

WORKING TIME DIFFERENCES

Working time differs considerably in EU member countries, Norway, Hungary and Slovakia. Column A in the table sets out the average normal weekly working hours in 2002 for full-time workers as set by collective bargaining, across the whole economy. The overall average weekly hours for the 15 EU member countries plus Norway was 38.2 hours. The range of weekly hours was between 35.7 hours (France) and 40 hours (Greece).

Since 1998 major working time reductions were absent across the EU and Norway, with the notable exception of France, where a 35-hour week has

been introduced progressively and, to a lesser extent, Belgium.

The annual duration of working time is strongly influenced by the amount of paid annual leave to which workers are entitled. The average number of days of collectively agreed annual leave was 25.3 in 2002 for the EU and Norway. Agreed annual leave entitlement varies considerably, from 31.3 days in the Netherlands to 20 days in Ireland.

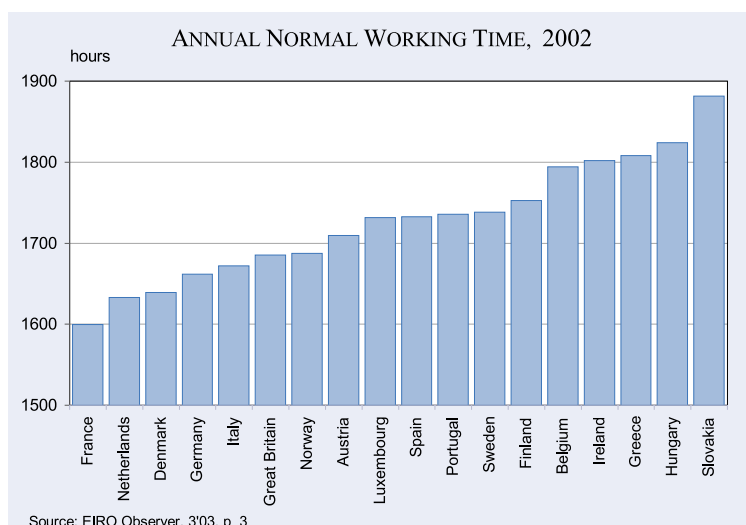
Variations in the number of public holidays are wide, with 13 a year in Austria, Portugal and Spain and only eight in the Netherlands. The total of agreed annual leave and public holidays varies in the EU and Norway from 40 days in Italy to 29 days in Ireland – a difference of two working weeks. Other notably high-leave countries include Germany, the

Average collectively agreed normal annual working time, 2002

Country	A. Weekly hours	B. Annual hours (A)x52	C. Annual leave (days)	D. Public holidays (days)	E. All leave expressed as hours (C+D)	F. Annual hours (B-E)
Austria	38,5	2002,0	25,0	13,0	292,6	1709,4
Belgium	39,0	2028,0	20,0*	10,0	234,0	1794,0
Denmark	37,0	1924,0	29,0	9,5	284,9	1639,1
Finland	39,3	2043,6	25,0	12,0	290,8	1752,8
France	35,7	1856,4	25,0	11,0	257,0	1599,4
Germany	37,7	1960,4	29,1	10,5	298,6	1661,8
Greece	40,0	2080,0	23,0	11,0	272,0	1808,0
Hungary	40,0	2080,0	20,0*	12,0	256,0	1824,0
Ireland	39,0	2028,0	20,0	9,0	226,2	1801,8
Italy	38,0	1976,0	28,0	12,0	304,0	1672,0
Luxembourg	39,0	2028,0	28,0	10,0	296,4	1731,6
Netherlands	37,0	1924,0	31,3	8,0	290,8	1633,2
Norway	37,5	1950,0	25,0	10,0	262,5	1687,5
Portugal	39,0	2028,0	24,5	13,0	292,5	1735,5
Slovakia	40,9	2126,8	20,0*	10,0	245,4	1881,4
Spain	38,5	2002,0	22,0*	13,0	269,5	1732,5
Sweden	38,8	2017,6	25,0	11,0	279,4	1738,2
UK	37,2	1934,4	24,5	9,0**	249,2	1685,2
Average EU and Norway	38,2	1986,4	25,3	10,8	275,8	1710,6

* Statutory annual leave figure. - ** Great Britain only – one extra day in 2002, norm is 8.

Source: EIRO Observer, 3'03, p. 3.



Netherlands and Denmark while Belgium, the UK and Greece are low-leave countries.

In order to arrive at a crude estimate of annual working time annual paid leave and public holidays (column E) have been subtracted from the collectively agreed annual normal working time (column B). The resulting figures do not, of course, take into account factors such as overtime working, or other forms of time off and leave. Normal annual working time ranged from just over 1,800 hours in Greece and Ireland to under 1,600 hours in France. In Hungary and Slovakia annual working hours are higher than in any EU member country or Norway (figure).

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