

Sustainable work throughout the life course: National policies and strategies



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Country codes EU28

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary

IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
UK	United Kingdom

Executive summary

Introduction

Sustainable work over the life course, according to the working definition set out by Eurofound, means that 'living and working conditions are such that they support people in engaging and remaining in work throughout an extended working life'. Making work sustainable throughout the life course requires that two domains are addressed: (a) the characteristics of the job and the work environment and (b) the characteristics and circumstances of the individual. It demands accommodation and adaptation between these two domains as both evolve over time, where work corresponds to the abilities, needs and personal circumstances of the worker throughout the life course. Work that is sustainable enables more people to enter the labour market; it also enables people to continue working throughout their life and into older age.

This report focuses on national policies that help to achieve sustainable work in 10 Member States. The study looks at how these policies are being implemented, whether they are integrated into a coherent framework, and whether they are complementary or contradictory.

Policy context

European countries face a number of societal and labour market challenges that might be resolved by designing work so that sustainability is at its centre. Their populations are ageing and the workforces to support them are shrinking. There is also a trend towards more precarious jobs, new forms of employment are emerging, and in many cases, the number of jobs available is decreasing in the context of the recent economic crisis. These changing circumstances generate additional pressures on European social protection systems and impose a number of barriers to achieving the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth promoted by the Europe 2020 strategy. As a result, the issue of how to ensure that people can participate in the labour market and continue to do so until an older age has become central in all EU Member States.

A wide range of public policies can contribute significantly to making work sustainable. Relevant tools include legislation (for example, labour law and occupational health and safety regulation), social protection systems (providing, for example, unemployment, family and disability benefits and parental leave), public services (including employment, education, health and lifelong learning services), public infrastructure (such as childcare and elderly care) as well as financial and other incentives for companies (to adapt the workplace, for instance).

Key findings

- An all-encompassing approach to policies that embrace the relatively new concept of sustainable work was found in the Netherlands, Sweden and, to some extent, Belgium. In other countries, some key features of sustainable work are covered through concepts such as quality of work, decent work and good work (Germany), well-balanced work (Poland), good-quality employment (Lithuania) and quality of working life (Finland).
- Eurofound has previously defined four dimensions of quality of work and employment: earnings, prospects, intrinsic job quality and working time quality. To make work sustainable, all four dimensions are important, both at the level of the job and at the level of the specific needs and circumstances for the individual. Many of the policies identified cut across these dimensions. For example, active labour market policies cut across the themes of inclusion, employment protection, prospects and earnings, skills development and work–life balance. This implies that actions both at the general level (job quality for all) and actions that address specific issues or groups (such as the labour market integration of certain groups) are needed.

- Policies derived from a wide spectrum of social angles and addressing a wide range of issues are vital to making work sustainable. However, inter-institutional coordination of these policies is a big challenge, and interaction between different measures needs to be considered. Approaches to sustainable work are too fragmented, leading to gaps and inconsistencies across and within policy areas.
- A strong role taken by the social partners is significant in successfully pursuing strategies contributing to sustainable work and creating a favourable working environment. Nevertheless, much depends on the institutional and legal frameworks in which the social partners operate and the extent of inclusion such frameworks provide, as well as the room for manoeuvre in the economic context.
- The study underlines the importance of policies that create the framework conditions but also allow for development of company practices that lead to more sustainable work. These are shaped by the way in which government regulation and collective agreements are applied in practice, whether the workers' voice is heard (or not) and how worker participation evolves.
- A gender mainstreaming approach is essential for sustainability of work for all. A clear gender bias in some policies means that women face more barriers to sustainable work. In contrast to this, certain policies were identified that create an encouraging context for a more equal take-up of care responsibilities over the life course and a smoother interaction between work and private life.
- Various changes in labour market and employment systems have occurred in response to the economic crisis, but its adverse effects on sustainability of work have not necessarily been considered. The lack of jobs has made some transitions more difficult, particularly for young people and older workers.

Policy pointers

Introducing the term 'sustainable work' into the policy agenda would help to enrich policymaking. In fact, the concept of sustainable work could connect different policies into an overarching agenda with a long-term goal: adapting work to the worker and their situation throughout the life course so that workers remain healthy and active in the labour market for as long as possible, and achieve a proper balance between work and private life.

Member States have been discussing or adopting horizontal strategies aimed at dealing with demographic ageing, protecting workers' health or addressing skills shortages. Often these have been primarily discussion frameworks. It is important that they are followed by specific policies with budgets, implementing agencies and oversight of results.

There is no trade-off between horizontal and issue-specific policies. Adopting overarching sustainable work strategies might help mainstream relevant ideas. These need to be coupled with inter-institutional coordination between relevant ministries and policy actors to plug policy gaps and address inconsistencies. A coherent policy framework aimed at making work sustainable should aim for a holistic approach ensuring that different thematic policy frameworks feed into each other.

There is no one-size-fits-all prescription: each Member State must consider how it fits and adapts to the changing economic context and challenges. This could lead to 'sustainability-proofing' of policies, in the sense that new policy measures in a particular field and the overall policy body would be accompanied by ex-ante and ex-post impact assessments of their impacts on sustainability of work for men and women throughout the life course.

Introduction

The European Union's 10-year jobs and growth strategy, Europe 2020, aims to create the conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. One condition is a high level of labour market participation; hence one of the headline targets is to increase employment rates, by enabling more people to participate in the labour market, by enabling workers to continue working until a later age, and by improving productivity by getting the best out of the workforce. Increased employment is all the more critical in the context of demographic ageing, which is simultaneously swelling the population of retirees and shrinking the workforce on which this population depends.

Sustainable work – which envisages achieving living and working conditions that enable people to engage in and thrive in work over their lives – could be a way to achieve the Europe 2020 employment target. However, making sustainable work a reality requires accommodation between the requirements of work and the needs of individuals, as both evolve over time.

Sustainable work, as a concept that champions the improvement of working conditions and the adaptation of work to the needs of people, is an end in itself and needs no justification. But it has a clear economic imperative too. By making work more sustainable, it is hoped that:

- more people can be brought into the labour market;
- workers are able and wish to remain in the labour market until an older age.

Neither of these goals is simple; each embraces multiple aspects of living and working conditions that interact to bring about work that is sustainable over the course of a lifetime.

Sustainable work has been of growing interest in policy circles for quite some time. The issue of how to ensure that people can participate and can continue to participate in the labour market is central in all EU Member States. In each country, a series of policies, linked or not linked strategically to one goal, are used to tackle this issue, directly or indirectly.

The overall aim of this report is to provide an overview of different national policies developed in Member States that contribute to making work sustainable throughout the life course. It addresses the following specific questions.

- What policies help to achieve sustainable work?
- How are these policies implemented within countries?
- Are policies integrated in a coherent framework? What interaction exists between different topics and policy areas? Are there stronger and weaker or even contradictory elements in the policy agenda?
- How can policymakers better deliver sustainable work policies and outcomes?

The report is based on evidence from 10 national case studies, desk research (including policy documents, legislation, academic papers and statistical data) and around 10 in-depth qualitative interviews with policy stakeholders (policymakers, social partners and researchers) per country. The 10 countries were selected to represent different economic situations and social policy traditions: Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

Chapter 1 of the report defines sustainable work for the purposes of this study. Chapter 2 presents a contextual data-based overview of sustainable work across EU28 countries. Chapter 3 delves deeper into the relevant policies across the 10 EU countries featured in the case studies. Finally, Chapter 4 provides a comparative policy assessment and a discussion of policy messages.

Sustainable work is a complex term and was operationalised for this study for analytical purposes (see Chapter 1). The study takes a policy perspective and therefore is less based on analysis of socioeconomic trends, although some contextual data are presented to support and enrich the policy context in Chapter 2. It is an exploratory analysis, starting with a limited number of predefined topics and policies; other elements that could be relevant to sustainable work were added inductively and included in the country studies. Furthermore, given that sustainable work is thematically a very broad term, there was no attempt to limit it artificially. On the contrary, throughout the interviews, evidence was collected on the associations that this term evokes across countries and policymakers.

The limitations of the methodology are manifold. First of all, given the scope of the study, it is not focused on a single or even a few specific policies (for example, family policy). It is an exploration and a comparative overview rather than an in-depth analysis of several practices. Second, given that sustainable work can be approached from many different perspectives, the country experts had flexibility (within the guiding framework set by the coordinating team) to decide what policies or aspects of policy were most pertinent to their countries. This means that evidence was gathered on many different practices illustrating the variety of answers and concerns on sustainable work issues. However, there was no uniform benchmark, and thus it was not feasible to assess the relative performance of countries in terms of their overall sustainable work policies.

The research is one of the first attempts to explore national policies through the perspective of sustainable work. It is first and foremost an overview of multiple national policies and approaches. Future studies could go into more detail, focusing specifically on, for example, health, family, employment, active ageing, lifelong learning and other relevant policies.

Sustainable work: Concept and main elements

1

According to the working definition used by Eurofound, sustainable work over the life course means that 'living and working conditions are such that they support people in engaging and remaining in work throughout an extended working life' (Eurofound, 2015a, p. 2).

Eurofound differentiates between two domains of high relevance for sustainable work: (a) work, specifically the characteristics of the job and the work environment and (b) the characteristics and circumstances of the individual, which change over time.

The first domain relates mainly to various aspects of job quality:

- earnings;
- prospects (job security, career);
- intrinsic job quality (physical and social environment, work intensity, autonomy);
- working time (duration, flexibility).

Good job quality is likely to lead to positive outcomes that will increase the capacity and motivation of individuals to remain engaged in paid work.

The second domain is about the abilities, needs and obligations of an individual, such as care responsibilities, health, skills and employability, employment experience and motivation (Eurofound, 2015a).

In essence, making work sustainable means making the two domains of job quality and an individual's characteristics interact and complement each other in an ultimately positive relationship. For example, the relationships between work and health and well-being over the life course are numerous and bidirectional, can have varied effects, and may result in different outcomes depending on individuals. Work influences health and health influences work, both now and later in life; not all individuals exposed to the same circumstances will experience the same health and well-being outcomes. Sustainable work is concerned with ensuring that ultimately work and other individual circumstances are conducive to better health and well-being over the life course, allowing individuals to engage in paid work across their working lives and to contribute to the increased performance of the organisations that employ them.

Both the characteristics of the job and the circumstances of the individual are influenced by a set of policies, regulations and practices at different levels: institutional, company, job and individual. Relevant company (human resources) and public policies will have positive short-term and long-term effects.

Another important element is how policies and practices addressing life-course issues allow for work to be sensitive and responsive to the personal circumstances of an employee and to the changes in these circumstances over time. A number of mechanisms, policies and practices can be put in place to mitigate, manage and address potential difficulties.

The key elements of sustainable work are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key domains and aspects of sustainable work



Source: Eurofound, 2015a

Sustainable work is beneficial to individuals, companies and society as a whole. From the individual perspective, sustainable work allows for better work outcomes, smoother transitions between life stages, and longer working lives. At company level, this may lead to a better realisation of the creative potential of the employees, resulting in improved efficiency or productivity. Eventually, society at large will benefit, not least because of the healthier population, higher employment rates, more inclusive labour markets and lower pressure on public budgets.

The concept of sustainable work is particularly relevant to several areas of social and labour market research and policy, such as the ageing population and shrinking workforce, the recent economic crisis, the need to develop new sources of growth and economic progress, and increased individualisation. All of these generate pressure to increase employment and quality of employment, extend working lives and introduce more flexibility into the labour market, while at the same time ensuring security for individuals. Sustainable work promotes a holistic approach that considers workers' health, personal characteristics (education, skills and interests), and family and social responsibilities.

The concept of sustainable work is linked to the life course and a life transitions approach (Anxo, 2010; Anxo et al, 2010), which posits that the situation of workers in the labour market varies over time depending on critical life-changing events (such as marriage, birth of a child, a new job or loss of a job) and changing individual health and preferences. The following key transitions in working life are of crucial importance to this study:

- school to work;
- parenthood;
- prime-age transitions associated with employment risks;
- work to retirement and old age.

Making work sustainable means organising jobs in a way that facilitates the adaptation of individuals to life-course transitions. Job quality is of relevance here. For example, adequate health and safety practices (an element of intrinsic job quality) help individuals to remain healthy during various

lifetime transitions, and working time arrangements are relevant for those with care responsibilities. Changes in the workplace during the life course may, for instance, take the form of redefining job tasks, assigning individuals to different roles, adjusting work-related physical demands, facilitating skills development or ensuring work–life balance.

Relevant research by Eurofound and other EU agencies

Eurofound has a long tradition of research into issues of direct relevance to the current analysis of sustainable work. In 2002, the concept of quality of work and employment was developed to complement the focus on quantity of jobs, which suggested that a focus on quality could be helpful to obtain ‘an edge over competitors’ in a globalised world (Eurofound, 2002, p. 4).¹ The paper listed four dimensions of quality of work and employment, which ultimately could be linked to sustainable work:

- ensuring career and employment security;
- maintaining and promoting the health and well-being of workers;
- developing skills and competences;
- reconciling working and non-working life.

A number of recent Eurofound publications have explored these topics in more detail.

- *Trends in job quality in Europe* (Eurofound, 2012a) assessed job quality by building four indices measuring positive and negative characteristics of the job that have a proven association in the literature with health: earnings, prospects, intrinsic job quality (consisting of skills and discretion, good social environment, good physical environment and work intensity) and working time quality. It did not focus on the personal situation of the worker and their working conditions, nor on company practices in general.
- *Sustainable work and the ageing workforce* (Eurofound, 2012b) explored the dimensions of work essential to the understanding of work sustainability: working conditions, physical and psychological health, the expressive dimensions of work, reconciliation between working and non-working time, and socioeconomic conditions. The report was based on a secondary analysis of the data from the fifth European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS).
- *Health and well-being at work* (Eurofound, 2012c) examined the relationship between job quality and health based on a secondary analysis of the fifth EWCS. It built on the job quality indices developed by Eurofound and found a positive relationship between each of the four indices. The aspects with the most impact on workers’ well-being are intrinsic job quality and job prospects. The role of access to healthcare in the wake of the economic crisis was discussed in a separate report (Eurofound, 2014e).
- *Women, men and working conditions in Europe* (Eurofound, 2013a) examined how the relationship between gender and job quality is modulated by the different experiences of women and men overall, and at different life stages and by variable household composition. It focused particularly on occupational segregation. *Working time and work–life balance in a life course perspective* (2013c) investigated how working time is organised and how it affects the balance of work versus private

¹ This combination of quantity and quality of jobs was very clear in the policy focus present in European discourse and in European employment strategies from the 1990s onwards under the motto ‘more and better jobs’.

life over the life course for men and women. The study also analysed the relationship between paid employment and domestic activities, work–life balance and working time preferences across the life course.

- *Role of governments and social partners in keeping older workers in the labour market* (Eurofound, 2013b) mapped initiatives at national and sectoral level taken by governments and social partners to keep older workers in the labour market. While some measures involved financial incentives to work longer, others addressed ways to enhance working conditions.
- *Extending working lives through flexible retirement schemes: Partial retirement* (Eurofound, 2016) looks at how reduced working time can enable and motivate older workers to continue working longer. While such partial retirement schemes have potential, they come with challenges in practice. The report presents guidelines for policymakers, social partners and pension funds that are considering implementing or reforming partial retirement schemes. It builds on Eurofound's earlier research on work preferences after 50 (2014f) and income from work after retirement (2012i).

Other Eurofound research has looked at specific factors that impact on sustainability of work for men and women throughout the life course. These relate to either specific elements of working conditions (for example, working time and work intensity) or factors that affect availability for work (for instance, policies and company practices that influence the availability for work of people caring for children or other dependants or workers with health issues). Research also examined how mid-term career reviews could help workers who might not be able to continue to do the same job until a later age (for instance, those in arduous jobs might arguably be more at risk). Key resources related to sustainable work are listed on the Eurofound website.²

Eurofound's sister agency EU-OSHA, at the request of the European Parliament, investigated the issue of older workers and occupational safety and health (OSH) in depth through a major research project that focuses on how the ageing workforce, the increase of official retirement ages and longer working lives have increased exposure to hazards at work and the need to prevent work from compromising workers' health. The objectives of this project included assessing the prerequisites for an OSH system to meet the challenges of an ageing workforce as well as the exchange of experience and good practice for better prevention for all. The results point to the key role of prevention for all workers, with tailored interventions for individual workers where necessary, implemented in a sensitive way to avoid stigmatisation of older workers. A robust OSH system is needed to deliver effective prevention, provide access to occupational health services for all workers and promote health in the workplace. The results of this project are feeding into the Healthy Workplace for All Ages campaign 2016–2017. More about the project and publications arising from it can be found on the EU-OSHA website together with resources for the campaign.³

Other EU agencies have equally looked at the issue of an ageing workforce with particular reference to their remit, such as Cedefop and its examination of vocational training for workers of all ages. The ageing workforce and its implications for all policy domains are therefore very relevant for all EU agencies contributing to the development of social policy.

² <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/news/spotlight-on/sustainable-work/resources-key-resources-related-to-sustainable-work>

³ Information on the project is available at <https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/osh-management-context-ageing-workforce/ep-osh-project>, while information on the Healthy Workplace for All Ages campaign is available at <https://osha.europa.eu/en/healthy-workplaces-campaigns/2016-17-campaign-healthy-workplaces-all-ages>.

In Eurofound, the concept of sustainable work has been developed as a result of various lines of previous research combining the two domains as explained above: (a) job quality and (b) the more subjective domain related to the individual choices and circumstances of workers themselves. Both touch on elements of the four dimensions of quality of work and employment and have an impact on sustainability of work over the life course.

Role of policy

Public policies can make a significant contribution to fostering sustainable work. Relevant tools include legislation and regulation (for example, labour law and occupational health and safety regulation), social protection systems (for example, unemployment, disability and family benefits), public services (including employment, education, health and lifelong learning services) and public infrastructure (such as childcare and elder care). Other measures include incentives for companies to embark upon actions for inclusion of certain groups with specific needs or difficulties in the labour market, as well as ensuring that specific actions are taken to ensure that older people can stay engaged in work. Companies and social partners have a key role to play in the implementation of policies and actions. Collective bargaining is usually central – both as a way to set standards and reach agreement between employers and employees and as a channel for learning and information exchange. The workplace is clearly the main place of action for making work sustainable.

Public policies aimed at promoting sustainable work are the prime focus of this study. The relevant policies may target individuals directly or be implemented through companies, social partners or other arrangements. Different policies sometimes complement and sometimes contradict each other. For analytical purposes, the research is organised according to the four dimensions of quality of work and employment that cut across both job- and individual-related domains of sustainable work; that is, job quality, on the one hand, and interaction between work and individual over the life course, on the other hand:

- ensuring career and employment protection;
- maintaining and promoting the health and well-being of workers;
- reconciling working and non-working life;
- developing skills and competences.

Background: Demographic change and life-course transitions

European countries face a number of societal and labour market challenges that might be resolved by a model of work with sustainability at its centre. There is population ageing and a shrinking workforce. There is also a trend towards more forms of temporary contracts, including precarious and insecure jobs, more forms of self-employment, an increase in new forms of employment – with some forms incurring the danger of work intensification, increased stress levels and working time, or professional isolation (Eurofound, 2015b) – and, in many cases, a decreasing number of jobs available in the context of the recent economic and financial crisis. These employment trends have affected vulnerable social groups across a large part of Europe, especially young people, older workers, migrants and disabled people (Valía-Cotanda et al, 2014). The transition from education to the labour market particularly has been disrupted, as young workers are more often unemployed or employed in precarious and insecure jobs with lower employment security than workers in other age groups (Nardo and Rossetti, 2013). These changing circumstances generate additional pressures on European welfare states and social protection systems by imposing a number of barriers to achieving the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth promoted by the EU's Europe 2020 strategy.

In the context of these transformations, making work more sustainable over the life course should become a particularly important policy goal for European and national policymakers (Eurofound, 2015a). It requires additional effort to improve the conditions of work and employment, to adapt them better to the specific and changing needs of workers, to redesign social and employment policies in a way that ensures smooth transitions between the different life stages, and to consequently take into account the increasing variation of individual life trajectories.

This chapter begins with an overview of key demographic and labour market trends in Europe. It then discusses the relationship between job quality and sustainability of work. It finishes with a brief look at the changing frequency and timing of transitions over the life course as well as the increasing variation of individual life trajectories across the different European countries, which require additional efforts to adapt social and employment policies to the specific and changing needs of workers.

Key challenges and starting points

Demographic change

Over the past few decades, European societies have experienced a number of significant demographic transformations. In general, they constitute the key element of the European policy context and are a driver of change, making it necessary to devise new solutions for working conditions and career paths in order to keep workers in employment longer (Eurofound, 2012d, 2015a).

First of all, low birth rates have become very common across the EU. In 2013, only 1.55 live births per woman of fertile age were recorded in the EU, ranging from 1.21 births in Portugal to 1.99 births in France. Although the average number of children being born increased in most European countries over the past decade, the fertility rate remains below the replacement rate of 2.1. The mean age of women giving birth to their first child has also gradually increased, reaching 30.3 years in 2013.

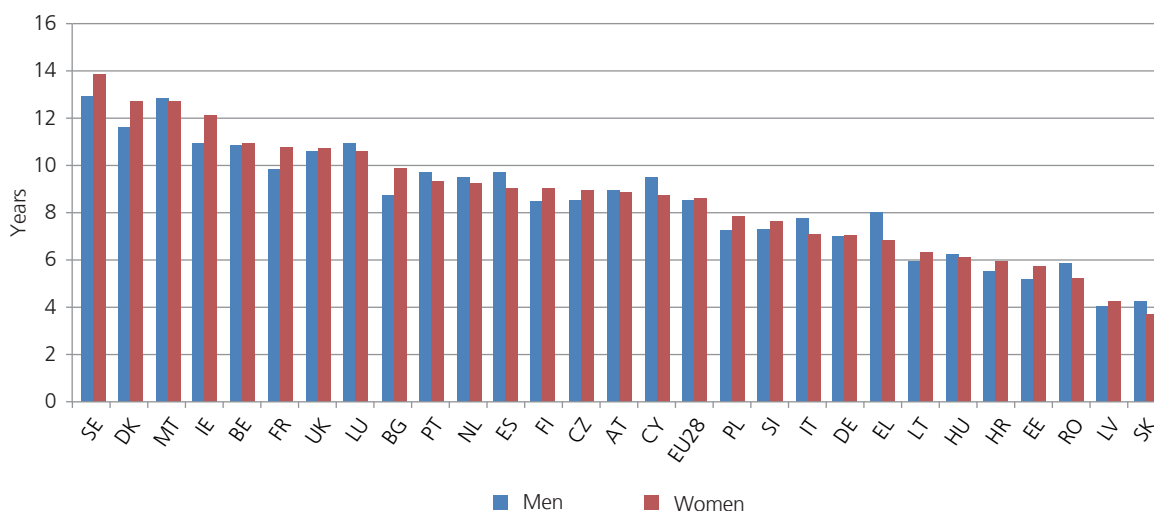
At the same time, life expectancy at birth for the EU as a whole rose from 77.7 years in 2002 to 80.6 years in 2013; overall, it has increased by eight years since the 1960s. However, life expectancy at birth still varies widely between European countries, ranging in 2013 from 74.1 years in Lithuania to 83.2 years in Spain. When it comes to increased longevity, gender differences are also evident:

according to Eurostat, women in the EU were expected to live almost five years longer on average than men (83.3 and 77.8 years respectively) in 2013.

The increase in longevity does not necessarily mean that all individuals will enjoy more healthy life years after retirement. Continuous exposure to arduous working conditions and other factors may compromise workers' health, which may result in a lower healthy life expectancy in spite of increased longevity. Notwithstanding the important methodological limitations, the indicator measuring healthy years after the age of 65 provides information on the number of years that may be enjoyed by individuals without major disability or illness at an older age.⁴ It shows that expected healthy life years have kept increasing gradually and, in 2013, the average healthy life years remaining at age 65 was 8.6 years for women and 8.5 for men in the EU (Figure 2). Despite the substantial gender differences in terms of life expectancy at birth, there is no significant gender gap when it comes to the healthy life years remaining at age 65. This means that women are likely to live longer with some type of activity limitation after age 65 than men because of longer overall female life expectancy (OECD, 2013a, p. 172). All of this can affect both general well-being and the total length of the working life of individuals.

Furthermore, significant differences can be observed when comparing years of healthy life expectancy between countries (Figure 2). According to Eurostat data for 2013, Sweden, Denmark and Malta had the highest expectancies of healthy life years after age 65 for both women (13.8, 12.7 and 12.7 years respectively) and men (12.9, 11.6 and 12.7 years respectively). Meanwhile, the lowest expectancy of healthy life years after age 65 was recorded in Latvia (4.2 and 4.0 for women and men respectively) and Slovakia (3.7 and 4.2 for women and men respectively). This can have important implications for both public finances (in areas such as health or long-term care expenditure) and a country's employment policies.

