

Working hours in the Nordic countries

Anttila T, Lie JA, Ojala S, Nätti J

For affiliations and more information please see:

<https://www.ttl.fi/en/research-and-development-projects/wow/>

Current trends in working hours are characterized by labor market deregulation, a de-standardization of both duration and timing in working time, increasing work intensity, and a blurring of the boundaries between work and free time.

Recommendations

- ✓ Given the wide occurrence and far-reaching negative effects, regulation of non-standard work schedules is needed. The European Directive of Working Hours forces national legislation in the European Union. The involvement of effective employee organizations, as well as the active engagement and commitment of employers, and agreements with high flexibility and interactions between the actors are necessary parts to modify the central regulation.
- ✓ Comprehensive health and family policies are needed to support well-being in challenging working hours. This should include access to occupational healthcare and flexible access to childcare facilities offering possibilities to reduce tensions between work- and family lives.
- ✓ Sustainable working times over the life course are needed to support appropriate working hours in different phases of life, skill-upgrading and occupational mobility.

Trends in the working hours in the Nordic countries

The Nordic countries are characterized by shorter usual working hours, less unsocial working hours, and more work-time control, compared to the rest of EU. However, the tempo of working hours is high. Employees in northern Europe are the most satisfied with how their working hours fit with their family or social commitments. This is at least partly a result of a tradition of strong and inclusive labor market regulation concerning bargaining, working conditions, worker autonomy, and combining work with family life.

Distinct Nordic working time regime identified by WOW:

1. Bargaining agreements between employer and employee organizations, predominantly at the sectoral level, are the key instruments when establishing working-time standards.
2. Nordic countries are characterized with high employee - and employer-centered flexibility, which benefit both employers and employees.
3. The Nordic working time regime is characterized by relative strong gender equity in working time arrangements.