

Working hours, length of working week, overtime and irregular hours

Report 6 of the WICARE project, February 2015.

What are the working hours in the social services? Based on the 2013-2014 data of the WageIndicator survey on work and wages, WICARE aims to explore this topic. In the web-survey, one question asks if the respondents have agreed their working hours with their employer, either in writing or verbally. If yes, they are asked how many hours per week they work under the terms of their contract. A next question asks “Do you usually work the number of hours laid down in your contract?” If no, the usual number of working hours is asked (If yes, the question has been skipped). Respondents who do not have an employment contract or have no working hours agreed, are always asked about their usual working hours. Working hours are asked using drop-down selection lists with hours, ranging from 1 to 100. A final question asks workers how many days a week they work. This question is used for checking the reliability of the reported hours.

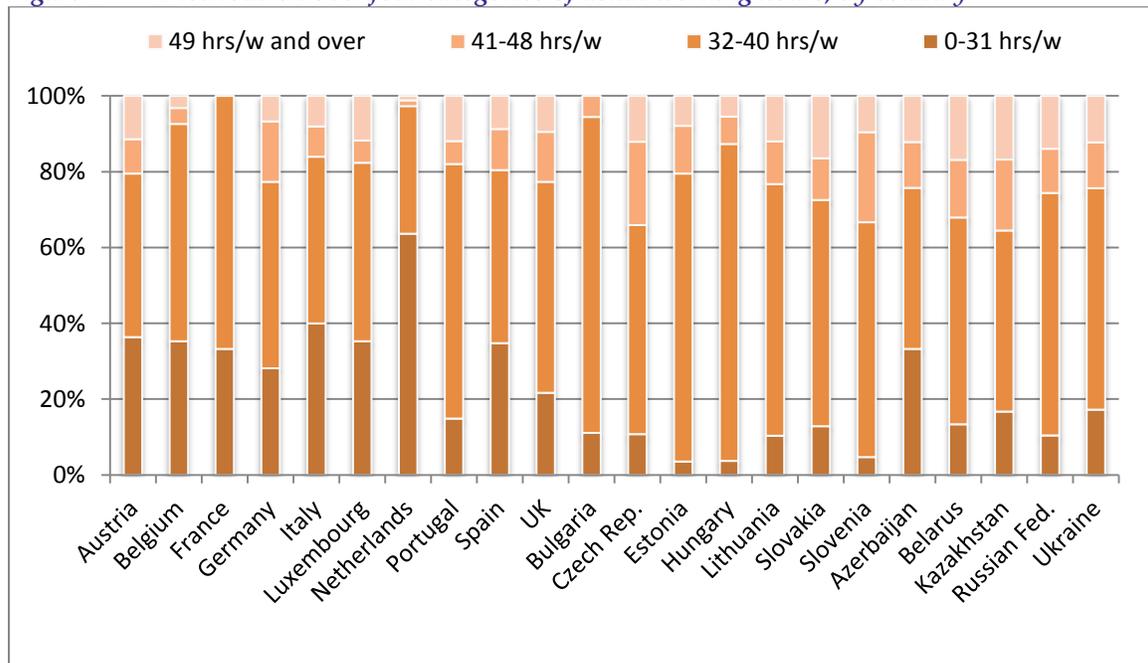
In this report, our first focus is on the length of the working week in the social services. Here we focus on the usual working hours. Figure 1 reveals that in

BOX: This report is part of the [WICARE](#) project, funded through the EU Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue Program of the European Commission (nr VS/2013/0404, DEC 2013 – NOV 2014). WICARE is coordinated by the University of Amsterdam/AIAS. Its main partner is the European Federation of Public Services Unions ([EPSU](#), Richard Pond and Mathias Maucher) in Brussels, the largest federation of the [ETUC](#) comprising of 8 million public service workers from over 250 trade unions; EPSU organises workers in the utilities, health and social services and local and national administration, in all European countries including in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood. Other partners are the research institute [CELSI](#) in Bratislava (Brian Fabo and colleagues), and the [WageIndicator](#) Foundation (Paulien Osse). Authors: Kea Tijdens and Maarten van Klaveren, University of Amsterdam / Amsterdam Institute for Advanced labour Studies ([AIAS](#)). Sole responsibility for the project lies with the authors. More information about the [project](#). Core of the WICARE project are the analyses of the data from the continuous [WageIndicator](#) web-survey on work and wages. Visitors of the national WageIndicator websites are invited to complete the survey. Survey data is used from workers in the residential care activities and the social work activities without accommodation, collected between 1/1/2013 and 30/9/ 2014 from the web survey and a printed version of the survey, which was distributed by the national affiliates of EPSU. For Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, and Ukraine data-collection was prolonged until 31/01/2015. In total 9,143 workers started the questionnaire, of which 4,223 gave valid details about their wages. Per country the number of observations ranges from 20 in Bulgaria to 2,911 in the Netherlands. On 18/11/2014 the draft project results are presented at a conference in Amsterdam. The current report is the version of 28/02/2015.

Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Russian Federation less than one in ten workers have a working week of less than 32 hours, whereas at the other end of the spectrum this is six in ten in the Netherlands; part-time work is very common in the latter country. Working weeks of 32-40 hours are most common in most countries, with more than eight of ten workers having such a working week in Bulgaria, and Hungary, and at the other end of the spectrum again the Netherlands with only approximately three in ten workers in this group. When looking at the category 41-48 hours per week, Belgium, the Netherlands and Azerbaijan rank lowest with less than one in twenty in this group, whereas in the Czech Republic and Slovenia two in ten work in this hours group. Very long working hours, that is more than 48 hours per week, are found in Slovakia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan where slightly less than two in ten reports to be working in this hours' category. In contrast, hardly any worker in Belgium, and the Netherlands reports to be working so many hours.

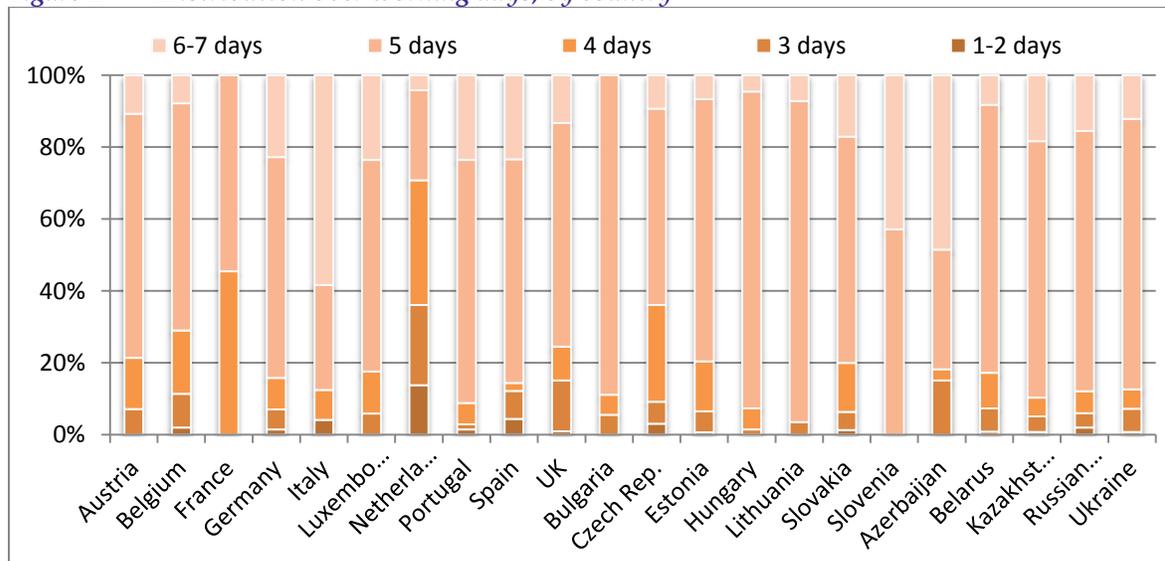
Figure 2 shows how many working days per week are associated with these working hours. In Bulgaria, Hungary, and Lithuania nine in ten workers work five days per week. In Italy, Slovenia, and Azerbaijan approximately four in ten workers report even a six-day working week.

Figure 1 Distribution over four categories of usual working hours, by country



Source: WageIndicator data 01-Jan-2013 - 30-Sep-2014 (AZE, BEL, BLR, KAZ, RUS, UKR: 31-Jan-2015). Selection workers in social services in 22 countries. N = 7,488.

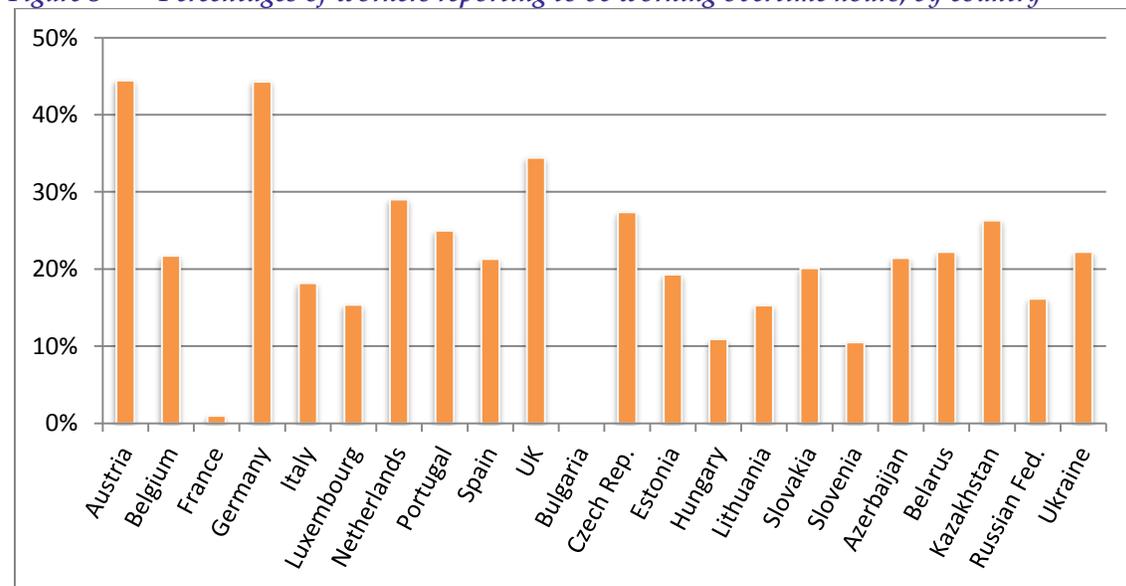
Figure 2 *Distribution over working days, by country*