Figure 2: Healthy life years expected after age 65, by gender, EU Member States, 2013



Source: Eurostat, Healthy Life Years dataset (code: hlth_hlye), 2013

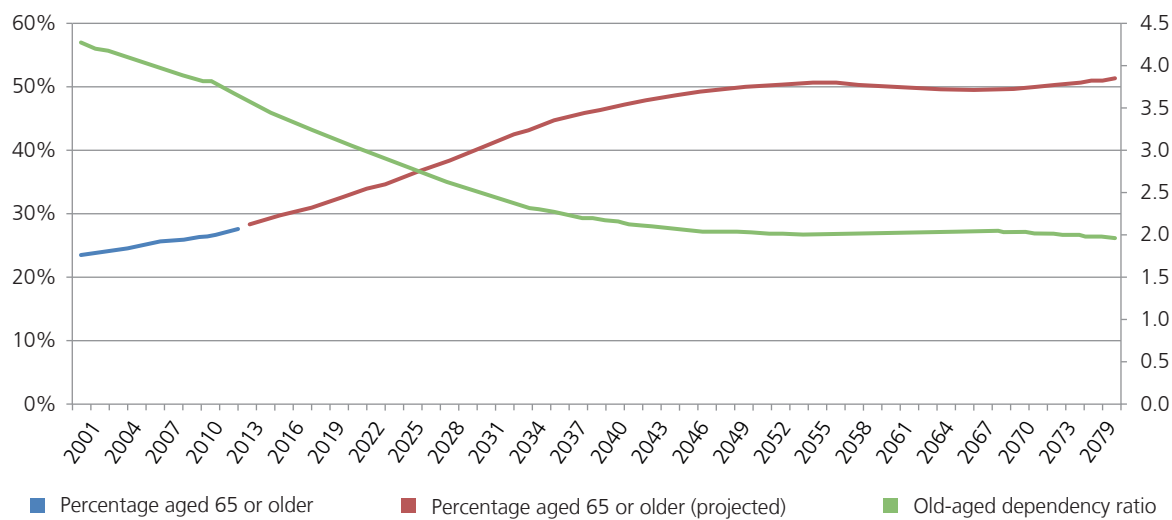
The combination of the factors discussed above has been the main cause of a natural ageing of the population in the past decades. In 2001, the percentage of older dependent people in the EU was 23.5%;

⁴ Disability-free life expectancy is measured by a 'healthy life years' indicator calculated on the basis of a general question about disability in the European Union Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). It is self-reported and does not cover institutionalised populations. In addition, long-time series are not yet available because this indicator was developed relatively recently.

by 2014, it had reached 28.1%, indicating that for every person aged 65 or over there were fewer than four people of working age. Eurostat predicts a steep increase in the proportion of elderly dependent people, and the old-age dependency ratio will increase accordingly (Figure 3). Eurostat predicts there will be 2.6 people aged 15–64 for each person above 65 in 2030 and only 2.0 people in 2050.

Furthermore, increasing old-age dependency affects the total-age dependency ratio (taking into account dependent children and young people). The total-age dependency ratio in 2014 was 51.8%, indicating that there were approximately two people aged 15–64 for every dependent person.

Figure 3: Older people as a proportion of the EU population and old-age dependency ratio, EU, 2001–2079



Note: The left vertical axis shows the percentage of people aged 65 and older in the whole population aged 15 years and over. The right vertical axis represents the ratio of people aged 15–64 for each person aged 65 and older.

Source: Eurostat (code: proj_13ndbims, demo_pjanind), 2013; authors' calculations

Although the projected increases for the youth dependency ratio are relatively small, overall the number of people dependent on the working age population in the EU is expected to grow in the coming decades. On the individual level, this may significantly affect the living standards of each working person.

The rapid demographic change combined with very moderate economic growth creates additional pressure on the welfare state. As regards the sustainability of European welfare states and social protection systems, the future development of age-related public expenditure in the EU is expected to create considerable uncertainty (European Commission, 2012). Policies related to sustainable work are extremely important in this regard, as the rising dependency ratios and other challenges to social protection systems may be combated by lengthening working lives and bringing more people into employment (Eurofound, 2015a). At the same time, the role of the welfare state is vital in promoting and implementing such policies in the first place, as social protection systems assist with critical life events and the transition periods of workers (Eurofound, 2015a). Therefore, expanding participation in the labour market is crucial, given the constraints on the ability of states to finance welfare systems.

Budgetary projections made by the European Commission (2015a, p. 9) show that population ageing poses a real challenge for public finances in the EU because it is expected to result in higher welfare

state expenditure in many EU countries (see Table A1 in the annex). Official predictions foresee a gradual but sustained increase in expenditure between 2013 and 2040 in such areas as pensions (+0.4% of EU gross domestic product (GDP)), healthcare (+0.9%) and long-term care (+0.7%).

Overall expenditure on 'strictly age-related items' (including pensions, healthcare and long-term care) is expected to increase by almost 2 percentage points, from 24.6% of GDP in 2013 to 26.2% in 2040 and 26.4% in 2060 in the EU as a whole. The predicted expenditure on these items varies across countries. The biggest increase in GDP expenditure from 2013 to 2060 on strictly age-related items is expected in Malta (6.6 percentage points), Luxembourg (6.4 percentage points), Belgium (5.3 percentage points) and Germany (5.1 percentage points). Meanwhile, a moderate reduction is projected in Croatia (-2.5 percentage points), Latvia (-1.6 percentage points), Greece (-1.4 percentage points) and France (-1.3 percentage points).

With regard to the increase in welfare state expenditure, it is important to note not only the magnitude of the change, especially in some countries, but also the speed of this shift. In only 25 years, this expenditure is projected to rise by almost 2 percentage points. This gives a limited amount of time for policymakers and institutions to adapt.

Furthermore, the role of social protection systems is crucial for sustainable work and should be considered as an investment and not only a financial burden. Indeed, the way social protection systems are shaped can influence how they support more sustainable work for men and women with different abilities and in different circumstances throughout their life course. This needs to be embedded in deliberations on the modernisation of the social protection system. Hence, the development of policies aiming at supporting sustainable work throughout the life course becomes even more relevant because of the demographic context and should be considered in this light.

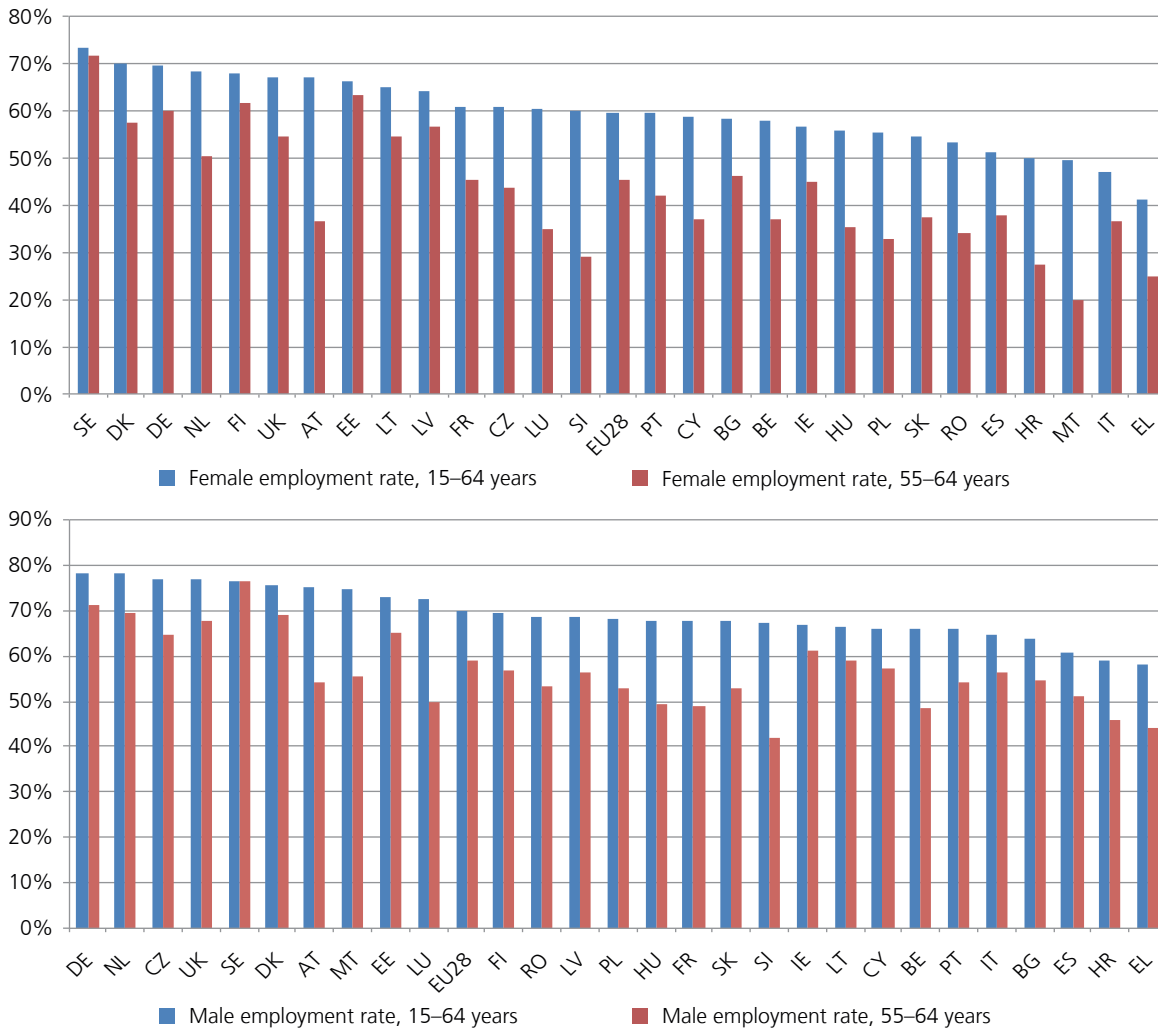
Labour market participation

Increasing labour market participation is regarded as one of the ways to tackle the demographic challenges and to counter the effect of a shrinking workforce due to population ageing (Eurofound, 2015a). Although specific targets for women or older workers were omitted from Europe 2020, achieving the joint 75% employment rate target for women and men aged 20–64 by 2020 requires inclusion in the labour market to be addressed from the perspective of sustainable work over the life course, and in turn a better integration of underrepresented groups of workers (Eurofound, 2012e, p. 2).

European labour markets are characterised by relatively low female employment rates and low activity of older workers, although there are large differences between countries. In 2014, the employment rate for the EU male and female population aged 15–64 was 70.1% and 59.6% respectively (Figure 4). Overall, the proportion of women in employment increased over the past decade (rising by more than 4 percentage points from 55.5% in 2004), while the employment rate for men almost matched the employment rate 10 years earlier (70.3% in 2004), following the significant decline due to the financial and economic crisis and only a limited recovery since. The different effect of the economic downturn on the employment of women and men can be partially explained by gendered sectoral segregation. The employment of women proved to be more resilient to the recession than the employment of men, since the crisis hit the male-dominated construction and manufacturing sectors particularly hard, and the effects of economic downturn were less severe on the services sector, dominated by women (Baran et al, 2014, p. 2). However, austerity policies mean that women are vulnerable to job losses in public services.

The cross-country comparison in Figure 4 shows a wide variation in the employment rates of women. In 2014, less than half of women aged 15–64 were in employment in Greece (41%), Italy (47%) and Malta (49%), while almost three-quarters of women in the same age group were in employment in Sweden (73%), Denmark (70%) and Germany (70%).

Figure 4: Female and male employment rates, by age group, EU Member States, 2014



Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) (code: lfsi_emp_a), 2014

With regard to the increasing participation of older workers in the labour market, substantial progress has been recorded over the past decade, with the proportion of 55–65-year-olds in employment increasing by more than 10 percentage points since 2004 (when it was 40.6%) and by nearly 6 percentage points since 2009 (45.9%), reaching 51.8 % in 2014. The highest employment rates were recorded in Sweden (74%) and the lowest in Greece (34%). Despite this generally positive trend, the employment rate of workers aged 55–64 is still well below the rates of other age groups. Furthermore, the gender gap in this age group is even more evident than in others: in 2014, the proportion of older male workers in employment was 58.8%, while that of older women was only 45.2%.

Another important indicator relevant for this study is the average duration of working life, which measures the number of years a 15-year-old is expected to be active in the labour market over their life. At EU level, there was a slight increase in this indicator from 32.9 years in 2000 to 35.2 in 2013. As demonstrated by Figure 9 (see Chapter 3), the longest expected duration of working life for the male population is observed in the Netherlands (42.4 years), Sweden (42.1 years) and the UK (41.1 years). The longest expected duration of working life for the female population is found in Sweden (39.6 years), Denmark (37.6 years), the Netherlands (37.0 years) and Finland (36.6 years). Meanwhile, the working life duration for women is expected to be the shortest in Malta (24.9 years), Italy (25.4 years) and Greece (27.9 years). These three countries also have the largest gaps between male and female working life duration. These differences are partially related to different timing and frequency of specific life-course transitions (as will be discussed later in this chapter).

Economic migration and labour market mobility may also contribute to increasing labour market participation and so counter the effect of a shrinking workforce. At the European level, Europe 2020 and the 2012 Employment Package both mention the efficient allocation of labour within Member States as a driver of future growth. Nevertheless, the labour market situation deteriorated during the crisis for EU migrant workers relative to native-born workers, whereas in some countries, residents are yet to support labour immigration, fearing increased competition or potential abuse of welfare systems (Eurofound, 2012f, 2014a).

Overall, high employment rates and prolongation of working life have been highlighted as a way to counter the effect of a shrinking workforce due to demographic changes. To increase employment rates in general and the labour market activity of certain of groups in particular, and to prolong the working lives of European citizens, Member States need to take into account the increasing individual diversity in the life courses of European citizens and the availability of work, depending on life stages. This topic is further discussed in Chapter 3.

Job quality

One of the two main domains on which Eurofound built the concept of sustainable work is the characteristics of the job and the work environment. This domain has a direct and obvious impact on the sustainability of work. In particular, job quality is affected by the demands and strenuousness of work, and this has potential long-term effects on a person's will and capacity to work (Eurofound, 2012a, 2015a). For this reason, Eurofound developed a Job Quality Index based on four dimensions that have a proven relationship with health in the literature and computed using self-reported characteristics of working conditions from the fifth EWCS.⁵

- **Earnings** constitute the basis of the fulfilment of many human needs, affecting crucial aspects such as health, education and access to services that can facilitate labour force participation.
- **Intrinsic job quality** takes into account four subdimensions: skills and discretion, social environment, physical environment, and work intensity. It has the strongest association with health and well-being and is therefore a key determinant of whether work is sustainable.
- **Prospects** refer to the stability of employment and opportunities for career progression and also have a long-term association with health and individual well-being.

⁵ This has been analysed in subsequent reports based at least partly on the survey (Eurofound, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2014b).

- **Working time quality** includes the duration, scheduling and flexibility of working time and having discretion over it. Working time quality can have a multilevel effect on the sustainability of work.

There are large variations not only between countries, but also between occupations and sectors, between age groups, and between men and women. Thus the divide between countries and across social groups in terms of job quality remains an issue. Policies, regulation and company practices may significantly influence job quality and its subdimensions, therefore job quality has to be addressed by policymakers and enterprises across Europe. It is important to consider job quality over the life course of people, as the impact of working conditions is not static but evolves over time. And it depends on the combination of different aspects, both in work – related to job quality and the work environment – and in private life. The main changes in the frequency and timing of different life-course transitions are discussed next.

Life-course transitions

Demographic changes and the trends in labour market participation need to be considered in the context of increasing diversity in individual life trajectories and greater variation in family life-cycle models across Europe.

The increasing individualisation of the life courses of European citizens is related to the changing timing and frequency of specific life-course transitions including later exit from the educational system, delayed entry into the labour market, earlier exit from the labour market related to development of early retirement schemes in a number of European countries, and lowering of the pension age (Anxo et al, 2010, p. 3). At the same time, there is increasing diversity in family life-cycle models; these include the postponement of family formation, an increasing number of partnerships, decreasing marriage rates, increasing rates of divorce (Anxo et al, 2010, p. 3), increasing numbers of lone-parent families, postponement of parenthood, decreasing family size, increased (in)voluntary childlessness (Tanturri et al, 2015, p. 2) and increasing importance of dual earner/dual carer (or dual full-time earner) arrangements (Ray et al, 2010).⁶

The overall situation is that the expectations, aspirations and needs of individuals in the labour market vary over time, depending on critical life-changing events (marriage, birth of a child, new job or loss of a job) and changing individual health and preferences. Therefore, it is important to review the key trends related to school-to-work transitions, transitions to parenthood, prime-age transitions associated with employment risks, and transition from work to retirement and old age.

Education-to-employment transitions

This study found some significant changes in European countries when it comes to the transition from education to first employment.

First, young people are tending to exit education and training systems later than before. The share of early school-leavers in the population aged 18–24 is tending to decrease in most Member States (European Commission, 2015b, p. 5). At the same time, more young people are continuing to pursue education and training at tertiary level. This is particularly evident in the countries where the reputation of vocational education and training (VET) is relatively low, such as Greece, Spain and the

⁶ The social model of the dual earner/dual carer, developed in welfare state literature, conceives of both men and women equally engaging in both paid work and unpaid caregiving. The relevant policy measures in this regard could include a mandated share of parental level, extensive public childcare systems and high wage-replacement rates for paternity leave, among others (Ray et al, 2010; Morgan, 2008).

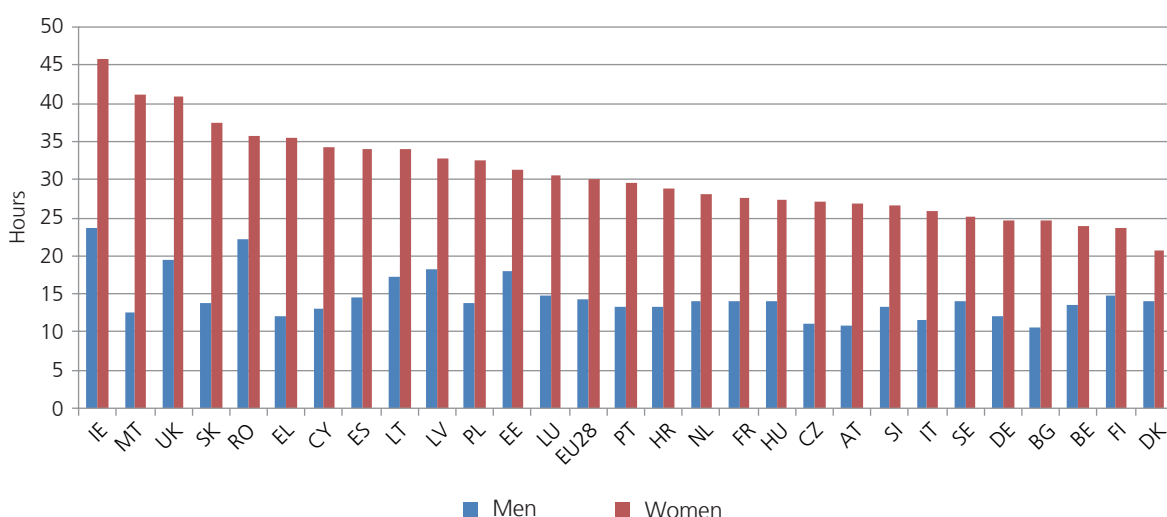
UK (Anxo et al, 2010, p. 16). The expansion of education may affect prospects related to sustainable work across a number of dimensions such as earnings, as education is crucial in developing the abilities of workers and their capacity to deal with demanding tasks (Eurofound, 2015a). It also calls for changing working life trajectories and later entry into the labour market, in particular, to be taken into account when discussing measures concerning sustainable work.

Second, the economic downturn created additional obstacles for young people seeking their first job. The transition from education to first employment and later to stable employment has become a problem in many countries, with youth forming one of the new vulnerable groups. The situation was especially difficult for lower-skilled young workers (see Figure 12 in Chapter 3). In 2011, only 21% of young people in Greece who had left their studies with upper secondary education were in employment one year later; in Spain and Italy, this figure was 34% and 39% respectively. Substantial delays in entering the labour market after education have a detrimental effect on long-term employability, social inclusion, human capital, skills, future wages and prospects for sustainable work overall (Banerji et al, 2014; Eurofound, 2015a).

Transition to parenthood

The transition to formation of the family household and parenthood has seen many changes. Feminisation of labour markets, new social developments in family formation, delay in the age of parenthood, processes of individualisation, and reductions in career security have all affected the way this transition happens in societies. Women still bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid work compared with the whole population, including both employed and unemployed. For example, in the EU as a whole in 2011, in the overall population (both working and non-working), women worked an average of 16 hours more than men in unpaid activities such as caring for children, cooking, housework, and caring for the elderly or disabled (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Total weekly hours of unpaid work, by gender, EU Member States, 2011



Source: Eurofound, Third European Quality of Life Survey, 2011; authors' calculations

Looking more closely at the employed population also reveals gender differences. For example, Eurofound's report on working time and work-life balance over the life course, based on data from the fifth EWCS, showed that when paid working hours, unpaid work time at home and commuting

hours to and from work are combined, women work on average 64 hours per week, while men work 53 hours on average (Eurofound, 2013a). However, men reported spending more time in paid work (41 hours) than women (34 hours) and, on average, spend almost three times fewer hours on caring activities (9 hours, compared with 26 hours spent by women) (Eurofound, 2013a, p. 9). Both men and women dedicate more time to unpaid work – that is, work done in the private sphere, mostly care and household activities – when there are children in the household. However, there are big differences between men and women, and these differences are bigger when the children are relatively small (under the age of seven).

These and other key trends and challenges related to transition to parenthood and care responsibilities are discussed further in Chapter 3.

Prime-age transitions

Consideration of the prime-age transitions associated with employment risks highlights the importance of in-work-poverty, whereby those in work have low earnings and live in a household that is at risk of poverty. For example, the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate rose in the EU from 8.3% in 2010 to 9.5% in 2014. This means that having a job in some instances no longer guarantees a minimum level of earnings and decent living conditions, which has an impact on people's room for manoeuvre to make their work and life more sustainable. In-work poverty affects the well-being of workers (and by extension, the sustainability of work) through the cumulative impact on the capacity and motivation for work, individual health, fulfilment of many human needs and so on. In addition, there is a growing trend of insecure jobs and careers for certain groups of people, especially lower-skilled individuals. This group is also disproportionately affected by rising long-term unemployment and involuntary part-time employment (Anderton et al, 2012). Instability and impeded career progression may have a long-term, direct effect on health and the capacity of individuals to adjust their participation in employment to their needs (Eurofound, 2015a).

In most European countries, non-standard forms of employment have become much more common than they were decades ago. According to Eurostat data, the proportion of temporary contracts increased in 19 of the 28 Member States between 2002 and 2013. Moreover, involuntary part-time employment has become frequent in many countries. In 2002, 17.2% of part-time workers in the EU wanted to have a full-time job. In 2014, this proportion had increased to close to 30%. This, combined with the fact that individuals in situations of non-stable working conditions usually face higher risks of poverty and social exclusion, has led to an increasing number of people experiencing in-work poverty.

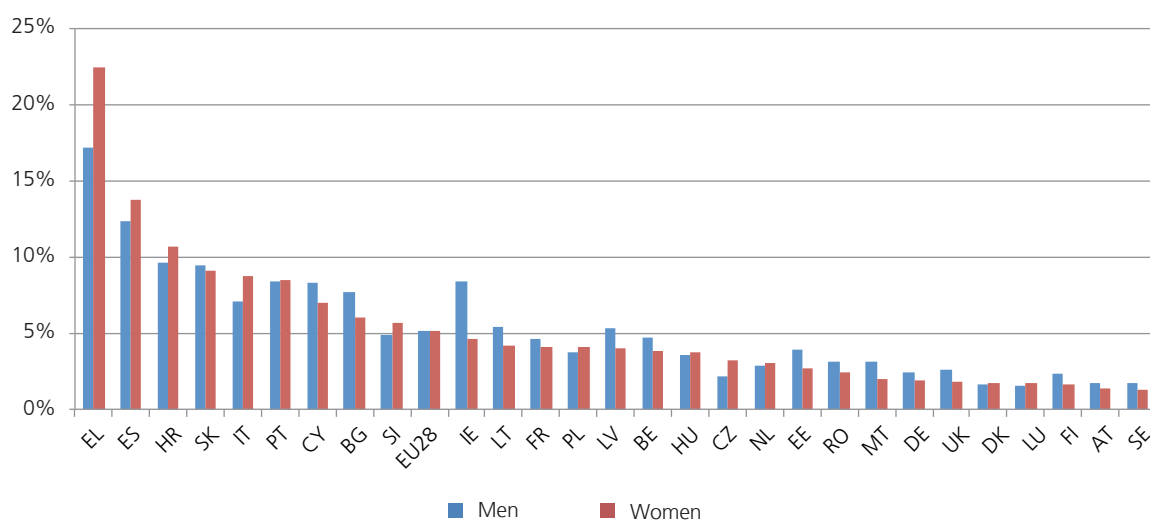
Other issues might be related to employment status, which impacts on a worker's ability to build up social rights. The choice and changes between being self-employed and being an employee might be something that needs more reflection. This is particularly important in the context of the current developments of new forms of work, often linked with information and communications technology (ICT) and the blurring of frontiers between different employment statuses.

Moreover, in post-industrial societies, with the growing importance of education and working skills, obsolescence of skills and skills mismatch have become major problems, which tend to:

- decrease employability over the life course;
- hinder entry to the labour market and remaining at work;
- impede the supply of jobs and, in turn, individual employment transitions.

Difficulty in finding a job has become a significant problem for many people in a number of European countries, leading to increasing rates of long-term unemployment since 2008. According to Eurostat data, 5.1% of the labour force in the EU in 2014 had been unemployed for more than one year (Figure 6). Particularly high long-term unemployment rates were reported in Greece (19.5%), Spain (12.9%) and Croatia (10.1%). The rate was particularly low in Austria and Sweden in 2014, where only 1.5% of the population active in the labour market had been unemployed for 12 months or more. The gap between male and female long-term unemployment rates in 2014 varied from 5.2 percentage points in Greece (lower male rate) to 3.8 percentage points in Ireland (lower female rate).

Figure 6: Long-term unemployment as percentage of the active population, by gender, EU Member States, 2014



Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS (code: une_ltu_a), 2014

Lifelong learning has been identified as one of the key measures to support labour market transitions in prime age. Training throughout a person’s whole life reduces risks such as skills obsolescence, unemployment and in-work poverty.

