

Differences between Men and Women in Work Quality

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Quality is an innovative, quantitative and qualitative research project that aims to examine how, in an era of major change, European citizens living in different national welfare state regimes evaluate the quality of their lives. The project will analyse international-comparative data on the social well-being of citizens and collect new data on social quality in European workplaces in eight strategically selected partner countries: **UK, Finland, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Hungary and a candidate country for EU enlargement, Bulgaria.**

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Chapter 1: Introduction and theoretical considerations

Introduction

This report is Deliverable 7.2 for the project QUALITY of Life in a Changing Europe, funded by the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission. The task of this report is to review gender differences in work quality based primarily on quantitative and secondarily on qualitative data collected in the eight countries participating in this project. To foreshadow our findings: while we can observe significant gender differences when analyzing aggregate data on access to work, wages, promotion chances, etc, these differences are smaller and less systematic when we look at more nuanced indicators of work quality, such as enjoyment of work, the experience of insecurity, supervisory support or work-home enrichment. While men tend to feel more pressure at work, enjoy more authority, autonomy and find their work demanding, women are more likely to experience “flow,” to feel supported by colleagues and to claim that their work has a positive impact on their lives outside the workplace. These differences are small, however, as are gender differences in *which* individual characteristics impact work quality most. Age is a more important factor for women than men: the older they get, the more free women are to enjoy their work. This pattern is different for men, and one obvious explanation is that in the reproductive years most women’s energy is focused on domestic responsibilities outside the workplace and thus the source of their enjoyment is primarily elsewhere, while this is not the case for men. Conversely, supervisory position is more important for men’s work enjoyment than for women’s, possibly because of gender specific expectations about career success.

People spend a significant portion of their waking hours doing work or getting to their place of work. The average person employed in one of the companies in our project works for wages 40 hours a week, spends another half hour each day commuting back and forth between their home and workplace, and puts in an additional 10 hours a week doing housework to end up with a bit less than 53 hours a week spent on or on the way to work. (Women spend a median of 39 hours at paid work, while men 42. Women, on the other hand, also do about 10 hours of household work a week, while men only do about 6.) This report explores both the objective conditions and the subjective perceptions of one section of this time, the part that is spent in the workplace: we compare men’s and women’s overall experience in this realm.

A large volume of research has explored gender differences in a variety of aspects of people’s working lives and found, by and large, that women are at a disadvantage both at finding full time paid employment and also at attaining the same job quality as men. This is so regardless of the fact that women’s level of education in recent years have reached or exceeded that of their male peers. Specifically, researchers have published extensively on gender differences in unemployment, work hours, wages, as well as the sex segregation of work, the glass ceiling, the effects of a “macho” company culture, etc. A number of explanatory factors for women’s disadvantage has also been analyzed ranging from the force of patriarchy (Reskin 1990), through differences in human capital (Becker 1956), household responsibilities and domestic decision making to institutional and individual discrimination built into conceptualization of the ideal worker in a global capitalist environment (Acker 1990). Considerable attention has been given to

policies both at the national (Sainsbury 1994) and the supra-national levels (Hein 2005), which are designed to promote the equalization of women's and men's labor market experience.

Recently, a growing body of literature has started to cast the net even broader and analyze work quality in the larger context of life quality and life opportunities (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport 2006). One set of literature explores what is called "work-life balance" and finds ambiguous results from the point of view of its potential for alleviating gender inequality. While a number of companies have started to provide employees with options that make raising a family more compatible with making a living, researchers have argued that this can contribute to an increase in women occupying marginal positions in the workplace. In addition, women's growing participation in the labor market may exacerbate global inequalities among women: middle-class women working in western developed countries are now able to hire domestic workers from the peripheral economy producing a female army of underpaid, vulnerable, occasionally even illegal laborers. Researchers argue that regardless of some legislative attempt, little change has happened in the labor market that would target either men's reproductive work or question the conceptualization of the ideal worker as someone who devotes most of their energy to paid work.

In this report we explore if - and if so how - men and women perceive their work conditions differently in the paid labor force. (In the following report we combine these findings with an analysis of work conditions in unpaid care work to analyze the relationship between the two and their impact on overall well-being.) On the basis of the above we expect vast differences both in the "objective" conditions of work as well as the ways in which these are perceived and described by people working in the eight countries in our project. Given women's domestic responsibilities and the double burden most of them still carry, we expect them to feel less enjoyment at work, more pressure and less support from their supervisors than men. In addition, we expect that women will be more likely than men to feel and recount the negative impact of work on their lives outside work. In this report we restrict our analysis to paid work and will not address domestic responsibilities, the distribution of work at home, or its unquestionable impact on work conditions. That will be the task of our final report. Yet, work conditions, in and of themselves, are very important for people's overall life satisfaction and thus a gender difference in this regard should be of importance and significance.

Data and analytic strategy

Data for this report comes from several sources. We primarily rely on survey data collected within the framework of our project Quality of Life in a Changing Europe. The data collection mechanism and details have been described in detail elsewhere (Deliverable 2.3), so we will review this only briefly here, along with our main variables.

Survey data was collected in eight European countries participating in our project: Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and the UK. Each country team picked 4 companies, which operated in the sectors of finance, health, retail and telecommunications. We selected these sectors because of the diversity of its workforce as well as the fact that they are growing and of increasing importance in the European economy. In each company we conducted a web-based survey: with permission and support from the managers we posted a survey on a website and allowed access to all or a selected group of employees in each company. In each country and each company we received

between 150-600 answers, and the compilation of these serve as our data. (The exact procedure is described elsewhere in the documents for this project.)

Obviously, these data are not representative of the country, the sector or even the company as people self-selected into the survey. As in all such surveys, people who are especially loyal and satisfied as well as those who are particularly unhappy are more likely to respond. In addition, while we assured everyone that the survey is anonymous, in many cases they were administered or at least accompanied with a supporting letter/ email from the company management. Thus employers may have had doubts as to the real anonymity of the survey and might have been hesitant to tell us about their true feelings.

