

Internet as a trade union tool

- WageIndicator and Finnish nurses as an example

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Tehy ry
Publication Series B: Surveys 4/2007
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Wageindicator

WageIndicator aims to share and compare wage information, to contribute to a transparent labour market and to provide free, accurate wage data through Salary Checks on national WageIndicator websites. The data is collected through web surveys in participating countries. The continuous internationally comparable questionnaire contains questions about working conditions, life context and background information of respondents and wages.

Each national Salary Check shows wage information for a number of occupations, controlled for variables such as gender, tenure, education, supervisory position, promotion at the current firm and region. The Salary Check uses the coefficients of occupation-specific wage regression analyses, based on the survey data. Annually, Salary Checks are updated, using web survey data.

Technically, the WageIndicator websites, web surveys and Salary Checks are developed, managed and maintained in the Netherlands. The WageIndicator concept is owned by the WageIndicator Foundation, a non-profit organisation dedicated to labour market transparency by providing accurate wage and wage related information.

Thus, the public at large contributes to scientific information gathering, and scientists in return provide information free of charge to the public. Research reports and publications are to be found in <http://www.wageindicator.org/main/publications> and on the pages of the research laboratory <http://www.wageindicator.org/main/researchlab>.

The first WageIndicator website was launched for the first time in 2001 in the Netherlands. Presently there are similar websites in Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Hungary, India, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, UK and the USA.

In 2007 the Chinese WageIndicator team started working on a website and questionnaire. Mojazarplata will next give access to Russian visitors and visitors from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. During 2008 there will be new launchings of websites in France and WageIndicator teams will be created in Chile, Columbia, Guatemala and Paraguay

The ongoing next step is the scaling up of the WageIndicator operation to 75 countries, in which 86 percent of the world's population lives. Although the choice of these countries is based on a number of criteria, it is a flexible list. Naturally the above-mentioned countries, in which the WageIndicator is operational, are included. Moreover, large countries, all of those with a population of over 25 million in 2005, are on this list. Some medium-sized countries, i.e. with a population of over 2.5 million in 2005, and with a high Internet penetration rate (> 200/1000 inhabitants) are selected.

Käyttötieto Ltd.

Käyttötieto is a Finnish company which produces research about work life and the trade union movement. The responsible researcher of the company is Ph.D. Kimmo Kevätsalo. During recent years the company has carried out or acted as a partner in many Finnish and European work life and research and development projects. The most important present research project is "Work, employment relations and industrial relations in the globalising world. Besides this the company is involved in the WageIndicator project producing comparative research based on WageIndicator data files. It also provides expertise and training services about work life issues. More information in www.kayttotieto.fi

Abstract

This report is based on data files gathered from Belgium, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and UK by using the Internet questionnaire which is part of the WageIndicator tool box. In these countries, nearly 6000 nurses having different nursing tasks had completed the questionnaire by July 2007. Besides this survey, official salary and wage statistics have been used in checking reliability of the observations. As for Finland, the Netherlands and UK, the results have also been checked by co-operating with universities, research institutes and trade unions representing nurses in these countries.

The comparison of salaries proved that salaries after taxes and their purchasing power was lowest in Finland. Purchasing power was half of the UK nurses, whose salaries were highest within the compared countries. This result got a large interest in the media and was one of the arguments which the Finnish nurses' trade union, Tehy, used when preparing its industrial actions in 2007.

When compared with female technicians and associate professionals, earnings of nurses were lower in Belgium, Finland, UK, Germany and the Netherlands. They were higher only in Spain.

In all case countries atypical employment relationships are connected to lower earnings when calculated taking into consideration the working hours. In Finland and Spain the main form of atypicality is the fixed employment relationship. In the other countries in question, atypicality appeared as part-time employment.

Union density varies a lot between countries. It is highest in Finland and lowest in the Netherlands. The coverage of collective agreements however, has no connection with union density.

The case of Finnish nurses indicates that the WageIndicator offers opportunities for multi-dimensional analysis of work and other aspects of life. In this report, only satisfaction with a combination of family life and work life has been examined. The most satisfied with this aspect of their lives are nurses in the Netherlands and Spain and interestingly, the opposite factors explain satisfaction. In Spain, the most satisfied are full-time nurses, in the Netherlands this is the case with part-time nurses.

The experience of the Finnish nurses' trade union during 2007 demonstrates the new opportunities for trade union agency that are created by the WageIndicator. It offers rapid comparative information about salaries and working conditions and makes them transparent in many countries. This may be useful to convince union members and other groups in society about the legitimacy and necessity of industrial action. During less tense periods of industrial relations the

survey process and repeated reporting about results activate union members to follow employer policies and ongoing trends within the occupational group in question.