Data from Eurostat’s Adult Education Survey 2011 show that 40% of the European population aged 25–64 had taken part in either formal or informal education or training in the past 12 months (see Figure 11 in Chapter 3), slightly up on the figure of 35% in 2007. The proportion of adults in education and training varied widely across countries: large proportions of adults were in education or training in Sweden (72%), Luxembourg (70%), the Netherlands (59%), Denmark (59%) and Finland (56%), while only small percentages of the population received training in Romania (8%), Greece (12%), Poland (24%), Ireland (25%) and Bulgaria (26%).

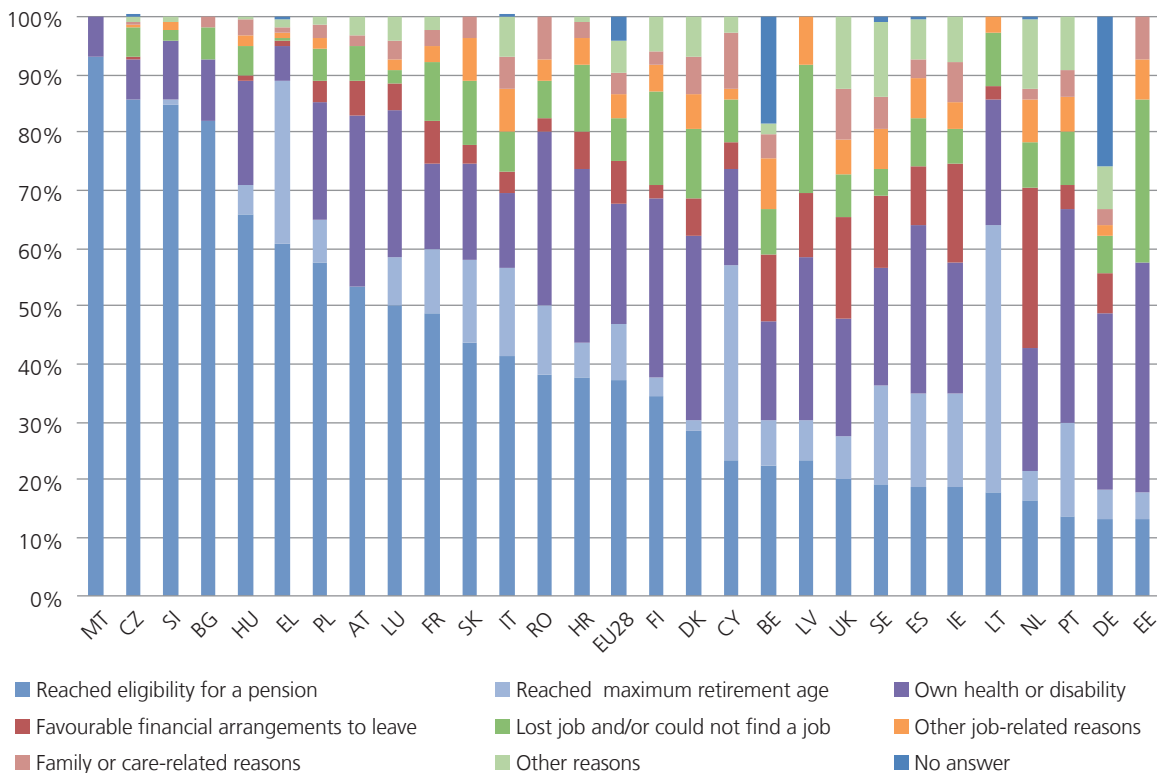
Transition from work to retirement

Labour market transitions from work to retirement have also transformed, as early retirement schemes are no longer seen as a valid measure for policymakers.

The reasons why people quit working vary. According to Eurostat data from 2012, an average of 45% of European men aged 50–69 years who received an old-age pension had taken up an early retirement scheme. EU-LFS data for the same year show that a significant share of inactive people receiving an old-age pension had retired after losing a job because they could not find another one

(Figure 7). For example, this was reported as the main reason for leaving the labour market by 27% of respondents in Estonia, 21% in Latvia and 16% in Finland. The highest proportion of respondents attributing their exit to health problems or disability was found in Estonia (38%) and Portugal (37%). Family or care-related reasons, even if they were less often reported than other categories, were mentioned most frequently by respondents in Cyprus and the UK (9% in both).

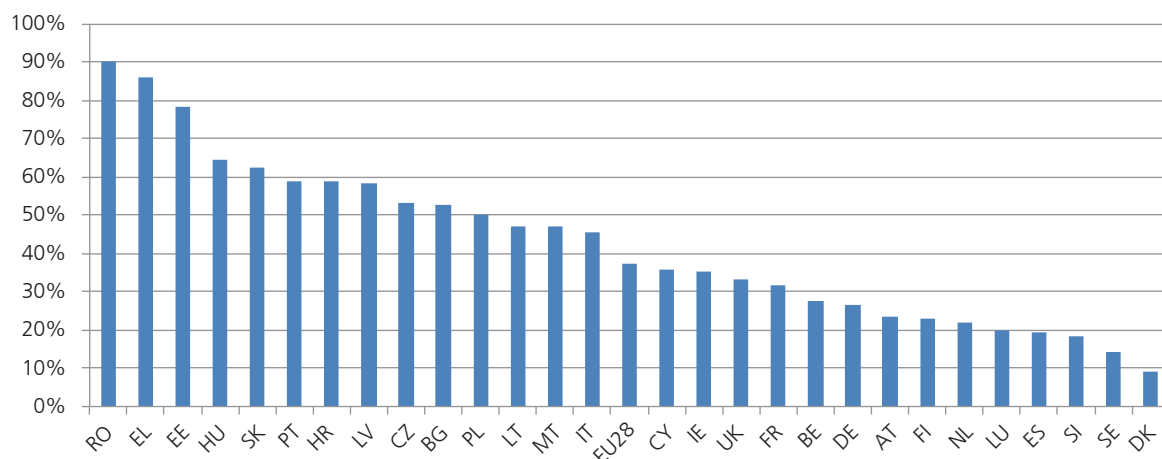
Figure 7: Main reason that economically inactive people in receipt of a pension stopped working, EU Member States, 2012



Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS ad-hoc module (code: lfso_12reasnot), 2012

The 2012 EU-LFS ad-hoc module also included information on the reasons why people receiving an old-age pension decided to keep working. Transition to retirement is especially hard in countries where an old-age pension does not guarantee sufficient resources for retirement. Among those receiving a pension, the percentage of people who continued working in order to provide sufficient personal or household income was particularly high in Romania (91%), Greece (86%), Estonia (78%), Hungary (65%) and Slovakia (63%) (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Percentage of people in receipt of a pension who declared financial reasons as the main reason for continuing to work, EU Member States, 2012



Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS ad-hoc module (code: lfso_12staywork), 2012

Taking into account the increasing individualisation of life-course trajectories and significant country variations, there is no default formula to design the interaction between the individual, the job and the support system (Eurofound, 2015a, p. 11). Different types of interventions can enhance sustainability of work over the life course in the countries included in this study.

Furthermore, different policies can be designed to target specific groups and the particular transitions that they deal with. For example, in order to increase female employment in the labour market, European countries may need to address a number of important issues including education, maternity, retirement, lifelong learning, care choices, flexible employment contracts and salaries (Baran et al, 2014, p. 2). In order to increase the participation of older workers in the labour market and extend their availability for work over time, it is important to consider job quality for workers of all ages, phased retirement schemes, the adaptation of workplaces to the requirements of older workers, and fostering an organisational climate that promotes appreciation of the value of older employees (Eurofound, 2015a, p. 11).

Life-course dynamics are embedded in the concept of sustainable work, as the impact of job quality on workers depends on the characteristics and circumstances of the individuals at their particular transitions and life stages, and it needs to be assessed from a long-term, comprehensive perspective. This is particularly relevant in the context of the changing frequency and timing of transitions over the life course in Europe, and the rise of new lifestyles and increasing variety of family life-cycle models (Anxo et al, 2010, p. 3).

The policy approaches and policy measures contributing to making work sustainable throughout the life course in the countries selected for this study are discussed in the next chapter.

Sustainable work policies across 10 countries

The national case studies carried out for this study showed that the term ‘sustainable work’ is relatively new, and not many examples were found of an all-encompassing approach to the concept in the policy discourse.

There are a few exceptions. In Sweden, sustainable work (*hållbart arbete*) is present in the public debate and encompasses such dimensions as working conditions and work environment (health and safety), job quality and job satisfaction, work–life balance and training. In the Netherlands, the concept of sustainable employability (*duurzame inzetbaarheid*) is used, and the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs has a specific division working on this issue. In Belgium, too, sustainable employability (*duurzame inzetbaarheid/employabilité durable*) is sometimes mentioned, although workability or workable work (*werkbaar werk/travail faisable* or *travail soutenable*) is also widely used by the social partners and in tripartite discussions. The Minister for Work recently set up a round table with the social partners to consider this issue.

In other countries, some key features of sustainable work are covered through the concepts of quality of work, decent work or good work (Germany); well-balanced work (*zrównoważony*, Poland); good-quality employment (*kokybiškas užimtumas*, Lithuania); and quality of working life (Finland). In all these countries, specific policies are present to address the inclusion of workers faced with specific barriers to employment, such as health problems or care responsibilities, or spells of unemployment. These policies are of different depth and reach.

In all countries, there are overarching public policies and initiatives aimed at a systematic coverage of the various facets of sustainable work. Among the relevant initiatives, there are horizontal discussions and cooperation frameworks such as the Forum for Well-being at Work and the national Working Life 2020 project in Finland, and *Arbeiten 4.0* in Germany (launched in 2015). While all are directed by public institutions (for the two quoted examples, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Ministry of Employment and the Economy of Finland, and the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, respectively), they also involve a large variety of stakeholders, including social partners and national experts. These initiatives aim to produce messages, recommendations and practical examples that could be used in the workplace and to inform the policy process. Similarly, in 2015, the Swedish Ministry of Employment started developing a new strategy for improving the work environment that encompasses both policy discussion and policy action.

Across countries, there are also relevant demographic strategies containing many elements pertinent to sustainable work. The strategies not only present a vision for the future but also serve as inter-institutional coordination frameworks for measures aimed at addressing the demographic challenges of ageing societies. Such strategies include *Every Age Counts* in Germany (2012) and *Solidarity between Generations* in Poland.

EU funding, especially the European Social Fund (ESF), is frequently directed towards various aspects of sustainable work, including investments in the skills of workers and the unemployed, job guidance for the young, activation of older people, and social services to support people with care obligations (Belgium, Greece, Lithuania, Poland and Spain). Finally, the National Reform Programme (NRP) process encourages Member States to think in a horizontal and integrated way about the key economic and employment issues. The NRPs, as prepared by the Member States, feed

into the Annual Growth Survey by the European Commission, which results in country-specific recommendations (CSRs).

The Annual Growth Survey takes stock of progress towards the implementation of Europe 2020. This strategy itself has five ambitious quantitative goals; of particular relevance from the sustainable work perspective are the targets in the fields of:

- employment (increase employment rates to 75% by 2020);
- education (reduce the rates of early school-leaving to below 10% and make sure that at least 40% of 30–34-year-olds have completed tertiary education);
- poverty reduction (at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 2020).

It is important that the concept of sustainable work is used as an integral part of policies aimed at achieving these targets. Otherwise, the employment target may be reached through, for example, substantially increasing the share of precarious jobs – to the detriment of workers' health and long-term working lives.

While the general thrust of the 2015 CSRs is towards promoting growth, employment and competitiveness, some of the recommendations are of direct relevance and are positive from the sustainable work perspective. Examples include:

- improve the employability of young people, older workers and the long-term unemployed, focusing particularly on developing job-relevant skills (Finland);
- take measures to reduce the excessive use of temporary and civil law contracts in the labour market (Poland);
- further improve the availability of affordable, high-quality, full-time childcare (UK);
- improve the coverage and adequacy of unemployment benefits and cash social assistance and improve the employability of those looking for work (Lithuania).

This chapter presents an analysis of sustainable work policies across the four dimensions presented in Chapter 1: fostering workers' career and employment security; promoting health and well-being at work; promoting work–life balance; and developing skills and competences. Each of the themes includes both policies directed to improving the quality of the job and the work environment as well as improving the fit between work and the individual's needs and circumstances over the life course.

Ensuring career and employment security

Career and employment security are linked to sustainability of work in two ways: first, through employment and social protection of those who are in work, because this has an impact on job prospects, that is how they are protected against losing their job (in comparison with other workers) and on financial vulnerability (with potential impact on their health in the long run); and second, there is the issue of those who have lost their job or who do not have a job and what measures need to be taken so that they may find work again. Specific attention should be given to more vulnerable groups, and to older and younger workers who, for different reasons, may have difficulty re-entering the job market.

Two important elements to consider when reflecting on the link with sustainability of work over the life course are employability, focusing on the building up or enhancement of the relevant skills to make a transition between different jobs, and decommodification,⁷ ensuring that people are protected against financial vulnerability if they have no job. It is about having a job with the necessary employment and social protection and ensuring that an individual could make a transition from one job to another. It is about ensuring that more vulnerable groups receive the necessary support to get into work.

The issue of employment participation is core to the sustainability of work and has been one of the main goals of the European Union from its onset. Employment participation has received specific attention through the employment strategy since the 1990s and this has continued into the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth.

The focus of employment policies in all Member States is to enable more people to work and to ensure that they can do so. This is done through a combination of active and passive policies designed to help workers to get (back) into work, for instance through active labour market policies (ALMP), but also to ensure they are supported throughout the period in which they are unemployed so that they can make smooth transitions. These measures are usually accompanied by some elements of training.

Many countries have revisited their social protection schemes and particularly their unemployment benefits to ensure that they support and encourage these transitions. This approach is, however, linked closely with flexicurity, whereby there is a balance between more flexibilisation of employment contracts with the necessary employment security to allow transitions between jobs. Labour demand and the economic crisis might have had an impact on this balance and led to more flexibilisation, though not necessarily with the correct balance between employment protection and transitions into other jobs. This has important implications for the sustainability of work.

Issues related to employment protection and social protection

Changes in employment protection

Since the onset of the crisis, concerns over discouraging job creation and dealing with high unemployment rates have led to an overall reduction in the strictness of employment protection, especially in Greece, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK (OECD, 2013b; Schömann, 2014). In particular, a trend of easing dismissal procedures has been observed across Europe (Eurofound, 2013c). For instance, the UK saw the introduction of high fees for cases taken to employment tribunals, while the cost of laying off employees in Greece was reduced in 2010 by curtailing redundancy compensation payments and shortening the notice period in the event of contract termination. In Spain, dismissing a worker for economic reasons was validated in those cases where a company was making or foresaw a loss, or was experiencing a persistent drop in its revenues or sales. Following a comprehensive agreement by the social partners, the Netherlands has also been in the process of simplifying dismissal procedures and capping the amount of severance pay with a linkage to seniority rather than age (European Commission, 2015c).

The general trend of increasing weakening of employment protection might have an impact on both the security (career prospects) and earnings dimensions of job quality and on health (Eurofound, 2015a; OECD, 2013b).

⁷ Decommodification refers to a situation whereby certain social services are a right, and people are not dependent on the labour market.

Employment protection for non-standard employment

Fast-paced labour market shifts have led to a rise in non-standard, more flexible forms of employment, which has challenged both the employment protection and social protection of workers in Europe (Eurofound, 2002, 2014c; Nardo and Rossetti, 2013). In particular, countries such as Greece, Lithuania and Spain have reportedly facilitated the use of fixed-term contracts and temporary agency work (European Commission, 2015d). As an example, the permitted duration of employment through temporary work agencies in Greece has been extended to three years, replacing a scheme of 12 plus 6 months in duration. In Lithuania, a 'service vouchers' system was established in 2013, which reduced the administrative burden for employers in the agricultural and forestry sectors when hiring employees for temporary low-skilled work. Also worth mentioning is the UK's Work Programme, which has frequently moved the unemployed into part-time, zero-hours and temporary jobs.

In parallel, rates of part-time and temporary work rose in the EU during the recession, often as a result of involuntary withdrawal from full-time employment (Eurofound, 2014c; Erhel et al, 2012; Nardo and Rossetti, 2013). For example, in 2014 varying proportions of part-time workers across the EU considered they were underemployed, according to Eurostat. The figure was higher for women in all Member States except Romania. Overall, close to 30% of part-time employees wanted to have a full-time job in 2014, a substantial rise on the 2002 figure of 17.2%. This situation may potentially contribute to the creation of dual labour markets characterised by the presence of 'insiders' and 'outsiders', whereby those with a permanent, full-time contract are better protected and have superior long-term prospects over the life course (Guillaud and Marx, 2013).

Workers in secondary labour markets with non-standard forms of employment often bear the burden of poor working conditions, low wages and higher risk of unemployment (McKay et al, 2012). For example, workers with non-standard contracts are the first to suffer changes to their status and employment relationship when a crisis hits (Lang et al, 2013). A widespread diffusion of non-standard employment may become even more problematic when coupled with a low level of transition to permanent jobs (European Commission, 2015d).

Evidence from the case studies highlights a number of instances where non-standard work combined with a lack of corresponding protection may result in precarious employment. For example, agency workers in the UK and those on zero-hours contracts often cannot accrue enough continuous service to qualify for the rights related to fair dismissal; flexible work arrangements are generally associated with negative consequences including lower pay and impeded career progression. Short-term work was still the predominant form (90%) of employment contract signed in 2015 in Spain, almost one in four lasting seven days or less. This high volume of temporary employment, even after the massive disappearance of this type of contract since 2008, represents a dual labour market in Spain, with 24.6% of waged employees on fixed-term contracts.

Wages among temporary workers are, on average, lower than those of permanent workers (Eurofound, 2012g). According to the Spanish National Institute of Statistics, the average annual wage of fixed-term workers in Spain in 2013 was 36.6 percentage points lower than that of permanent workers.

Agency workers in Germany are not represented on works councils, usually receive lower wages and normally do not get the same benefit packages as workers with standard contracts. In addition, German workers in so-called marginal employment (short-duration jobs or jobs paying up to €450 per month) face low levels of employment protection, social security and codetermination rights (rights of employees to participate in the management of the organisation they work for).

Moreover, despite the advantage of flexibility, the voucher system in Lithuania for work in the agriculture sector or mobile work based on business certificates or certificates of individual activity does not provide the same employment benefits and security as regular work contracts.

Similarly, contracts of limited duration in Poland are associated with poor working conditions. In particular, so-called ‘civil law contract’ workers in Poland experience lower pay, fewer social security benefits, less on-the-job training and a higher risk of poverty than workers on open-ended and even fixed-term employment contracts. One specific characteristic of civil law contracts is that they are agreed outside the Labour Code, so they do not entail unemployment benefits or automatic health insurance coverage (European Commission, 2015e).

Vulnerable groups and non-standard employment

Certain groups might be more vulnerable with regard to employment security, these include young workers, lower-skilled individuals and older workers, who may face significant challenges in finding a new position in case of job loss. In particular, the evidence is that young workers are often those who are made redundant first when a crisis hits (Davis and von Wachter, 2011; Bettio et al, 2013; Banerji et al, 2015). This is partly due to the young cohort often being employed in precarious and insecure jobs (such as low-paying temporary jobs), with lower employment security than workers in older age groups (Nardo and Rossetti, 2013). For example, in Sweden, young people are overrepresented among workers with short-term contracts, implying that, for a large share of the country’s youth, entry into the labour market is associated with lower employment stability than for older generations. In Greece, vulnerable groups such as minors aged 15–18 and young workers up to the age of 24 have been excluded from the minimum protection provided by the National General Collective Employment Agreement (EGSSE). Young people in Poland constitute the majority of those employed under civil law contracts and so often lack the rights enjoyed by regular workers.

Analysing labour market segmentation from a gender perspective, a large proportion of women are engaged in non-standard employment, especially part-time work. According to the Eurostat data for 2014, almost one-third of the European female workforce is employed part time (compared with less than 10% of men), with Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK all having shares of female part-time employment of more than 40%. The gender gaps in the number of hours worked and in pay (the total earnings gap is 37% across the EU) add up to significant inequalities in the labour market (European Commission, 2015c). For example, the case study for Greece reported that the extension of temporary employment had affected women disproportionately in relation to precarious work.

On the whole, the case studies on Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Spain and the UK reported a number of labour market segmentation problems that constitute a trap for vulnerable groups of workers. In contrast, Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden were described as being relatively more successful in accommodating some of the career risks of non-standard employment, although similar types of issues were often reported in these countries as well. For instance, duality in employment protection in Sweden was described as still being ‘significant’ – a result of relatively strong protection of open-ended contracts combined with fairly weak regulation of short-term and temporary agency work. Similar observations were made about Finland and Germany.

Flexible forms of employment could be part of a sustainable work model as long as they did not become precarious forms of employment. In other words, non-standard jobs can be ‘good jobs’ provided they are accommodated by the institutions of the welfare state (Häusermann and Schwander, 2010). Accordingly, a number of countries (in particular southern and some eastern European countries)

have in recent years modified their employment protection regulations, reducing the strictness of employment protection for permanent contracts and increasing the protection of temporary workers, thereby reducing the gap between the two (European Commission, 2015d, p. 3).

Particular examples of regulation accommodating non-standard work include arrangements in Germany that aim to avoid a 'chain' of fixed-term contracts used by employers to circumvent long-term commitments. In Sweden, fixed-term employment must be transformed after a maximum of four years into an open-ended contract. As a result, short-term contracts in both countries reportedly constitute not a dead end but a stepping stone towards more stable forms of employment. However, similar regulation in Poland was deemed ineffective as even a month's break in employment between the fixed-term contracts allowed for an increase in the number of temporary contracts permitted. Because of this, amendments were made to the Polish Labour Code in 2015.

While severance pay in most Member States applies mainly to permanent employees (open-ended employment contracts), in Spain it also applies to fixed-term contracts, amounting to 12 days' pay per year worked. If an employer dismisses a fixed-term employee before the contract expires, the employee is entitled to additional severance pay. In accordance with the Temporary Employment Act in Poland, temporary contracts should be used by employers only exceptionally and only when or where justified, for example, for seasonal work or when a regular employee is absent. There have also been initiatives to improve the unemployment security of the self-employed, freelancers and temporary workers in Finland. Economically dependent self-employed workers in Spain (that is, workers receiving at least 75% of their income from a single client or company) and the self-employed are allowed to contribute at a fixed rate (€50) to the Special Regime for Self-Employed Workers (RETA) of the Social Security System for six months and are entitled to receive (and capitalise) unemployment benefit for a maximum of 270 days.

A further issue is the increase in self-employment in some countries, such as the Netherlands, particularly in the number of self-employed without employees. This is not in itself a negative development and can be a form of job creation. It is also linked to the development of new forms of employment such as those associated with ICT – crowd employment, for instance, where an online platform enables employers to access unknown workers to fulfil set tasks (Eurofound 2015b). In the context of sustainable work over the life course, these developments call for a reflection in each country on social protection and the building up of social rights, such as pension rights, and transitions in employment status in the context of their career for this group of workers. Certain forms of self-employment are used in an inappropriate way – sometimes called 'bogus' or 'false' self-employment or economically dependent workers – which refers to the illicit intent to bypass labour law or social security standards by utilising a concealed employment relationship. In doing so, employers can avoid not only observance of formal work requirements but also paying additional taxes or insurance contributions; they also transfer risks to the worker. This in turn distorts competition and results in precarious employment. Although the exact figures are difficult to calculate, in the UK's construction sector alone, it is estimated that false self-employment involves between 90,000 and 150,000 workers (Eichhorst et al, 2013).

Social dialogue has contributed to the adaptation of European social institutions to the new employment risks. In countries with a longer tradition of collective bargaining, such as Finland and Sweden, there is clearly better accommodation of non-standard forms of employment by social insurance and protection schemes (see Box 1). At the same time, social dialogue has weakened across the EU. The trend towards decentralisation in collective bargaining from the industry/sector level to the enterprise level has accelerated in some countries, although it shows significant differences between countries depending

on the predominant level of bargaining and the role of legislation (Eurofound, 2015d). In many cases, this process of decentralisation has developed in a rather disorganised way, with a number of negative and adverse side effects. For example, in Greece, it has resulted in less favourable remuneration and other working conditions for employees. In contrast, in other Member States, this process has evolved in a coordinated manner, and the balance between more flexible processes and coordination in the implementation of collective bargaining at national level has not been seriously altered.

Box 1: Offsetting the career risks related to non-standard employment in Sweden and Finland

According to the national case reports, Finland and Sweden have been relatively successful in accommodating the career risks of non-standard employment. These two countries have a strong tradition of social dialogue, particularly high union density* and collective bargaining at industry/sector level (both countries) and at national level (Finland). The government plays a facilitating role in negotiations between social partners (which have relatively extensive autonomy from public authorities) by setting the legal framework of collective bargaining and passing basic labour regulations, including social policy and labour legislation reforms. The result has been a comprehensive institutional system that tends to diminish the differences between standard ('typical') and non-standard ('atypical') forms of work (Häusermann and Schwander, 2010).

* In 2012, trade union density among OECD countries was highest in Finland (69.8%), followed by Sweden (67.5%) and Denmark (67.2%).

Overall, weakened employment protection and issues related to non-standard forms of employment may come at a price for the workforce of Europe. To make work more sustainable, public policies on unemployment benefits, job-search assistance and active labour market programmes can be put in place (OECD, 2013b). Accordingly, the already mentioned notion of flexicurity has been widely and controversially applied in the context of the EU to reconcile the demands for flexible labour markets with those for comprehensive employment security. It is strongly advocated by the European Employment Strategy and Europe 2020. Generally, flexicurity can be achieved by providing an effective safety net during unemployment, backed by high-quality ALMP targeted at those searching for a job (Viebrock and Clasen, 2009). These two sets of policy measures are discussed in the next sections.