All these problems notwithstanding, we have a dataset of close to 7,000, collected in 8 countries in 4 sectors in 16 companies (see tables for exact N's for each procedure in the D. 2.3 national reports). We asked questions about people's conditions of paid and unpaid work as well as how they felt about it, their perception of their workplace characteristics, enjoyment of work, level of stress, health, etc. While it may be difficult to make generalizations on the basis of these data, the information we gain is still diverse enough to potentially lead to the development of novel ideas and the explorations of emerging trends in the European labor markets.

We have recoded the dataset to make it more easily usable for our analysis. Primarily we relied on scales constructed by the Quality team to measure a variety of aspects of work quality. The construction of these scales and their basic characteristics are described in detail elsewhere. Here we will only list the indices used and give a very brief description in the table below.

AUTONOMY	Describes how much autonomy people experience at work, to what extent can they decide what, how and when they will be doing
PRESSURE	Describes the amount of pressure experienced at work, how fast paced the work environment is
FLOW	Describes pride and pleasure people find in work
INSECURITY	Describes how secure people feel that they will be able to keep their jobs
SUPERVISORY SUPPORT	Describes how comfortable people are talking to supervisors
SUPPORT 1	Describes support people receive from colleagues
SUPPORT 2	Describes support received from supervisors especially to help with balancing work with family responsibilities
CAREER DEMAND	Describes how demanding people experience their careers
NEGATIVE HOME-LIFE INTERFERENCE	Describes whether or not people feel that pressures and demands at work make their home lives harder
POSITIVE HOME –LIFE ENHANCEMENT	Describes the extent to which people feel their work enriches their lives outside work
LIKES WORK	This is not an index, just a single variable asking people whether they like their work, answer on a scale

In addition, we included a number of independent variables: *age* is coded in years, *education* is a binary variable which describes if a person has post-secondary degrees or not (as this seems to be the main

dividing line in our highly educated sample.) *supervisory position* is a binary variable which records whether or not the person supervises the work of others, *training* is a binary variable describing whether or not the person has received training paid for by the company in the past 6 months, *loyalty* is another binary variable describing whether a person has looked for a job outside the company in the past 6 months, *hours worked* described the number of hours worked in a typical week, while *commuting minutes* describes the amount of time it takes to get to work and back, in a day. Several binary variables describe work conditions: *overtime work*, *shift work*, people's ability to use flexible schedules (*flex time*) and work at flexible locations (*flex space*). We will also use *gender* coded as a binary variable in this analysis. The distribution of the independent variables by country is available in tables 5 and A.4 and A.5.

We received answers from a diverse number of people in each country and in each sector, so in order to make sure each sector has equal weight in the overall analysis we weighted the data in each country separately to produce an N of about 200 for each type of company and altogether about 800 respondents in each country.

In addition to the survey data we also used information from interviews collected in some of the companies where the survey was also conducted. Each country team interviewed and conducted an innovation group workshop in one company of the four selected for the survey. A more detailed description of the interview process, including the selection of participants and the questionnaire as well as the procedures and results of the innovation groups can be found elsewhere (Deliverable 2.3; 4.1; 4.2.), so we will not repeat this here.

In addition, we use data collected and published by Eurostat (see Eurostat website and source designation for tables below) to access the macro level indicators of gender differences in work conditions.

For our analysis we rely on relatively simple statistical procedures but approach the question of gender differences in paid work from a variety of angles. We start by reviewing macro data and comparing women's work conditions across the eight countries (for a detailed analysis of the social, political and policy making context of work in the countries in the project, see Deliverable 3.1.). Then we continue the discussion of cross-country differences using our own dataset and more nuanced indicators. Next we move on to a comparison of gender differences in work conditions across sectors. In the following section we use the method of multiple regression to assess gender differences in the determinants of work conditions. Finally we isolate a handful of occupations and compare women's and men's work experience in these. On the basis of these in the last section of this report we summarize our findings and suggest areas that seem suitable for future analysis.

Chapter 2: The “objective” conditions of work

In the first part of this report we examine some basic aggregate indicators to explore gender differences in work conditions at the societal level in the eight countries included in this report. In this segment we use data collected by Eurostat through national Labor Force Surveys and published at the Eurostat website as well as in the publication “Report on Equality Between Women and Men, 2007” commissioned by the European Commission. The goal of this first section is to identify the overall pattern of gender inequality at work as well as point out the trends in national divergences from these trends. In the next chapter we will build on this to examine what additional information we can gain from a different set of indicators, those collected in our survey, albeit in a somewhat different population, in contrast to these well-known patterns and trends.

As numerous researchers have noted before, gender inequality is pervasive in the labor markets of the European Union and this profoundly shapes the ways in which women (as well as men) experience their working lives. Men are in a privileged position in the labor markets of all eight countries included in this project, if to varying degrees and in different ways. Women’s employment rates range from 72% (in Sweden) to less than 51% in Hungary, with the EU average at around 58% (see table 1). Men’s rates are significantly higher and range from a high of 82% in the Netherlands to a low of 64% in Hungary, averaging 72.5% in the European Union’s 27 countries in 2007. The gap between women and men also varies but is always to men’s advantage: it is lowest in Sweden and highest in Hungary.