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1. Introduction

The background of this report is the agreement signed in the beginning of the year 2007 by Tehy and Käyttötieto Ltd in Finland. The partners agreed on clearing up

- nurses' salaries in Belgium, Finland, Germany, Poland, Spain, the Netherlands and UK
- salaries of the health sector professions and occupations and occupations compared with nurses taking into consideration resources which were available
- looking at taxing and the purchasing power of above mentioned occupations and social security and benefits for people at the income level of occupations in question
- empirical material will be data files of WageIndicator
- results will be completed and verified using available official statistics of states in question and information which will be available from trade unions representing nurses in case countries
- working conditions will be compared using Wageindicator data files and information which is possible to get from trade unions in different countries

Because it was not possible then to weight the data file for Polish nurses to be representative, Poland was omitted from the report.

In April 2007 Käyttötieto delivered advance information to Tehy to support their salary negotiation round. The trade union used this information and got wide publicity for the results that the purchasing power of Finnish nurses was clearly below corresponding EU -countries.

The empirical materials of this report are the WageIndicator questionnaire data from case countries until July 2007. There were about 6000 observations. When observations were checked both manually and using statistical methods, some observations had to be cancelled because salary information was missing or was obviously incorrect. For this reason, the final salary comparison is based on 5900 observations.

The responsible researcher of Käyttötieto, Kimmo Kevätsalo visited the Netherlands and the UK to become familiar with the work conditions of nurses in these countries. There were two special reasons for concentrating on these countries. The level of earnings was highest in the UK and the proportion of atypical employment relationships was biggest in the Netherlands.

After this more or less methodologically introductory part, nurses' earnings will be presented in 6 case countries calculated for the standardized working month. The average level of taxes and social payments has been subtracted from these gross earnings in each country. The purchasing power of net earnings are calculated taking into consideration the proportional price level in each country using Eurostat comparisons as a basis.

Comparison between countries is also made regarding auxiliary nurses and corresponding occupations. Moreover, nurses' earnings are compared with earnings of technicians and associated professionals within each country and across countries.

The most general forms of atypical employment relationships, part-time and fixed term employment, are examined in each country considering proportions of atypicality and the connection between these employment relationships with levels of earnings.

Basic information about trade union membership, the coverage of collective agreements and satisfaction with work life – family life combinations bring the results presenting part of the report to the end.

Finally, an estimation of result reliability will be made using the data from two illustrative sources: the WageIndicator Internet survey and official statistics for Finland. This provides a reasonable picture of the reliability of WageIndicator data for a country, where response rate in the questionnaire has been high and official statistics are accurate and available for all main sectors i.e. municipalities, private sector and the state. In the 5 remaining countries, there are some representativity problems; for example, the private sector does not feature in the official statistics in most cases countries, and data for the public sector is not represented very consistently in Spain and Germany.

To create a sort of benchmark for other case countries, a salary hierarchy within the health care sector in Finland is also presented. To extend perspective, there is a comparison of nurses' salaries with other associate professionals.

2. Comparison of nurses' earnings in 6 EU countries

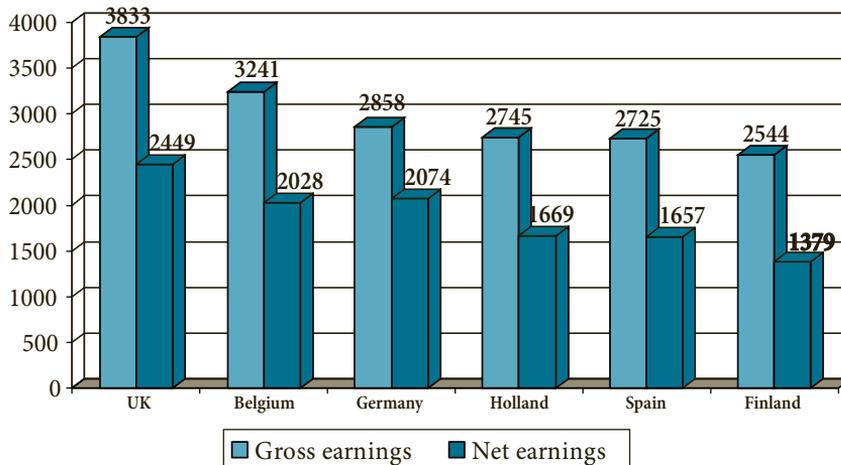
In this report 6 different EU countries are compared. When using purchasing power parities of gross national income per capita as an indicator, the highest income level is in the Netherlands (37 390 \$), thereafter Belgium (36 080 \$), United Kingdom (35 940 \$), Finland (34 500 \$), Germany (31 879 \$) and Spain (29 610\$)¹.

“Nurses” in this report mean those employees calculated by ISCO-88 classification into the category 323. The main occupational titles are nurses and midwives. The titles used in different countries are varying. For example the category 323 does not include the following occupational groups which are members of the Finnish trade union Tehy: practical (auxiliary) nurses, medical porters and ambulance crews, social workers, health care assistants, dental nurses and oral hygienists, physiotherapists and related associate professionals. They are dealt with in the chapter 2.1.

