

# Checklist of relevant items

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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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# 1. Introduction

This checklist is developed to highlight the major topics of social quality in European workplaces. The topics presented in this checklist were selected basing on the findings of Quality of Life survey (Work package 2) and healthy organization case studies (Work package 4) both carried out in eight European countries between years 2007 and 2008. The questionnaire-based survey was targeted at the four industries of service sector, namely telecom, retail trade, banking and public healthcare. The healthy organization case studies were conducted in one of these industries in each country. In addition, the combined report on socio-economic trends and welfare policies (Work package 1) (Kovacheva, S. et al 2006) was used as background information for the construction of checklist.

This checklist focuses mainly on the sphere of work and how it relates to quality of life. In particular, the checklist focuses on the following aspects of work life:

1. job demands, autonomy, and insecurity
2. organization culture
3. wellbeing effects
4. life satisfaction

Job demands and autonomy were derived from Karasek's theory of job demands and control (Karasek 1979; Karasek & Theorell 1990). Karasek's model emphasizes the importance of demands-control balance for wellbeing at work. Based on the previous literature and data analysis, job insecurity was also included in the model as a specific type of work-related demand.

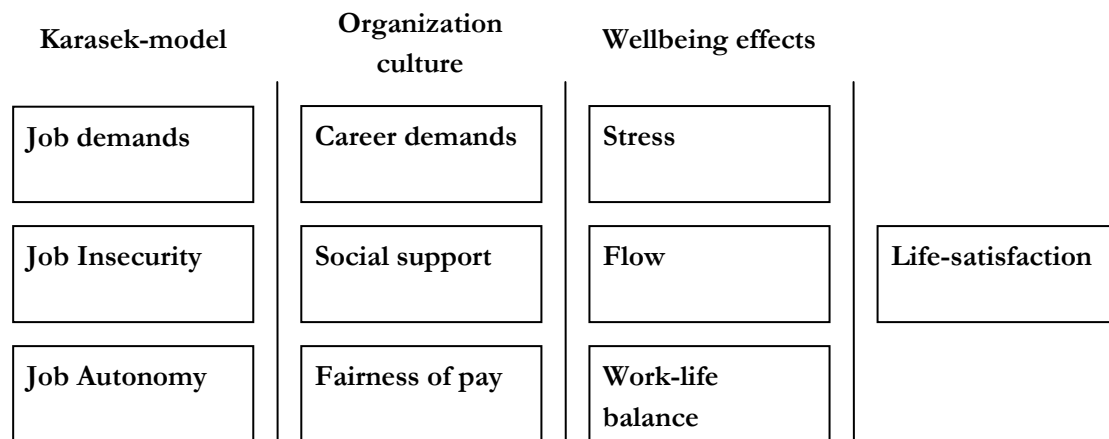
In the checklist, this Karasek-model is extended with the indicators of organization culture. Organization culture is included in the list as a threefold concept. Firstly, it is considered as the amount of received social support from colleagues and supervisors. Secondly, it is understood as career demands stemming from the cultural norms of workplace. Thirdly, it is regarded to enclose an idea of fairness of pay. The fairness of pay was highlighted especially in the interviews as a crucial element of healthy organization.

The checklist pays also attention to wellbeing effects that can be seen as consequences of job demands, job autonomy and the buffering effects of organization culture. Wellbeing effects are covered in the checklist through job stress, job engagement, and work-life balance statements. The last element of the checklist is an indicator of overall life satisfaction. As the other components of the checklist are rather narrow in scope, the life satisfaction statements reflect more broadly the social quality of work and life.

Many of these topics emerged from both the quantitative and qualitative part of Quality of Life study. The issues of satisfaction and fairness of pay came up most heavily from the healthy organization case studies. The cross-national survey, in turn, highlighted the significance of job autonomy and demands as well as the role of organization culture. Yet, also the qualitative healthy organization studies brought out the importance of supportive organization culture for the social quality of work life. For instance, the meaning of good internal communication and positive collegial relationships for the combining of workplace effectiveness and employee quality of life were stressed by the interviewees across the countries.

## 2. The composition of checklist

The selected aspects of social quality of work are illustrated in the scheme below. In the next phase, these aspects are specified into explicit statements that form the main body of the checklist.



### 3. The selection of statements

Most of the statements were derived from the initial survey questionnaire. All the relevant questions indicative of different aspect of social quality of work were first composed into sum variables (demands, autonomy, career demand, etc.). Best statements were then chosen from each sum variable according to their relative explanatory power and their theoretical as well as substantial relevance for the social quality of life. To test the statistical explanatory power, factor analyses with both principal component and maximum likelihood procedures were used (more about this in Deliverable 5.3. (forthcoming)). In result, the following statements were selected to represent various aspects of social quality of work:

#### *Job demands*

- Does your job require you to work fast?
- Does your job require you to work very hard?
- 

#### *Job Autonomy*

- Are you free to decide how your job is to be done?
- Are you free to decide what your job involves?

#### *Job insecurity*

- I am afraid I will lose my job

#### *Career demands*

- In order to be taken seriously in this organisation, employees should work long days and be available all the time.

#### *Social support*

- I am comfortable in discussing my private life with my direct superior
- I am comfortable in discussing aspects of my private life with my colleagues

#### *Fairness of pay*

- How fair your company has been rewarding you in view of your experience/effort responsibilities/stresses/strains/work quality?
- How fair are the payment procedures in your company?

#### *Stress*

- In the last month, how often have you felt stressed?

#### *Flow*

- I am enthusiastic about my job
- My job inspires me

#### *Work-life balance*

- Your ability to meet the needs of your job with those of your personal or family life

#### *Overall life satisfaction*

- I am satisfied with my life