Table 1. Employment rates for 14-64 year olds, 2007

	Women	Men	All
Bulgaria	57.6	66.0	61.7
Finland	68.5	72.1	70.3
Germany	64.0	74.7	69.4
Hungary	50.9	64.0	57.3
Netherlands	69.6	82.2	76.0
Portugal	61.9	73.8	67.8
Sweden	71.8	76.5	74.2
UK	65.5	77.3	71.3
EU 27	58.3	72.5	65.4

Source: Eurostat data online (<http://epp/europa.cc.europa.eu>, accessed July 22, 2008)

Especially striking is the gap in employment between women with and without children (see table 2 below). In the EU-25, women of prime working age without children are about 15% more likely to be employed than those without, whereas men with children are actually more likely to be employed than their counterparts without offspring. There are a number of reasons for these differences, most beyond the scope of this review. The obvious one must be mentioned, however. Raising small children is seen (by both men and women) as primarily women’s responsibility and this hinders their ability to maintain or establish economic independence. The disadvantage faced by women varies, however, from a low of less

than 1% difference between childless women and mothers in Portugal, to over 30% in Hungary. These tables describe only the immediate disadvantage and say nothing about longer term ones in life time earnings, promotion chances, etc.

Table 2. Employment rates for 25-49 year olds with children under 12, and differences with similar childless people, 2005

	Women	Men	Diff for W	Diff for M
Bulgaria	61.4	81.5	-13.7	4.4
Finland	70.0	91.8	-9.4	13.0
Germany	55.7	89.2	-23.2	6.9
Hungary	48.5	86.2	-30.4	3.5
Netherlands	71.3	94.1	-10.2	6.0
Portugal	76.6	94.5	-0.7	3.9
Sweden	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d
UK	63.3	91.2	-19.9	4.0
EU 25	61.1	91.5	-14.9	5.9

Source: Report on Equality between women and men, 2007. (European Commission)

Women are more likely than men to work part time: almost a third of all EU women do so, while only 7.7% men (table 3 below). This again varies in the eight countries in the QUALITY project: Seventy-five percent of women work part time in the Netherlands, but less than 6% do in Hungary. Part time work has advantages as it allows people with outside work responsibilities to make a living and keep a foot in the labor market, but recent research calls attention to the dangers embedded in working less than full time. Part time “mommy-track” work is often underpaid, more vulnerable to economic downturns, chances of promotion and doing autonomous, interesting work are lower, etc. Hence part time work, especially if it is primarily done by women, must be viewed with caution when offered as a solution to the problems of balancing work and family obligations.

Table 3. Share of part time work, women, 2006

	Women	Men
Bulgaria	2.7	1.6
Finland	18.2	9.2
Germany	45.8	9.3
Hungary	5.7	2.8
Netherlands	74.7	23.2
Portugal	15.9	7.5
Sweden	40.3	11.7
UK	42.6	10.6
EU 25	32.9	7.7

Source: Report on Equality between women and men, 2007. (European Commission)

Except for Germany and the UK, the unemployment rates of women are higher than those of men in all eight countries. Sex segregation patterns are quite similar across the countries with women found in lesser

paid sectors and occupations in all 8 countries, although the degree of occupational and sectoral segregation varies. Women constitute about a third of all managers, which means that men take the other two thirds of these positions (see tables A.1, A.2 and A.3 describing these patterns in the Appendix). And as a result of lower work hours, working in segregated and devalued positions and bumping in the glass ceiling on a regular basis, women make less money than men (see table 4). The wage gap in the EU is 15% in 2006, and there is some variation around this figure in the eight countries we examine. Portugal has the lowest gap at 8%, followed by Hungary while Germany and the UK have the largest.

Table 4. The wage gap in selected countries, 2006

Bulgaria	14
Finland	20
Germany	22
Hungary	11
Netherlands	18*
Portugal	8**
Sweden	16
UK	21
EU 27	15

Source: Eurostat data online (<http://epp.europa.ec.europa.eu>, accessed July 22, 2008)

* Data for 2005

** provisional value

Wage gap: Difference between men's and women's average gross hourly earnings as a percentage of men's average gross hourly earnings, 2006

In sum, even a cursory look at labor market indicators reveal significant gender differences in women's and men's experience on the labor market. Women's attachment to the labor market is tenuous in all the countries in this project: they are less likely than men to find paid work, more likely to work part time or be unemployed. Mothers of small children are especially vulnerable. In addition, women tend to work in a restricted range of sectors and positions, have a lower chance of promotion than men and make significantly less money.

What is also obvious from the tables presented and briefly described above is that there are vast variations in these trends across the countries. In fact, we can identify two different patterns in labor market gender regimes. On the one hand, in countries like Hungary, Bulgaria and Portugal, women's labor force participation is low (even relative to men), and in Hungary and Bulgaria this is especially true for women with children in their households. In the rest of the countries, in Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland and the UK, women's participation rates are higher and motherhood is not as large a detriment to labor force participation as in the other group. On the other hand, in the first group of countries women seem to be more equal and legitimate members of the labor market compared to men. Women in these three countries tend to work full time, the level of segregation is the lowest in these countries by sector, by occupation as well as vertically. Women have the largest share of managerial positions in these three countries. Consequently, the pay gap is the lowest here as well. In the second group of more developed countries women are present in the labor market but only in a half-hearted way. While many of them work, they tend to work part time. They are more likely to be found in segregated positions, less likely to

be promoted to jobs with authority and overall experience a larger wage disadvantage than women in the other group of countries.

There are a number of ways in which we could characterize the two different gender regimes. One possibility is to argue that in the first group women's participation is only possible if they adopt the male norms and compete with men on their terms, while in the second group women can participate as women, as workers and simultaneously those responsible for carework. In Hungary, Bulgaria and Portugal if women are unable or unwilling to "work like men" they must drop out and stop being part of the labor market altogether. National policy in Hungary, for example, encourages just this pattern. In this country, best known to the authors, the state provides lengthy (3-year) paid maternity leaves. Very few childcare institutions exist for children under three years of age and the ones in operation are mostly overburdened and/or low quality. In addition, politicians of all stripes foster an ideology that suggests that children are best off with their mothers (sic!) until age 3. So women are forced to specialize: either have children and care for them at home in a position altogether dependent on their families (since maternity leave is dismally low), or decide to shun childbearing or postpone it to a more settled point in their careers (when they can afford to pay for the quality childcare they want out of their own pockets), so they can participate full time, full-career in paid work. Labor market institutions and state policies do not encourage either men to share childcare duties, or women to try to combine work and family obligations. The result is that there is a relatively select group of women in the paid labor force, who are highly qualified, devoted and relatively free of reproductive burdens and thus can compete with men for earnings and positions with more success than their sisters elsewhere.