Chart 1

Gross and net earnings of nurses in 6 EU -countries

Gross earnings transformed to be full time earnings euros/month;
 Net earnings=gross earnings – total taxes and levies in each country



Wageindicator VII/2007, N=4 078

Tax levels, Statistics Finland 2006

¹ World Bank Internet Statistics (Note the currency is US \$, not €.)

Earnings	UK	Belgium	Germany	Holland	Spain	Finland*
Gross	3833	3241	2858	2725	2473	2544
Net	2449	1744	1846	1657	1612	1379
N	138	97	925	2380	125	413

*The figure for Finland deviates from earlier figures, because the basis for calculations has been made similar with other countries.

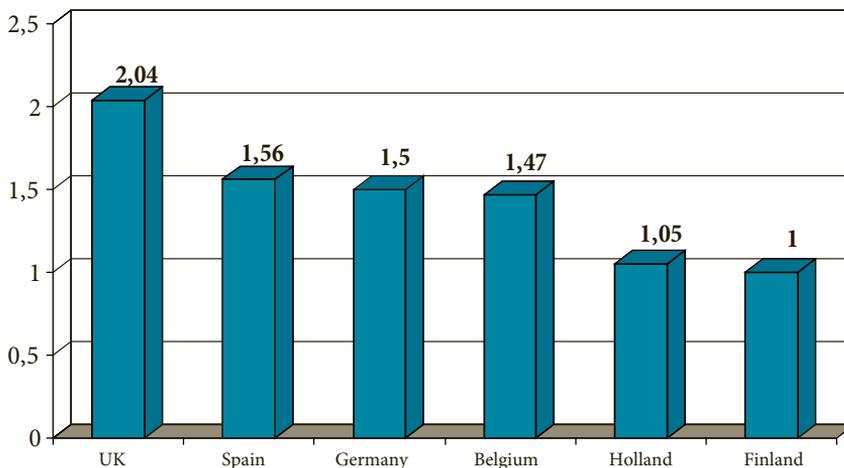
The gross and net earnings are calculated based on the assumption of a similar working week for each country (40 hours per week) and 4,33 weeks in a month.

When the price levels of countries haven been taken into consideration, the purchasing power is lowest for Finnish nurses. Now the position of Spanish nurses improves. Together with their colleagues in Germany and Belgium, they have 1,5 times higher purchasing power than those in Finland. The Dutch nurses were closer to their Finnish colleagues, with purchasing power 10 % higher than in Finland.

The data has been checked using national statistics, research institutes and trade union representatives.

Chart 2

Purchasing power parities of nurses in 6 EU-countries



Wageindicator VII/2007, N=4 078

Price- and tax-levels from Statistics Finland 2006

2.1. Salaries of practical nurses, childminders and home care assistants in 6 EU countries

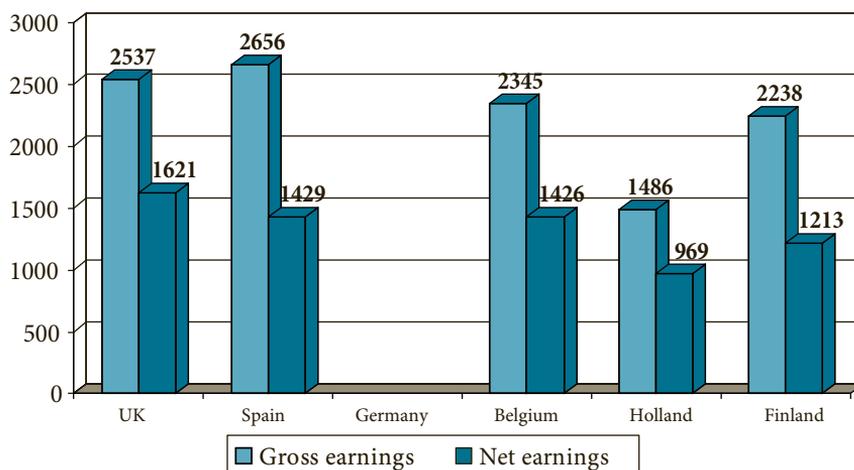
There is a remarkable variation of classifications in health sector occupations between countries especially for practical (auxiliary) nurses, personal care and related workers. The following comparison is based on those countries where the WageIndicator data sets give information by the ISCO-88 classification 513. In Germany the national Wageindicator team did not use that occupational category at all. In Spain there were so few observations that the results are very preliminary. For English and Dutch data the information has been checked using the above-mentioned sources.