Income security and income support for the unemployed

Earnings can significantly affect the disposition of an individual towards a prolonged working life, including their capacity and motivation to work. In addition, a sufficient level of income may provide access to services that may facilitate labour force participation for some groups (Eurofound, 2015a). On the other hand, decreasing incomes can have a detrimental effect on the working population and contribute to the growing levels of in-work poverty (which rose in Europe from 8.3% in 2010 to 9.5% in 2014), wage polarisation and labour market segmentation (European Commission, 2015c). In some countries, these issues are partly determined by national or sector-specific minimum wage rates that are too low (as reported in the case studies of Lithuania and the UK). However, minimum wage policies may have only a narrow impact and not address those who receive the minimum wage but remain below the low-pay threshold. At the same time, high minimum rates might constitute a barrier for workers with low skills or low educational attainment, and for the new entrants to the labour market. This presents a trade-off for policymakers who need to accommodate the risks of low income for workers across Europe. Working part time or part year or on a temporary contract is also strongly associated with in-work poverty, in conjunction with low work intensity in the household

(Marx and Nolan, 2012). The issues raised by non-standard work (discussed above) are even more relevant to income security and in-work poverty.

In the context of making work sustainable over the life course, particular attention should be paid to policies supporting the transition from inactivity to work, including income support for the unemployed (Eurofound, 2015a, p. 13). The effect could be at least threefold. First, it may provide individuals with the time to find a job that matches their abilities, circumstances and motivations (Tatsiramos, 2014). Second, it may support their health and well-being during spells of unemployment, which is crucial in terms of long-term career prospects and thus the sustainability of work over the life course. Third, unemployment benefit systems can perform a role of automatic stabilisation during crises, thereby contributing to smoothing aggregate shocks and in turn improving employment prospects for individuals (Stovicek and Turrini, 2012). Overall, since involuntary unemployment can be considered an economic contingency that people may face often during their life (ILO, 2010, p. 57), support for transition periods is important when dealing with critical life events (Eurofound, 2015a, p. 10) and attempting to minimise the possible long-term scarring effects of unemployment (Anxo et al, 2010, p. 9).

In the countries considered in this report, income support measures for the unemployed vary. Overall, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden are characterised by a highly generous unemployment benefit system in terms of both entitlement conditions and income support, whereas Lithuania and Poland have the leanest unemployment benefit systems (Stovicek and Turrini, 2012). These cross-national variations can be observed across several dimensions, such as the way unemployment benefits are delivered. In some countries, provision is mainly the domain of public employment services or other public bodies. Such is the case in Greece, where the Greek Manpower Employment Organization (OAED) manages 'passive' policy tools such as the main unemployment benefit in the country.

On the other hand, in Sweden, complementary unemployment compensation above the standard unemployment benefit and severance payments are often administered by the social partners, mainly in the form of bipartite Job Security Councils (Trygghetsråd), which supplement the role of public employment agencies. These councils date back to the 1970s; currently there are several councils covering different sectors, including the public sector. The Board of Representatives is the main governing body of the Job Security Council and decides on the scope and contents of support. These support arrangements, based on collective agreements and financed by the affiliated member companies (Diedrich and Bergström, 2006), cover more than three-quarters of the labour force. Similarly in Finland, the earnings-related allowance is typically tied to trade union membership and trade union unemployment funds – though the system has been criticised as being unfair to non-members of the funds.

In addition, countries differ in relation to the size, scope and entitlement conditions of the income support. For instance, in Finland, the average compensation level is 57.4% of previous earnings. In Spain, the rates are equivalent to 70% of the last earned wage for the first six months and 50% from the sixth month onwards, while in the Netherlands the unemployed receive 75% of the last earned wage for the first two months and 70% thereafter.

A lack of proper coverage of unemployment risks was reported in Lithuania, where the unemployment insurance benefit is very low (up to €301.70 per month) and deemed insufficient to properly support labour market transitions. Compared with other EU countries, the duration of the entitlement of unemployment support is relatively short: in Finland, the benefit is granted for up to 500 working days, whereas in Lithuania it is paid for only up to six months to those whose work record is shorter than 25 years (Aidukaite, 2013). In addition, the qualifying conditions are strict for unemployment benefits in Lithuania, with at least 18 months in paid employment required. In contrast, requirements

in Spain are more relaxed, with the worker being required to have made contributions for at least 360 days within the last six years.

Unemployment allowances in some cases are received by a small share of the unemployed (as reported in the Greece case study). Equally important is the fact that income support for the unemployed is usually lower in relation to non-standard employment, which increases the risk of 'implicit disentanglement' of unemployed workers within earnings-related unemployment insurance systems (Emmenegger et al, 2012). Implicit disentanglement, created by the lack of accommodation of new patterns of employment risks in social insurance schemes, threatens to leave many workers without decent income security during periods of unemployment, especially in countries marked by high non-standard employment rates. One relevant example is reported in the case study of Poland, where employees under the previously mentioned civil law contracts do not have the same rights to unemployment benefits as workers under regular contracts. This issue has been addressed by a new regulation (which came into force in 2016) that will oblige employers to pay monthly social contributions for civil law contracts to at least the level of the minimum wage.

Furthermore, the activation elements within unemployment benefit schemes vary across the sample of countries. As income support schemes present a trade-off between income compensation and incentives to take up jobs, unemployment benefit schemes should entail adequate activation policies aimed at strengthening job-search efforts (Stovicek and Turrini, 2012). Given that activation measures in turn reduce benefit dependency and unemployment traps, a trend towards the inclusion of financial and non-financial negative incentives in unemployment benefit provisions across Europe is not surprising (Weishaupt, 2011). Without such measures embedded in benefit schemes, there is a risk of skills depletion that might subsequently reduce future employability and make longer working lives more difficult to achieve (Tatsiramos, 2014). The EU's *Joint employment report 2011* emphasised that unemployment benefit schemes should 'provide the right incentives to work' and called for greater sanctions for non-compliance (Council of the European Union, 2011). Particularly with regard to the long-term unemployed, the European Council invited the Commission to come up with proposals to help support the long-term unemployed. This was translated by the Commission into a proposal for a Council recommendation on 17 September 2015 to make systems for the integration of the long-term unemployed more efficient (European Commission, 2015f).

Accordingly, a number of case studies, including those for Belgium, Germany, Lithuania, Spain and the UK, highlighted requirements for unemployment benefit claimants to comply with strict conditions requiring participation in activation measures. For example, the UK's Universal Credit programme requires those deemed capable of working to actively seek and be available for full-time work. Beneficiaries are subject to financial sanctions if they do not meet this condition, and both partners in a household have to make a claimant commitment; initial non-compliance can lead to a benefits sanction for 2 weeks, followed by 4 weeks and finally up to 26 weeks. Nevertheless, the programme has been criticised because employers are free to offer very flexible jobs, including zero-hours contracts, which make it difficult for claimants to secure full-time work. In addition, the impact of the sanctions is causing concern as more people are being forced to turn to food banks and other forms of charity due to loss of benefits.

Similarly, a programme by the German public employment service designed to re-train unemployed job-seekers is primarily offered to those receiving unemployment benefits, whereas unemployed people in Belgium are obliged to enrol as job-seekers with the employment services in the area where they live. Likewise in Spain, income support schemes ask the unemployed to sign an activity commitment

declaring their willingness to actively search for a job, to attend the interviews organised by the public employment service and to participate in specific activities, such as counselling, guiding or training.

When it comes to income support to the unemployed, particular attention should be given to their long-term inactivity since this poses the risk of them never regaining access to sustainable work. In Spain, the Prepara programme was created to cover the income needs of the long-term unemployed (see Box 2) and the Employment Activation Programme (Programa de Activación de Empleo) was also introduced. The latter is a temporary measure covering only the long-term unemployed and provides an income benefit tied to participation in active employment services.

Box 2: Supporting the long-term unemployed in Spain

Since 2011, the Prepara programme in Spain has sought to improve the income security, as well as update the professional qualifications, of workers approaching the end of their entitlement period for unemployment benefit. Within the framework of the programme, the amount received as unemployment allowance depends on the claimant's household situation and lasts for a maximum of six months. Beneficiaries are required to participate in active employment activities, training courses and employment searches as proposed by the employment services, and to accept appropriate job offers. According to official statistics, more than 572,000 individuals have benefited from this programme. Prepara has been extended seven times and will be extended automatically until the unemployment rate falls below 20%.

Furthermore, the case studies reported on several income security measures related to the financial downturn. In Spain, special subsidies to workers affected by restructuring processes were introduced in 2013 to address their financial needs, especially in cases where their employer had been declared insolvent and unable to pay the legal or agreed costs of dismissal. Another relevant initiative was the implementation of public works in Lithuania. Workers who participated in these public works received temporary incomes and were entitled to all social security benefits, although the measure was criticised for not developing workers' skills and competences.

On the whole, income support schemes play an instrumental role in supporting various working life transitions and ensuring employment stability, embedded in the notion of sustainable work over the life course. Nevertheless, in the face of a trade-off between income security and incentives to take up jobs, activation policies must also be taken into account. Relevant labour market inclusion policies are discussed below and in the last section of this chapter.

Labour market inclusion and ALMP

The concept of sustainable work implies a range of policies that are aimed at creating inclusive labour markets through activation, tackling labour market segregation, and improving access to employment for the disadvantaged (Eurofound, 2015a). Such policies often (but not always) fall under the umbrella of ALMP and are designed to support the unemployed, employees at risk of unemployment and inactive people to find work and in turn avoid long-term unemployment. Not surprisingly, ALMP have been described as 'indispensable' in achieving goals related to full employment (van Steendam et al, 2011). While income support and other social protection schemes remain at the heart of the European policy framework, measures such as personal job-search assistance, subsidies for private enterprises, training programmes, active restructuring, direct job creation, placement services and employment incentives have played an increasingly important role in the EU in recent decades, while

also constituting the cornerstone of the flexicurity agenda promoted by Europe 2020 (ILO, 2010, p. 57). Overall, such policy interventions play a central role at various transitions during the life course and are therefore essential to the notion of sustainable work.

While the increase in ALMP spending has been a general trend, considerable cross-national differences can still be observed in Europe (Bonoli, 2010). Within the case study countries, for example, active interventions in the labour market are prevalent in countries such as Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden, while the lowest expenditures on active measures in relation to GDP were recorded in Greece, Lithuania and the UK (see Figure A3 in the annex). The breakdown of these figures – that is, the proportional amount of public budget allocated to each active measure (training, incentives to companies, direct job creation, business start-up policies and so on) – has been considered in relation to further variables such as the unemployment rate. Moreover, cross-national variations are apparent in the way labour market services and measures are implemented, although for the most part, public employment services play the central role. For example, in the UK, 18 so-called prime providers are responsible for the provision of the assistance envisioned in the 2011 Work Programme; of these, 15 come from the private sector.

Several of the case studies reported different overarching labour market inclusion programmes targeted at all workers who are unemployed or at risk of losing a job (see Box 3).

Box 3: Programmes aimed at labour market activation

Relatively comprehensive efforts at inclusion and support in the labour market were described in the assessment of the UK's Work Programme. It was launched in 2011 to consolidate and replace a range of other similar initiatives. It supports measures such as community work-placement to develop basic employment skills, and practical help and advice such as help with developing a CV or advice on interview techniques. Participants are supported through an individual 'action plan' with the aim of getting back into work. Nevertheless, the programme has been only partially successful: between 2011 and 2014, only 367,500 of the 1.65 million people who participated in the programme stayed in employment for at least 26 weeks (or 13 weeks in case of individuals with severe barriers to employment). The programme has been described as providing less support to those most in need due to the design of the incentive system; worrying regional differences in the job outcomes achieved have also been reported. The UK case study criticised the programme for focusing its support on getting people back into work and not providing support once they are in work, thus questioning its compatibility with the goals of sustainable work.

Another example comes from Finland, where the Change Security programme was initiated in 2005 to provide tailored support for workers either dismissed or in danger of being dismissed for financial or production-related reasons. The aim of the programme, which involves regional companies, development organisations and company services, is to facilitate job-to-job transitions at the earliest stages of possible dismissal. The main measures applied within the framework of the programme include: a plan supporting the job-search process worked out between the employer or public employment services and the worker; paid leave during the notice period to draft the employment plan or participate in the activities specified in the employment plan; and a supplementary unemployment allowance scheme (Te-Services, 2014). Much as in the Work Programme in the UK, the Finnish programme seems to benefit some groups more than others, with regional differences in work practices remaining one of the main challenges.

Vulnerable groups

Some of the labour market inclusion policies reviewed target specific groups considered vulnerable or facing the greatest barriers in the search for employment. Across Europe, various measures aimed at different social groups encompass wage subsidies, counselling, training and practical advice, among others. They can also include additional incentives for specific target groups to become self-employed, which may provide an avenue for older workers or workers with family responsibilities to remain in the labour market. The Non-Discrimination Act 2015 in Finland can be seen as promoting labour market inclusion; perfect knowledge of the Finnish language or holding Finnish citizenship can no longer be demanded in job recruitment processes unless justified by law or by the obligations associated with particular tasks. Some aspects of gender-related discrimination in recruitment were also reported to have been addressed. In Greece, for example, employers hiring unemployed mothers with at least two children can receive a subsidy. Measures tackling labour market inclusion of the disabled are considered in Box 4.

Box 4: Programmes targeting disabled workers

Several case studies reported on measures targeted at those with reduced capacity to work or with disabilities. These measures include subsidies, quotas, social services, rehabilitation, education and employment services.

The UK's Work Programme incentivises prime providers with a differential pricing system to assist potential employees with a health condition or disability. Belgium provides subsidies for employers hiring workers with disabilities, along with specific assistance provided by the public employment service to those with a limitation. This can include an interpreter for a person with a hearing impairment, an allocation for workplace adaptation, or a special means of transport.

Likewise in Finland, the People with Reduced Work Capacity at Work Programme 2013–2015 (OSKU) was developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to offer support and tools for the employment of workers with reduced work capacity. People enrolled on the programme cooperate with a personal, specially trained ability coordinator in an effort to boost their employment chances and increase their understanding of the labour market. The programme encompasses healthcare and social services, rehabilitation, education, employment services and social welfare.

In 2013, the General Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities in Spain set up a mandatory quota scheme for companies with 50 or more employees requiring that 2% of their staff be workers with disabilities. Supplementary to the quota system, incentives schemes, direct subsidies, reductions in a company's social security contributions and subsidies for the adaptation of work stations are available for companies. Disabled people are also offered employment centres providing adequate working conditions and special employment status. These centres seek to produce and deliver goods and services while facilitating social integration.

Young workers

The labour market transitions of young workers pose a major policy challenge in Europe. The first job might be an important factor determining further working life throughout an individual's life course. Thus labour policies for young people are not only important for labour markets (and employment rates) but also and primarily for making work sustainable over the life course.

Governments across the EU implement a variety of measures aimed at supporting youth in the labour market including apprenticeships, training, internships, subsidised jobs, voluntary labour, entrepreneurial loans and various non-financial services. Assistance for unemployed youth is usually provided on the basis of individual action plans, put together by the public employment agencies, defining mutual obligations and listing the relevant actions that need to be taken. On the European level, broader initiatives such as the Youth Employment Package were initiated to deal with the scarring effects of unemployment among young people.

As a consequence of the crisis, the EU has set out to systematically tackle youth unemployment by promoting a measure called the Youth Guarantee (launched in April 2013), which seeks to ensure that all young people under 25 receive an offer of a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed (Council of the European Union, 2013). Thus the Youth Guarantee is both a structural reform aimed at improving transitions from formal education to the labour market, and an immediate measure to provide work for young people. In order for Youth Guarantee schemes to be activated, the European Commission has helped each Member State to develop its own national Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. Plans often require robust cooperation between the key stakeholders such as public authorities, employment services, career guidance providers, employers and trade unions.

Policies implemented within the Youth Guarantee framework vary from country to country, and include improving the quality and quantity of apprenticeships, VET opportunities, reforming public employment services and combating early school-leaving. For instance, in Spain, where the system was set up in July 2014, young people registered for the scheme can use four online training courses for free, while in Poland exemptions from social insurance contributions for those under 30 were introduced. Finland has developed one of the most comprehensive Youth Guarantee schemes: in 2011, 83.5% of young job-seekers received a successful offer within three months of registering as unemployed (Eurofound, 2012h). Conducted by municipalities and governed by public employment services, the scheme aims to reach out to young people in schools, health centres, libraries and youth centres and to interview and assess them to develop an individual plan.

With regard to the means of boosting youth employment, subsidising is a prevalent measure across Member States. As an example, the Manpower Employment Organisation in Greece uses subsidies broadly to promote the employment of young people, with employers who hire young unemployed people (up to the age of 25) receiving a subsidy of up to 50% of the employer's contributions that must be paid during the first year of employment. Recent programmes implemented by the agency further subsidise enterprises to hire large numbers of young people.

The Lithuanian government also uses subsidised measures to encourage employers to hire inexperienced youth; for instance, the Support for the First Job programme provides job subsidies for all first-time employed young people if an employer makes a request. More precisely, the employer can receive an allowance covering 23.3% of the newly employed young person's salary for up to 12 months. According to the Lithuanian Labour Exchange, the number of participants in job creation subsidy programmes increased more than threefold and reached 20,000 between 2008 and 2014. In Spain, within the Youth Guarantee framework, employers can receive a €300 monthly payment for six months for hiring young people on open-ended contracts.

A large number of instruments and services tailored to young job-seekers were reported overall. For example, in Sweden a permanent upper secondary school apprenticeship programme was introduced following the Austrian and German examples. It is expected to significantly ease the transition from

education into the labour market. Within the framework of the Youth Guarantee, young job-seekers aged 20–24 also have the right to be enrolled in ALMP schemes after an unemployment period of three months (in contrast to a six-month waiting period for other age groups). Furthermore, activation measures from day one of unemployment were launched in 2012, and some support measures for vocational introduction jobs for young people were implemented in 2014. A number of municipalities also have their own labour market measures for unemployed youth in Sweden (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014).

Designated networks of specific youth centres designed to facilitate labour market integration were also identified in the case studies. These include special employment service points for youth in Germany, where all relevant stakeholders are present in a one-stop-shop (for instance, staff from the federal public employment service, local job centres, municipal authorities and voluntary-sector representatives). Similarly in Lithuania, the network of Youth Job Centres has been extended from 11 to 29 offices, and it is planned that each of the country's 60 municipalities will have at least one such centre by 2019. In these centres, young people can obtain information about the labour market or receive motivational and career guidance services.

Older workers

The type of transition from economic activity to retirement depends on the mix of public and employer policies towards older employees, age management at the company level, the framework of public and private pensions, various activation measures, and social norms and expectations (Eurofound, 2015a; Rubery, 2010). All of these can influence the extension of working lives and the overall labour market inclusion of older workers.

There are frequent mentions in the national case studies of hiring subsidies, reductions to social security contributions and other financial incentives for companies that are designed to encourage employment of the older labour force. In Lithuania, the project Support for Unemployed Elderly People, in addition to supporting territorial mobility and vocational training activities, has also funded subsidised jobs. Similarly in Greece, the Manpower Employment Organisation implemented a series of employment incentives to ameliorate the difficult situation of older workers since the beginning of the economic crisis, with subsidising jobs being the key policy instrument (see Box 5). Additionally, the Fund for Professional Experience in Belgium was set up to give subsidies to employers who conduct age-conscious human resource management, and projects addressing the ageing process and the workload of older workers.

The Solidarity of Generations strategy in Poland was adopted in 2008 with a package of government measures aimed at increasing the employment of people aged 50 or older. To decrease labour costs, it reduced social security contributions for older workers and sickness benefits paid by employers. Spain has equivalent incentive schemes, such as one that reduces compulsory social security contributions for hiring workers aged over 45 years old. Moreover, older workers were defined as one of the target groups in the country's Employment Promotion Programme (Programa de Fomento de Empleo), which cut employer's social security contributions for people aged 59 or more to encourage the maintenance of permanent contracts in this age group. The Spanish government also implemented negative incentives for collective redundancies of older workers in 2013; companies with more than 100 employees now have to contribute to social security payments when a collective redundancy involves a significant proportion of workers aged 50 or older. The amount to be paid by the company is determined by the costs to the public employment services incurred by the newly laid-off workers.

The reintegration of older workers is one of the weaker areas of the Netherlands' labour market policies. In 2012, the government introduced the so-called 55+ programme (renamed 50+ in 2014), which aims to support individuals aged 50 and over to find a job and in turn make them more resilient on the labour market. The Social Security Office supports the project through a broad action plan, which involves employer motivation measures (for example, employers recruiting older workers receive a social security tax reduction for three years) and workshops with both employers and potential employees. Despite all these measures, it remains difficult to get those who have lost their job back into employment beyond a certain age (50 or 55), particularly because they are in competition with those who are retired and for whom a job provides only supplementary income to a retirement pension.

Box 5: Labour market inclusion of older workers in Greece

In Greece, older workers have been especially disadvantaged since the beginning of the crisis. The employment rate for workers aged 55–64 decreased drastically, associated with the impact of the crisis on sectors such as construction, industry and commerce, which traditionally employed large proportions of older workers. The Greek government has implemented various programmes of incentives for companies hiring workers in vulnerable categories. Among the targeted groups, there has been a special emphasis on older workers. Job subsidies were put into place, as illustrated by three programmes targeting unemployed older workers. The first one offered support to private enterprises for the employment of 2,500 unemployed individuals close to pension age. The second programme incentivised the employment by government enterprises of 5,000 unemployed individuals aged 55–64, and the third programme subsidised 160,000 full-time employment positions for workers aged over 50.

Since 2010, there have also been negative incentives for companies to dismiss older employees. In this context, employers firing employees aged 55–64 are obliged to pay some of their social security contributions. Within two months of the employee's dismissal, the employer is obliged to pay a percentage of the worker's social security contributions for a maximum of three years. This percentage is 50% for insured employees aged 55–60 and 80% for insured employees aged 60–64.

Overall, employment incentives targeting older individuals are at odds with the Greek post-crisis policy context of flexibility and removal of employment protection. They potentially contribute to sustainability of employment by making it possible for older individuals to prolong their working lives. Nonetheless, there is no clear picture of whether enterprises choose to invest in older individuals by hiring them.

Not all labour market inclusion policies for older workers in the national case studies offer financial incentives. In Germany, the Perspective 50+ programme (2006) offers individually tailored support services to (mostly long-term) unemployed workers above the age of 50 to reintegrate them into the labour market.⁸ An example of a less complex measure comes from Spain, where workers aged over 45 have priority when public employment services organise training programmes and other active labour market initiatives. The Bank of Seniors in Lithuania created a public database for older job-seekers, although with limited success.

⁸ With a reintegration rate of almost 25%, the programme is considered effective. Nevertheless, a large majority of participants do not end up in typical employment contracts (similar to the case of the UK's Work Programme).

Notably, along with the public sector, the role of the social partners appears to be important in relation to inclusion initiatives. For example, in Finland, a policy package titled the Work Course model, put forward by the employer and employee organisations, targets workers of all ages in an attempt to promote a better understanding of the age variation in workplaces. It encourages communication between the employer and the employee, and encompasses issues such as career planning, flexible working time arrangements and adjusting job demands in relation to changes in one's work ability. Collective Agreement No. 104 concluded in Belgium in 2013 made it obligatory for all companies with 20 or more employees to develop a plan of action for the employment of individuals aged 45 or older. The plan may contain an obligation to recruit a number of older employees, development of career plans and career management, internal job mobility and task rotation. While, in principle, the idea behind this collective agreement is fully in line with ensuring that work is sustainable for workers of all ages, including older workers, the development of the plans at company level is left quite open, and this room for interpretation leads to a variation in depth of implementation; some plans may even 'lack teeth' to some extent. Lastly, the previously mentioned 50+ programme in the Netherlands was developed in cooperation with social partners to promote training, discussions and networking between employers and employees.

The negative perceptions of older workers can present a significant challenge for Member States, however, and several case studies reported on specific measures tackling this issue. For example, the German government has sought to introduce 'cultural change' through information campaigns (directed at both employers and the general public) and other platforms, to make companies more willing to recruit older workers. The campaign took place within the context of the demographic strategy Every Age Counts and the Skills Offensive. Another example comes from Spain, where the Global Strategy for the Employment of Older Workers 2012–2014 also strove to raise public awareness of the positive work values of older workers and their contribution to society. Similarly, the Dutch 55+ (and 50+) programme includes specific campaigns aimed at the general public and employers in particular to present arguments for recruiting older workers.

At the European level, the Commission has advocated the concept of active ageing since 2012, with an Active Ageing Index (AAI) having been developed to measure the untapped potential of seniors. Among other dimensions, the AAI measures the extent to which older people can realise their full potential in terms of employment. As pension systems in Europe have implications for both the concept of active ageing and the length of working lives in general, linking retirement age with life expectancy, restricting access to early retirement and closing the pension gap between men and women have been promoted across Member States (European Commission, 2012). The national case studies therefore reported on trends in pension rights and retirement age regulation, which play an important role in promoting the labour market inclusion of older workers.

Within the scope of the case studies, the experts first noted the general increase in the retirement age. In Germany, for example, the retirement age was recently set at 67. In Lithuania, it has been gradually increasing since 2012 for both male and female workers (by 2026 it should reach 65 years for both sexes), while in Poland it began to increase in January 2014 and, by 2040, should be 67 years for both men and women. Public pension system reforms included other relevant measures: for instance, the period of compulsory contribution has been extended from 15 to 25 years in Spain, a measure that will come into force in 2022.

In addition, greater limitations on early retirement schemes were observed in a number of countries. Even if such schemes continue to exist, conditions for early retirement have become or remained

strict in recent times, as reported in the case studies of Belgium, Finland, Lithuania and Spain. In the former case, a person who chooses early retirement may lose up to almost one-fifth of their total pension amount. In contrast, pre-retirement protection of older workers was extended from two to four years in Poland.