In the second group of countries, women are allowed, indeed encouraged to participate in paid work on different terms as men. Difference, however, tends to lead to inequality. Dutch, Swedish, British, German and Finnish women work shorter hours, but experience a more segregated and unequal labor market: they are less likely than women in the first group to attain positions of authority or to make an income closer to that of men. However, they are in a better position to combine work and parenthood and they can and do stay in the paid labor force even when they have children, albeit many of them in feminized, "mommy track" positions.

There are a number of reasons for the difference, the review of which is beyond the scope of this report. However, two points should be noted. First, Hungary, Bulgaria and Portugal are the least prosperous countries of the group, and the countries where only a small part of the GDP (both in relative and absolute terms) is spent on creating family friendly labor markets and supporting employers who encourage and employees who attempt to combine work and family responsibilities. In addition, being at the peripheries of the European Union, the economies of these countries are more vulnerable and thus more responsive to the needs of global capital. Finally, civil organization, both labor union and those demanding access for women and mothers to work, are also weaker for the above reason.

Second, the legacy of state socialist emancipation policies must be briefly mentioned, which had pushed Hungarian and Bulgarian women into the labor market full time, full career until the late 1980s. Arguably, women's more selective participation is a form of backlash against these policies, which had been perceived by many as oppressive and authoritarian, as well as exhausting for women. Raising children away from the labor market is seen by many as a privilege and as a form of emancipation from the

burdens experienced by previous generations of women who had to combine work and domestic responsibilities without much help by state, companies or husbands.

In sum, we have identified the basic trends of inequality experienced by women in all countries and pointed out that there is variation within this. We identified two gender regimes: a selective one, where a smaller group of women participate in paid work but do so on more equal terms compared to men and another, more inclusive one, where many women develop looser attachments to the labor market but this has consequences for their (and possibly overall women's) wages and promotion chances. In the second group, women have access to paid work, but the quality of their work is significantly lower than that of their male counterparts. It is these patterns that we explore further, using more nuanced and detailed indicators in the rest of the report.

Chapter 3: How do men and women see their work conditions?

The punchline of the rest of this report is that regardless of all the objective differences in the work conditions of men and women, in terms of people's own views, description and perceptions, gender differences in the conditions and character of work are overall small, unsystematic and do not correspond to the pattern described above. We attempt to approach the question from a number of angles and at several levels to highlight this point and to suggest where small, yet identifiable gender differences may lie. After a brief look at the distribution of some of the basic variables in the dataset we analyze work conditions using a variety of measures and focusing on differences across the countries. Then we move on to an examination of gender differences across sectors.

Table 5. Percentage of women in each country and in each company (%)

	Retail store	Telecom	Hospital	Bank	Total women	Total N
Bulgaria	69%	68%	83%	82%	579	767
Finland	91	69	89	83	710	906
Germany	98	38	79	54	721	1201
Hungary	54	32	83	51	418	860
Netherlands	93	36	83	42	691	1012
Portugal	51	49	55	71	735	1363
Sweden	77	27	82	77	410	650
UK	57	62	46	71	460	780

Note: unweighted data.

In this first section we will show cross-country variations in women's and men's quality of work. We use weighted samples in order to make sure that each sector represents the same weight in each country. (The original raw distributions and percentage distributions are displayed in table 5 above, which is the only table which presents unweighted statistics. The rest of the table displays data weighted to correct for the differences in sample size in countries and sectors.)

Let us start by examining three basic characteristics of the samples, the proportion of women and their sectoral distribution (table 5), the average age of the samples (table A.4 in the Appendix) and the proportion of men and women with post-secondary degrees. Table 5 suggests that there is wide variation in the proportion of women represented in each sector sample. For example, almost 70% of the sample from the Telecom company are female in Finland, but only 27% are in Sweden, 32% in Hungary and 38% in the Netherlands. Ninety-one percent of those who filled out the questionnaire in the Finnish retail store are women, but only 54% are female in Hungary. The bank and the hospital are perhaps more homogeneous but even here there are some variations. The reason for this is not necessarily due to differences in job segregation patterns across the countries but more in differences in the choice of companies. For example, in retail companies specializing in food and clothing women tend to be vastly over-represented, while in companies selling electronics devices this is less likely the case. Similarly, distributions of age and tertiary education are also due to sample choice and perhaps self-selection bias into the sample, as well as an actual underlying pattern in these companies. Nevertheless, in our sample women tend to be slightly older than men, with a sample mean of around 40 years of age. Many people in the samples have post-secondary education, although again, these numbers do not represent national averages even in these sectors, only describe our sample.

Let's move on to talk about some of the "behavioral" characteristics of work conditions. We will discuss gender differences overall as well as how these vary by country. The first interesting point to note is the cross-country differences in the number of hours people tend to work. This is one of the few instances when we see the pattern described in chapter 1 reproduced: Bulgarians, Hungarians and Portuguese – both men and women – spend the longest time at paid work and the difference between men and women in work hours is the smallest in these countries. This supports the point we made above: in these three countries "peripheral" to the European economic system fewer people work, but those who do, do so longer and harder hours. Related to this, the same pattern is visible with respect to overtime work (column 3, table 6) : 30-40% of workers in the samples from Bulgaria, Hungary and Portugal claim to have been asked to do overtime work on a regular basis (and without much advance notice), while the relevant percentages are significantly lower elsewhere.