Chart 3

Earnings of practical (auxiliary) nurses in 5 EU country

Gross earnings euros/month;

Net earnings=gross earnings – total taxes and levies in each country



Wageindicator VII/2007, N=1 822

Tax levels, information Statistics Finland 2006

Earnings	UK	Belgium	Germany	Holland	Spain	Finland*
Gross	2537	2656	-	2345	1486	2238
Net	1621	1429	-	1426	769	1213
N	351	93	-	949	30	399

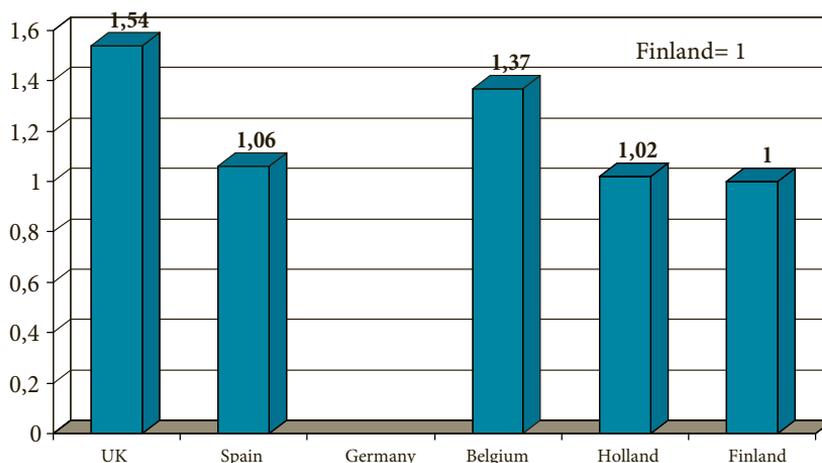
* The figure for Finland deviates from earlier figures, because the basis for calculations have been made similar with other countries.

These preliminary results show that lowering educational level equalizes salary level between countries. On the other hand, gaps between educational levels within countries are considerably high. The highest gap is to be found in the United Kingdom, where nurses earn on average 1 296 euros more than practical/auxiliary nurses. In the Netherlands the gap is 409 euros and in Finland 309. In Spain there are so few observations that one has to be very cautious with conclusions.

The purchasing power parities for earnings follow the previous comparison because there are no different consumer level brackets and tax levels for these two categories of nursing occupations.

Chart 4

**PPPs for practical nurses, childminders
and home care assistants**



Wageindicator VII/2007, N=1822

Price- and tax-levels from Statistics Finland 2006

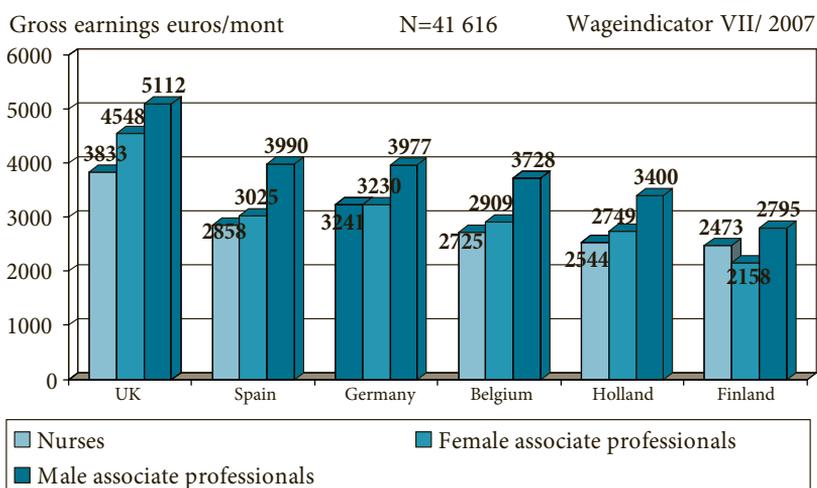
2.2. Nurses compared with other associate professionals in six EU countries

In the ISCO-88 classification nurses belong to the same category as associate professionals. One of the most important classification criteria is education. In the comparison, salaries of associate professionals have been presented by gender. The assumption behind this is that there is a gender gap in salaries which has an influence on strongly female occupations like nursing.

There is an expected correlation. In Spain nurses seem to earn more than female associate professionals. And in Belgium nurses earn approximately as much as other associate professional. In Germany, Holland, England and Finland their earnings are at a lower level. These country-specific differences are worth require a more detailed statistical analysis in the future.

Chart 5

Earning of nurses and other associate professionals in six EU countries



Earnings	UK	Belgium	Germany	Holland	Spain	Finland
Nurses	3 833	3 241	2 858	2 725	2 473	2 544*
Female associate professionals	4 548	3 230	3 025	2 909	2 158	2 749
Male associate professionals	5 112	3 977	3990	3 728	2 795	3 400
N	3 068	3 035	11 309	20 291	3 340	2 831

** The figure for Finland deviates from earlier figures, because the basis for calculations have been made similar with other countries.