What is more, employment during retirement has reportedly been encouraged in some Member States, thus taking into account the transition from employment to retirement and promoting longer working lives. In Lithuania, employed pensioners still receive their full pension, with each additional working year during retirement becoming a part of the general work record, which consequently increases the size of their pension. In Spain, partial retirement allows workers (aged 63 or in some cases 65) who are entitled to retirement benefit to carry on working, by reducing their working hours and simultaneously allowing them to claim a retirement pension. This is important as phased retirement schemes may extend a person's availability for work (Eurofound, 2015a, p. 12).

Overall, inclusion of vulnerable groups into the labour market involves a number of policy measures and regulations. Nevertheless, subsidised jobs, job-search assistance, quotas and other relevant arrangements may not help to solve the structural problems of the European labour markets, such as skills' mismatch. Policies favouring skills development and occupational mobility, such as vocational rehabilitation or vocational training, are discussed in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

Maintaining and promoting the health and well-being of workers

This section covers policies that encompass some elements of the job quality domain of sustainable work (in particular, intrinsic job quality), as well as policies that aim to address some individual characteristics and circumstances, in particular measures to protect the health and well-being of the current workforce and to integrate potential workers with health problems. Both are relevant for making work sustainable over the life course. Indeed, the policies examined encourage companies to invest in order to improve the working conditions of their workforce and at the same time to become more receptive to individual needs and circumstances (for example, related to age, health or family), thereby contributing to longer working lives.

Overall trends

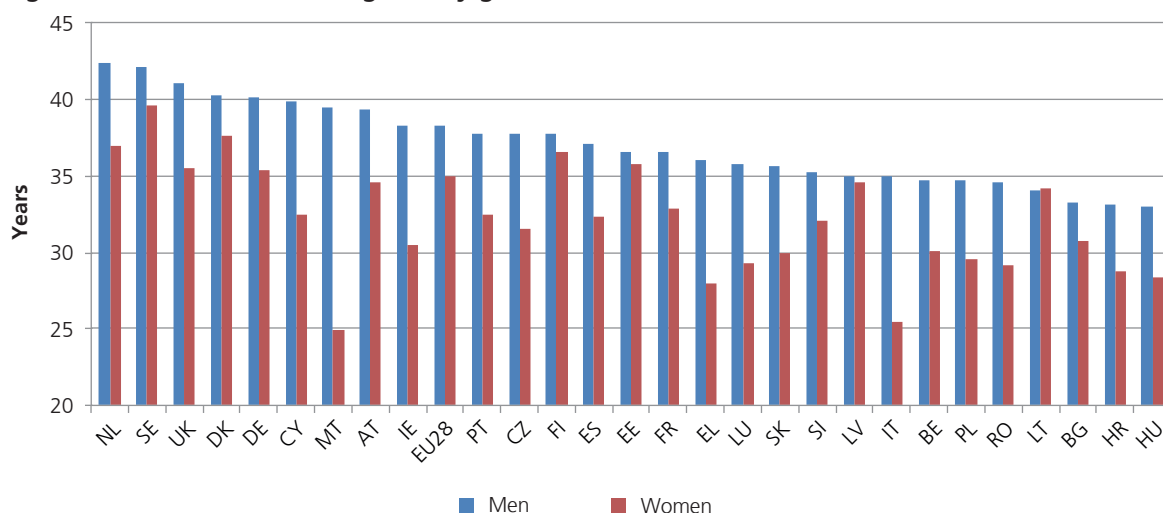
Evidence from different comparative studies at EU level and from the national case studies shows a decreasing number of accidents and fatal accidents at work (likely attributable to different reasons) and an improvement of workers' health. For example, the number of work-related accidents in Germany fell from 2.8 million in 1960 to 0.96 million in 2013 (BMAS, 2014). In the UK, the total number of working days lost due to illness fell from 178 million in 1993 to 131 million in 2011 (ONS, 2012). There are many and different factors behind this change. However, there is significant variation between countries. For example, the percentage of Polish workers reporting at least one work-related health problem was almost twice as high as the EU27 average (Council of Ministers (Poland), 2013).

Overall, the duration of working lives differs significantly across countries, and there are also significant gender differences (Figure 9). Duration of working life and retirement decisions are not only related to health and well-being outcomes from work (linked to all four dimensions of job quality), even though these are important. There are many push and pull factors that influence (early) retirement decisions. These include: the content of the work and work organisation; employability and skills; financial considerations; the wish to do other things in life (this can be related to the

retirement decisions of a partner); and reconciliation between working life and private life, including issues such as care responsibilities for children, grandchildren and other dependents, and health status in general, where both good and bad health can influence retirement decisions.⁹

Job satisfaction data from Sweden and the UK from 2010, 2011 and 2014 show that a large majority (around three-quarters) of employees are satisfied with their jobs, yet a significant minority (one-quarter) report issues such as stress, poor management, pressure and unachievable targets.

Figure 9: Duration of working life, by gender, EU Member States, 2013



Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS (code: lfsi_dwl_a), 2013

Most of the national case studies identified the increasing prominence of musculoskeletal and psychosocial risks (such as stress and bullying) and illnesses. This is partly due to the ongoing transition to the service economy and partly due to longer working lives and the higher employment rate of older workers. In the UK, musculoskeletal problems such as back and neck pain account for the largest share of working days lost, amounting to 35 million working days (ONS, 2012). In Poland, 70% of survey respondents believed that over the next five years an increasing number of people will suffer from work-related stress (Council of Ministers (Poland), 2013).

According to some authors, an increasing flexibility in labour markets across Europe (for example, the proliferation of fixed-term and other types of contracts with lower levels of social protection than open-ended and full-time employment contracts) has added to the psychosocial pressure on employees. Meanwhile, while policies have been quite successful in tackling traditional occupational safety in the sense that they might have reduced the number of accidents at work, risk exposure to many physical (and psychosocial) factors is not decreasing or decreasing very little and has been translated into other health-related challenges.

⁹ See the STREAM project website at <https://www.tno.nl/nl/aandachtsgebieden/gezond-leven/prevention-work-health/innovatie-en-arbeidsproductiviteit/stream-langer-gezond-en-productief-doorwerken/>.

Policy framework

At European level, the health and well-being of workers is an important principle and is covered by much legislation. The heart of this is Framework Directive 89/391/EEC on managing safety and health at the workplace.¹⁰

Across the EU, a variety of institutions, bodies and frameworks implement occupational health and safety (OSH) measures. In every country, there is a body of legislation that focuses on this issue and might pre-date the European legislation to some extent, follow on from it, or be adapted to it.

In some European countries, there is a long tradition of legislating on working conditions and quality of work. Among the many examples of this are:

- Occupational Safety Act (Germany, 1973);
- Health and Safety at Work Act (UK, 1974);
- Occupational Healthcare Act (Finland, 1978);
- Work Environment Act (Sweden, 1977);
- Law on Well-being of Workers (Belgium, 1996)
- Law on Working Conditions (Netherlands, 1980, with major adaptations in 1997 and 2005).

In essence, these Acts set out the duty of employers to ensure the health and safety of their employees (for example, by providing safe equipment, protective clothing and training). They also define the key standards and design the institutional framework for implementation.

A significant step towards a more coordinated approach across Member States was the adoption in 1989 of the OSH Framework Directive (Council of the European Union, 1989) and individual follow-up directives that were later transposed into national law. The framework directive formulated a number of principles, such as avoiding and evaluating risks, adapting work to the individual and developing a prevention policy. Importantly, the way the Member States implemented the directives is highly diverse and depends on the national context and institutions.

Across the Member States, the laws are implemented through a multitude of institutions, policy frameworks and programmes. In addition to regulation, several instruments are used: social dialogue, public subsidies, voluntary agreements, information campaigns and training, and on-site inspection by relevant authorities. Collective agreements have been an important instrument in some countries, especially Belgium, Germany, Spain and Sweden, addressing issues such as prevention of stress at work and support for older workers (introduced in Belgium in 1999 and 2012, respectively).

In some countries, the institutional field is very dense due to the significant role played by regional and local governments and agencies. For example, in Germany, the relevant regulations can be adopted by the federal government and the governments of the 16 federal states. Other countries have also adopted programmes aimed at improving the internal coordination of national policies,

¹⁰ Directive 89/391/EEC establishes general principles for managing safety and health, and refers to how work should be adapted to the workers and not the other way around. This is further developed in other directives. For instance, general basic requirements for safety and health in workplaces are laid down in Directive 1989/654/EEC concerning the minimum safety and health requirements for the workplace. The aim of this directive is to introduce minimum measures designed to improve the working environment in order to guarantee a better standard of safety and health protection. Further provisions are established in other specific directives for workplaces in sectors of elevated risk. Member States are obliged to implement these directives in their national legislation.

involving stakeholders and addressing current and prospective issues. Examples of such programmes include:

- the National Health Programme for 2007–2015 in Poland;
- the National Strategy for Safety and Health at Work (2010–2013) in Greece;
- the Strategy for Health and Safety at Work 2015–2020 in Spain.

These programmes aim to ensure better coordination between different policies and more coherence.

In all countries, implementing agencies play a key role in ensuring compliance with the law, for example, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in Finland, the Labour Inspectorate (SEPE) in Greece, the Lithuanian Labour Inspectorate (VDI), the Occupational Health Service and the National Labour Inspectorate (PIP) in Poland, the Swedish Work Environment Authority (WEA) and the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE). These institutions may work through regional branches or with the help of local authorities. Usually they have a wide range of functions including:

- issuing orders;
- conducting on-site inspections;
- investigating incidents;
- addressing complaints;
- imposing fines;
- prosecuting illegal employment;
- analysing data;
- publishing studies;
- providing guidance to companies and stakeholders;
- initiating awareness campaigns;
- making recommendations to policymakers.

Furthermore, across countries a variety of frameworks (in the form of councils, committees, working groups, networks and associations) aim to improve collaboration, foster action and exchange good practice. Social partners play a pivotal role in such frameworks. For example, the New Quality of Work Initiative (INQA) established in Germany in 2002 has become the flagship instrument for initiating discussion, conducting research and providing advice across the themes of personnel management, equal opportunities, diversity, health promotion and skills development. It operates as a multipartner network, including the federal and regional governments, employer organisations, trade unions, social security and healthcare organisations and individual companies. It conducts research and advises stakeholders on issues related to sustainable work.

In Greece, the Hellenic Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (ELINYAE) was set up in 1992 by employer organisations to promote the exchange of information, to conduct analysis and to provide advice to companies and policymakers.

In Finland, the Centre for Occupational Safety (TTK) is governed by employee and employer organisations. It provides training, information and materials, and offers development services related to occupational safety. It also manages the register of occupational safety professionals. Meanwhile the Forum for Well-being at Work, currently operated by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH), was launched in 2008 and aims to share good practice, provide guidance, support networking and improve communications. The Forum fostered the establishment of other, more specialised networks such as Kemikaalivihi (which focuses on chemical security), and Zero Accidents (dedicated to increasing the safety of workplaces).

In Belgium, specialised external services and specific centres, recognised by the government, assist companies to help to develop a health and well-being strategy.

Recent regulatory change

Relevant laws have been amended on various occasions and in different directions to adapt them to the changing realities in the workplace and in the economy. For example, in Belgium, the law was revised in 2014 to include the prevention of psychosocial risks.

The national case studies reported coordination and other institutional issues that persist despite recent amendments. Thus, the Polish case study argued that occupational health is not sufficiently recognised in the Polish National Health Programme; overall, there is still insufficient attention to prevention, health promotion and health protection as opposed to traditional occupational medicine implemented through health checks (Rantanen and Kim, 2012). In Lithuania, inter-institutional coordination is a significant problem given that OSH falls under the jurisdiction of two ministries (the social affairs and the health ministries); furthermore, despite being mentioned in the formal documents, psychosocial risks are not completely recognised by policymakers.

In the wake of the recent economic and social crisis, the public sector initiated a variety of policy changes. The national case studies record that the crisis created a perception of a trade-off between employment and working conditions. The policy focus turned to generating employment, and working conditions were considered less important. Thus, for example, in Lithuania, reporting obligations by companies to the Labour Inspectorate have been simplified and reduced; this reduced the administrative burden but may have an impact on the level of information on issues at workplace level. Overall, there has been a clear trend towards decreasing resources for agencies in charge of ensuring compliance in the OSH field. In the UK, a trade union report highlighted that, since 2010, the HSE's budget had been cut by over 40%, the number of officials reduced by 25% and the number of inspections by as much as 93% (TUC, 2014). According to the UK case study, the HSE's role has been changing from that of a regulator to being an advisor; however, these changes need to be seen in the context of a historically strong health and safety record in the UK. Due to staff and funding cuts, the number of inspectors and company visits has decreased in Germany, Greece, the Netherlands and other countries. The public funds available to companies for investing in or adapting working conditions have also been cut (for example, in Lithuania).

Another key trend has been making labour markets more flexible by decreasing employment contract security, which puts additional pressure on workers and may have a negative effect on their health and thus the sustainability of work. Research shows the negative impacts of shorter employment duration and arduous working conditions on the health of workers (Benach et al, 2014). After the recent reforms in Spain, under certain conditions companies may unilaterally modify wages, working hours and work schedules. In Greece, the standard working hours in the public sector have been

increased from 37.5 to 40. Moreover, new provisions stipulate that a collective agreement may establish a six-day work week instead of a five-day work week for workers in commercial outlets. In Lithuania, sick leave benefit was reduced to 40% of salary in 2009 (paid from the third to seventh day of the sick leave); this resulted in a 25% decrease in the number of days of sick leave, causing doctors to express concern that employees were going back to work without having fully recovered (Survilaitė and Gaižauskienė, 2014). Since 2014, the level of compensation has been returned to the previous 80%, and the number of people taking sick leave increased by 36.4% in 2015 (Sodra, 2015).

Company-level perspective

Employers bear the prime responsibility for the occupational safety and health of their workers. This entails various duties and voluntary measures aimed first and foremost at preventing accidents at work and the development of long-term conditions or illnesses. Some of the key measures are usually regulated, and sometimes subsidised, by the public sector. Usually companies are required to have a health and safety policy and to make regular risk assessments and health checks, although the specifics usually depend on the company size and sector.

The national case studies described several specific risk prevention and health assurance practices. In Germany, all employers are obliged to conduct a risk assessment covering both physical and psychological risks. Employers have to appoint an occupational safety specialist and a company doctor to carry out inspections and provide advice. In Belgium, employers have to carry out a risk assessment and adopt an annual plan stipulating specific actions, workplace adaptation and risk control measures. In Greece, employers have to carry out a risk assessment, take preventive measures, engage a safety technician and an occupational physician, train employees, and ensure access to a medical examination (especially for employees working in potentially hazardous conditions). In Finland, employers have to set up an occupational health system (the system is voluntary for the self-employed); they can use municipal health centres, integrate the system within the company, work in cooperation with other employers (through an association) or buy services from a private clinic (a growing trend). In Poland, besides following the obligatory standards, some companies (particularly large ones) take voluntary measures aimed at improving the health and working conditions of their employees by expanding the scope of medical tests, providing training and investing to ensure proper ergonomics in the workplace. In Greece, some companies offer special work models and flexible working hours to older employees (Eurofound, 2013a).

In the case of illness, companies are usually responsible for paying sick leave – partly or in full, depending on duration of the leave. In the Netherlands, for example, company-paid sick leave can last up to 104 days and cover 70% of the employee's salary (100% if agreed in the contract or collective agreement).

Some of the national case studies presented evidence of the gradual reintegration of employees who return to work after a prolonged absence or sickness. In Germany, employees returning after a prolonged leave (more than six weeks) are invited to discuss measures that could facilitate their integration. For example, this could include gradual reintegration into the job while receiving sickness benefits from the statutory insurance funds. In the Netherlands, the 'gatekeeper law' stipulates that adaptation of work to the worker may be needed after prolonged sick leave and envisions some incentives for both sides to find an agreement; a reluctant employee may lose their benefits while a recalcitrant employer may be obliged to continue paying sick leave payments. In Belgium, return-to-work policies have become central to government focus because of the human and financial cost of absenteeism. In the Netherlands, initiatives assist a gradual return to work for people with cancer.

Social partners and collective agreements at the company, sectoral or regional level generally play an important part in how a company's policy on working conditions and job quality is set up and run. Large companies are usually required to set up health and safety committees including workers' and sometimes management representatives to oversee health and safety issues and hazards at the company. For example, Belgian companies usually have a bipartite committee dealing with health and safety matters, which is informed and consulted about health risks and working conditions within the company. If there is no committee, then (in companies with more than 50 employees) the trade union may take on this function, and if there is no trade union, then the company is obliged to consult its employees directly. In the UK, employers are obliged to consult their employees and/or their trade union representatives on matters such as new measures or new technologies that may potentially impact on workplace health and safety, compliance with health and safety laws, and work-related risks and measures to limit them. In Germany, in line with the codetermination legislation, working conditions can be covered in collective agreements, with works councils coordinating the efforts of all parties and overseeing compliance. Given the recent decrease in trade union influence and the declining number of works councils, however, this mechanism now covers less than 50% of all employees.

Implementation of government regulation has been a problem in some cases. In Lithuania, only a minority of companies that are formally obliged to hire an occupational health specialist do so; the same situation was reported in Greece. In Lithuania and Poland, there is an overall lack of doctors specialising in OSH who companies can approach for help and advice. Across all the case study countries, the economic recession has encouraged many employers to cut budgets devoted to working conditions and health and safety at work.

Governments do provide some support to companies investing in workplace safety. In the UK, Access to Work grants are available to employees to finance the buying or adapting of special work equipment, hiring a support worker or job coach, paying for taxi fares to work, and so on. In the Netherlands, a public subsidy can cover training, adaptation of the workplace and even compensation for a worker's reduced productivity. In Lithuania, a subsidy from the State Social Insurance Fund aimed at accident prevention and reduction of risk of occupational diseases became available in 2005 but was discontinued in 2010 due to the financial crisis. In Lithuania and Poland, EU structural funds have been used to support companies investing to improve working conditions and safety measures; this was particularly useful for smaller companies. Furthermore, the EU support has been allocated to train OSH doctors and encourage more doctors to specialise in this field (for example, in Poland). Since 2010, older workers in Belgium may receive support from the government to move from harder to easier work (for example, to stop working night shifts).

A number of interesting initiatives have been tried. To promote the return to work, sickness absence monitoring in Finland has been following the '30–60–90 rule'. Legislated in 2012, it enables the occupational health service to assess an employee's work ability after 30, 60 and 90 days of sick leave, following which the employer, the employee and the occupational health service together determine whether the worker is able to come back to work. In 2003, Lithuania introduced differentiated statutory insurance premium rates for employers depending on the rate of accidents at work; companies with an extensive record of accidents are asked to pay more. This kind of bonus-malus system exists in many other countries. Meanwhile, in Germany, the occupational health insurance providers (BKK Dachverband eV) introduced a German Business Award in 2007, which honours companies with a good record of health promotion.

Some countries have initiated projects aimed specifically at managing stress and depression at work. In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs began a four-year campaign in 2014 to tackle stress at work. It aims to sensitise both employers and employees about the risks posed by stress, promote good practice and suggest ways to tackle the issue. A work pressure indicator (*werkdruk wegwijzer*) was developed to help stakeholders to measure the stress level in particular workplaces. In Finland, the Masto project (2008–2011) was launched by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to support the prevention and early recognition of depression as well as treatment, rehabilitation and return to work. The project involved relevant institutions, social partners and the non-governmental sector. It worked to increase awareness, provided training to health and safety personnel and company managers, and suggested measures that companies could take to prevent and address depression.

People with disabilities

The concept of sustainable work applies to people with health issues or disabilities and their integration into the labour market. The relevant policies (a) encourage companies to adapt workplaces to the needs of disabled people and (b) help them to remain active and productive in the labour market while receiving adequate attention to their health condition.

Based on EU and national law, non-discrimination and equal opportunities clauses apply: it is against the law to discriminate on the basis of disability at work in matters such as the recruitment process, career promotion, training or working conditions, among others. For example, UK law (the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Equality Act 2010) requires all employers to make reasonable adjustments to support the integration of disabled people in the workplace. This involves, for example, providing recruitment information in large print, allowing guide dogs in the workplace, buying extra equipment, installing specialist software and arranging parking spaces for the disabled. Workers may challenge employers in the courts if they are perceived not to be making reasonable adjustments, although the success rate has been low (Riddell et al, 2010; EHRC, 2012).

In Germany, public policy generally aims to integrate people with disabilities who are deemed capable of working into the primary labour market (public support is available if necessary). The Disabilities Act stipulates that for an employer with more than 20 employees, 5% must be employees with disabilities. Employers who violate this law have to pay a penalty tax (between €105 and €260 a month for each job that should be occupied by a disabled person) to the integration office.

Many countries strive for a policy mix to encourage more disabled people into the labour market. For example, the current UK government has initiated reforms rethinking the criteria for disability and requiring many of those previously deemed not able to work to seek work. Such people are referred by the employment agency, Jobcentre Plus, to the Work Programme and required to undertake job-search activities. So far, the programme has seen very limited success. This may be because those with very limited work capacity are being pressurised to re-enter the labour market, but may also be because employers are not being required or incentivised to make more jobs available to those with partial disabilities. There have been particular concerns about the assessment of mental health conditions and their impact on ability to work and the likelihood of being offered suitable work.

The UK government also encourages voluntary initiatives by companies. In 1990, the government launched the Two Ticks symbol to identify employers who were committed to creating a supportive environment for disabled people. Relevant criteria include interviewing all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria, discussing career and skills development with disabled employees, and

increasing disability awareness for company employees. Any employer who meets these criteria can apply to use the symbol on, for example, job advertisements to signify that applications from disabled people are encouraged. However, the effectiveness of the Two Ticks symbol for promoting disability equality in the workplace has been questioned in the literature (Hoque et al, 2014).

Across countries, special funds have been earmarked to support companies and disabled individuals investing in the adaptation of workplaces. The UK provides Access to Work grants (see above). Since 1 October 2015, an individual grant has been capped at GBP 40,800 (€50,539 as at 6 April 2016) a year, which may have negative implications for those with the most severe barriers to employment (for example, those requiring a support worker). In Poland, workplace adaptation is funded as a part of ALMP; an employer who receives public support is obliged to maintain the subsidised position for at least three years. In Germany, workplace adjustment is supported by the proceeds of the penalty tax described above. The German government has also started Initiative Inklusion, with an allocation of €100 million, to support the integration of disabled pupils in the regular labour market through career advice, counselling and subsidised apprenticeships.

Finally, professional rehabilitation and counselling measures have been put in place in several of this report's case study countries, aimed at supporting disabled people in developing their working skills and capacities. The relevant organisations often work closely with the public employment services and are financed through social protection (insurance) budgets and EU structural funds (for example, in Lithuania). In Germany, the public employment services have a large budget that can be used for relevant services and equipment, such as tractors equipped for use by farmers who became disabled following an accident.

Reconciling working and non-working life

This section focuses on time for work and private life, including working time, as part of job quality. It examines provisions that help workers maintain a balance between work and family life and to nurture their individual interests while remaining productive and engaged at work. In the long run, this may also contribute to the extension of their working lives; certain working time patterns over a prolonged period potentially have a negative effect on the health and well-being of workers.

Working time has been the focus of European legislation through the Working Time Directive. Research has shown that long working hours, night work, shift work and not having enough rest between working days have a potential negative effect on the health of workers. The directive, therefore, requires the EU Member States to guarantee certain rights for all workers, including a limit to the working week (48 hours) and a minimum daily rest period (of 11 consecutive hours). It also refers to Member States developing conditions for night work and shift work. The directive, which some countries including Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Malta and the UK opted out of, has been undergoing revision for a while, as policymakers try to adapt it to modern circumstances, such as telework and mobile work (Eurofound, 2015e). Furthermore, certain groups of workers are excluded, such as the self-employed, managers who have autonomy over their working time and doctors in training.

The gender aspect is of crucial importance when it comes to reconciliation between professional obligations and family commitments, since the burden of housework and care responsibilities is still carried disproportionately by women in many European countries. This has a significant effect on

female employment rates: almost half of inactive women aged 25–54 were inactive for personal or family reasons in 2014, whereas this applied to only 0.6% of men.¹¹

Therefore, difficulties in combining family, private and professional life may at least partly explain why underemployment remains more common among female workers across the EU. Even so, the figures show that today more women are entering the full-time labour force than some decades ago. However, higher female employment rates are not usually followed by increasing domestic responsibilities for men (see Hochschild and Machung, 2003; Anxo et al, 2007). In each life course phase, employed women still spend more hours on non-paid domestic work than employed men, with the gender gap increasing dramatically during the parental phase.

The Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010–2015, adopted by the European Commission in September 2010, highlights the contribution of gender equality to economic growth and sustainable development, and to the advance towards Europe 2020 objectives (Brodolini, 2011). Accordingly, a social model that stresses the importance of dual earner/dual carer (or dual full-time earner) arrangements has been emerging in the EU in past decades in academic debate and public policies (Ray et al, 2010). In this line of thinking, women and men should symmetrically engage in family responsibilities, which in turn will promote equal career paths and the stability of women's employment. Furthermore, the Commission's roadmap for the initiative entitled 'New start to address the challenges of work–life balance faced by working families' will help Member States to consider those working time regulations and social provisions that help workers, both men and women, to better reconcile work and private life (European Commission, 2015h).