It is obvious from tables 6-7 that men are in more privileged positions in the companies we surveyed. They are more likely to be supervisors (not surprising, given the national statistics), they are more likely to have received training paid for by their employers, and they are more likely than women to be using flexible time and space work options. This is so even though women in most countries have spent longer time in the companies and are more loyal (i.e., are less likely to have looked for jobs elsewhere in the past 6 months). The data from these companies describe men in white collar and managerial positions who have more options than women in their working lives and more options in the labor market overall. There is little variation in this overall pattern across the countries. While our samples are hardly representative of the working populations or even the four sectors within these countries, the pattern is familiar and supports the findings from aggregate statistics.

Table 6. Means and percentages to describe gender difference in work quality (1)

		Hours worked /week	Commute minutes /day	% doing overtime	% using flextime	% using flex space
Bulgaria	Women	44	34	32	33	5
	Men	45	31	27	35	10
Finland	Women	n/a	26	8	29	6
	Men	n/a	24	12	39	10
Germany	Women	34	28	16	33	5
	Men	42	38	13	67	17
Hungary	Women	45	47	32	30	9
	Men	46	40	33	39	18
Netherlands	Women	29	34	6	26	9
	Men	40	43	19	49	28
Portugal	Women	44	37	32	35	8
	Men	46	35	40	49	17
Sweden	Women	36	32	11	59	10
	Men	41	28	30	71	41
UK	Women	35	32	19	42	15
	Men	41	35	25	36	18

Notes: N= see in table above. Weighted samples.

Table 7. Means and percentages to describe gender difference in work quality (2)

		Length of tenure	% Supervisor	% Loyal	% Training
Bulgaria	Women	10	10	86	36
	Men	7	18	77	39
Finland	Women	13	11	74	68
	Men	10	25	65	79
Germany	Women	15	29	89	50
	Men	13	32	83	69
Hungary	Women	10	24	84	58
	Men	9	44	85	72
Netherlands	Women	12	13	84	55
	Men	13	26	78	57
Portugal	Women	11	27	85	58
	Men	11	39	85	63
Sweden	Women	15	6.5	80	51
	Men	13	22	77	57
UK	Women	11	28	66	42
	Men	10	30	64	41

Notes: N= see in table above. Weighted samples.

The above indicators replicate results found in aggregate statistics. There are, however, aspects of work conditions and quality which are more difficult to measure and which are not usually measured in international statistics. It is these that we turn to now, relying on information again from our survey of companies in the eight countries. Members of the QUALITY team have constructed several indices (described in chapter 1) tapping a number of dimensions of job quality. We use these to compare gender differences across countries.

Table 8. Characteristics of work quality (1)

		Pressure	Autonomy	Flow	Supervisor support	Insecurity
Bulgaria	Women	2.80	2.36	4.82	2.11	2.46
	Men	2.75	2.51	4.64	2.52	2.34
Finland	Women	2.65	2.12	4.83	2.34	2.15
	Men	2.59	2.20	4.53	2.35	2.20
Germany	Women	2.42	2.27	4.73	2.12	2.16
	Men	2.22	2.38	4.77	2.17	2.06
Hungary	Women	2.48	2.45	4.99	2.01	2.75
	Men	2.48	2.54	4.99	1.96	2.61
Netherlands	Women	2.25	2.27	5.33	2.03	2.08
	Men	2.34	2.43	5.21	2.14	2.52
Portugal	Women	2.59	2.44	5.13	2.68	2.85
	Men	2.57	2.51	5.15	2.67	2.81
Sweden	Women	2.60	2.37	5.07	2.24	2.18
	Men	2.62	2.61	4.92	2.21	1.92
UK	Women	2.67	2.09	4.33	2.49	2.59
	Men	2.61	2.08	4.15	2.47	2.56
All	Women	2.56	2.29	4.91	2.25	2.37
	Men	2.51	2.42	4.83	2.30	2.42

Table 9. Characteristics of work quality (2)

		Support 1	Support 2	Career demands	Negative work-life interference	Positive work-life interference	Likes job
Bulgaria	Women	3.99	2.95	3.01	2.24	3.31	2.26
	Men	3.66	3.02	3.01	2.09	3.28	2.31
Finland	Women	3.82	3.54	2.42	1.86	3.40	2.28
	Men	3.96	3.49	2.72	1.79	3.32	2.45
Germany	Women	3.98	3.08	2.97	2.10	2.86	2.22
	Men	4.03	3.22	2.95	1.97	2.82	2.22
Hungary	Women	3.75	3.02	3.25	2.20	2.80	2.29
	Men	3.92	3.06	3.29	2.18	2.80	2.30

Netherlands	Women	3.89	3.64	2.34	1.77	3.33	2.13
	Men	3.79	3.55	2.77	1.79	2.99	2.27
Portugal	Women	3.88	3.06	3.50	2.04	3.42	2.40
	Men	3.95	3.06	3.47	1.99	3.38	2.38
Sweden	Women	4.32	3.59	2.64	1.91	3.30	1.94
	Men	4.31	3.56	2.94	1.96	3.23	2.10
UK	Women	3.79	3.24	3.28	2.04	3.08	2.68
	Men	3.65	3.16	3.31	2.07	2.92	2.84
All	Women	3.94	3.28	2.88	2.01	3.21	2.27
	Men	3.94	3.24	3.11	1.99	3.07	2.36