3. Employment relationships of nurses

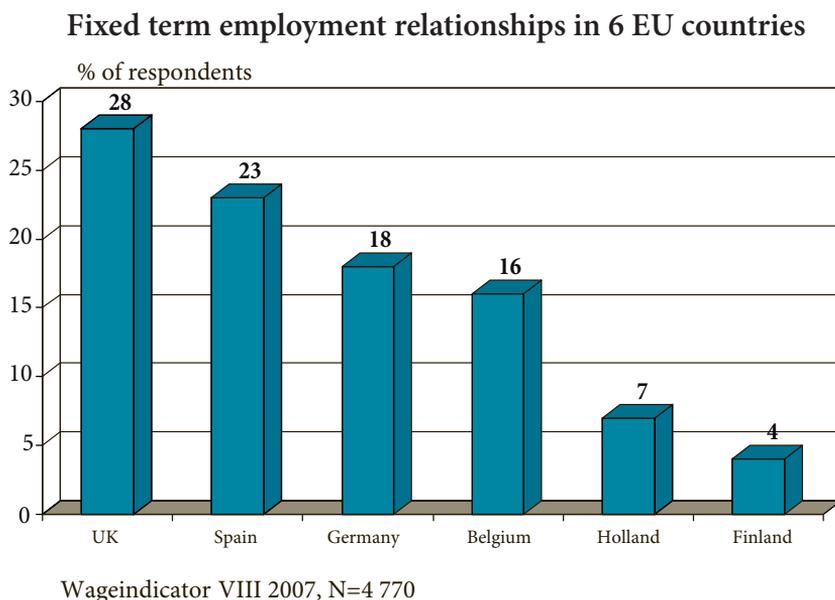
3.1. Employer

Health care has been organised in varying ways in different EU countries. In the case countries of Finland, England and Spain the employer is mainly a public sector organisation or private enterprise. In Belgium, Holland and Germany the employer is quite often a so-called third sector organisation. Because the question about one's employer was not compulsory, approximately one third of respondents did not answer this question. For this reason, no exact figures are included in this report.

3.2. Continuous – fixed term employment relationship

Fixed term employment relationships are especially typical in Spain and Finland. The most permanent are employment relationships in the United Kingdom

Chart 6

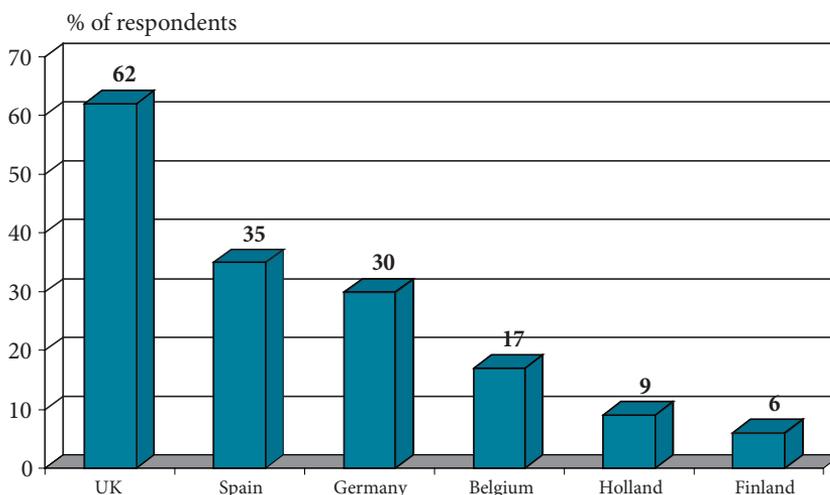


3.3. Full-time – part-time

Part-time employment is typical for those countries where the so-called third sector had an important role as employer. The Netherlands is a class of its own. There the majority of nurses work part-time.

Chart 7

Proportions of part-time nurses in 6 EU countries



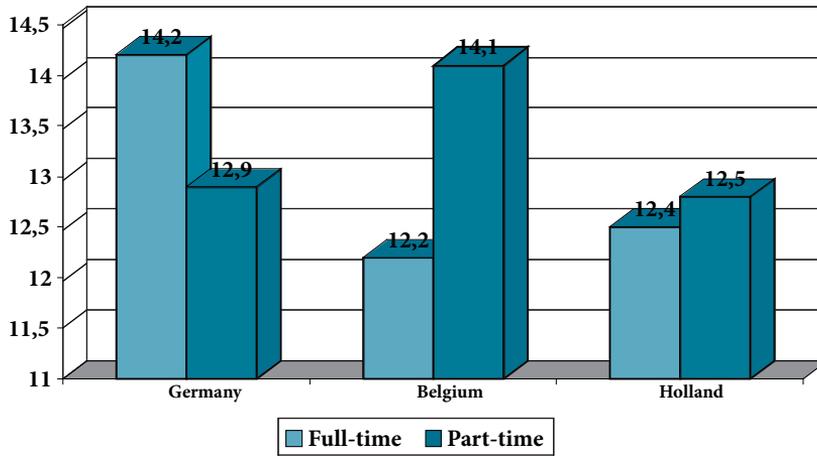
Palkkalaskuri / Wageindicator VIII 2007, N= 3 711

3.4. Atypical employment relationships and earnings

This data shows that the atypicality of employment relationship has an effect on earnings calculated for real working hours. Because this examination is preliminary, and the quantity of respondents is not sufficient for reliable statistical analysis, only examples of the countries with the most obvious results are presented.