Working time arrangements

Working time quality is an important dimension when it comes to overall job quality and the sustainability of work over the life course (Eurofound, 2015a, p. 5). Working time arrangements can have a two-fold effect on the sustainability of work. On the one hand, long duration and high intensity of the work effort can generate long-term (negative) effects on a person's capacity to work, whereas flexible arrangements can alleviate the work-related pressures experienced by workers. On the other hand, high-quality working time allows various roles to be performed outside work, thus facilitating a worker's transitions to different life stages over the life course (Eurofound, 2015a). Simultaneously, it is often assumed that flexible employment along with flexible working time arrangements may also result in precarious employment as this may lead to fewer career and training opportunities, lower pay and loss of welfare benefits. It may also blur the boundaries between work and leisure, and results in unsocial working hours (Eurostat and European Commission, 2009; Plantenga and Remery, 2009). These contrasting features of flexible working time arrangements are particularly significant in terms of gender equality and possibilities for women with caring or other responsibilities to succeed in the labour market.

Working time quality can be examined according to different forms of working time organisation including:

- part-time work;
- overtime work;
- long hours;

¹¹ According to Eurostat data, 8.5% of men aged 25–54 were inactive in the EU in 2014 compared with 20.5% of women.

- reduced hours;
- non-standard hours;
- the ability to take whole days off without using holiday or special leave;
- flexible working time schedules (flexitime, working time banking or compressed working weeks);
- telework (working from home);
- shift work.

Several ways of grouping working time policies have been identified, including part-time versus full-time work, employee-centred versus employer-centred provisions, and policies referring to the flexibility in the length of working time versus flexible organisation of working time (Chung and Tijdens, 2009; Plantenga and Remery, 2009). In the European context, all of these arrangements have led to the individualisation and diversification of working time patterns during past decades (Eurofound, 2013d).

Flexible length of working hours

Provisions concerning the flexible length of working hours are one of the most common measures in terms of working time arrangements affecting work–life balance. As regards part-time work, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and, to a lesser extent, Belgium stand out in the context of the national case studies as having the highest share of employees in part-time employment. As reported by Eurostat in 2014, part-timers constitute up to 50.4% of those in employment in the Netherlands, whereas almost one in four workers works part time in Belgium.

High part-time employment rates might indicate flexible work–life balance opportunities for employees and deficiencies in the labour markets. As discussed in Chapter 4, involuntary part-time work rose in Europe during the recession (Eurofound, 2014c; Erhel et al, 2012; Nardo and Rossetti, 2013). The Spanish case study suggests that companies might have adjusted their employees' hours via part-time arrangements to reduce labour costs. Accordingly, the Eurostat data show that, in 2014, 32% of part-time workers in the EU28 wanted a full-time job – a stark contrast to the corresponding 18.3% in 2002. Evidently, these rates are not compatible with the goals related to sustainable work.

In spite of these tendencies, a considerable number of policies providing more opportunities for employees to work part time have been implemented. For example, workers in both the Netherlands and the UK have the right to request the reduction of their working hours regardless of whether they have any caring responsibilities.¹² In Lithuania, provisions restricting minimal working time were eliminated with a view to liberalising part-time work. The transition from unemployment to low-wage part-time work in Finland has been facilitated by allowing workers to earn up to €300 per month without losing the unemployment allowance, although this may impede the transition from part-time to full-time employment (Kotamäki and Kärkkäinen, 2014).

Across the EU, part-time work has also been encouraged with opportunities for part-time care leave as well as part-time pension, and the increasing demand in the services sector (along with extended opening hours). In Spain, partial retirement allows workers entitled to retirement benefit to keep working by reducing their working hours – and thus their salary – by between 25% and 85% and

¹² UK employers are not obliged to fulfil such requests as they can refuse to do so on various grounds, although in practice they accept as many as 61% of applications (Tipping, 2012). Dutch employers have relatively less room for denying a request as they can do so only in case of important company interests.

simultaneously allowing them to claim a retirement pension. However, in countries such as Finland, Lithuania and Poland, working part time has remained unpopular despite the provisions described above, and the majority of people work full-time.

The high levels of part-time work arrangements among women across Europe can be seen as generating inequalities, even if such arrangements allow them to remain in the labour market (Allmendinger et al, 2013; Allmendinger and von den Driesch, 2014). High levels of part-time work among women can be observed, for instance, in:

- the UK – 42.5% of women employed worked part time in 2014 compared with 32.8% in the EU (Eurostat, 2014);
- Belgium – particularly for women aged 50 or over (Statistics Belgium, 2014);
- the Netherlands – where an astounding three-quarters of all working women work part time (Eurostat, 2014);
- Sweden – women work long part-time hours, enabling them to remain significant contributors to the family's income.

The extent of part-time work among women can be attributed to the family responsibilities held by women (Table 1), and to the use of part-time workers by large service companies in order to cut costs.

Table 1: Main reasons for engaging in part-time employment, case study countries and EU, by gender, 2014

Country	Could not find a full-time job		Own illness or disability		Care of children or dependent adults		Other family or personal responsibilities		In education or training		Other reasons	
	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %
Belgium	15.2	8.9	9.6	5.4	6.0	22.4	19.0	27.4	6.7	2.4	43.6	33.4
Finland	28.5	29.2	13.0	9.9	n.a.	11.5	23.9	22.1	33.3	27.3	n.a.	n.a.
Germany	22.3	12.8	8.4	2.7	4.2	28.2	5.0	20.5	27.3	6.4	32.9	29.4
Greece	74.7	68.8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	4.6	3.0	8.9	5.5	3.9	15.9	13.5
Lithuania	32.6	30.5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	16.8	n.a.	(8.3)	39.5	33.0
Netherlands	(15.2)	(9.4)	(5.3)	(3.7)	(8.4)	(36.4)	(0.9)	(5.4)	(41.3)	(15.4)	(28.9)	(29.7)
Poland	31.9	32.5	9.9	4.1	n.a.	7.7	(2.4)	4.4	13.0	7.0	42.2	44.2
Spain	70.0	61.8	1.4	0.7	1.1	13.5	(0.5)	5.1	7.5	4.2	19.5	14.6
Sweden	(31.8)	29.1	(11.8)	9.3	7.3	19.7	(9.3)	11.0	(18.5)	11.3	(21.2)	19.5
UK	35.1	14.0	4.5	1.8	7.7	40.2	16.9	19.1	21.2	9.2	14.6	15.8
EU28	40.2	26.3	6.4	3.4	4.2	27.1	7.3	15.1	19.1	7.5	22.8	20.6

Notes: Employees in the EU28 aged 15–64; brackets around figures indicate low reliability; n.a. = data not available.

Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS (code: lfsa_epgar), 2014

Part-time work can be attractive to mothers with childcare responsibilities. However, the amount of time a person wishes to dedicate to their home life can change throughout the life course. Thus in terms of sustainable work and gender equality, it is important to ensure the right to transition from full-time to part-time work and vice versa (as is the case in the Netherlands and Sweden). With no statutory right to return to a full-time position after the reduction of working hours, part-time work

can become a matter of gender inequality, as illustrated by the case study from the UK, where many women remain in part-time work after their children have grown up.¹³

Regarding long working hours, the UK stands out as the only country in the EU where an individual opt-out clause applies to all workers so they can work longer than the maximum weekly working hours if they formally agree to do so.¹⁴ According to the latest figures, one-third of all UK workers have decided to opt out of the 48-hour average working week (BIS, 2014).¹⁵ Employees in the Netherlands can also request to work longer hours (collective agreements play an important role in this regard), but the maximum working time duration cannot exceed the maximum working week in the particular company or sector.

When certain motivations (for example, career progression or income) lead to longer working hours unrestricted by regulation, detrimental effects on work–life balance may be observed. The authors of the UK case study argue that long hours associated with full-time work may drag women towards taking up part-time jobs as they still take primary responsibility for care activities in most countries. Furthermore, it is not possible to work part time in jobs where working hours are long and highly variable, as this causes resentment among other employees.

As the number of good quality part-time jobs is falling (partly due to men working very long hours and partly due to cuts in the public sector), women in the UK are forced into low-skilled and low-paid jobs in an effort to reconcile work and family life. This is illustrated by the fact that female part-time workers in the UK's private sector earned only 56% of the male full-time private sector hourly wage, while the equivalent ratio was 68% in Germany and nearly 80% in France (Grimshaw et al, 2012). All this constitutes a vicious circle as the assumption that care responsibilities will be taken by mothers who work part time also provides legitimacy for employers to expect long and variable hours from men. Thus it is equally important to ensure a wide availability of good-quality, well-paid part-time jobs, in part by regulating full-time hours, in order to make work more sustainable throughout the life course.

Flexibility concerning working time schedules and mobile work

Flexible working time schedules include arrangements such as staggered working hours, flexitime and working time banking. Notable cases in this respect are Finland and Germany, where working time accounts have spread to some sectors, enabling employees to work more hours or days in exchange for taking the equivalent time off at some time in the future. Additionally, some of the Finnish collective agreements include innovative working time practices, such as 12-hour shifts that are later compensated for with longer leave periods.

Flexitime is a common practice in Belgium. It has been introduced recently in Poland, where workers can set the hours for starting their workdays. Both Dutch and UK employees can request individual organisation of working time over the working week.

Policies introducing flexible working time schedules are usually considered to be employee-friendly and likely to incur more costs for employers in some workplaces, including communication problems or loss of direct supervision (Eurostat and European Commission, 2009). However, as noted by the

¹³ In the UK, 54% of women over 55 years old worked part time in 2008 (Anxo et al, 2010).

¹⁴ This practice is contradictory as regards the Working Time Directive, of which the UK has opted out of certain provisions.

¹⁵ The UK has among the longest working hours in the EU in terms of full-time employment, at 43.7 hours on average (in Finland, the figure is 36.2 hours), while 18.9% of UK workers worked 45 or more hours per week in 2014 (ONS, 2015).

authors of the Lithuanian case study, rearranging working hours alone may not be always sufficient to improve work–life balance for workers.

Telework is another form of work flexibility identified by the authors of the national case studies. It can be associated with flexible working time arrangements in those cases where it allows for and is combined with less time-monitoring and more individual planning. In Poland, public funds are allocated in a form of grant for telework in order to create jobs that allow workers to work from a remote location. In the UK, workers have a statutory right to request a change in the location of their workplace. In the Netherlands, as much as 56% of workplaces offer telework, while 14.4% of Belgian workers worked from home sometimes or regularly in 2013 (Statistics Belgium, 2014). The Working Time Act in Finland has been criticised for not properly recognising telework despite its relative popularity; furthermore, there have been initiatives supporting the view that workers should increasingly be assessed in relation to task completion rather than working times.

Notably, telework was linked in the national case studies not only with greater individual autonomy, but also with fewer measures to protect workers' safety and difficulty in fulfilling statutory requirements concerning the workplace. According to a Eurofound study on new forms of employment, mobile work may offer some flexibility, autonomy and empowerment, but it can also incur the danger of work intensification, increased stress levels and working time, and a blurring of the boundaries between work and private life. It may also outsource employer responsibilities, such as safety protection, to workers (Eurofound, 2015b).

Overall, as several authors of the national case studies point out, working time flexibility and part-time work in particular can help to balance work and non-working life or increase labour market access for new entrants or re-entrants, but this does not necessarily mean better prospects for stable and secure jobs in the longer term. Rearranging working hours alone may not be enough to reconcile work and other duties, whereas part-time work may result in poorer work sustainability over the life course.

Despite these contradictory arguments, several authors agree that flexible working time arrangements may become increasingly important in the future, especially in relation to:

- extending the working lives of older workers who want to continue working;
- the increase in mobile multi-locational work fuelled by digitalisation;
- workers with care responsibilities in a context of an ageing population.

In particular, the right to request a reduction in working hours and the right to return to a full-time position after reduction of working hours are relatively effective measures in improving work–life balance; practices related to flexitime and working time banking may also prove effective. However, various financial incentives to ease transitions from unemployment to low-wage part-time work, for instance, or to make mobile work possible need to be addressed with caution as a means to support sustainable work, as they can turn out to be counter-productive in the long run.

Family responsibilities and care services

Differences in work trajectories related to child-rearing and the unevenly distributed double burden of work and care responsibilities can lead to differences in the lengths and types of careers. According to Eurostat data, women's working careers are on average eight years shorter than those of men (Eurofound, 2015a, p. 2). Furthermore, care responsibilities not only significantly influence a worker's

availability in the labour market, but can also prevent an individual from being employed in general (Eurofound, 2015a, p. 4). Therefore, it is important to support family members with different care responsibilities and facilitate their inclusion in the labour market (Esping-Andersen, 2005).

Leave arrangements for workers constitute an important part of social policy packages in welfare systems across Europe. Elderly and disabled care leave and parental leave are designed to help with reconciliation of work and responsibilities outside work, and to assist workers in their transitions to different life stages while securing their position in the labour market. As a result, different leave schemes can have a crucial impact on work sustainability. They may allow workers to take time off work when necessary and to support them meeting some of the cost of these changes over time. It is also particularly important to ensure the provision of accessible and affordable formal care services for children, the elderly and the disabled; these have to complement care leave to ensure employment continuity over the life course.

Parental leave

In the context of this report, parental leave is an umbrella term encompassing four general types of leave defined by the OECD (2015):

- **maternity leave** – employment-protected leave of absence for employed women at around the time of childbirth, or adoption in some countries;
- **paternity leave** – employment-protected leave of absence for employed fathers at the time of childbirth;
- **parental leave** – employment-protected leave of absence for employed parents, which is often supplementary to specific maternity and paternity leave periods (as above), and usually follows the period of maternity leave;
- **home-care leave (or childcare leave)** – employment-protected leave that sometimes follows parental leave and which typically allows at least one parent to remain at home to provide care until the child is two or three years of age.

Despite the importance of leave schemes in facilitating women's participation in the labour market, the potential effects of these schemes on women's long-term employment are not unambiguous. They may withdraw women from the labour market for too long, thus reducing their training opportunities, work-related capacities, labour market skills and human capital. They may also make employers more reluctant to hire a woman who may soon deviate from the standard employment relationship. Seemingly, all of this can damage future career paths for mothers (Eurostat and European Commission, 2009). Moreover, parental leave may further entrench women in their roles as primary family caregivers, increase gender specialisation in household labour, and cater to the relative advantage of men with regard to career development and long-term job quality (Anxo et al, 2010; Mills et al, 2014).

Different parental leave regimes can be assessed according to:

- the length of job-protected parental leave schemes available;
- the generosity of leave entitlements (in terms of salary replacement);
- the extent of employment-protected leave geared towards involving fathers in care responsibilities and reducing the gender divisions of labour.

These three elements of parental leave regimes can help group countries in relation to their leave policies and their specific characteristics. There are substantial variations between parental leave policies across countries, even though EU legislation such as the EU Pregnant Workers Directive (1992) or the EU Parental Leave Directive (1996) has had a significant impact on Member States as it imposed regulation in terms of minimum requirements for maternity leave (14 weeks) and individual right to parental leave (at least three months). Among the factors contributing to this variation are collective agreements, which also play a role in developing leave schemes. In Germany, employees can create a lifetime working time account, which may later fund care or parental leave, early retirement, or part-time work. A similar practice is prevalent in the Netherlands. In Greece, private sector entitlements during special leave for the protection of maternity are specified in the General Collective Employment Agreement.

As demonstrated in Table 2, Belgium, Spain and the UK have less extensive care leave regimes compared with the other case study countries, although Belgium is more gender-egalitarian in terms of paid leave reserved for fathers. In Spain, maternity leave for women lasts for 16 paid weeks, with a full wage replacement. Mothers can transfer up to 10 paid weeks to fathers, who in their own right have 2.1 weeks of paid paternity leave available to them. Greece, Lithuania and Poland may appear more generous in their leave arrangements, but these countries do not seem to prioritise gender equality and provide fewer incentives for fathers to engage in childcare than some of the other case study countries.

Parental leave policies in Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden are both generous (as they offer limited earning loss for parents) and gender egalitarian, with welfare systems that significantly reduce parenthood costs for women. The most successful in achieving a dual-earner/dual-carer model is Sweden, which sustains ‘feminisation of the labour force’ through the parental leave programme introduced in 1974. In Germany, the Parental Allowance and Parental Leave Act 2007 was modelled on the Swedish programme and is intended to promote more equal gender roles.

Table 2: Parental leave entitlements in case study countries, 2014

Country	Total paid leave for mothers ^a (weeks)	Average payment rate ^b (%)	Full-rate equivalent total paid leave for mothers ^c (weeks)	Paid leave reserved for fathers ^d (weeks)	Average payment rate ^b (%)	Full-rate equivalent paid leave reserved for fathers (weeks)
Belgium	32.3	40.1	13.0	19.3	25.7	5.0
Finland	161.0	26.4	42.6	9.0	70.7	6.4
Germany	58.0	59.8	34.7	8.7	47.0	4.1
Greece	43.0	54.4	23.4	0.4	100.0	0.4
Lithuania ^e	62.0	100.0	62.0	4.0	100.0	4.0
Netherlands	42.0	49.3	20.7	26.4	19.3	5.1
Poland	26.0	100.0	26.0	2.0	100.0	2.0
Spain	16.0	100.0	16.0	2.1	100.0	2.1
Sweden	60.0	63.4	38.1	10.0	75.6	7.6
UK	39.0	30.9	12.1	2.0	20.2	0.4
OECD average	53.6	59.3	27.6	9.0	65.1	4.2

^a Paid maternity leave, parental leave and subsequent periods of paid home-care/childcare leave to care for young children; ^b proportion of gross earnings replaced by the benefit over the length of the paid leave entitlement for a person on average earnings; ^c length of paid leave in weeks if it were paid at 100% of previous earnings; ^d entitlements to paternity leave, ‘father quotas’ or periods of parental leave that can be used only by the father and cannot be transferred to the mother, and any weeks of sharable leave that must be taken by the father in order for the family to qualify for ‘bonus’ weeks of parental leave; ^e payment rates in Lithuania are based on average wages from 2013.

Source: OECD, 2015 (PF2.1 Key characteristics of parental leave systems, Table PF2.1.A. Summary of paid leave entitlements)

Other countries also enacted new provisions in order to make strides towards a dual-earner/dual-carer system and to support working mothers. From April 2015 in the UK, there are opportunities for more shared parental leave for parents of babies born after that date, as maternity leave policy was reformed in order to allow fathers take up to 19 weeks of paid paternity leave once the mother has returned to work. Nevertheless, this leave is paid at a low rate, which will reduce take-up. In Lithuania, the decision was made in 2010 to allow women to return to work during the second year of a child's life without losing the maternity allowance. In Poland, policymakers are planning to extend the period during which fathers can use paternity leave to the first 18 or 24 months of a child's life. All of these policy alterations are designed at least in part to increase female employment and overcome gender segregation of the labour market by facilitating transition into parenthood. It remains to be seen whether these will have a substantial effect.

Formal childcare arrangements

Investment in social services in general and child-centred investment strategy in particular are based on the belief that the provision of childcare services can increase female employment rates, enhance children's human capital and lessen social inequalities early in life (van Lancker, 2013, p. 4).¹⁶ To achieve the anticipated benefits, it is particularly important to ensure equal access to quality services to all social groups and to increase take-up, especially for children from low-income families (Plantenga and Remery, 2009, 2013; van European Commission, 2013; Lancker, 2013; Janta, 2014).

In general, participation rates in early childhood education and care (ECEC) by children between the age of three and mandatory school age has been rising more or less continuously in the EU since the establishment of the Barcelona targets in 2002. According to Eurostat data, the EU saw an increase of 6.2 percentage points in early childhood education participation rates between 2002 and 2012. In particular, enrolment increased substantially in Lithuania (from 64.3% in 2002 to 84.8% in 2012) and Poland (from 58.4% in 2002 to 84.3% in 2012), while the lowest pre-school attendances as of 2012 were observed in Finland (75.1%) and Greece (75.2%). At the same time, participation in formal childcare by children under three years old continues to fluctuate in the EU, with very limited or no progress. It remains extremely low in Poland (5%), Lithuania (13%) and Greece (14%); Belgium showed the biggest improvement between 2010 and 2013, increasing childcare provision by 10 percentage points from 36% to 46%. Figure A1 (in the annex) shows the use of formal childcare in 2013 across the EU and individual Member States.

The relatively low take-up may be related to insufficient formal childcare arrangements in a specific country (see Figure A2 in the annex). Furthermore, the existing arrangements can assist parents to enter and sustain employment only if they are affordable and of sufficient quality (Mills et al, 2014, p. 17).

Accessibility

The increase in the number of children enrolled in formal childcare in some of the case study countries is related in part to specific government actions aiming to increase the number of childcare places. For example, the German federal government has introduced several laws and initiatives since 2005 – most importantly, the Childcare Promotion Act (*Kinderförderungsgesetz*) of 2007 – which have boosted the

¹⁶ A growing body of research demonstrates that children benefit significantly from high-quality early childhood education and care services (Ruxton, 2011; OECD, 2012; Plantenga and Remery, 2013; European Commission et al, 2014). It also showcases the positive (cognitive) effects of early maternal employment and childcare provision after the first year of a child's life (Waldfogel et al, 2002; Del Carmen Huerta et al, 2011; Heckman et al, 2012; Lazzari and Vandenbroeck, 2012; Bingley et al, 2015).

number of childcare places in the country.¹⁷ To improve the accessibility of formal care for children under the age of three in Poland, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy launched the Maluch programme; this has resulted in a quadrupling of the number of childcare institutions (nurseries, child clubs and day-care providers) in the country from 571 in 2011 to 2,488 in 2014.

In addition, the expansion of childcare services in some countries is due to funding from European structural funds, as noted in the Greek and Lithuanian case studies. The accessibility of childcare services can be also related to the decentralisation of the provision of formal care or the increasing diversification of childcare providers. Box 6 details the gradual diversification of childcare providers related to changes in legislation and specific actions funded through European structural funds.

Box 6: Decentralisation of formal care provision and diversification of childcare providers

In Finland, local authorities are responsible for the provision, quality and supervision of ECEC, and they have a legal obligation to provide formal childcare quickly in urgent cases where the family could not have reasonably foreseen the need for it.

In the UK, local authorities have also had the responsibility since 2006 of ensuring there is an adequate supply of childcare in their local area, a requirement that only 43% of local authorities agreed they were fulfilling in 2015, down from 54% the previous year (Rutter, 2015). Private sector and voluntary organisations provide the vast majority of pre-school childcare in the country.

In Belgium, pre-school facilities are organised by both the public and private sectors, with childcare available in private houses.

In Lithuania, private actors are beginning to emerge in large cities due to the more favourable legal framework established in 2011, which simplified hygiene norms, introduced a public financing tool and simplified the requirements for nursery buildings and facilities. However, municipalities remain the main providers of childcare and pre-school education services.

In Greece, the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government S.A. (EETAA) played an important role in the allocation of places in childcare facilities under the Human Resources Development 2007–2013 operational programme and specifically the action entitled 'Reconciliation of family and professional life'. According to the Greek case study, the involvement of an agency whose mission is to reinforce local government emphasises how making work more sustainable for women should take into account variables such as the allocation of childcare facilities per region, local patterns of economic development, and, overall, the differing socioeconomic characteristics of different regions.

In Poland, the funds from the Maluch 2015 programme are available not only to local governments, businesses and non-governmental organisations, but also to universities (MPiPS, 2015).

Affordability and quality

As previously mentioned, in some cases, existing arrangements may not be perceived by expected users as suitable or affordable (Mills et al, 2014, p. 17). Among the reasons for not enrolling children

¹⁷ The services are run locally, often by faith-based welfare organisations such as Caritas or Diakonie, and are under the jurisdiction of the federal states (*Länder*) and the municipalities.

in formal childcare, the most important is cost (see Figure A2 in the annex). This is alarming given that ECEC especially benefits children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds (Bennett, 2012). In the sample of national case studies for this report, childcare costs were the highest in the UK (Table 3).

Table 3: Availability and affordability of formal childcare for children aged under three, case study countries

Country	Availability of childcare ^a (%)	Cost of childcare ^b (%)	Marginal tax on second-income earners ^c (%)
Belgium	46	11	66.3
Finland	28	23	53
Germany	28	11	57.2
Greece	14	5	34.4
Lithuania	13	14	–
Netherlands	46	24	51.2
Poland	5	7	36.1
Spain	35	7	45.2
Sweden	55	6	45.6
UK	30	45	38.9

^a Enrolment of children under three years old in formal childcare as a percentage of all children in the same age group, 2013;

^b net childcare costs of average earnings for a dual-earner family with full-time earnings of 150% of the average wage, 2012;

^c marginal tax wedge faced by second-income earner with two children and earning 67% of average earnings, whose partner earns 100% of average earnings, 2011.

Sources: Eurostat, EU-SILC (code: ilc_caindformal), 2013; OECD Tax-Benefit model 2014; OECD, 2011

Other factors

Another explanation for the low take-up of childcare services for children under three may be associated with the length of paid maternity or paternity leave in Greece, Lithuania and Poland (see above). Of key importance here is also the extent to which the return to the labour market is facilitated for workers and whether employment can be resumed at the end of the parental leave period. Notably, Swedish regulation promotes mothers' labour market participation and their reintegration into the labour market after maternity and parental leave (Eurofound, 2015c), which increases the need for more formal childcare services. In this regard, the existence of alternative working arrangements and the ability to negotiate working time adjustments upon return may be of help (Eurofound, 2007).