Workers experience the most pressure at work in Bulgaria, followed by Finland, Sweden and the UK. There is little gender difference observable in this regard with the exception of Germany, where women claim to feel more pressure while doing their jobs than men do. Men everywhere tend to experience more autonomy at work, thus they have more say over what and when they do. This is not surprising, given that more of them are in higher positions and in positions of authority than women in our samples. Swedish, Hungarian and Bulgarian men seem to enjoy the greatest autonomy, while British and Finnish men the least. While there is a definite gender difference here, it is small everywhere. Dutch workers, men and women alike, experience the most pleasure at work, “flow” as we called it, followed by Portuguese workers. In many countries there is a gender difference here: women, surprisingly, are more likely to experience “flow” than men. For example, in the UK, the value of this indicator for women is 4.33 while it is 4.15 for men (on a scale which runs from 1 to 7, with an overall mean of 4.8, and standard deviation of 1.2). The gender differences are small but surprising, since women seem to be at a disadvantage in a number of other areas (such as lacking autonomy and authority, less likely to be able to use flexible schedules) yet they seem to derive more pleasure from work than men. There is little gender difference in the support men and women enjoy from their supervisors and their peers (“Supervisor support, support 1, support 2), on the other hand, men seem to experience their career as more demanding than women, that is, they are more likely to say that people must do overtime and work hard, be always available, prioritize work over home life in order to get ahead. Again the gender difference is small, but visible, especially, surprisingly, in the Scandinavian countries Finland and Sweden, and in the Netherlands. Overall, about the same proportion of men and women feel that their work has a negative impact on their home lives, yet more women than men believe that it also has a positive impact. Interestingly, the group of peripheral countries (and the UK) has the highest proportion of men and women who are most likely to complain of a negative work-home influence, while people in Finland, the Netherlands and Portugal (also!) boast of a positive one.

In sum, we see some systematic patterns in cross-country differences: men and women in peripheral countries are more likely to feel insecure and experience their work as a burden and a negative influence on their family lives. This is in line with the previous argument about the patterns of labor force attachment in these countries: those who work must do so for longer hours and under more stressful conditions. In terms of gender differences, the main finding is that they are small overall. Yet we saw that women are somewhat more likely to derive pleasure from their work (experience flow and a positive work-home influence), even though they tend to work in lower level, lower quality jobs, which entail less authority, yet perhaps less pressure also.

Next we turn to explore whether or not there are observable gender differences across the various sectors, keeping in mind that the samples are hardly representative and thus may not describe anything other than life for the close to 7,000 workers we interviewed. Table 10 describes the results.

Table 10. Attitudes about work by sector and gender (scores on indices)

	Retail		Telecom		Hospital		Bank	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
Pressure	2.54	2.54	2.59	2.54	2.55	2.53	2.60	2.43
Autonomy	2.22	2.38	2.26	2.41	2.38	2.47	2.31	2.44
Flow	4.77	4.66	4.64	4.66	5.01	5.00	5.03	5.11
Supervisor support	2.10	2.27	2.35	2.30	2.23	2.48	2.36	2.24
Insecurity	2.29	2.45	2.51	2.48	2.15	2.31	2.61	2.37
Support 1	3.97	3.92	3.89	3.9	3.91	3.89	3.95	3.93
Careed demand	2.84	3.10	3.16	3.14	2.61	3.03	3.07	3.11
Support 2	3.28	3.24	3.30	3.31	3.29	3.17	3.24	3.21
Negative W-H	1.97	2.02	2.04	1.99	2.00	1.99	2.06	1.98
Positive W-H	3.08	3.05	3.08	2.96	3.31	3.28	3.35	3.10
N	1142	399	698	782	1102	370	986	502

Men hold jobs with more autonomy everywhere and this gender difference is roughly constant across the sectors. In both retail and the hospital along with the higher level of autonomy, men also talk to their supervisors more, but they are less likely to experience flow than women and more likely to feel insecure and find their career very demanding. Aside from the difference in autonomy there is practically no other visible gender difference in the IT sector (Telecom companies). Life is hardest for women in the finance sector (Banks), where they feel more pressure and more insecurity than men and experience less flow than men. Yet, it is in this sector that we find the largest gender gap in how people feel their work affects their life outside work: women are more likely than men to claim that demands of their jobs do not interfere with their hobbies or relaxation at home.

While these results are somewhat ambiguous, the main story that emerges is that the gender gap in work quality seems to be the smallest in the telecom company and largest in the bank. While it is possible that there is something about the actual organization of work that contributes to this result, it is also possible that this is largely due to the effect of sample composition. Women working in the telecom companies are on average younger than those working in the bank and they are just as likely to be in supervisory position as men, unlike in the bank, where women tend to be older yet in lower positions than their male peers. This difference and its causes and consequences might also contribute to the explanation of the sectoral differences.

In order to explore gender differences in the determinants of some of the characteristics of work conditions better, we ran multiple regressions separately for women and men with a variety of work characteristics as dependent variables. (We also ran full models with all the predictors and their interaction terms for gender to check for the significance of the coefficients for the interaction terms to indicate

existing gender difference. We present the separate models below for the ease of interpretation but will only interpret the coefficients which turned out to be significant in the full models.

Table 11. Determinants of the experience of FLOW for men and women, regression coefficients

	Women	Men
Age	.009*	.000
College degree+	.097*	.094
Length of tenure at company	.006*	.005
Does not supervise anyone	-.180*	-.510*
Hours worked	.001	.008*
Does shift work	-.147*	-.423*
Does regular overtime	-.118*	-.193*
Has done training	.220*	.382*
Has used flextime	.121*	.062
Constant	4.56*	5.11*
N	4,005	2,079

Note: Coefficients marked with * are significant at the $p < .10$ level in separate models for men and women. In a full model with interaction terms of each variable with gender, the shaded coefficients proved significant, thus this is where a difference between men and women may be interpreted.

In the regression equation in table 11 above the dependent variable is the experience of “flow” at work. Flow is a variable constructed using questions that aim to identify to what extent people are inspired by and enthusiastic about their work, whether or not they feel proud and happy when working intensively, etc. The uni-variate tables above show a slight advantage to women (overall), i.e. women are more likely to report feeling this than men. Indeed, when we regress flow on gender for the whole sample, we find that the expected difference between men and women in flow is $-.073$ on a 7 point scale ranging from 1-7: men on average score $.073$ points lower on this scale than women. But what are the other determinants that predict someone’s positive experience at work? And do these determinants differ by gender? We explored these questions using the method of multiple regressions (coefficients presented in table 11). It seems that similar factors contribute to the experience of flow for both genders: by and large older and more educated workers, those with more seniority at the company, those who have received training paid for by the company, supervisors, those not doing shift work or regular overtime, as well as those with the possibility to choose the time and place of their work are more likely to experience flow. This does not seem counterintuitive: people with more attachment to the company enjoy work more and vice versa.