Chart 8

Hourly earnings for part-time and full-time nurses in 3 EU countries



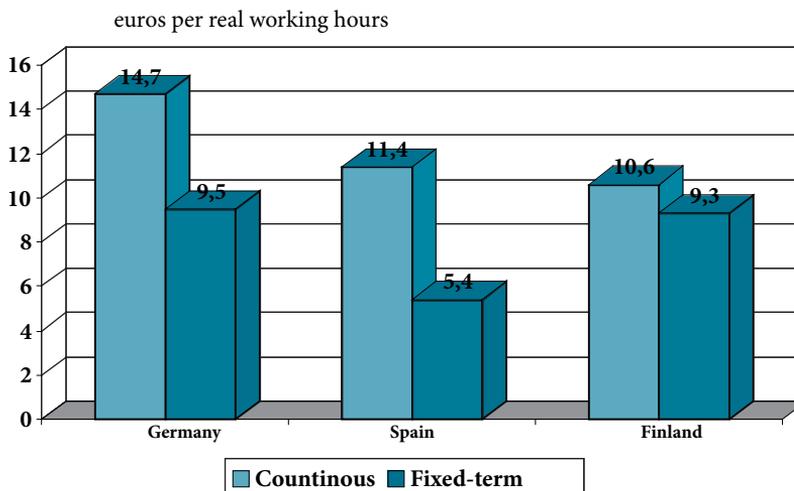
Wageindicator VII/2007, N=3 594

Earnings/hour	Germany	Holland	Belgium
Full-time	14,2	12,4	12,2
Part-time	12,9	12,5	14,1
N	1128	2548	145

In Germany earnings per hour are clearly higher for full-time employment relationships. In Belgium and the Netherlands proportions they are the contrary, although in the Netherlands the difference is minor.

Chart 9

Hourly earnings of nurses in different employment relationships



Wageindicator II/2007, N=1 796

Earnings	Germany	Spain	Finland
Continuous	14,7	11,4	10,6
Fixed-term	9,5	5,4	9,3
N	1134	182	481

The stability of employment relationships has the same effect on earnings in all case countries. Proportionally the largest difference is to be found in Spain and the smallest in Finland. In Germany the difference is also remarkably large.

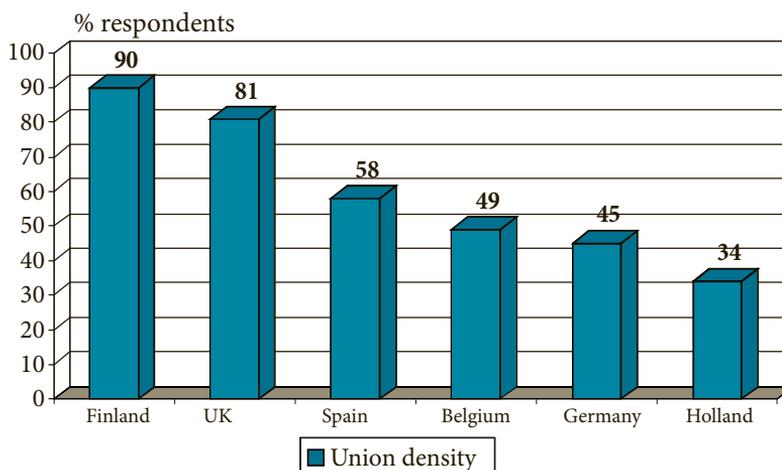
These hourly calculated comparisons have to be seen as being entirely preliminary because earnings depend among other aspects, on the times of working hours. It is possible for example, that part-time work is done during inconvenient hours and allowances for inconvenient hours increase earnings. A more detailed analysis of these factors should be carried out on larger samples at a later stage.

3.5. Union densities and the coverage of collective agreements

Trade unions have played a central role in starting the WageIndicator project in some countries. That is one of the reasons why trade union members seem to be over-represented in national samples. However, union densities are parallel with other examinations concerning trade union membership.

Chart 10

Union densities of nurses in 6 EU countries



Wageindicator VIII 2007, N=4 086

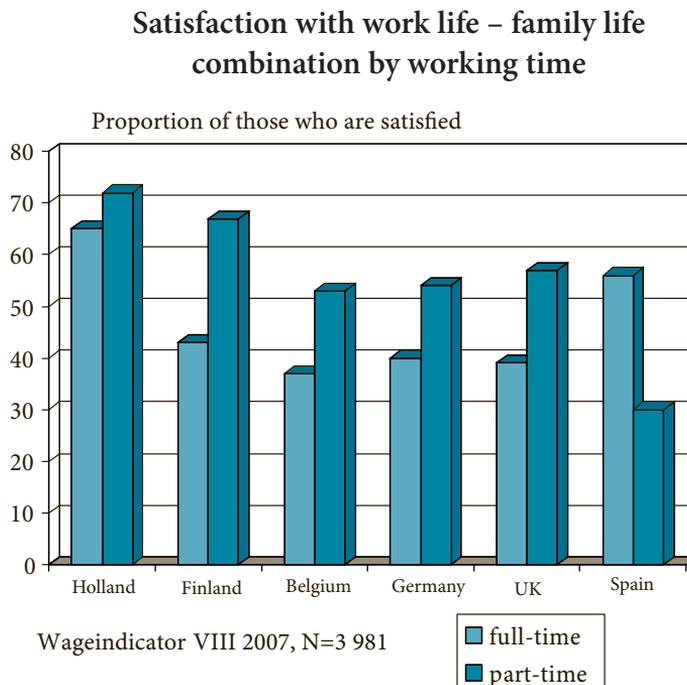
The highest union density is in Finland, the lowest in the Netherlands. In the United Kingdom, union density is quite high, depending on nursing tradition as a public sector profession and strong craft unions.

