on the pace of work and longer hours

of work per day, the signs of particularly heavy pressure of the demand for commitment to the sphere of work, which is at the same time reflected by a not inconsiderable level of autonomy at work. On the other hand, employees in an insecure job situation have to cope with more disjointed, even fragmented, jobs. The instability of their employment status is often matched by non-standard hours of work, tight deadlines and irregular work schedules without them having the same level of independence as stable employees, in other words without having a genuine opportunity to negotiate or alleviate this general condition.

To these general observations can be added certain more detailed comments. Although people in insecure jobs are as a whole more likely to be working nights than those in stable jobs, it is temporary and “other” workers who are most likely to be working over weekends. The tighter deadlines above all affect those on fixed-term contracts, because of the high proportion of these employees in the service sector. This leads to growing exposure to commercial constraints originating from the users or customers on whom they are directly dependent. But the most salient differences are in the level of autonomy, in which there are great inequalities depending on job status: people in insecure jobs have far less influence over their choice of the order of their tasks or working methods than do permanent staff. The same is also true of their ability to decide on breaks from work. In 2000, under half of employees with a non-stable status (except for those in the “other” category) were able to take a break on their own initiative in the course of the day’s work. The matter of greatest concern, however, is the significant deterioration in the *position of temporary workers* as regards autonomy. In this group, the possibility of influencing the order of tasks has fallen back from 48% to 37%, and of influencing working methods from 57% to 49%, whereas the possibility of taking a break has dropped from 53% to 44%. Temporary workers are in a way confronted by the persistence and even the greater rigidity of industrial constraints, in particular hierarchical constraints (MERLLIE and PAOLI, 2001). In this respect, the gap between temporary workers and stable employees has been steadily widening, reaching almost 21 percentage points in 2000 (stable workers: 36%; temporary workers: 57%). On the other hand, the category of “others” is the one in which there is the greatest similarity in terms of autonomy with that of permanent employees.

The effects of irregularity is predominate in the case of insecure jobs, although there are differences among them depending on their categories. Irregularity in the number of hours worked a day has a greater effect on people with fixed-term contracts and the “others”, whereas irregular variations in the number of days worked a week mainly affects temporary workers and the “others”. Here again it is evident that the latter category is particularly prone to irregular work schedules, which means that the less well regulated insecure jobs are also those most often confronted by irregularity in the wider sense. This situation is broadly linked with the construction of insecure categories of employed, one purpose of which is to buffer fluctuation in the demand for goods and services. But this also highlights the *porosity between the two forms of flexibility*, recourse to insecure jobs and the various methods of time flexibility, especially irregular work schedules. The frontiers between the types of quantitative flexibility are far from impassable. One of the main characteristics of the new flexible forms of organisation, on the contrary, seems to be that the essential impact of market-related adjustments and unpredictability is transmitted to certain segments of the work force.

Rather than constituting a category of employment in the strict sense of the term, in this case instability tends to designate a certain mode of existence, a type of relationship with the world that are forced upon men and women who have to bear most of the adjustments that companies set up in a context of growing flexibility. MOLINIE (2002, p. 2) points out that flexibility in timing affects mainly young people, as is clear when “the age distribution of certain work-related constraints or demands is examined; selection criteria, linked statistically to age, led young people rather than older people to take on jobs with a particular characteristic. This was true until quite recently for night shifts, jobs with very demanding time pressures, and multitasking and access to new technologies, for example”. This has generated a number of knock-on effects on other living times and modes of social life, an issue on which the research available to us provides certain indicators.

Time in the City

Time flexibility first and foremost relates to working time, but the uncertain and varied nature of such new time frames has chain effects on the organisation of other forms of social life – training time, time for leisure, time for the family, etc. This point is stressed by BURCHELL and FAGAN (2002, p. 65-66), who are concerned with the problems of “compatibility” or “conciliation” between working life and private life. On this subject, they point out that *19% of the population having a job (22% of men and 16% of women) feel that their work schedules do not fit in with their way of life*. In the case of the female population, this tendency relates in particular to women having jobs in industry (21%) or executive posts (21%). But it also relates to women engaged in intellectual or scientific professions (16%) and service jobs, whether or not these are administrative (14%). More broadly, it is parents with children who feel that their working time fits in least, whether they are fathers (25%) or mothers working full-time (25%). These are all factors that highlight the societal effects of the widespread flexibility of work schedules and the radical changes in the relationship with the time spent in the sphere of work.

This is the context in which certain European authors have launched their examination of “time in the city” (BOULIN and MUCKENBERGER, 1999). This term is understood as being the whole body of changes affecting the workings of urban networks and territories, in their close relationship with the working world. The research, published by the BEST journal, is based on a series of experiments in several EU countries (Germany, France, Italy, and the Netherlands). The initial research proposal was as follows: “a plurality of rationalised social temporalities ... co-exist and interact, and they have to be reconciled. Obviously, in our societies, tendencies towards speediness, acceleration, and hence stress, are increasing. It is one challenge for our societies whether and how these trends can be reconciled with the human need for qualitative temporalities related, for example, to slowness, to self-regulation, to individualities, to the temporalities of history, remembrance and memory.” This research has helped to discern the chain reaction caused by flexibility of working time on other modes of collective life, as well as the problems it raises within enterprises, territories and nations:

- several factors today are at the origin of the diversity of social temporalities: apart from the flexibility of working hours, one could cite urban over-development, the individualisation of life styles and the development of services of general interest.
- women have a different relationship to time than do men: it is more constrained (as with part-time work) and also more multi-form (e.g. combining the demands of work and domestic

commitments). Women's entry into the labour market may be a source of aspiration towards a different relationship with time.

- the city can no longer be regarded as a stable and spatially delineated environment; rather it is a "multiregional network of relationships and flows";
- the co-existence of temporalities is currently based on a contradiction between highly quantitative time (such as working time) and other more qualitative forms (such as family time). The resolution of this contradiction – which must now be achieved through short-term adjustments without any true compromises – should be based on a renewed dialogue between all the partners in civil life: the employers, unions and also those who play a part in the life of the cities, networks of associations and NGOs;
- this would call for a bottom-up approach, from the local to the general, which would at the same time strengthen local democracy.

The product of the growing flexibility of working time, but also of broader issues in the form of Western development, the present co-existence of so many social temporalities offers the potential for individual and collective fulfilment, but it also detracts from the functioning of towns and local areas through the: congestion of main roads, continuous stress, tensions among social groups, etc. These different elements are associated, at least in part, with the existence of quantitative time that is spiralling out of control and the forced reduction of more qualitative temporalities. Quite apart from reducing the duration of work, the question arises of how genuinely to regulate time on the national and European scale.