Source: WageIndicator data 01-Jan-2013 - 30-Sep-2014 (AZE, BEL BLR, KAZ, RUS, UKR: 31-Jan-2015). Selection workers in social services in 22 countries. N = 7,057.

The survey includes questions about contractual hours and about working hours; the answers indicate the incidence of overtime. Figure 3 reveals the percentages of workers reporting usually to be working more hours than agreed. In this respect workers in Austria, Germany, and UK are on top. In contrast, France, and Bulgaria show hardly any overtime.

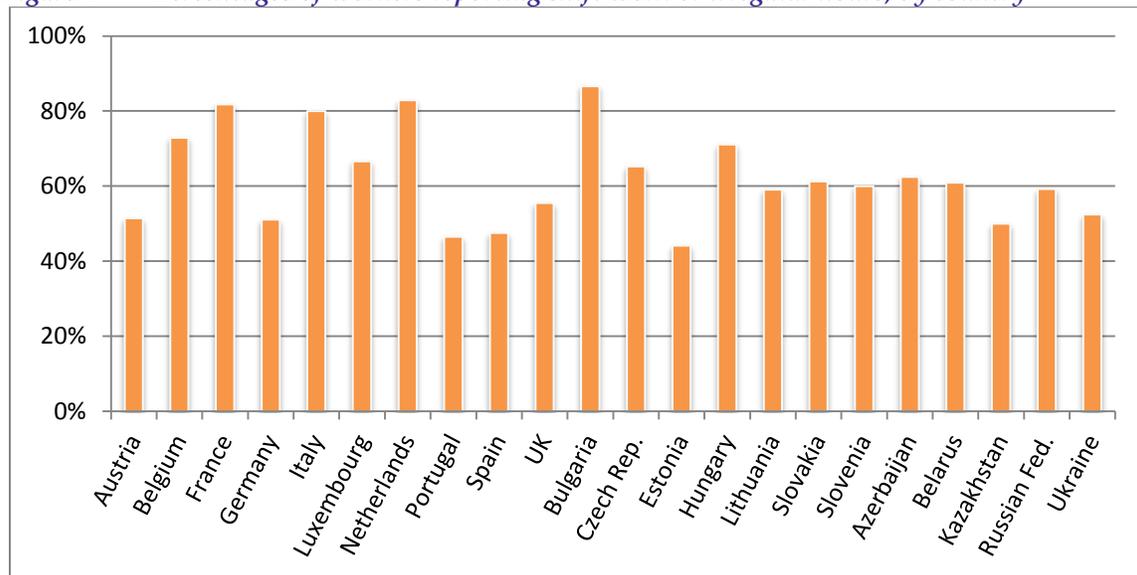
Figure 3 *Percentages of workers reporting to be working overtime hours, by country*



Source: WageIndicator data 01-Jan-2013 - 30-Sep-2014 (AZE, BEL BLR, KAZ, RUS, UKR: 31-Jan-2015). Selection workers in social services in 22 countries. N = 5,920.

The survey also includes a question asking if the respondent works shifts or irregular hours. Figure 4 shows how often the workers in the social services report to do so. In Estonia, the incidence of shift or irregular hours is lowest with four in ten workers reporting so; it is highest in France, Italy, Netherlands, and Bulgaria, with eight or more in ten workers reporting so. In all other countries between four and seven in every ten workers experience shift work or irregular hours.

Figure 4 Percentages of workers reporting shift work or irregular hours, by country



Source: WageIndicator data 01-Jan-2013 - 30-Sep-2014 (AZE, BEL, BLR, KAZ, RUS, UKR: 31-Jan-2015). Selection workers in social services in 22 countries. N = 6,562.

In conclusion concerning working hours, working weeks of 32-40 hours show up as most common in most countries for social service workers. In Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Russian Federation very few workers have a working week of less than 32 hours, in contrast to the Netherlands. Considerable shares of workers (slightly less than two in ten) in Slovakia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan answer to work more than 48 hours per week. Working overtime is most widely reported in Austria, Germany, and UK.

Shift work or irregular hours are widespread in social services. They are most often reported in France, Italy, Netherlands, and Bulgaria, but are also experienced by at least four in ten workers in all other countries.