The coverage of collective agreements is higher than union density but the collective agreement systems are so specific (especially within the private sector) that it is too early to present exact figures.

4. Satisfaction with work life – family life combination

The WageIndicator questionnaire includes many questions which measure the different dimensions of life. One example of the opportunities to study the totality of life spheres of employees using the WageIndicator is presented in this report. There is a question about how satisfied respondents are with their work life – family life combination. This variable is studied by the working time variable.

Chart 11



Dutch nurses who work mostly part time are the most satisfied with the family-life work-life combination. In general, those who work part-time are more satisfied than full-time working nurses with the exception of Spanish nurses.

5. Methods

5.1. The Internet as a survey tool

The Internet is being used more and more for scientific data collection. The WageIndicator websites have shown to be able to provide information on wages and in return, ask visitors to complete a questionnaire on work and wages.

It is sometimes assumed that a web survey cannot be taken seriously, because the Internet is associated with one-second-a-page visitors, who have neither time nor patience to complete a 20-minute questionnaire. From the consistency of the data, however, it can be concluded that this hardly applies to the WageIndicator survey. Item non-response is mostly below 5 percent. From the respondent's emails and their comments at the end of the questionnaire, the WageIndicator research team has learned that the vast majority of the respondents answer the questions with great care. Many do report that they enjoyed completing the questionnaire.

In addition, some people have pointed to the risk that an occupational group may systematically report earning higher or lower wages than in reality. By doing so, the Salary Check in their country would come up with biased wage information. This argument assumes that respondents within an occupation will act collectively. In cases where extreme wages are reported, these are excluded in the analyses. As for Finnish nurses, we have shown in this report that analysing the main biases and weighting the data using these analyses gives accurate salary information compared with official statistics (see chapter 2).

In the case of the WageIndicator, visitors' emails to the national web managers provide feedback on the questionnaire and its technical functioning. In addition, the text box at the end of the questionnaire 'what did you like about the questionnaire' allows additional input. Finally, dropout during completion provides insight into difficulties in filling out the questionnaire. In the past few years, web-visitor's comments have led to several improvements in the questionnaire. Moreover, when continuous volunteer web surveys lead to large sample sizes, it is particularly profitable to invest in survey quality.

Apart from its many advantages, the WageIndicator questionnaire has one major flaw, because it is a volunteer web survey. Individuals in the target population, i.e. the labour force, do not have a similar chance to access the survey and therefore the data are not representative for the population. In general, this is not the case for nurses in countries like Finland. The oldest nurses were under-represented in the sample but this bias was corrected by weighting. Results of studies in a number of countries to investigate the national WageIndicator

bias as for socio-demographic variables are available, e.g. Kevätsalo, K. (2006) WOLIWEB national report - Some preliminary results from Finland. Amsterdam: WageIndicator, PDF 152 kB;

It is important to emphasize that the Internet reaches out to millions of people in different countries speaking different languages. This is a major advantage of volunteer web surveys. Volunteer web surveys allow for extremely large sample sizes, not possible in other survey modes.

For several reasons, large sample size is advantageous. The data from large-scale web-surveys allow for exploring small-scale units such as regional intersections, or occupations, because each unit still has sufficient data. A homogenous occupational group like nurses is a good example of this. A web survey can be continuous. For instance the Finnish nurses' union, Tehy, has plans to do repeated reporting using the WageIndicator to check the real results of its industrial action rapidly. This is possible because the running costs are relatively low, even when taking the marketing efforts into account.

5.2. Statistical analysis

The data used in this report has been processed using only those responses which allow the calculation of hourly, monthly and annual earnings. Responses which the researcher has defined as erroneous have been excluded. For nurses only earnings between 5-45 euros per hour have been accepted. Monthly earnings have been made uniform assuming that there are 40 average weekly working hours.

As mentioned previously, the data is reliable when checked against official statistics.

Appendix

Nurses' salaries in Finland

1. Nurses' salaries in Finland according to official statistics and WageIndicator information available in October 2007

From publications of Statistics Finland one can find salary information presented in Table 1. Within municipalities, average monthly earnings are used. This information is not available for the private sector and monthly earnings for regular hours have been used instead.