Some gender differences are also observable. Age is important for women’s work enjoyment but not for men: older women are more likely to find pleasure in work than younger ones, but this difference does not exist for men. One possible explanation is that younger women may be more involved (or feel that they should be more involved) in childrearing and other domestic activities, and can only fully devote themselves to work in later years. Supervisory activity is more important for men than women. Although supervisors of both genders are more likely to experience flow than non-supervisors, this factor is more important for men. Perhaps men experience promotion as more important and thus their position in the hierarchy is a significant contributor to how they feel about their work (and their overall well-being possibly). Similarly, those experiencing flow work longer hours, but men especially so. Yet working in

shifts damages men’s perceptions of their work experience more than it does for women – perhaps because this is an expectation in the jobs that women typically do in the sectors we examined (for example, in retail). These are slight, yet interesting differences in the determinants of the overall pleasure people derive from paid work.

We also examined gender differences in the determinants of two other types of work experience: insecurity and overall satisfaction with one’s job, and found similar results (tables A.6 and A.7 can be found in the Appendix). The overall patterns are the same for men and women, yet there are slight differences, especially in the importance in the effect of age and the hours people put in to their work. We will not interpret these results in detail here, but the data are available in the Appendix.

The above is interesting, but it is never clear what the reasons behind the differences are. Since our samples are not representative of even the population of workers at the companies we surveyed, it is likely that the composition of those who answered biased our results. For example, if in the hospitals of country A mostly doctors filled out our survey we are bound to have different results than in country B where mostly nurses responded. One possible way to create some homogeneity in our sample is to restrict our analysis to a selection of occupations. We picked two high level professional jobs (medical doctors and computer professionals) and two lower level ones (nurses and sales persons) to further explore possible gender differences in work quality. Table 12 displays our results.

Table 12. Quality of work in a few selected professions by gender

	Medical doctors		Nurses		Sales persons		Computer professionals	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
Hours worked	43.3	45.9	27.8	36.5	32.1	39.0	38.1	42.3
Overtime	37.0	61.2	16.4	13.1	11.5	15.4	15.0	19.6
Supervisor	60.6	69.5	13.7	20.2	27.9	27.1	17.8	26.3
Pressure	2.67	2.65	2.53	2.47	2.53	2.61	2.38	2.45
Autonomy	2.52	2.62	2.28	2.27	2.14	2.14	2.49	2.54
Flow	5.21	5.22	4.98	4.59	4.61	4.20	4.78	4.65
Supervisor support	2.62	2.44	2.14	2.25	2.19	2.31	2.40	2.23
Insecurity	2.25	2.06	1.87	2.03	2.36	2.52	2.09	2.08
Support 1	3.67	3.89	3.82	3.53	3.94	3.85	3.97	4.06
Careed demands	3.21	3.03	2.47	2.56	2.88	2.93	3.18	3.11
Support 2	2.89	2.81	3.31	3.10	3.31	3.29	3.42	3.36
Negative W-H	2.22	2.11	2.01	1.95	1.95	1.99	1.89	1.93
Positive W-H	3.38	3.30	3.28	2.84	3.01	2.90	3.02	2.91
N	73	98	480	84	542	157	107	210

Among the 171 doctors who answered our survey in the eight countries we find that men are likely to work longer hours, do significantly more overtime and are more likely to supervise others. Yet women are more likely to find their careers demanding and negatively impacting their home lives, they feel less job

security and autonomy, and receive less support from their colleagues. Female doctors, it seems, experience overall harsher work conditions than their male counterparts.

Nursing is a typically female dominated field where skills and work are undervalued. Indeed, in our sample of nurses, we find a vast predominance of women. In such a situation, men may be able to “ride the glass escalator” upwards into more comfortable positions than their female counterparts (Williams 2002). Indeed, this is exactly what we see in our sample: 13% of female, yet 20% of male nurses are supervisors, and men tend to work longer hours altogether in this job also. Yet women seem to experience “flow” at work more than men, and claim that their work does not affect their outside work lives negatively. Women also experience more support from colleagues (“support 2”).

Unlike nursing, sales is a field where female domination does not translate into positional disadvantages for women. We find less gender difference in work quality characteristics among those working as salesmen and shop assistants: while men work longer hours, the proportion of supervisors is the same among the two genders. In addition, women derive more pleasure from work, feel that it impacts their home lives more positively, enjoy more support from supervisors and colleagues and feel more secure than men.

Among computer professionals men dominate overall and in the supervisory fields as well. They experience more pressure and autonomy, but women feel more “flow”, support and overall a positive impact on their lives beyond paid work. It seems that long hours and supervisory power may be positively correlated with wages but not always with the enjoyment of work.

In all four professions women tend to have less power yet enjoy their jobs as much or more than men do. Women receive support from colleagues and supervisors more than men and may feel less pressure at work. While these differences are small and not always systematic, this is the general story that emerges from our examination of the data at the level of countries, sectors, individuals and when looking at single occupations only.