V - Flexibility and working conditions

The aim in this final section is to review the interactions between flexibility and working conditions in the light of the various research papers published on the subject. Without disregarding the general developments in the matter of working conditions (PAOLI, 1991; PAOLI, 1996; MERLLIE and PAOLI, 2001), we shall attempt to gauge the extent to which specific effects can be discerned, the ways in which one type of flexibility can be more specifically linked to another, and trends in certain work or employment variables. There are, however, particular difficulties in seeking such specific links. Firstly, it is often difficult to distinguish in theory or in practice the effects arising from global social and production change from the effects of more short-term local strategies. Secondly, the effects themselves are variable. Irrespectively of the question of temporalities (short-term/long-term), there are major differences in arriving at an objective picture of the effects that can be observed in matters of health and working conditions. Certain effects are fairly explicit and have been known for a long time, as in the case of shift work and/or night work, on which many European research papers have already been published (in particular COSTA *et al.*, 2000). Others are more implicit and therefore harder to identify. This is firstly because of the interdependence among the different risk factors: on several occasions, researchers have pointed out the conjunction of the classic deleterious factors (such as noise) and new such factors (the intensity of work, for example) which are difficult to differentiate. Next, because the psychological or psycho-social dimensions of the effects on health are becoming increasingly apparent, although their underlying mechanisms are hard to categorise. Lastly, because the relative perceptions of the deleterious factors discussed may differ depending on whether the employees in question are in a stable position, whether they work full time and whether their work schedules are regular.

Bearing these reservations in mind, the point of departure for European thinking on the relationship between flexibility and working conditions can be taken to be the second European survey on working conditions (1995). The findings of this survey highlighted the importance that had been acquired by insecure employment and the simultaneous deterioration of certain working conditions within the EU. One of the research questions then was on the correlation between these two trends. With this in mind, two secondary analyses were conducted on the relationship between employment status and health (BENACH and BENAVIDES, 1998) and precariousness and working conditions (DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX, 1998). In parallel, a review of the literature was commissioned regarding the workings of the labour market and health observed over the period 1993-1998 (PLATT *et al.*, 1999). Subsequently a qualitative and comparative study sought a clearer understanding of the relationships between flexibility and working conditions by looking at the strategies of allocation of the work force. In this study different scenarios were put forward, i.e. different configurations shedding light on the nature and extent of effects perceived by employees (GOUDSWAARD and de NANTEUIL-MIRIBEL, 2001). A first horizontal synthesis was produced by LATTI (2002) on the subject, in particular incorporating the findings of European research on temporary work (STORRIE, 2001). Lastly, several secondary analyses under the third survey relate explicitly to this subject.

In this connection, it is of interest that each analysis tackles the question of interactions between flexibility and working conditions from a different viewpoint. For BOISARD *et al.* (2002), the approach is to itemise the scale of working time flexibility practices, which have relatively explicit effects on health and working conditions (non-standard hours of work, irregularity, intensity). There has been a very detailed exploration of the intensity of work. For ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2002), the task is to take the typology of effects listed in the qualitative and comparative analysis mentioned above and to test it on in quantitative terms. On this subject it will be noted that, according to these authors, this typology is seen as inadequate in explaining the interactions between flexibility and working conditions. This is the reason why the typology of forms of organisation proposed by DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY (2002) is no doubt the one that at the present time seems to be the richest in heuristic terms. Without disregarding the findings that have already been reached, it can be used to evolve more complex instruments for their interpretation. The labour allocation strategies advanced in previous research are here integrated into work organisation choices that relate the variables at different levels (such as commercial or industrial constraints, the flexibility of working hours, the levels of autonomy and discussion in production teams). This approach is adopted as part of a broader discussion of the role of social relationships of domination in the generation of occupational risks and health problems in the workplace. In this connection, central importance is attached to the gender issues as dimensions that structure all the forms of organisation that are identified.

It is obviously not our intention here to go over these research studies in detail; rather we shall try to highlight the progressions in those studies and the ways in which they complement each other. For example, after outlining the main trends in working conditions and summarising the dimensions of what PLATT *et al.* (1999) call “the changing labour market conditions”, we shall go on to consider the three main analytical frameworks mentioned: the effects of temporal change; the role of workforce allocation strategies; and taking account of gender and types of work organisation.

The development of working conditions: a few references

As regards the general developments in working conditions, we can report only briefly the comments by MERLLIE and PAOLI (2001 b) and by authors who have summarised those changes in their research reports (in particular BURCHELL and FAGAN, 2002; DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY, 2002). In general, MERLLIE and PAOLI (2001b) point out that the third survey reveals “that no significant improvement in risk factors or overall conditions in the workplace took place over the ten-year period [1990-2000]” (*ibid.* p.1). More specifically, they show that exposure to physical risks, the intensification of work and employment flexibility practices, especially in part-time work, are among the main features of changes in working conditions within the EU in 2000. The two latter factors have been discussed at several points in this report, and we shall not return to them here, but mention should be made of the rise in occupational risks, both physical and chemical. In this, this rise is confirmed by what DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY (2002, p. 3) call “the juxtaposition of ‘classic’ occupational risks (physical and chemical) and of increasingly significant time and productivity constraints, thereby confirming the results of national surveys (in particular in France) which demonstrate the persistence of physical and chemical risks and the increasing intensification of work”.

There has been a steady increase in physical risks over the past ten years or so. From 1995 to 2000, the proportion of people subject to such risks within the population having a job has been rising for most of the items taken into account. For instance, exposure to loud noise has risen from 28% to 29%, painful or tiring positions from 45% to 47% and the carrying of heavy loads from 33% to 37%. There has been a slight decline in repetitive work (from 33% to 31%), but it is noted that almost one third of workers experience repetitive work for tasks lasting less than 10 minutes, while one fifth (22%) declare that they perform a repetitive task for less than a minute. In addition there is the persistence of chemical or toxic hazards: 23% of the workers in the European Union say they are breathing toxic vapours or fumes for at least a quarter of the time,” report DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY (2002, p. 17). These developments are all the more significant in that they represent a constant rise over the decade as a whole and contradict the widely vaunted assertions as to the “dematerialisation” or “intellectualisation” of work. Lastly, the third survey on working conditions shed light on affronts to the dignity and moral integrity of employees. It shows that 9% of people having a job had suffered intimidation over the twelve months preceding the survey and 4% had been the victims of physical violence by people outside the workplace. In general, these developments mainly affect the intermediate age group. MOLINIE (2002, p. v) notes that: “the growing scarcity of the youngest labour and the fact that they now have higher levels of training has meant that more and more of this physically heavy work is carried out by workers in the intermediate age range (35-44). The oldest workers still have the opportunity to be ‘protected’ to some extent from this heavy work, but the opportunities to be shielded in this way are becoming scarce”.