Other childcare arrangements

In addition to parental leave, other measures exist that tend to increase workers' time spent off work due to parenthood responsibilities. These mainly include various financial benefits, allowances and tax incentives directed towards home care. For example, a flat-rate home-care allowance for families raising children at home until the age of three is available in some of the countries in the sample (particularly Finland, Germany¹⁸ and Sweden). Nevertheless, such arrangements are often criticised, as in Finland or Sweden, for hindering the transition of mothers back to the labour market. In Germany, the allowance is said to provide incentives for low-income families not to use public

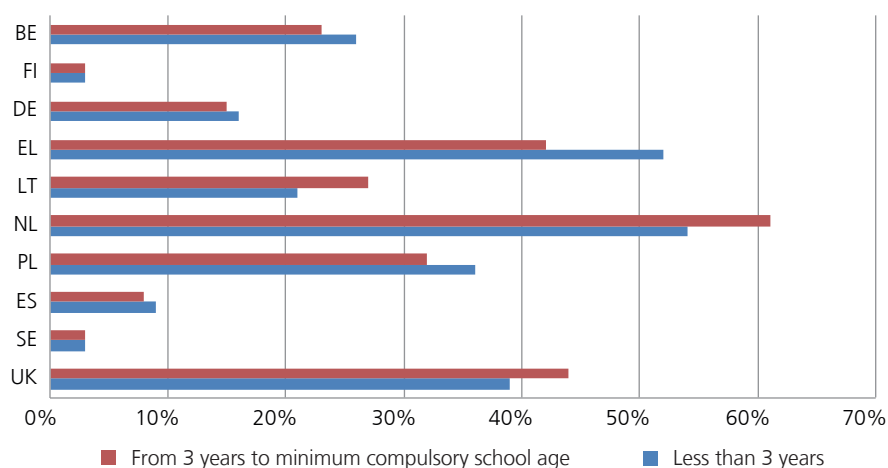
¹⁸ According to the German case study, the German law was found by the Federal Constitutional Court to be unconstitutional and will be abolished. At the time of writing, however, the government had not yet taken legislative action.

childcare, which in the case of children of ethnic background postpones their learning of the German language.

Supplementary to the previously mentioned formal childcare institutions, various other forms of formal day-care arrangements can reduce parental home-care commitments. In the UK, 36% of families in 2014 made use of after-school clubs and 6% utilised breakfast clubs for school-age children; over half of these arrangements are organised by private or voluntary organisations, but an increasing share are provided by schools. Likewise, the German federal government began advocating ‘all-day’ schools (that is, schools that would end later in the day), providing considerable financing in the period from 2003 through 2007. After-school care and activities are widely available in Belgium, although these are usually not entirely free. In Poland, children’s clubs and day-care providers have been developed as a result of the Maluch programme.

Informal types of childcare also play a crucial role in some cases (Figure 10). Childminders, grandparents, household members, friends, neighbours and relatives can care informally for children in lieu of parents, and this may help to increase female participation in the labour market, though it can contribute to less usage of formal childcare. As explained in the UK case study, childminders tend to provide the most flexible care hours, although the number of childminders is falling in the UK. In Belgium, child-minding services can be provided by the social insurance fund for a sick child from the second day onwards.

Figure 10: Percentage of children in informal childcare, by age group and case study country, 2013



Note: Informal childcare is childcare by a professional childminder at the child’s home or at the childminder’s home, and childcare by grandparents, other household members (other than parents), other relatives, friends or neighbours.

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC (code: ilc_caindoth), 2015; authors’ calculations

Care of the elderly and disabled

The reconciliation between professional obligations and family or social commitments also involves issues linked to the time committed to caring for other family members, relatives or friends who have physical or mental handicaps, are frail, elderly or need special help in managing their daily lives (European Commission, 2008).

Elderly and disabled care leave

In the EU, care leave is rarely formally directed specifically towards the elderly and disabled but is instead multipurpose – being called ‘family leave’, ‘short-term or long-term care leave’ or simply ‘care leave’ – and assessed in relation to duration and replacement rates.

In Europe, the majority of informal carers are women (mainly spouses, daughters and stepdaughters). This means that care leave arrangements (especially if extended and not flexible) for dependent adults may also present a problem for work–life balance, especially in relation to gender equality (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2010; Lipszyc et al, 2012; Eurofound, 2003). More working women than working men tend to reduce their hours of work, quit employment or shorten their leisure time in order to care for relatives or friends (Bonsang, 2009).

In the European context, short-term care leave (ranging from 6–7 days to 30 days per year, and more often linked with sick family members rather than ongoing elderly or disabled care needs) usually includes more generous financial support than long-term care leave. In Germany, for instance, care leave longer than 10 working days is financed via interest-free loans (which are partially paid for, depending on income loss and family situation), rather than by the wage-replacement benefits applied to short-term care leave. Polish caregivers are entitled to a care allowance equal to 80% of their salary during the two weeks off work per year that they can take for the care of elderly dependent family members. A similar policy is in place in the Netherlands, where care leave of two weeks is compensated with 70% of the salary. In most countries, short periods of leave is not made conditional on the employer’s consent, although in Finland, under the Employment Contracts Act 2001, care leave can only be taken by an employee in an agreement with their employer.

In the national case studies, provisions for long-term care leave are scarcer and are often unpaid. One reason for this is that there is still insufficient knowledge about the optimal design of long-term care leave (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2010). In spite of this, several countries do provide some arrangements for long-term care, particularly Belgium, Germany, Spain and Sweden. Spain provides one of the longest full-time employment-protected care leave schemes, which can last up to two years, although the leave is mostly uncompensated. In Sweden, the income-replacement rate for care leave for a seriously ill relative (up to 60 days) is set in accordance with the replacement rate for sickness benefit, whereas paid care leave for sick children can last up to 120 days per year. In Belgium, time credits are available in the private sector, which can result in long-term care leave amounting to one year or, in some cases, even five years.¹⁹ In Germany, long-term care leave can last up to six months and is financed via the interest-free loans mentioned above.

As a result of inconsistencies and difficulties with long-term care leave, and the overall lack of provisions concerning care leave in general, flexible working time is often seen as an effective option that can satisfy care demands when a dependent’s disability (or dependency) is light, while serving to complement formal care when disability is severe. In Lithuania, employers have to provide opportunities to reduce working hours and to choose flexible working hours for employees who are nursing sick family members; in Spain, this requirement also applies to disabled relatives. Dutch and UK employees also have the right to request flexible working hours – a right that was recently extended to all workers in the UK and not limited to those with care responsibilities (see above). In Germany, part-time ‘family long-term care leave’ can last up to 24 months, although a minimum of 15 hours of work per week is required.

¹⁹ Specifics depend on collective agreements and other circumstances.

Long-term care services

Even though the provision of long-term care has traditionally been understood as a family responsibility, formal long-term care services are provided in a variety of settings across Europe, including home care, residential care (nursing homes, hospitals and old people's homes) and semi-residential care (day-care centres and respite care facilities), sometimes in various mixed forms. Along with a reduction in institutional care, a trend towards developing home-care services has been observed in most Member States, as it is said to be cost-effective and adheres to families' preferences (Lipszyc et al, 2012). For example, according to the authors of the UK case study, there is a strong tradition of subsidised and organised home care of the elderly in the UK. Mediterranean countries are also moving in this direction: the Dependency Law 2006 in Spain implied an expansion of a system in which dependent old people would have the opportunity to stay in their own home and within their social network.

However, there are still large disparities between different Member States in terms of home-care infrastructure and home-care coverage, with Nordic countries taking a lead and central and eastern European (CEE) countries falling behind (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2010). In this respect, Lithuania has shown some improvement; according to Statistics Lithuania, the number of recipients of social services at home more than doubled from 7,600 in 2003 to 16,200 in 2013. In addition, a measure called Work–Family Reconciliation: Integral Help Development began in 2012, with the aim of providing integrated social care and healthcare services at home. Mobile teams of specialists were created, including personal care workers, social workers, nurses and other healthcare professionals, alongside other relevant steps to make formal care provision more flexible. In Belgium, some social insurance services can provide a person on care leave for a dependant relative with some respite care and help to allow the caretaker to take a break.

Although institutional care infrastructure continues to play less of a role in the EU context, some of the countries in the sample selected for this report have also improved institutional care provisions, especially in terms of semi-residential care (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2010). For instance, a government programme in Poland, Senior-WIGOR, oversees the creation of day-care centres and clubs. These facilities can include, for instance, a university of the third age, a senior club, a library and a rehabilitation centre. Similarly, social care facilities in Lithuania are being improved and modernised via financing from European funds. In addition, countries can supplement or replace long-term care services with cash support, which can be used by patients to purchase required services (Lipszyc et al, 2012), as demonstrated in the Polish and Spanish case studies.

Overall, the ageing of the population is expected to put pressure on governments to provide long-term care services, as high rates of informal care for dependent family members may result in gender inequalities in the labour market and shorter working lives in general.

Developing skills and competences

Having relevant and up-to-date skills facilitates individuals' adaptability during various life-cycle transitions and prolongs their working lives. In particular, possession of relevant skills is an important individual characteristic (the circumstances of the individual domain of sustainable work, as explained in Chapter 1), as individuals need to update their skills throughout the life course, either to continue doing the same job or to learn skills for a new job or career development. It is, however, also a very important part of job quality, not only intrinsic job quality (skills, discretion and learning) but can contribute to earnings and career progression (the job characteristics domain of sustainable

work). Education and training, but also learning on the job and through the way work is organised, can be very important to develop oneself in work. Policies aimed at supporting the development of skills and competences, related to all aspects of learning and work organisation, are an important element to keep work sustainable throughout the life course.

Skills agenda in Member States

Different national case studies reported on policy frameworks that include an element of investment into lifelong learning and skills development. For example, the German government initiated a discussion in 2009 on issues related to demographic ageing and, as a result, in 2012 launched the demographic strategy Every Age Counts. It established a working group involving various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, representatives of the municipal organisations, social partners and research institutions, and implemented various measures aimed at activating workers and improving the level of skills in the country. In Spain, the government is aiming to improve the quality of vocational training for the unemployed via the Strategy for Employment Activation 2014–2016. In Finland, the National Working Life Development Strategy to 2020 has a section on competent workforces. The UK government also defines skills development as a priority and speaks of shared responsibility between the state, employers and citizens in its Skills for Sustainable Growth strategy.

Some countries have adopted strategies devoted specifically to skills development and lifelong learning that operate in parallel with policy frameworks dealing with demographic challenges. For example, Germany has implemented the Skills Concept, which seeks to increase the supply of skills in the economy and the supply of labour through various measures such as activation and employment protection, better integration and recruitment of skilled migrants, and improved access to VET. In Spain, the Strategy for Lifelong Learning aims among other objectives to enhance the skills level of the population. In Greece, the government adopted the National Lifelong Learning Programme (2013–2015), which aims to support lifelong learning and foster links between education, employment and the labour market.

General features of VET systems

VET systems are a major tool to address the skills dimension of sustainable work. In Germany and Sweden, the VET system is organised in close collaboration with the social partners, which have a major role in defining the training content, examination and certification.

Governments in Member States employ various instruments to support and incentivise individuals to participate in VET. The most widespread instrument is public subsidies for training. Usually the government offers special vouchers, loans or grants to those eligible. Vouchers are particularly common and are used in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands and other countries. For example, in Belgium, vouchers are mostly targeted at low-skilled individuals and can be used as an enrolment waiver (covering 50% of the enrolment fee) or for obtaining necessary training materials such as books. To enable employed individuals to undertake training, some Member States have legislated for education leave for workers.

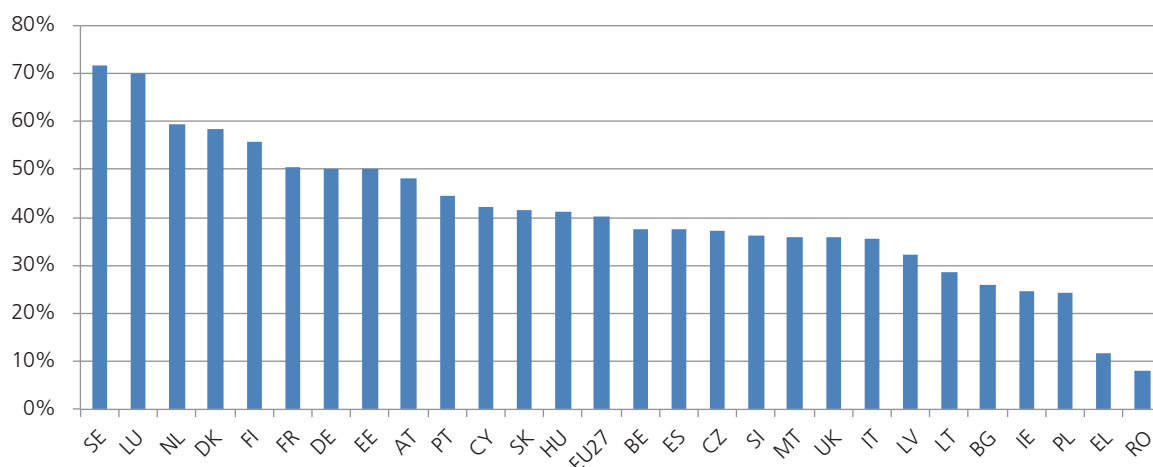
Loans or grants with a subsidised interest rate provide another possibility for funding individuals' participation in VET. For example, in the UK, the government has introduced an adult learning loan system that targets individuals aged 24 and over and offers them loans to finance their further education (at ISCED Level 3). The repayment of these loans is conditional on the recipient's income exceeding £21,000 a year (around €27,000 as at 1 June 2016). In cases of no repayment, the state writes off the outstanding loan after 30 years. The Swedish case study reported similar programmes, such as the Adult Education Initiative and Knowledge Lift, implemented in 1997–2002.

Apprenticeships are of key importance to sustainable work in that they play a major role facilitating transition from education to employment. In some countries, for example Germany, Greece, Spain, Sweden and the UK, the state is actively involved in promoting and subsidising apprenticeship programmes. In Germany and the UK, the public institutions enter training pacts with companies, providing public support to apprenticeship schemes. However, companies sometimes use apprenticeships as a substitute for cheap labour, which does not facilitate the further integration of youth into sustainable employment. The social partners criticised apprenticeship schemes in Greece for this reason, according to the case study.

Lifelong learning

Measures designed to help employees to improve or upgrade their existing skills and acquire new skills are crucial for prolonging working lives. Such measures support individuals' personal or professional development and assist them in various stages of life transition (for example, from job to job). While some Member States have well-institutionalised lifelong learning policies, others are less advanced; this is reflected in the very different formal and informal training rates across Member States (Figure 11). Historically, some have treated adult education as primarily the responsibility of either employees or employers and thus left it to the market. However, recent developments point towards an increasingly proactive role by the state.

Figure 11: Participation rate of employees in formal or informal training in the past 12 months, EU Member States, 2011



Source: Eurostat, Adult Education Survey (code: trng_aes_102), 2011

Training leave is an important instrument for supporting adult learning. For example, employees in Belgium can apply for the so-called 'time credit', which, among other purposes (such as parental leave), provides for a maximum of 36 months of part-time or full-time leave to partake in intensive education or training. In Finland, workers are entitled to take unpaid study leave once in five years for a maximum of two years. The study leave can be financed through a fund run jointly by the social partners and the state. In addition, Finnish employers are obliged by law to take responsibility for their employees' skills development, mainly through personnel and training plans, which allow employees to participate in and influence company human resources policies (Act on Cooperation within Undertaking 2007). Legislation in the Netherlands under the life-course savings schemes (*levensloopregeling*) also enables individuals to take unpaid education or training leave.

Sweden has a long tradition and particularly flexible legislation on education and training leave (Individual Training Leave Act 1974). The Act gives employees considerable leeway in their choice of study, including the type or length of training. Thus, employees can undertake training in areas completely unconnected to the sector of their employment. Moreover, all employees with at least six months' service are entitled to take the education leave and are guaranteed to be reinstated in their workplace with at least the same conditions and pay (even if they do not complete the training).

Public subsidies have been used to support adult training across Member States. Among others, the governments of Finland, Germany and Poland introduced new subsidy schemes for employers. For example, in 2014, Poland established a National Training Fund (Krajowy Fundusz Szkoleniowy) that covers 80% of training costs for employees aged 45 and over. Companies that have fewer than 10 employees are eligible for 100% compensation. In 2014, the government in Finland introduced a similar scheme that gives special attention to supporting the skills development of older employees. In Germany, the WeGebAU programme has been designed specifically to upskill workers, mostly those in the older age bracket.

In parallel, Member States have introduced schemes aimed at encouraging employees to undertake training on their own initiative. For example, the German government has offered continuing education grants since 2008 that cover 50% of individual further VET costs. In Finland, the government and social partners provide an adult education allowance for self-motivated studies. To be eligible, an individual must be a permanent resident, self-employed or employed by a Finnish employer for at least eight years. This allowance cannot be used to support the unpaid study leave described above.

Social partners are actively involved in promoting lifelong learning across Member States. For example, evidence from Germany suggests that due to social partners' efforts, further VET has been included in various sectoral and company-based collective agreements in recent years. Social partners in the Netherlands have established a special fund (VOION), which, among other goals, aims to finance individual employees' further education and training. Moreover, the Dutch social partners are also in charge of sectoral funds (O&O-fonds) used to support workers' training.

Work organisation

Policies can also deal with work organisation at workplace level, in the sense that they can give assistance to companies that want to revise their organisation of work to increase workers' participation and, consequently, to develop learning and innovation at workplace level, so-called workplace innovation. Indeed, work organisation and more worker autonomy and organisational participation will develop workers' skills.

For example, the Dutch Institute for Improvement of Quality of Work and Organisation (NKWO) has organised conferences and provided training for managers, middle managers and employees in the Netherlands since 1981. In 2006, the Dutch Centre for Social Innovation (NCSI) was set up as an 'active knowledge centre', with the mission of stimulating workplace innovation through workers' autonomy and job participation.

Similarly, in Belgium, diversity and professional competence funds support work organisation in companies as a way of acquiring competencies and sharing work experience among workers. Some initiatives are funded by the ESF, such as Flanders Synergy in Flanders, with a view to creating awareness and assisting companies to promote continuous development and the involvement of workers through work organisation.

In Sweden, the bipartite non-profit Prevent organisation, created and financed by the Swedish social partners, aims to provide information and training in work organisation.²⁰

The Investors in People initiative in the UK also takes into account best practice in people management related to the skills development of workers. Another relevant initiative in the UK is the Work Organisation Network, a non-profit coalition of social partners, universities and policymakers that seeks to share and disseminate knowledge and experiences about new ways of organising work. This organisation stresses learning, shared knowledge and experience as key points for achieving high performance and sustainable organisations.

In Germany, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) started funding a special R&D strand called Balance of Flexibility and Stability in a Changing Working Life in 2009. The political goal was to identify opportunities and risks in modern working life through exploring the ambivalence of stability and flexibility. The aim was to improve innovation policy and to secure employability. A great number of joint projects were identified, developing models and methods to adjust work processes, products and competencies to changed conditions. With the R&D programme Working – Learning – Developing Skills – Innovation Ability in Modern Working Life, the Ministry supported concepts and tools that are applicable in practical working life. It included models of employability, lifelong learning and design of work tasks adapted to the needs of older employees. It was complemented in 2014 with funding from the R&D strand Innovations for Production, Services and Work in the Future, co-financed by the ESF as well as the Digital Agenda. It strengthens social aspects of work such as innovative workplace development and healthy and safe living and working conditions.

In Finland, the Leadership Development Network operated by FIOH has developed criteria for good leadership in the public sector that highlight the need for:

- involving employees;
- experimenting with new working methods;
- access to knowledge and networking;
- systematic skills development;
- understanding and accepting diversity.

ALMP

ALMP refer to measures that aim to activate individuals in the labour market. The target group of such measures is mainly the unemployed. ALMP may be central at various stages of life transition (for example, from school to work, prime-age transitions or family-related transitions) and therefore essential to work sustainability.

Across Member States, ALMP focus mainly on guidance, career advice, job placement, counselling and training. For example, the UK's Work Programme supports measures such as community work placement to develop basic employment skills (it is mostly voluntary work), practical help and advice (for example, help with developing a CV and advice on interview techniques), and training and counselling for special groups, such as those with drug or alcohol dependency. In Belgium, job-

²⁰ The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (Svenskt Näringsliv), the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO).

seekers can apply for career vouchers that provide access to guidance and counselling services. Neither of these services is limited to job-seekers and can be accessed by those who are already in work and can, for example, be particularly useful for those in transition from one job to another.

The national case studies included some criticisms of the Polish and UK ALMP programmes. The Polish case study found that ALMP mostly target individuals aged below 30 and over 50, meaning that support for job-seekers aged between 30 and 50 is usually more limited. The UK case study discussed the so-called ‘creaming’ effect: due to the financial incentives in the system, support is more likely to reach those who are most ready for the job market rather than ‘harder’ groups such as those with disabilities or chronic health conditions.

In some countries, non-governmental actors are actively involved in the labour market activation process. In Sweden, for example, the Job Security Councils (discussed early in this chapter), in addition to administering special support measures for the unemployed, provide coaching and training.

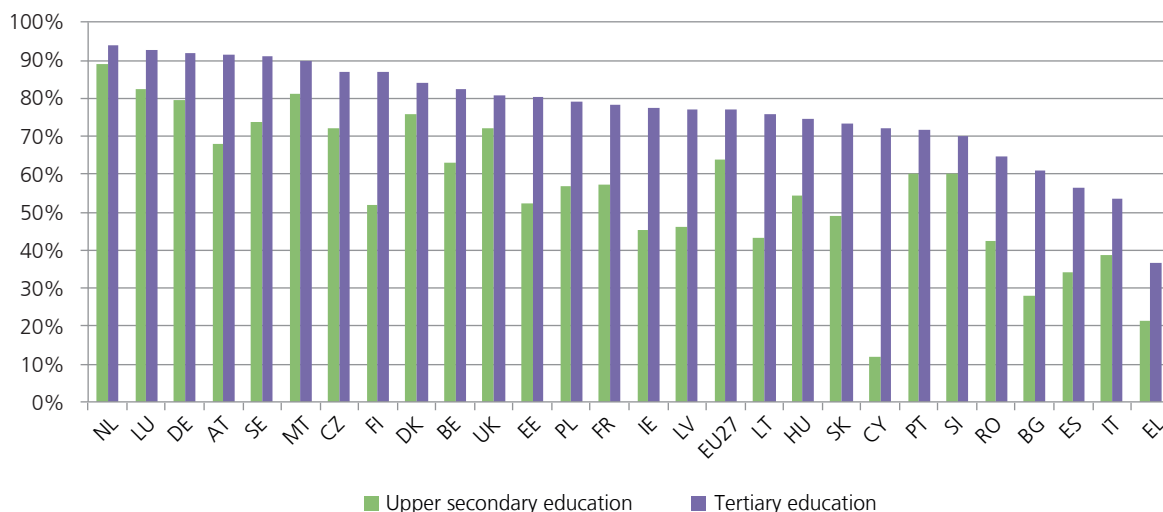
Some ALMP target specific groups considered vulnerable or to face the most barriers in the labour market. For example, in Germany, the public employment service implements a federally funded programme to offer specifically tailored services to migrants, mothers returning to work after prolonged care leave, lone parents, and people with special needs. Specific measures include on-the-job and school-based training, wage subsidies, counselling, and practical advice. Belgium provides subsidies for employers hiring workers with disabilities. In the UK, the Work Programme incentivises prime providers with a differential pricing system to assist the neediest (for example, those with a health condition or disability).

Some governments offer support to people working in specific areas of the economy. In Lithuania, the government used ESF funds (2007–2013) to support vocational training and arrange motivational seminars and career guidance for workers in the agricultural sector. The aim of the programme was to re-skill individuals so that they could take up jobs in other areas of the economy. In Belgium, the government directs job-seekers to engage in occupations associated with labour and skills shortages. Besides receiving public subsidies, these individuals are also exempt from sanctions (that is, participants can refuse job offers from other sectors without losing unemployment benefits).

Policies for younger and older workers

The most important transition for an individual at the early stage of the life course is from school to work. However, problems such as shortage of skills and lack of work experience can impede such transitions. This is especially relevant to young people with lower levels of education, although differences between Member States are also very large (Figure 12). Therefore, policies aiming at supporting early entrants to the labour market are of particular importance from the perspective of work sustainability. Many European countries consider youth a priority target group and provide various measures to assist them during this transition.

Figure 12: Proportion of school-leavers in employment one year after finishing education, by educational attainment, EU Member States, 2011



Note: The value for the EU27 was estimated by Eurostat.

Source: Eurofound, 2014d

Governments across the EU have implemented a variety of measures aimed at supporting young people in the labour market, including apprenticeships, trainings, internships, subsidised jobs, voluntary work, entrepreneurial loans and various non-financial services. For instance, Sweden allows individuals age 20 and over who failed to graduate from upper secondary school to access the loan/grant system and get back to school without paying tuition fees. Poland introduced the Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP) scheme for early dropouts from the education system.

Moreover, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Scandinavian countries started deliberating on and experimenting with schemes aimed at ensuring all young people up to a certain age had guaranteed access to public employment, training and vocational guidance services. Based on this, the concept of the Youth Guarantee was developed, finally reaching EU policy level in the mid-2000s (see the earlier section ‘Young workers’ for more details).

The Member States also recognise unemployed older workers as a priority target group and support measures aimed at helping them to remain active in the labour market. For example, the German government supported the launch of programmes such as IFlaS (2012) and Perspective 50+ (2006) to support the reintegration of older workers. The former aimed at upgrading qualifications while the latter focused on encouraging employers to hire older workers. In 2006, the German government committed additional resources to upskill low-skilled workers, who are often older (the WeGebAU programme). In Poland, the National Training Fund covers part of the training costs (up to 80%) for employees aged 45 and older. In 2015, the government in Lithuania introduced a programme called Support for Unemployed Older People, which provides vocational training and placement into subsidised jobs for individuals aged 50 or more. As noted in the section ‘Older workers’ earlier in this chapter, based on Collective Agreement No. 104, all companies in Belgium with 20 or more employees are obliged to develop an action plan for employees aged 45 and over. Lastly, the 50+ programme in the Netherlands fosters the skills development of workers through subsidised training vouchers, with a view to supporting individuals aged 50 and above to find a job and make them more resilient in the labour market.