Macro-level characteristics of job quality, as seen in chapter 1, rarely correlate with the findings here. Our findings from interviews also suggest a more dire situation for women. In Bulgaria, for example, a distinct pattern of discrimination against female doctors has been noted once they had children, with male supervisors expecting them “naturally” to be able to devote less time and energy to their jobs and allocating tasks and rewards at work accordingly. In an interview for our project QUALITY a male doctor says:

There is no discrimination here but you know that at the moment a woman marries and has children, she can no longer be that invested in her work duties. (Male doctor, manager of a hospital department, Bulgaria)

Childcare is seen as women’s responsibility, not only in Bulgaria but in many of the other countries as well. And these domestic responsibilities tend to influence women more than men in their career choices. Flexible schedules are difficult to negotiate in a way that it would not create disadvantages for women in the labor market. As a Portuguese woman working as a secretary explains:

“Men have it easier, because they are more available for work. For women, as in many other things, having children changes everything and the availability is more limited. Unfortunately, most of the time things aren’t shared between men and women. Having children complicates things very much, it’s very difficult I think. Because women tend to miss work more often, because they need the leaves, they may be less focused, more dispersed than men, I think, because they have other preoccupations. Of course, this has nothing to do with competence! Women are as competent as men. But children change everything for women.” (Administrative Secretary, woman, Portugal)

In addition, data from some of the interviews indicate that company culture and direct discrimination also may make it harder for women to succeed. As a female doctor from the UK tells us:

“A lot of consultants keep their heads down, especially women.. They are worried about their job. There is a macho attitude. The tone of bullying is definitely there..... Some of the women are very worried about their jobs. They keep their heads down.” (Senior Woman doctor, UK)

“If I was a man, after having done what I did, raising the results of my department, I would have been promoted to the place of my old supervisor, when he left. But because I am a woman, I didn’t get that promotion.” (Senior manager, Portugal)

Based on the information from the interviews and the aggregate data reviewed in chapter 1, we would expect a significant gender gap in the enjoyment and emotional rewards that jobs bring to men and women, but this is not the case. Gender differences are small and unsystematic, men may enjoy more authority and power, yet women may benefit from the lower level of workplace stress and be able to derive more positive emotions from the work process itself. What remains to be examined is the relationship between domestic life, care responsibilities and their impact on work quality for both men and women, as well as how both contribute to an overall balance in, and satisfaction with, life. We will move to this analysis in our final report.

Appendix

Table A. 1. Unemployment rates for 14-64 year olds, 2007

	Unemployment rates		
	Women	Men	All
Bulgaria	7.3	6.5	6.9
Finland	7.2	6.5	6.9
<i>Germany</i>	8.3	8.5	8.4
Hungary	7.7	7.1	7.4
Netherlands	3.6	2.8	3.2
Portugal	9.6	6.6	8.0
Sweden	6.4	5.9	6.2
UK	5.0	5.6	5.3
EU 27	7.8	6.6	7.1

Source: Eurostat data online (<http://epp.europa.ec.europa.eu>, accessed July 22, 2008)

Table A.2. Sex segregation in economic sectors, 2005

	Segregation indicator*
Bulgaria	19.2
Finland	22.2
Germany	18.7
Hungary	19.8
Netherlands	17.5
Portugal	20.5
Sweden	21.6
UK	18.5

Source: Report on Equality between women and men, 2007. (European Commission)

*gender segregation is calculated as the average national share of employment for women and men applied to each sector, diffs added up to produce the total amount of gender imbalance expressed as a proportion of total employment (NACE classification.)

Table A.3. Distribution of managers

	Women	Men
Bulgaria	34.3	65.7
Finland	29.7	70.3
Germany	26.3	73.7
Hungary	34.4	65.7
Netherlands	25.6	74.4
Portugal	34.2	65.8

Sweden	29.8	70.2
UK	34.5	65.5
EU 25	32.2	67.8

Source: Report on Equality between women and men, 2007. (European Commission)

Managers are classified in ISCO 12 and 13.

Table A.4. Average age of men and women by country, weighted sample

		Age	N
Bulgaria	Women	39.6	548
	Men	36.5	180
Finland	Women	40.9	625
	Men	38.2	124
Germany	Women	42.3	529
	Men	41.0	260
Hungary	Women	38.7	397
	Men	37.4	324
Netherlands	Women	39.0	50.
	Men	42.8	287
Portugal	Women	37.2	443
	Men	38.4	341
Sweden	Women	44.4	503
	Men	43.2	258
UK	Women	43.6	421
	Men	49.3	291

Note: weighted data to be used in this and all the rest of the tables.

Table A.5. Percentage of women and men with tertiary education by country, weighted sample

		Age	N
Bulgaria	Women	62.5	547
	Men	62.8	188
Finland	Women	65.2	623
	Men	62.7	126
Germany	Women	30.4	533
	Men	56.5	260
Hungary	Women	56.6	399
	Men	69.8	325
Netherlands	Women	31.5	489
	Men	40.8	284
Portugal	Women	62.9	447
	Men	59.6	342

Sweden	Women	58.3	484
	Men	72.0	246
UK	Women	35.1	353
	Men	38.7	269

Note: weighted data to be used in this and all the rest of the tables.

Table A.6. Determinants of the experience of INSECURITY women, regression coefficients

	Women	Men
Age	.008*	.000
College degree+	-.146*	-.172*
Length of tenure at company	-.011*	-.002
Does not supervise anyone	.165*	.209*
Hours worked	.011*	.006*
Does shift work	-.147*	-.009
Does regular overtime	.223*	.122*
Has done training	-.105*	-.174*
Has used flextime	.031	-.067
Constant	1.65*	2.08*
N	3931	2070

Note: Coefficients marked with * are significant at the $p < .10$ level. In a full model with interaction terms of each variable with gender, the shaded coefficients proved significant, thus this is where a difference between men and women may be interpreted.

Table A.7. Determinants of overall SATISFACTION WITH JOB by gender, regression coefficients

	Women	Men
Age	-.002	.000
College degree+	-.004	.007
Length of tenure at company	-.006*	-.00*5
Does not supervise anyone	.133*	.181*
Hours worked	.002	-.004*
Does shift work	.038	.228*
Does regular overtime	.301*	.282*
Has done training	-.187*	-.268*
Has used flextime	-.121*	-.120*
Constant	2.24*	2.41*
N	3930	2071

Note: Coefficients marked with * are significant at the $p < .10$ level. In a full model with interaction terms of each variable with gender, the shaded coefficients proved significant, thus this is where a difference between men and women may be interpreted.

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