These different elements arise in a context of growing intensity of work and an increase in *new form of risks* linked with the “work pressures” placed on employees. According to DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY (2002, p. 6), the term implies “inappropriate or excessive work practices affecting men and women at work”. It covers factors such as tight deadlines, marked repetitiveness of gestures or high rates of work. In addition there are the practices of numerical or temporal flexibility already mentioned. All these factors crystallise in organisational choices “which may or many not be the source of specific risks for the health and safety of workers” (*ibid.*, p. 25). The authors consider that there are characteristics of work organisation which “preceded the occurrence of numerous accidents, even before the actual risks: a constant time pressure, inducing urgency in work and less vigilance or even non-compliance with elementary safety rules in order to meet deadlines, an organisation which is permanently short-staffed, leading to reduced scope for manoeuvre by the workers faced with working situations which are actually dangerous, or again, lesser integration into the work community, inducing a lack of solidarity and causing personal isolation” (*ibid.*).

The value of this analysis is that it allows a dynamic interpretation of the conditions under which risks and effects on health may occur: “this theoretical and methodological stance is based on the hypothesis that observation and research relating to safety and health at work must not stop at merely confirming that there are dangerous working conditions (a confirmation which is nonetheless indispensable, the first step to stricter working regulations in order to protect the health or safety of workers), but must also take into account the fact that it is often because certain organisational choices that working conditions *become* dangerous” (*ibid.*). It is the *dynamics of risk generation* that is at the centre of this problem and is, we believe, a general principle for the analysis of the interactions between flexibility and working conditions. In the paragraphs that follow, we shall discuss the various analytical approaches that will enable us to understand such processes. For a better understanding of the issue, however, in Box 2 below we outline the main trends in health at work that have been found. Any analysis of the differential effects of flexibility must be systematically reviewed within the context of the general trends observed in this domain.

Box 2 – Health in the workplace– Longitudinal trends

The question of health in the workplace is a multi-faceted issue. In 2000, 27% of people having a job believed that their health or safety was at risk because of their work. This figure is lower than in 1995 (28%) and 1990 (30%). But “if European workers are questioned precisely about the health problems specifically linked to their work, almost two thirds (60%) declare at least one health problem caused by their work while the remaining 40% state that their work does not affect their health” (DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY, 2002, p. 9). According to the authors, the differences between these two figures reflect “different times in the personal history of the workers: the responses concerning health problems which are named specifically related to the state of health experienced at the time of the survey; the more general question on the threat posed by work to health reflects a projection of their opinions on what the future will bring” (*ibid.*). This being so, it will be noted that trends in the majority of *declared health indicators* have been negative in the second half of the decade, even though the main health problems mentioned by individuals remain the same. Between 1995 and 2000, reported backache has risen from 30% to 33%, headache from 13% to 15%, general fatigue from 20% to 23%. The only factor remaining stable, at 28%, has been stress. There are, however, other indicators of health problems of a psychological nature. They concern irritability (11% of people having a job), sleep disorders (8%) and anxiety (7%).

Musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs) are one of the striking factors in occupational health: pathologies of this kind have risen steeply over the past decade, for example from “673 recognised cases during 1988 to 8,972 cases in 1998” in France (*ibid.*, p. 52). The problem of MSDs has been posed at EU level for several years. There are still, however, no consistent methods of accounting for these within the EU, and discussions are under way with a view to improving the statistical counting tools. These pathologies are multi-factorial in nature. In the work environment, “these are problems attributable to repetitive work under strict spatio-temporal constraints” (*ibid.*). Comparisons cannot be established with prior data, as the questions on this pathology have been changed and made more detailed in the third survey. In the European Union in 2000, more than one worker in four (28%) is affected by at least one type of MSD. In the light of the variables taken into account, the survey shows that 12% of workers are affected by muscular pains of the lower limbs, 13% by pains of the upper limbs and over a fifth (23%) by muscular problems of the neck and/or shoulders (MERLLIE and PAOLI, 2001b, p. 2). More specifically, DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY point out that “7% of workers suffer from the three cumulative types of MSD (8% of men and 6% of women) and 21% of the total suffer from one or two cumulative MSDs, i.e. one worker in five (20% of men and 23% of women)” (*ibid.*). The types of MSD vary between men and women. In general, “men are more exposed to a cumulation of the three types of MSD (8% compared with 6% among women). On the other hand, women are more exposed to MSD of the neck and shoulders only (13% compared with 10% of men) and suffer more from MSDs in the legs (3% compared with 2%)” (*ibid.*, p. 11).

Accidents at work are the last dimension of health problems in the workplace. There is no direct relationship between declared health problems and accidents at work themselves, as each health-linked item may or may not give rise to an accident at work. In the third survey (2000), the incidence of accidents of work is measured through absenteeism: 8% of European workers state that they have had at least one day off work on the grounds of an accident at work in the twelve months preceding the 2000 survey, men being more affected than women (9% compared with 6%). These figures can be viewed in the light of the figures provided by Eurostat. In 1996, 4.8 million accidents at work caused more than three days off work in the EU. Of these, 5,500 accidents were fatal. In general, declared health problems give an idea of the number of days lost but they underestimate the actual effects on employees. Accidents arising from repetitive work and exhausting working conditions may have irremediable sequelae, physical or mental, for the people concerned but may also reduce their stability of employment (DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY, 2002, p. 13).

Changing conditions on the labour market

A review of the literature has been produced on the effects of the changing labour market conditions on the health of employees, covering the period from 1993 to 1998 (PLATT *et al.*, 1999). In general, this study showed that, despite certain methodological shortcomings in the literature examined, there was clear evidence of the impact exerted by the current operation of the labour market on the health of individuals. The findings showed that organisational changes, downsizing of the workforce, technological changes or the changing nature of work detract from the physical and/or mental health of a whole series of employees. Besides the data associated with working status, the study reviewed other aspects such as reorganisation, downsizing and the feeling of insecurity (prior to redundancy, at the end of a contract or when the employer is going through difficult economic times). The main conclusions of this review are as follows:

- the perceived intensity of job insecurity is closely associated with psychosomatic symptoms such as aches and pains. The sense of insecurity in the period leading up to organisational change also brings about deterioration in emotional or mental factors;
- the appearance of such symptoms is strongly linked with the instability of past career paths. The more people have experienced precarious jobs, the greater their feeling of insecurity is developed, causing risks to their health. This is also true of people with low levels of skills whose future has no visibility;
- as regards redundancy, the research papers reviewed refer to the periods immediately following the time of becoming unemployed. Here the review emphasises the distinction between “voluntary” redundancy – in which good conditions can be negotiated – and “compulsory” redundancy – which has a significant impact on people’s health. It seems, however, that the lack of prospects of retraining and employment is more damaging to the health than the mere fact of not working;
- in analysing the position of women, the study shows that their health is closely linked to their job situation as a whole, and recommends policies on employment and childcare that promote the (financial and occupational) independence of women;
- lastly, the study reviews the research on the validity of the “job control/demand” model (the Karasek model). This model is seen as predictive: it proposes that the greater the demands on workers the fewer opportunities they can have for autonomy and the more negative the effects on health. As regards cardio-vascular disease, the model is only partially validated. It applies only to those who already have a high sense of self-efficacy. In the case of other illnesses, autonomy is not enough to limit the damaging effects of an increase in the demands of the job.