Statistics published by Statistic Finland are the most reliable. They are however about a year older than WageIndicator information. WageIndicator is the only source which converts full-time and part-time earnings to be comparative with full-time earnings within all countries. Wageindicator shows rather higher earnings than Statistics Finland because it also includes salary increases which have occurred in the first half of the year 2007.

Table 1: Gross earnings of Finnish nurses according to the sources used in this report

Salaries of nurses

Wage indicator (Palkkalaskuri) VII/2007	Municipalities 2006 Statistics Finland	Private sector 2006 Statistics Finland	State sector 2006 Statistics Finland
Monthly gross earnings based on questionnaire	Average monthly gross earnings	Monthly earnings, for regular hours	Average monthly gross earnings
2540 (including salary increases within)	No aggregated information nurses 2486 health n. 2153 radiol. n. 2426 laborat. n. 2315	2338 nurses 2325 helath n. 2369 radiol. n. 2364 laborat. n. 2242	2379 nurses 2379 laborat. n. 2052

Note! Within municipality and state sectors the data represents total earnings from employer sources. The WageIndicator data is based on a question about monthly total earnings included

in an Internet survey. The private sector data represents monthly earnings of regular working hours given by employers, which have not published data about total earnings.

Sources: Wageindicator questionnaire data July 2007, Statistic Finland: Private sector monthly salaries 2007, Local government sector wages and salaries 2007, Central government monthly salaries 2007

According to the Finnish WageIndicator (Palkkalaskuri) for nurses

- salaries for women were 92 % of men's salaries (Statistics Finland: within municipalities 93 %, private sector 95 % and the state sector 86 % in 2006);
- for part-time employees earnings per hour were 92 % of the earnings of full-time working employees (no comparative data from Statistics Finland)
- for fixed-time employees the earnings were 91 % of those in permanent employment relationships (cf. the former comment)
- the age of respondents influences earning levels: on average for those below 30 years the level of earnings was 227 euros lower than for those over 50 years
- the size of one's workplace influences earnings, so that in workplaces with 10 or less employees earnings were 249 euros lower than for those in the workplaces with more than 50 employees
- working for the same employer has the following influence: on average more than 20 years for the same employer yields 212 euros per month for less than 1 year or lower.

2. Salaries of practical nurses, childminders and home care assistants in Finland

A remarkable group of Tehy members are practical nurses, childminders and home care assistants.

In table 2 their earning levels are according to sources used in this report. It is worth mentioning that variation is quite noticeable according to occupation.

Table 2: Gross earnings of Finnish practical nurses, childminders and home care assistants

**Finland: Practical nurses, childminders
and home care assistants**

Wage indicator VII/2007	Municipalities 2006 Statistics Finland	Private sector 2006 Statistics Finland	State sector 2006 Statistics Finland
Monthly gross earnings based on questionnaire data	Average monthly gross earnings	Monthly earnings, for regular hours	Average monthly gross earnings
2118	2235	1958	2170

3. Salaries within the health care sector

Salary hierarchy within the health care sector is the broadest compared with other sectors in Finland.

**Table 3:
Comparison of qualified personnel salaries within the health care sector**

Profession or occupation	Municipalities 2006 Statistics Finland	Private sector 2006 Statistics Finland	State sector 2006 Statistics Finland
	Average monthly gross earnings	Monthly earnings, for regular hours	Average monthly gross earnings
Practical nurses, childminders and home care assistants	2218 (practical nurse)	1958	-
Nurse	2416	2325	2429
Senior nurse	2717 (in hospital)	2595	2564
Head nurse	3442	3709	No data available
Physician	5097 (health centre)	5127	3438
Senior physician	6402	6768	5185

4. Nurses compared with other associate professionals

The Finnish classification of occupations (based on the European Union variant of ISCO-88, worldwide classification of occupations) classifies nurses in the main category of “technicians and associate professionals”.

When comparing nurses’ earnings with other associate professionals using official statistics, it is noticeable that within this sector regular earnings for nurses are higher than for other associate professionals. Within the private sector, both male and female nurses earn less than other associate professionals. Female nurses within the state sector earn a bit more, but male nurses a bit less than other associate professionals.

Table 4: Nurses compared with other associate professionals

Occupation	Municipalities 2006 Statistics Finland			Private sector 2006 Statistics Finland			State sector 2006 Statistics Finland		
	Regular earnings			Regular earnings			Regular earnings		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Technicians and associate professionals (nurses included)	2 453	2 248	2 282	3087	2507	2816	2 681	2 203	2 419
Nurses	2 534	2 351	2363	2 445	2332	2 338	2 599	2 258	2322

The WageIndicator data shows that there is a clear salary gap between genders. It is larger for other “associate professionals” (female salaries 82 % of male salaries) than for nurses (female salaries 92 % of male salaries).

Directly comparative official data is available for the private sector and the state. According to these statistics private sector nurses earned 340-843 euros less per month than other associate professionals. Within the state sector nurses earned more than technical associate professionals. Earnings of commercial and administrative associate professionals were strongly dependent on gender. Males earned more than their female colleagues in the same occupations and also more than male and female nurses.



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