Temporal effects

The question of the relations between flexibility and health is not just one of the effects induced by job instability, but it also entails various aspects of flexibility of time, in particular the growth of non-standard hours of work. A recent study (COSTA *et al.*, 2000) has updated the data on the *specific effects of shiftwork and/or night work*. An analysis of the effects of this type of work schedule on health must take account of two major methodological constraints: the first is that

we all grow older and health declines with age; the second is that the health difficulties encountered by shift workers cause them to change their working rhythm. In this context, the authors need to distinguish between short-term and long-term effects. The former have been listed by the European surveys on working conditions:

- they demonstrate the relationship between the type of work schedules (shiftwork, daytime work) and the proportion of workers declaring that they have health problems;
- in proportion, more shiftworkers report digestive disorders and cardio-vascular risks than daytime workers, and this proportion is even greater in relation to sleep problems;
- they are also exposed to psychological problems (stress, anxiety, depression, etc.).

The data should be treated with care, as they mainly depend on the sector of employment, working conditions and the characteristics of the work force (age, seniority). They conceal wide differences within the population of daytime workers and need to be supplemented by long-term analyses. They generally make use of global indicators (such as the risk of illness and incapacity) and, among daytime workers, make a distinction between those who have already worked shifts and those who have never done so. By means of the two methodological elements stated above, they show that daytime workers who have worked shifts are those evidencing the highest indications of illness and incapacity; on the other hand, shiftworkers have a lower level of such indicators than day workers who have never worked shifts.

Now that night work for women is authorised in the EU, the study reports the effects of shiftwork on women's health. The number of women shiftworkers who declare gynaecological disorders or maternity risks (fertility, miscarriages, difficult pregnancies, etc.) is proportionately higher. The study concludes by pleading for a strengthening of medical supervision, listing the conditions that should lead to exemption and call for the regular monitoring of the people exposed to them. These elements may be supplemented by the findings of the latest survey on working conditions (2000). Shiftwork and/or night work is regarded as one of factors of temporal flexibility that are most potentially harmful to health. For instance, "some 68.3% of employees who work at least one night a month consider that their work affects their health, whereas this is the case for only 57.4% of those who never work at night" (BOISARD *et al.*, 2002, p. 43) The highest figures are for insomnia: "18.2% of those working at night complain of insomnia problems compared with 5.9% of employees who never work at night" (*ibid.*). But other factors are also cited, such as stress, overall fatigue and stomach pains.

BOISARD *et al.* (2002) report on the harmful effects on the health of working long hours. In parallel they highlight the relationship between the rise in tighter constraints on working time – working hours combined with travel times – and people's opinion that their work may be a threat to their health and safety. They state that "only 17% of employees who devote under 30 hours a week to work consider that their work is a risk to their health or safety, while the figure is 33% for those working between 45 and 48 hours. In the 48-55 hours bracket, the figure is 34%, and for over 55 hours. 36%" (*ibid.*, p. 39). More generally, they observe that "the same link emerges with the identification of an increase in several health problems, including headaches, muscular pains, fatigue, anxiety and insomnia. Employees are much more inclined to blame their work as being a risk to their health and as the reason for a health problem if they are forced to work long hours" (*ibid.*, p. 58).

For their part, DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY (2002) report on the adverse effects of non-standard hours of work on the mental health and sociability of employees. In the light of these studies as a whole, these elements may be supplemented by an analysis of the combined effects of the irregularity and intensity of work. For example, “changing schedules at least once a month has considerable effects on health problems. In particular, it is a factor in stress, insomnia and fatigue. Of employees subject to these changes, 67.6% declare that their health is affected by their work compared with 56.9% of those not subject to such changes” (BOISARD *et al.*, 2002, p. 44). The intensity of work is also recognised as placing health at risk, especially as this aspect of time flexibility is often linked with long hours of work (BOISARD *et al.*, 2002, pp. 46 *et seq.*). On this subject, MERLLIE and PAOLI (2001 b, p. 3) report the strong correlation between work intensity and health problems such as backache, stress and muscular pains in the neck and shoulders. These findings are set out in Table 10 below:

Table 10: Health problems relating to working at high speed and to tight deadlines

% of workers ...	Backache	Stress	Muscular problems (neck-shoulders)	Injuries
... working continuously at high speed	46	40	35	11
... never working at high speed	25	21	15	5
... working continuously to tight deadlines	42	40	31	10
... never working to tight deadlines	27	20	17	5

Employees who work various forms of flexible hours attribute to this a number of factors aggravating their state of health, either general or specific. The factors differ depending on the nature of the schedules. Three sorts of schedules are considered to be particularly harmful to health: working at night, working over 10 hours a day and changing schedules in the course of a month. The most marked effects are on sleep (insomnia), stress, fatigue and irritability. At the same time, the intensity of work leads to particular problems in the form of backache, stress and muscular pains of the neck and shoulders. These differ from the trends found on the labour market, in that these are flexibility practices that modify some of the time variables in the employment relationship and they have relatively explicit effects on health and working conditions.

Workforce allocation strategies

In this field a series of research papers is to be found, which attempt to shed light on the impact of workforce allocation strategies on the generation of health problems or the creation of special working conditions particulars. This time the aim has been to generate discussion on the

process leading to a significant deterioration in the variables of the work and employment of people in situations of numerical or temporal flexibility. One of the points of departure has been, as we have already stated, the findings of the second survey on working conditions. This highlighted the fact that employees in an insecure situation face greater difficulties than permanent employees. The pattern is almost linear: the position of fixed-term workers is more unfavourable than that of permanent workers, and that of temporary workers is even less favourable than for fixed-term workers. Closely correlated with the greater intensity of work, stress at work affected permanent employees more than the others; on the other hand, it was found that backache, musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs) and overall fatigue were clearly worse for employees in a situation of instability. In a context such as this, several European researchers have attempted, with the help of statistical regression analysis, to isolate those factors that might explain the differentiation between categories of employees. This has led them to distinguish between a “structure effect” and a “status effect”:

- although the *structure effect* (general variables such as age, sex, level of qualification, job occupied, etc.) predominates,
- there is also a *status effect* in the sense that “jobs involving difficult working conditions are occupied more by workers on precarious contracts of employment” (LETOURNEUX, 1998, p. 54).

In a more descriptive manner, this distinction has been reformulated and explained as follows: even though working conditions are the main variable explaining the differences of effects between permanent and precarious employees, the correlations between employment contracts and effects on health persist after the adjustment of individual working conditions. The findings suggest, for example, that the different types of employment contract have an independent effect on health irrespective of the more general variables (BENACH and BENAVIDES, 1998, p. 1). LETOURNEUX has stated on this subject that “as the main factor explaining differences in contract, structure is not as important in all countries, which reflects different regulations and legislation on the use of precarious employment contracts. All things being equal, however, jobs occupied under precarious contracts are more exposed to poor working conditions. Non-permanent contracts of employment, which are a tool for structural flexibility, also appear to be a tool for internal flexibility, as jobs that involve poor working conditions are more likely to be occupied by those conditions of employment already place them in a precarious position” (LETOURNEUX, 1998, p. 57). There are, however, certain limits to the analysis of statistical correlations: it does not cover all precarious employees in a consistent manner: the variables of work and employment do not necessarily move in a cumulative manner; and it does not incorporate more qualitative flexibility strategies. A qualitative and comparative study has therefore been produced, based on monographs in seven Member States, in order to analyse the effects of various forms of flexibility on working conditions and employment (GOUDSWAARD, de NANTEUIL-MIRIBEL, 2001). In this, a distinction is made between the following three scenarios:

- *transfer of risks*: the exposure to risk in poor working situations is shifted to non-permanent employees but also to part-time and sub-contracted workers. These employees do the more demanding and restrictive tasks than others. They do not enjoy the same protection or safety, nor do they have opportunities for learning or the prospect of advancement at work. In this context, poor working conditions are combined with difficult conditions of employment;
- *reinforcement of the division of labour*: recourse to non-permanent, part-time or sub-contracted workers is part of a management strategy of being more and more selective of the work force. Here the various forms of flexibility do not entail significant differences in terms of working

conditions, but there is a continuous gap in the terms of employment such as access to training, career prospects and remuneration, as well as gender discrimination;

- *qualitative changes*: the trends that are found are in the qualitative changes affecting production work, in particular in the implementation of functional flexibility. These relate to all employees, including permanent personnel, working full time within the parent enterprise. The differences here are in the occupational positions, qualifications or place occupied by the employees in the organisation. Certain jobs particularly dependent on external demand, groups of low-skilled workers and certain production workshops seem to be the main differentiating factors. The study highlights many situations where work is monotonous or intensive irrespective of the various forms of flexibility. The trend described here is one of changes in production activity and, in particular, of the intensification of work.

**Figure 5: Working conditions in the E.U. by type of contract –
Results from a multivariate analysis**

	Unfavourable conditions	Favourable conditions	R2
Non-permanent contracts	Young workers (male and female); female workers aged 35+		
excluding structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ergonomic conditions ● discrimination ● low job control ● low time control ● no skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ambient conditions ● low job demands ● social support 	Conditions of work: .001 Conditions of employment: .01
including structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● low job control ● low time control ● no skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● none 	Total: .15
Part-time contracts	Female workers; all age groups		
excluding structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ergonomic conditions ● discrimination ● low time control ● no skills ● training skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ambient conditions ● low job demands ● high job control ● less non-standard hours 	Conditions of work: .01 Conditions of employment: .02
including structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● low time control ● no skills ● no training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ambient conditions ● less non-standard hours 	Total: .15
Self-employed without personnel	Male workers; older workers		
excluding structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ergonomic conditions ● non-standard hours ● no task flexibility ● no social support ● no training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ambient conditions ● no discrimination ● low job demands ● high job control ● no shifts ● high time control 	Conditions of work: .01 Conditions of employment: .31
including structural/individual characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ergonomic conditions ● non-standard hours ● no task flexibility ● no social support ● no training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● low job demands ● high job control ● high time control ● no shifts 	Total: .34

Source: ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2002)

ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD (2002) have suggested returning to this typology and testing it in quantitative terms. But this has been less probative than expected. According to the authors, *structural dimensions* have a paramount role in the production of results. Unlike LETOURNEUX (1998), who reported a significant statistical correlation, workforce allocation strategies have a far more relative weight in the evolution of working conditions. Without directly contradicting the previous findings, these authors have placed greater emphasis on the theory of the structural breakdown of jobs. It should be borne in mind that differentiation based on employment status has evolved in 2000 for three main reasons: the working conditions of permanent employees have tended to deteriorate, which has narrowed the gap between them and people in more insecure employment; the trends for the latter have been less consistent depending on the variables observed and the categories of employment taken into consideration; the main differences between stable and instable employment, however, lies in the variables of autonomy at work, which continue to be highly discriminating, especially for temporary workers. The importance of structural effects and the relatively low level of autonomy due to management strategies on the allocation of the workforce is highlighted by ANDRIES and GOUDSWAARD in the following table:

Work organisation and gender

These limits justify the approach adopted by DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY (2002), centred on choice in the work organisation. As we have already pointed out, workforce allocation strategies are this time integrated in forms of work organisation that relate variables at different levels (for example, commercial or industrial constraints, the flexibility of work schedules, levels of autonomy and discussion in production teams). The starting point for these research workers is a twofold hypothesis: health as a social construct on the one hand; and the role of social relationships of domination in generating occupational hazards and health problems on the other. Taking a sociological approach to the questions, they attach “the utmost importance to the influence of social relationships of domination on changes in the social work organisation, among which the insecurity of work, the gender division of work and the emergence of new divides at the very heart of the workforce between secure and insecure workers are of major importance” (*ibid.*, p. 4). The main level of reality covered by the concept of work organisation, according to the authors, is “composed of working conditions and the constraints of work organisation at the actual place of work” (*ibid.*, p. 6). This approach can be used to construct the concept of organisation based on data from the third survey, with the emphasis on three principal dimensions: the temporal frame, in particular non-standard hours of work and the speed constraints of an industrial nature; the room to manoeuvre for employees in their work and their degree of control over the pace of work, the order of tasks and their working methods; and social relations within the enterprise, on this occasion incorporating the influence of a customer-supplier type of demand, the scope for discussion in the enterprise and the possibility of continuing training. In this context, the authors distinguish between four types of work organisation. These types are more or less widespread among both women and male employees and have different effects on health and working conditions.

The first type is said to be “*servitude*” or “*constrained*” work. It is typified by the low level of variables evoking autonomy at work, and the virtual impossibility of conducting discussions in the workplace on working conditions or work organisation. It is also characterised by the lack of opportunities for training made available to employees. On the other hand, this group is less affected than others by long working days and work schedules,

even though there is flexibility in working time in the form of variable work schedules, Sunday work or shiftwork. This group covers 18% of women and 17% of male employees in the EU. In terms of health and working conditions, its main characteristics are as follows: it is the type of work organisation in which women regard themselves as the least well informed on risks, although they are also the least exposed to such risks, which, according to DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY (2002), raises the question of awareness of risk as a vehicle of its expression. Men also consider themselves to be inadequately informed, although the risks are not the same. The imposing of excessive pressure is common to all types of work organisation for women, but this type of risk is particularly marked in the case of male workers. It mainly takes the form of repetitiveness, but not of other dimensions of work intensity (the pace of work, deadlines, unexpected interruption, etc.). Another major factor for male employees is painful work positions and the carrying of heavy loads. In parallel, back problems due to work affect almost one in three of the women operating in this type of organisation. The researchers add that: “backaches are an indicator of constrained work, of unskilled work, most of the time not automated, but nevertheless demanding major efforts, which at the same time build up throughout the day” (*ibid.*, p. 53). Also present are MSDs of the neck and shoulders, together with general fatigue and stress. This type of organisation is typified by tiring work, but work that is less subject to variation and the demands of commercial constraints than other types of organisation. In general, it is the type of work organisation with which women express the greatest degree of dissatisfaction. This type of organisation generally creates difficulties for the commitments outside work of employees of both sexes and raises problems of the over-qualification of individuals for the tasks they are called upon to do, a sign of a process of deskilling.

The second type is that of “*automated work*”. This is also typified by a lack of autonomy in one’s work, but it refers rather to constraints of an industrial type than to social relations as such. The restrictions are in the possibility of influencing the order of tasks, working methods or control of the pace of work. Here, only one woman out of three may decide to take a break when she wants. The industrial constraints more commonly mentioned are based on quantitative criteria, but the demands of quality also exist. This being so, unlike the previous case, discussions in the workplace are possible for a very large majority of those working in this group, on the subject of work organisation but above all on working conditions. DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY (2002) suggest that acquisition of worker autonomy or participatory expression in a number of large industrial enterprises has helped to negotiate true exchange in the workplace. This might explain the apparently paradoxical situation in which work that is very restricted in terms of its pace and the technical processes used is accompanied by scope for exchange and discussion. This group relates to 22% of women employees and 18% of men in the EU. In matters of health and working conditions, its main characteristics are as follows: it includes a number of physical and toxic hazards, but women regard themselves as relatively well informed on the risks they run, something that is less true for men. Nevertheless, it is in this type of organisation, at a level equivalent to the previous case, that there is the highest number of accidents at work. In the same way, it is this group that is the most exposed to repetitive movement, short deadlines and high working rates. But this is not the case with other factors of hyper-demand, i.e. unexpected interruptions and the feeling of not having enough time to finish one’s job; in this respect, it is one of the least exposed groups. Again it is backache that is the problem mainly arising in this type of organisation, although MSDs of the neck and shoulders is also a problem. It is the second group in terms of absenteeism. Here again, there are problems of adjustments of skills for both men and women, but in this case a feeling of being under-qualified, of over-heavy

demands being imposed by the technical and organisational system. This group differs between men and women: it contains a high proportion of men finding it difficult to reconcile their working and private lives. It is the group in which they express the least satisfaction.

At first sight the third type of work organisation is the one referring more directly to the issue of flexibility, since it is known as “flexible work”. The type of flexibility referred to, however, is mainly in terms of non-standard hours of work. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that flexibility, in the sense in which we have used the term throughout this report, is to be found in the other types of organisation as well, to judge by the place occupied by the intensification of work or unexpected interruptions of work in the various groups described. Logically, this type of organisation is characterised by the prevalence of differing work schedules (long hours of work, shiftwork, night work and weekend work, variable work schedules, etc.).

Most women and men in this group are affected by the presence of commercial constraints and direct exposure to internal demand. A high level of demand for quality is also to be found. There is greater scope for autonomy than in the previous group, but it is still restricted, especially because of the limited influence that employees, women in particular, can exercise over the pace of work and the order of tasks. It is also noteworthy that two thirds of the women cannot take a break when they wish. At the same time, men in this group are often subject to strong constraints of self-assessment. Discussions in the workplace are, however, widespread, as is training – affecting a majority of women, the largest proportion in any of the four groups. This type of organisation includes 7% of women and 16% of men employees in the EU. In matters of health and working conditions, its main characteristics are as follows: the men in this group stand out in the volume of the toxic risks to which they are subject: “these workers, exposed to extreme flexibility of their working hours, are compelled to perform tasks presenting toxic or chemical risks. The question of sub-contracting these risks arises once more,” point out DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY (2002, p. 60). For women, the risks of excessive pressure are, as a whole, spread evenly among the types of work organisation. It is, however, in “flexible work”, at a level equivalent to the previous type, that those risks are at their highest, especially as regards unexpected interruptions and lack of time to finish a job. The latter two indicators are also the most marked in the case of men in this group. On the other hand the constraints of repetitiveness, the pace of work and deadlines are less than in “automated” work. All these factors point to the existence of work that is both intense and interrupted. But the most characteristic feature relates to affronts to personal dignity. Intimidation and physical violence are — in particular, but not only — directed against women, far more marked in this type of work organisation than elsewhere, mainly due to the prevalence of certain difficult sectors (hotel and catering trades, hospital environments, social services, etc.). Here again, the problems of MSDs of the neck and shoulders and backache are substantial, but this group is clearly differentiated from the others in terms of the psychological risks: stress, general fatigue, headaches or sleep problems, affecting both women and men. Here too the rate of accidents at work is high, even though workers in this group perceive themselves as being relatively well informed of the risks incurred. As regards the reconciliation of working and private life, this is obviously very difficult to manage; women are those who experienced the more negative situations. This explains the psychologically and socially destabilising impact of non-standard hours of work.

The final group has been designated “*autonomous work*”. It is typified by the broader scope for manoeuvre in matters of autonomy at work and discussion in the workplace. Employees have a greater opportunity to alter their pace of work, working methods and the order of tasks. There is also more scope for deciding on taking breaks. There is a conjunction between commercial constraints and quality control, even though there are also quantitative industrial constraints for a minority of men in this group. In general, this type of work organisation is little affected by non-standard hours of work, although variable schedules and long hours are fairly frequently worked. This type of work organisation covers 53% of women and 49% of male employees in the EU. For both women and men, it is the group with the lowest level of risk and deterioration in health, although these data should be taken as relative and to be gauged by comparison with the findings for other groups. Women are not spared certain physical risks, however, in particular exposure to painful or tiring work positions and having to carry heavy loads. In the same way, backache and MSDs of the neck and shoulders are common to all types of work organisation, including this fourth group, affecting both women and men. It should be noted in particular as regards certain general indicators such as fatigue and stress that this group does not greatly differ from the others. All the same, it is the group least likely to declare itself dissatisfied, and the one in which qualifications are best adjusted.

As already pointed out, the wealth of prospects offered by this type of approach was a good reason for presenting at least minimal detailed information. But many other elements are also mentioned by DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUD-MONY (2002) as regards the sectors and occupations concerned. This typology also calls for certain comments, in particular on the relations between these types of work organisation and the more classic forms of quantitative flexibility such as insecure jobs or part-time working. The concept of autonomous work should no doubt be spelled out in greater detail in the light of these different dimensions. Even so, the main heuristic contribution of this latter approach is that it integrates both the importance of the choice of work organisation and social relations of domination, in particular the social relations of gender, in the analysis of impact on health and working conditions. For instance, it is not so much the general characteristics of this type of work organisation that break down in different ways between men and women, it is the effects encountered. Certain types of organisation may make a very different impact on employees of one sex or another. DAUBAS-LETOURNEUX and THEBAUDMONY (2002) propose, for instance, considering that there are in reality two labour markets in the European Union, one for men and one for women. This suggestion is corroborated by what has already been stated on the construction of female part-time work. But it is still an open question whether the hypothesis extends to all the dimensions of flexibility.

Lastly, the main aspect of this last part should be borne in mind: the analysis of the working conditions of employees subject to flexible working highlights *a succession of analytical frameworks that differ in level and scope*. In this respect, the material at our disposal is particularly rich in resources. Four approaches have been suggested: the ways in which the labour markets operate, the effect of new temporal forms, strategies for the allocation of the labour force and the types of work organisation. Each of these frameworks offers its own potential for interpretation, but they are also interlinked. And this leads to a threefold comment:

- an analysis of the effects of flexibility on working conditions calls for *a plurality of analytical frameworks*, with the emphasis on each individual dimension of the problems;
- starting from the analysis of labour markets and the most familiar temporal effects (such as night work), these frameworks have gradually incorporated a series of other aspects

associated with companies' policies. Through these aspects, it has been possible to add to the complexity of previous analyses, while stressing their continuing topicality. It now seems clear that companies' choice of personnel management or work organisation perform an essential role in *the production of a specific relationship* between flexibility, health and working conditions;

- this relation is therefore fairly closely interlinked with determining factors of a *structural nature* (sectoral breakdown, the division of labour, ages, gender relations) and more *short-term* aspects (personnel management practices, types of work organisation) in varying proportions.

In general, the effects of flexibility and its different dimensions on the health and working conditions of women and men employees in the EU are unfavourable but varied in nature. Apart from a number of explicit effects, there is a range of impacts, both cumulative and non-cumulative, and to understand them the existing occupational contexts must be taken into account. Taken as a whole, the portrait of the consequences as provided by the research papers mentioned is a matter of concern, one that should alert the economic, social and political leaders of the Member States. But also the European Commission.

Conclusion

Flexibility and collective bargaining: necessity or paradox?

Produced in 2002, this synthesis shows that many changes have taken place since the late 1980s. The Fordist norm of permanent full-time employment has been steadily declining throughout the past decade. It is also noteworthy that *special or atypical forms of employment* – in other words, all the employment situations departing from the “Fordist” norm of the indefinite, full-time contract – have continued to rise. In 2000, they reached 30.5% of paid employment within the EU. But this overall figure conceals many disparities. Contrary to certain received ideas, a levelling out, or even a slight reduction, can be observed in jobs that are insecure in legal terms (fixed-term contracts, temporary agency work, non-registered jobs) over the past five years. If one takes a closer look, however, this trend occurs in conjunction with two factors, both just as decisive. The first is the rise in the non-registered jobs (almost one fifth of precarious jobs), i.e. those at risk of the growing fragmentation of employment contracts. The second is the spread of these forms of employment to people at any age in their working life at the time of job mobility, about one third of whom are affected, and testifying to the radical change in recruitment practices. The implication is not that instability is becoming the general rule but rather that there are more stringent controls over access to permanent employment, depending on the current economic cycle and companies' strategies. In general, the proportion of women occupying these positions has been steadily rising over the past decade.

Similar comments could be made on the various aspects of temporal flexibility. The very marked rise in part-time work is one of the main factors observed in the last decade and to a great extent is the reason for the increase in atypical forms of employment. The scale, however, depends on the way part-time work is defined: while “self-declared” part-time work amounts to 17.5% of European employees, this figure is 28% for all employees working fewer than 35 hours a week. The trends in part-time working in fact reflect a greater variety in working hour brackets, in that a rise is observed in the number of people working a shorter week (under 20 hours) but also and above all in those working a longer week (30-35 hours). Furthermore, this trend varies greatly from one sector to another and relates mainly to women (44% of women work under 35 hours a week in the EU, as against 14% of men). In this respect, it gives a clearer picture of the growing dualism of the labour work and the increasing inequality between the sexes, rather than one of a uniform expansion in shorter hours of work. Female part-time work is the subject of twofold discrimination: between men and women on the labour market in general, and between women in full-time work and women in part-time work in production organisations. This means that it is particularly concentrated and confined to certain jobs in services, personal care, retailing and administration and to certain unskilled jobs.

At the same time, the persistence of long work schedules (17% of employees work over 40 hours a week, 14% over 45 hours) mainly affects men. Lastly, recent European observations demonstrate, against all expectations, that there is relative stability in recourse to non-standard hours of work (*unsocial hours*), with slightly over one fifth of European employees working such hours and with compensatory pay being less and less common.

But the significance of this trend differs for men and women. Whereas this type of flexibility is more likely to affect men, these work schedules are falling in the case of men while there is a rise in Sunday working among women due to the high proportion of women providing services. This seems to point to Sunday work becoming a common practice for women, although this needs to be confirmed over the years to come. In addition there is an increase in the irregularity of work schedules and the intensification of work: the indicators of fast working rates and short deadlines rose from 54% to 57% and from 59% to 62% respectively between 1995 and 2000. At the same time, it is noteworthy that completely regular work schedules, in other words fixed daytime schedules entailing the same number of hours a day and the same number of days worked in the week, is now the case of only 47% of employees, i.e. one person out of two. Overall, the changes are just as qualitative as quantitative, reflecting the recomposition of time factors in jobs as a whole.

The last point is that the effects of flexibility on health and working conditions are unfavourable but heterogeneous. Today there are several analytical frameworks that help to provide a picture of these consequences: the ways in which labour markets operate, the effects of new temporal arrangements (night work, long and non-standard hours of work, irregular schedules), the strategies for the allocation of the work force and the types of work organisation. Starting from an analysis of labour markets and the more familiar temporal factors (such as night work), these analytical frameworks have gradually been extended to include a set of aspects associated with companies' policies. In incorporating these aspects, previous analyses could be made more complex while at the same time light could be shed on what still exists. It now seems clear that employers' choices on personnel management or work organisation perform a vital role in *the creation of a specific relationship* between flexibility, health and working conditions. These are all signs of the growing interlinking of long and short-term dimensions when analysing the changing patterns of work and paid employment in a system of ever greater flexibility.

Multiple and widespread flexibility practices, whose overall effects on employees are unfavourable despite the complexity of the underlying factors: this is the main message emerging from the synthesis of the many European studies conducted on the subject over the period 1995-2000.

This message calls for a questioning of the ways in which the direction taken in this process can both be limited and modified. Looking beyond the debate on public policies directed towards improving the situation of employees, especially women, the question that undoubtedly arises is the role of collective bargaining. This dimension is highlighted by the many research projects, which often put forward the path of "negotiated flexibility" as a solution to the contradictions and difficulties highlighted here. Looking at it more closely, this position is somewhat paradoxical.

By its very structure, flexibility often has the effect of accentuating diversity, or even fragmenting points of view. By acting simultaneously on several levels, it leads to varying decision-making processes that are hard to monitor, especially as a number of decisions are taken during the recruitment stage and are not subject to a specific form of social regulation. By means of insecure employment, but also of part-time work in all its varied concepts, it weakens the sense of belonging to a community and makes it harder to build up common interests. The traditional bases of union action are difficult to federate, especially when the dispersion of job categories has reached a more advanced stage than current bargaining. On this subject it should be mentioned that European bargaining on atypical forms of

employment, despite the nature and importance of the underlying regulatory mechanism, has not yet tackled the system of “unregistered” jobs, even though they account for almost a fifth of insecure jobs in the EU today. When flexibility is conceived solely in terms of growth or maintaining the volume of employment, it may also serve as an exchange currency rather than an object of bargaining in its own right that might oblige the social partners to tackle the basic issues. The subject is all the more complex in that these trends raise the problem of who are the legitimate and relevant players in collective bargaining. Generating knock-on effects not just for private life but also for the organisation of towns and of territories, the development of flexible working and employment practices raises the question of the role of those taking part in civil society and local political life in adjusting those changes. This also leads to wider issues: the place of women in the bargaining process, on a labour market that is generally dominated by men, whereas it is the women who are most affected by current changes. We should add that this diversity and complexity are becoming more acute on a European scale as well.

It is evident that, in all these fields, national methods of socio-institutional regulation generate considerable differences. Here, however, we come to the “*paradox of negotiated flexibility*”. Quite apart from national differences, one can only support the prospect of flexibility becoming more and more the subject of bargaining between the parties. If it were to be no more than a leitmotif, this prospect alone might nonetheless overlook the fact that the development of flexible work and employment practices disperses interests even more, evades previous methods of negotiation and weakens the capacity of the players to reach decisions. This paradox would also be formulated as follows: the more necessary the prospect of negotiated flexibility, the more difficult it seems to achieve. Or in other words: the more flexible working and employment practices tend to develop, the harder and more delicate it becomes to achieve the conditions that will lead to the placing of limits on such development. This is why “negotiating flexibility” has the overtone of a paradoxical injunction, since flexibility has gradually been built up as the “missing part” of any form of joint decision-making, far more than it has been built up as the outcome of a consistent rationale, an alternative to the impasses of the past Taylorist-Fordist compromise.

Once again, the problem is not that flexibility has homogenous, mass effects. As we have seen, its impact is highly heterogeneous. But the challenge is that any attempt to control this heterogeneity seems to have been greatly weakened. In this respect, flexibility as a whole is a challenge to the collective bargaining practices inherited from the industrial age. In parallel with a debate on the mechanisms for public intervention, one of the possible courses of action in attempting to overcome this paradox is to question the bargaining processes themselves. Many agreements relating directly or indirectly to the flexibility of work and employment point to possible solutions. The study of this database would have called for a study in its own right. Only a few paths for guidance can be indicated by way of a conclusion.

- **negotiate the flexibility of work and employment in its totality:** flexibility is a global and multivariate process, simultaneously affecting technologies, organisation, work, time and strategy. The risk of breaking down the subjects of bargaining might be to detract from consideration of the side effects for companies and employees.
- **integrate the question of working and living conditions and into the bargaining process.** In general, the different forms of flexibility have a more or less significant effect on employees’ working and living conditions. There are three factors deserving special attention: the health of workers more exposed to risks; autonomy in the workplace; and the prospects for integration and career development.

- **rethinking the production of standards on both stability and time:** what is needed here is to consider new procedures for achieving stability of employment, preserving both the continuity of employees' social rights and genuine visibility as regards their future. The question of how to master new methods of using time, creating time that is both dense and fragmented, constrained and broken down, also calls for a display of inventiveness in this field and for launching a debate on new ways of using time that will reconcile the needs of both employees and society.
- **initiate a “gender” approach to all the factors concerned.** Flexibility affects women in particular, but often in a specific manner. It does not necessarily call for special measures: improving the general lot of women entails first of all improving the working conditions of all jobs. But a gender approach cannot be taken without reflecting on how the bargaining processes may or may not reflect the specific problems encountered by women in a context of growing flexibility.
- **extending the debate where appropriate to actors in civic society and local territories.** In thinking about new mechanisms for the coordination of a plurality of actors (trade unions and the community), the debate could be extended so as to redefine the concepts of territorial development and promote global compromise, especially on the subject of changes to working time (duration, work schedules, the pace of work, etc.).

More broadly, it is the responsibility of the public authorities to develop policies in support of bargaining, at least in three domains: the prevention of risks (mental and physical) and the promotion of workers' health; the improvement of employees' access to general social rights (training, social protection), especially when they face insecure situations or involuntary part-time work; the support to women's entry into the labour market (parental leave, provisions for help with childcare). Apart from collective bargaining itself, such changes affect society as a whole. When they challenge the foundations of social cohesion, such evolutions question choices in public action emanating from the Welfare State. When those changes disrupt the duration and pace of work, thus affecting the whole of personal life, civil society leaders are called upon in their capacity to propose alternatives, in liaison with the trade unions. When such evolutions alter the borders between the workplace and the outside world, the relationship between the enterprise and society must take its place as the focus of debate.

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