Comparative assessment of policies to promote sustainable work

Policies that help to achieve sustainable work

Based on Eurofound's definition, sustainable work enables workers to extend their working lives and encourages more workers to participate in the labour market. It facilitates reconciliation between the different roles that individuals play in companies and as members of a family and citizens in society, and supports them during significant life events (such as parenthood, job loss or illness). Two domains are key to understanding sustainable work:

- structural characteristics of the job – various aspects of job quality: earnings, job security and career opportunities, physical and social environment, work intensity, work autonomy, learning and working time;
- characteristics and situation of an individual in relation to work – abilities, needs, health, skills, employment experience and motivation, family and care responsibilities.

Making work sustainable means creating a fit between the two domains so that they interact in a complementary manner at the workplace. While relations between employers and employees are key to sustainable work, the state also has a crucial role to play. The main instruments used by the state include legislation and regulation, public services, infrastructure development, and public funding of actors and projects. Social dialogue and collective agreements may also support the sustainability of work by setting standards and fostering the exchange of ideas and good practices to be implemented in the workplace.

Characteristics of the job

Companies take prime responsibility in the domain of the structural job characteristics, ensuring that these establish quality of work and the work environment and lead to sustainability of work, while the public sector acts first and foremost as the standard setter and controller. With regard to earnings, all countries in the sample (except for Finland and Sweden) had some kind of national minimum wage regulation. Yet in Finland and Sweden and in other countries (Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands), collective bargaining at the national, industry and company level is a pivotal wage-setting mechanism. This is useful from the sustainable work perspective as collective bargaining is more about setting a decent rather than a minimum wage. Working time regulation across Member States draws on the EU Working Time Directive, referring to certain 'unsustainable work patterns', which is implemented by national frameworks. A number of Member States, however, opted out of the directive, which is at odds with an approach committed to sustainable work. In particular, certain patterns of working hours (such as long hours and night shifts) indeed have been linked with negative effects on workers' health and tend to reduce working lives in the long term.

All countries have set some minimum standards of job security (hiring and firing regulations, severance payments). There is large variation in the national case studies, from the relatively flexible markets in the UK to the relatively stringent regulation in Germany and Spain. Since around the 2000s, however, countries have been experimenting with a variety of arrangements aimed at making labour markets more flexible, such as zero-hour contracts in the UK and mini-jobs in Germany. These are often low-paid jobs with low levels of employment security and social security. While they do help some workers earn additional income, there is also a trend for 'traditional' and full-time jobs to be converted into zero-hour-type jobs. The insecurity associated with such jobs has negative health repercussions on both those whose income depends mostly on these jobs and those who

use such jobs to top up their regular income and so work long hours. This is not sustainable in the longer term.

The physical and social environment in the workplace is a crucial element of job quality and has an impact on workers' health. All Member States have adopted relevant regulatory frameworks, drawing on the OSH Framework Directive (1989) and individual follow-up directives. In addition, collective agreements have been important instruments defining working conditions in some countries, especially Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Spain and Sweden. Public policy as well as collective agreements have been extended in most countries to tackle health-related challenges such as musculoskeletal and psychosocial risks and illnesses. Furthermore, in some cases, health and safety regulation has been in the spotlight in the wake of the recent economic crisis, with a view to reducing the administrative burden on business, while implementing and monitoring authorities have seen their resources cut. In addition, standards are usually lower or more difficult to enforce for some types of employment (for example, self-employment).

Characteristics of the individual

The second domain of sustainable work concerns the personal circumstances of workers. It encompasses their family and care responsibilities and their abilities, health, skills, employment experience and motivation. The state is an active player in this domain by providing the social security net in the case of significant life events and helping individuals to adapt to the changing needs of the labour market and their private life. It employs a variety of relevant policy instruments, from social legislation and social protection systems to public services and infrastructure investment as well as incentives to companies to recruit and adapt workplaces to workers with different needs. Yet state regulation may also have mixed or contradictory effects. For example, labour market flexibility aimed at increasing employment may lead to insecure and precarious employment, with negative health effects – this might not be sustainable in the long term.

To tackle skills and motivation, all the case study countries have been investing in education services and infrastructure (including VET and adult training) to improve the skills' composition in their country. This is relevant for the sustainability of work in that highly skilled individuals are more active in the labour market and have higher bargaining power vis-à-vis their employers. While lifelong learning, with a focus on training, is and remains quite central in the deliberation on employment strategy at European level and in all Member States, to ensure that workers maintain their skills, the role of learning through the way work is organised is becoming increasingly visible to national policymakers: workers learn also through being involved in the improvement of work processes and products, either individually (developing autonomy) or collectively (developing team work and organisational participation, for instance). This is not only beneficial for workers but also for companies. Several countries have given incentives and subsidies to companies to examine and revise their work organisation.

All the countries have implemented various active labour market policies (ALMP) to support jobless workers in finding work. ALMP measures take different forms, such as job guidance, counselling, job placement, training and even public works. Funding decreased somewhat during the crisis years, and the effectiveness of ALMP in some countries has been disputed (for example, public works in Lithuania). Meanwhile, unemployment benefit remains an important element of the social security net for those out of work, although the duration, level and replacement rate vary substantially across countries, from relatively high protection in Spain and Sweden to relatively low protection in Lithuania, Poland and the UK. An adequate level of unemployment benefit in combination with ALMP is part

of the sustainable work approach, provided they offer a path to sustainable employment. In some cases, however, especially in the wake of the crisis, there has been pressure on the unemployed to take any job available, which is not conducive to sustainable work.

Different policy frameworks across the Member States aim to help individuals manage their family and care responsibilities. These include parental or care leave, social benefits, the public or private services infrastructure, and arrangements aimed at facilitating a return to the labour market. The key for sustainable work is finding the right balance between job security and the motivation to maintain skills and interest in the labour market. For example, some countries have relatively generous parental leave arrangements (Greece, Lithuania and Poland) but have fallen behind in terms of childcare provision; use of formal childcare for children under the age of three is particularly low in these countries. A better policy mix from the sustainable work perspective entails generous benefits with many options for working time and an extensive system of childcare services, such as in Sweden.

Caring for disabled or elderly family members is another life-course transition, and policies to make work sustainable should allow for flexibility in taking on this responsibility while retaining links to the labour market. The national case studies noted that, compared with parental leave policy frameworks, long-term care policy tends to be less elaborate – not least because there is insufficient knowledge as to the optimal design of such a system. The key from the sustainable work perspective is the opportunity to take (paid) leave when necessary and work flexible hours, while also having an option to draw on day-care and home-care services. While regulation of long-term or short-term leave is in place in most countries, the level of generosity differs; home-care infrastructure and coverage is much more developed in the Nordic countries than in the CEE countries. Yet the national case studies also observed some promising developments in the CEE countries, such as the creation of mobile teams of specialists providing home care in Lithuania and the Senior-WIGOR programme in Poland, which oversees the creation of day-care centres and clubs for senior citizens.

The national case studies identified a clear gender bias in some policies, meaning in essence that women face more barriers to sustainable work. Of particular concern are policies that discourage women from returning to or being active in the labour market. Under the new Universal Credit system in the UK, in a family with two unemployed partners, if one takes a job, the second partner (usually a woman) faces strong financial disincentives to become a second income earner. In Germany, about two-thirds of people employed in mini-jobs are women. Around 40% of workers in these jobs are students or pensioners who are not interested in doing a different job or entering the primary labour market. However, a considerable number of workers face some of the negative consequences of such jobs (low pay, low social security, and a risk of being trapped in the secondary labour market, with limited opportunities to find a full-time contract). Even if policies in most of the selected countries are gradually changing towards the dual-earner/dual-carer model, women are still far more likely to opt for long-term parental leave, compared to men. In some countries, take up of parental leave by fathers is encouraged and leads to modest steps forward (but not yet equal sharing of responsibilities). Meanwhile, women are also much more likely to provide care for disabled or elderly family members. In countries where the relevant public services and infrastructure are less developed, this often means leaving the labour market for a long period of time, with limited opportunities for return, especially to highly paid and skilled jobs. Flexible working time arrangements and flexible ways of taking leave could allow for better reconciliation between work and private care responsibilities throughout the life course.

Implementation of sustainable work policies across Member States

Inter-institutional cooperation

In most countries, quality of work and employment continues to be shaped by a set of sectoral policies and regulations related to the employment system, provisions for social protection, care arrangements, training programmes, funding for specific actions related to certain elements of sustainability of work, and other relevant policy areas. The existence of various strategies that operate in parallel, led by a number of different institutions, creates a multitude of points of reference.

As demonstrated in the national case studies, coordination problems are sometimes an important issue in terms of developing and implementing sustainable work policies. There may be instances where, given the institutional context, it is not entirely clear which ministry should be (financially) responsible for specific policy areas. As an example, there is a lack of inter-institutional cooperation in implementing OSH policies and enforcing related regulations in Lithuania: while the Ministry of Social Security and Labour is responsible for occupational safety policy, occupational health policy is implemented by the Ministry of Health. According to the Lithuanian case study, this dual system tends to complicate the process of solving holistic OSH problems. Inconsistencies like these can penetrate the system as a whole, usually stemming from a lack of a coherent policy framework and resulting in segmentation and overlap of different services and policies, as argued in the Greek case study. Furthermore, due to the involvement of various stakeholders, finding common ground on politically sensitive issues every so often presents a challenge and may ultimately lead to political discussion and division of opinions (as demonstrated in the German case study, which referred to various instances in which the government as well as the general public have been divided on issues such as the home-care allowance and part-time working arrangements for parents, among others).

Role of the social partners

Although the institutional arrangements and levels of inter-institutional cooperation differ across countries, in most Member States social partners have a role to play alongside the public authorities (Eurofound, 2015a). The national case studies indicated that the social partners have been instrumental in promoting sustainable work in many of the selected countries. As reported in the case studies on Belgium, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, the social partners often raise awareness, initiate discussions, provide support and campaign on a number of questions related to low pay, lifelong learning, health and safety, gender equality, and sustainable work as a whole. They need to be heard in the processes of legislation drafting. In some cases, the social partners may use tripartite negotiations to give advice or put proposals to the government on a number of issues related to sustainable work, which may have some concrete outcomes. For example, the National Labour Council and the Labour Foundation in Belgium as well as the Social and Economic Council in the Netherlands have played a major role in developing advice, which has often been adopted subsequently in key legislation. For this to work best, however, the social partners need to have an incentive to cooperate and find a compromise. If this happens, it often leads to a better-supported agreement, which can be defended to the workers and employers more easily.

Apart from institutionalised tripartite cooperation, various high-level working groups, policy frameworks, information campaigns, committees and network projects (usually government-led) may also boost partnership efforts between relevant social partners and policymakers. This was the case especially in Finland and Germany with initiatives such as Working Life 2020 and INQA (see Chapter 3).

In some cases (primarily in Finland and Sweden, but also in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands), the social partners have a degree of autonomy in a number of policy areas and practices related to sustainable work. In Sweden, collective bargaining is important to the extent that labour law is in part optional; that is to say, most provisions of Swedish labour market legislation can be wholly or partly amended by collective agreements. Likewise, the German government cannot interfere in ongoing wage negotiations between the social partners, while unilateral legislative interventions are circumscribed and often controversial. Furthermore, educational leave, training, gender equality, childcare provision, working time, non-standard forms of work, paternity leave and social security benefits may all be included in the negotiations depending on the specific case (ETUI, 2014).

Having this institutional context in mind, the national case studies highlighted a number of concrete initiatives put forward by the social partners that were related to sustainable work. The most recent one was in Belgium, where the Group of Ten (consisting mainly of the social partners) was tasked to produce a joint action plan on 'workable work' (*werkbaar werk*) in 2016.²¹ In Sweden, the social partners established the Prevent initiative to support companies and other organisations in improving the working environment through communication, dialogue, training and similar measures. In Finland, the Job Cycle Model can be seen as an age plan prepared by social partners. Another example is the Good Work Index (Gute Arbeit Index), which the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) has conducted annually since 2007. Although highly valued by the unions, the index remains controversial, both with regard to its operationalisation and more generally to its use in political discourse. Particularly critical are the employers, who have criticised the assessment and interpretation of the statistical data.

Specific activities by the social partners may also touch on various sectoral policies contributing to making work sustainable throughout the life course. For instance, the social partners usually play a pivotal role in frameworks aimed at improving collaboration, fostering action and exchanging good practices that contribute to health and safety at work (for example, the Forum for Well-being at Work and Working Life 2020 project in Finland), and controlling OSH compliance. Their involvement and, in some cases, their initiative can also contribute to increasing the variety of measures facilitating the reconciliation of work and care responsibilities (for example, the Family-Work Reconciliation measure in Lithuania) and shaping various initiatives related to vocational training in different countries (for example, the German Every Age Counts strategy). Through similar measures, the social partners may also help workers manage life-course issues and transitions. In Belgium, the social partners took the decision to set up a specific fund dealing with transitions between school and work and engaging workers in further education and training. At the same time, Belgium's National Labour Council adopted Collective Agreement No. 104, which obliges companies with 20 or more employees to come up with an action plan so as to increase or maintain employment of employees aged 45 or older.

Overall, it is clear that a strong role taken by the social partners is significant in successfully pursuing strategies contributing to sustainable work and creating a favourable working environment. In general, their contributions can have a wide impact on comprehensive approaches and relevant sectoral policies. Nevertheless, much depends on the institutional and legal frameworks in which the social partners operate and the extent of inclusion such frameworks provide.

²¹ The Group of Ten has met in a series of meetings and study visits in preparation for a conference in November 2016, where concrete advice will be put forward on how to enable workers to work longer and have productive careers with reduced stress levels.

Company-level practices

Company-level policies are the crucial place for the proper implementation of practices related to sustainable work. The job climate in this regard is shaped by the way in which government regulation and collective agreements are applied in practice, the workers' voice is heard (or not) and worker participation evolves (Eurofound, 2015a).

One of the main areas where company-level practices are crucial is OSH, which entails various duties and voluntary measures for employers, and which are applicable to all workers. Companies are generally required to have a health and safety policy and to make regular risk assessments and health checks; the specifics usually depend on the company size and sector. In addition, the social partners and collective agreements at company, sectoral or regional level can play an important part in setting up and managing company policy on working conditions and job quality. For instance, safety representatives from trade unions appear to be important in terms of the health and safety environment in the UK, as employers there have a duty to consult them and provide them with information on risks in the workplace. In general, the UK has historically had a strong record in health and safety as it is one area where it has maintained trade union involvement.

Exchange of information, dialogue and jointly implemented arrangements at company level can contribute significantly to practices related to sustainable work across a number of areas other than OSH. The law in Sweden stipulates that, prior to any decision on significant changes in employment and working conditions, the employer must inform and consult the trade union organisations in charge of concluding collective agreements. In Finland, the Act on Cooperation within Undertakings obliges an employer to negotiate with employees before making a decision that affects their status in relation to their work, working conditions and their position within the organisation. In particular, working arrangements may often be subject to and adapted to the company-specific context; for instance, a voluntary agreement between employees and employers can be reached in Germany concerning the creation of lifetime working time accounts to fund long-term social insurance for care leave, parental leave or early retirement, thus providing workers with more flexibility.

Similar company-level arrangements, while taking into account the interests of workers, can also be beneficial to employers. As a result, companies might start promoting practices associated with sustainable work so as to encourage labour force participation and attract skills – as is the case in Germany. In addition, a dialogue between employers and employees can help to attain work-related solutions that are acceptable and useful to both sides. One example of good practice can be found in Finland, where innovative working time experiments are being implemented in the chemical industry. Local agreement on a working time model of 12-hour shifts is compensated for by longer leave periods. Initiatives to acquaint employers with the long-term benefits of sustainable working practices may prove helpful.

Despite these considerations, there is a growing need to further involve employers in practices that support sustainable work, such as general training, VET, apprenticeships and occupational rehabilitation services. Such concerns over employer involvement were reported in the national case studies for Germany, Greece, Lithuania and the UK. Accordingly, some government-led efforts to encourage companies to do more have been highlighted. For instance, in 2006, the German government launched WeGebAU, a specific programme to financially assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to support their workers to participate in further VET, while a ministerial campaign, Firms Promote Health, was initiated to support health-promotion activities in companies, mainly assisted by the Federal Ministry of Health. Similarly, in the UK, to increase the uptake of apprenticeships among employers, in 2012 the government introduced the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE).

Company representatives and the social partners can also be successfully involved in broader platforms, structures and projects related to sustainable work or relevant sectoral policies, usually together with policymakers and employee representatives (as discussed in Chapter 3). The Non-Discrimination Act in Finland was prepared by several committees and working groups consisting of representatives of various ministries and both employee and employer organisations. Other initiatives, such as the multipartner network INQA or the Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy in Germany, the Work Organisation Network in the UK, or the Masto project in Finland also included employer and employee organisations as relevant stakeholders in formulating policy objectives and implementation. A good illustration of the close collaboration between the social partners on work environment issues is Sweden's Prevent programme.

Monitoring

Measuring and monitoring progress towards sustainable work over the life course is essential. Given the complexity and multilayered nature of the concept, monitoring primarily involves assessing relevant policy areas through mainstreaming sustainable work and developing high-quality data and analysis contributing to better understanding and assessment of the situation. Several of the national case studies stressed that the lack of data, the weakness of monitoring mechanisms and a lack of a general culture of evaluation are important impediments to setting criteria for sustainable work and achieving relevant policy goals.

There are a few notable exceptions. In the 1970s, Statistics Finland developed the Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey, which is unique in Europe in its scope and comprehensiveness. It provides extensive coverage of all relevant dimensions of sustainable work. The data are collected through face-to-face interviews using a standardised questionnaire (Statistics Finland, 2014). The publication of each survey is followed by high-quality analysis from experts from universities, research institutes and other working life organisations.

The Dutch Working Conditions Survey (NEA), a postal/internet survey of 25,000 employees, gives a comprehensive picture of working conditions, work characteristics and health at work in the Netherlands and has been carried out since 2003. It has been complemented by a specific longitudinal annual investigation (STREAM), which interviews workers aged between 45 and 64. STREAM is an internet panel covering 12,000 employees, 1,000 self-employed and 2,000 non-employed people. The key questions concern health, work and work history, knowledge and capabilities, social environment and financial situation. The survey is enhanced by qualitative interviews providing insights on the factors leading to early exit from the labour market and reasons to keep working.

Similar monitoring programmes have been initiated in several other countries in the sample. The DGB's Good Work Index in Germany looks at several dimensions of employment, including job resources, stress and burdens of work, income and job security. The index is constructed by collecting representative data from some 7,000 people annually and thus measures quality of work on the basis of the employees' own judgements (Hexel, 2008). As mentioned above, the index remains controversial, especially among employers. Also in Germany, the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) has a remit to monitor and channel all governmental efforts to promote good work and operates a separate unit under the heading Future of Work. In addition, since 2010, the Federal Statistical Office has collected indicators on quality of work, which is measured along seven dimensions – job security and equal opportunities, income, working time and reconciliation of work and family life, employment security and social protection, labour relations, qualifications and skills,

and collaboration and motivation. Within these dimensions, the qualitative aspects of employment are represented by some 30 selected indicators (Federal Statistical Office of Germany, 2012).

Similarly, ‘workability monitors’ have been taking place every three years in Flanders (Belgium), performed by the Socio-Economic Council for Flanders (SERV) and covering various aspects of quality of work, including the emotional demands of work and working conditions. These are representative written surveys carried out on a sample of 8,000 workers (Eurofound, 2011). The workability indicators include four dimensions: stress at work, well-being at work, learning opportunities, and work–family balance. Together with this monitoring mechanism, 20 ambitious objectives were set, focusing on measurable targets. These are complemented by the so-called ‘external services’, which offer advice to companies on health and well-being issues (interpreted quite widely) and offer in-depth company- or sector-specific instruments and advice to companies where required. These are concrete examples of reflection on how to make work more sustainable at company level with a view to developing a longer-term strategy.

With regard to measuring progress towards sustainable work over the life course, the importance of the Job Quality Index launched in 2012 by Eurofound can also be highlighted. This measures the quality of employment in Europe by covering four relevant dimensions: earnings, prospects, intrinsic job quality, and working time quality (see Chapter 2).

The variety of indicators utilised across different Member States, and the conceptualisation efforts within the scope of this study, imply that the overall approaches concerning monitoring policies related to sustainable work could be expanded further. Put differently, together with the development of the concept of sustainable work, subsequent comprehensive attempts to evolve and expand appropriate indicators should follow.

Coherence of the policy framework

Policy interaction

The national case studies found that sustainable work is a relatively new term in the policy debate, and it is not currently used in policy documents in the countries studied apart from Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden. Nevertheless, alternative terms such as workability, decent work and good work are referred to in various policy initiatives that contribute to making work sustainable across the life course.

Countries in certain welfare state regimes are better placed to address the challenges relevant from the sustainable work perspective. In particular, Finland and Sweden had already in the early 1970s introduced proactive labour market policies and policies favouring gender equality, equal opportunities and the development of the dual-earner/dual-carer system. Both countries feature well-developed care infrastructure and strong social dialogue.

The analysis for this study covered four policy themes:

- ensuring career and employment protection;
- maintaining and promoting the health and well-being of workers;
- reconciling working and non-working life;
- developing skills and competences.

This differentiation was useful for analytical purposes, yet many policies that are important from a sustainable work perspective cut across the four themes. For example, ALMP cut across the themes of employment protection, skills development and work–life balance. Similarly, action to address non-standard forms of employment cuts across policies covering the fields of employment protection, occupational health and work–life balance. Finally, specific groups of workers such as older, young and disabled workers are covered by policies cutting across the various themes. For example, the national case studies identified policies aimed at incentivising companies to hire older workers (Belgium, Greece, Lithuania and Spain), adapting workplaces and working conditions to older workers (Belgium and Greece) and supporting the continuous skills development of such workers (Germany, Greece and the Netherlands). A coherent policy framework aimed at making work sustainable should aim for a holistic approach ensuring that different thematic policy frameworks feed into each other. There is evidence that Finland and Sweden have developed such frameworks more successfully than countries such as Greece and Spain.

Another way to discuss interactions between policies is based on the life-course and life-transitions approach. This study considered the following transitions:

- school to work;
- parenthood;
- prime-age transitions associated with employment risks;
- work to retirement and old age.

These transitions cut across the four themes as presented above. For example, the school-to-work transition is in essence about integrating young people into the labour market. A comprehensive policy in this field encompasses designing incentives for employers, developing apprenticeship schemes, adapting working conditions and supporting young families. The transition to parenthood, from the sustainable work perspective, should be supported through employment security policies, adequate parental leave arrangements, and policies that encourage parents to maintain and develop their job-related skills. Concerning prime-age transitions and associated employment risks, the national case studies reported on policies aimed at supporting the unemployed to return to the labour market, gradual reintegration of employees who return to work after a prolonged absence or sickness, and investment in adult training.

Member States cover relevant policies through overarching frameworks and more specific and sectoral policies. Examples of the overarching frameworks dealing with many facets of sustainable work are Working Life 2020 and the Forum for Well Being at Work in Finland and Arbeiten 4.0 in Germany. Also of key relevance are various demographic strategies such as Every Age Counts in Germany and Solidarity of Generations in Poland, as they tend to cover horizontally many challenges faced by ageing societies. Furthermore, numerous skills development and lifelong learning strategies have been adopted by various countries (Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Spain and others) addressing, amongst other issues, skills shortages and the adaptability of employees to the changing needs of the labour market. While such frameworks are often built as horizontal discussion and information exchange platforms involving many stakeholders, they also help to coordinate the actions of public agencies, the social partners and the private sector. In some cases (especially Belgium, Greece, Lithuania, Poland and Spain), EU structural funds and in particular the European Structural Fund (ESF) have created the impetus to adopt a holistic approach in areas such as youth employment, lifelong learning and social service development, supported by specific regulatory actions.

Sectoral policies are vital to making work sustainable as they usually have clearer institutional ownership, budget lines, stakeholders and target indicators. However, inter-institutional coordination between sectoral policies remains a big challenge across countries and some gaps and contradictions were reported in the national case studies, as described below.

Key gaps and contradictions

Achieving sustainable work involves assessing, and possibly adapting, social and employment policies, regulations and practices with a view to increasing job quality and to adapting work to the changing needs of workers over the life course (Eurofound, 2015a). As there are a number of dimensions related to the concept of sustainable work, policies need to work in a complementary way so as to achieve the desired outcomes. The lack of comprehensive strategies tackling the issue may result in policy arrangements that do not function in a synchronised manner, creating redundancies, contradictions and inefficiencies. However, measures in one domain may have unexpected positive effects on another domain. It is therefore crucial to consider policy coordination and interaction between different measures. Several of the national case studies (including those from Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Poland and the UK) pointed to the problem of approaches to sustainable work being too fragmented, leading to gaps and inconsistencies *across* different sectoral policy areas and *within* them.

As already noted, psychosocial pressure on employees does not receive the same attention in public policy everywhere in Europe as more traditional OSH. The cutback in investment in health and safety by the UK government (particularly in long-term health rather than safety as such) is inconsistent with the removal of the default retirement age and other measures tackling the problem of an ageing workforce. Similarly, the Polish case study argues that a gradual increase in the statutory retirement age is insufficient to cope with the consequences of an ageing society because it has to be combined with investment in education, health and the social environment, and labour market services. Parental leave in Lithuania is one of the longest in the EU, yet it is not supplemented by corresponding provisions of non-formal education and in-job training, which could facilitate parents' return to work by updating their skills and competences.

The national case studies indicated that the economic recession has had a significant influence on the prospects, policies and general approaches to sustainable work. The focus has shifted towards the creation of new jobs, developing more favourable conditions for businesses and dealing with high unemployment rates and away from increasing the quality of work and employment or improving the working environment. This has often meant rising job insecurity, less choice for workers, greater work intensity, deterioration of work–life balance and increasing stress at work. Meanwhile, some older workers have postponed their retirement due to a loss of wealth (for example, a reduction in house value or financial assets). This is not sustainable employment.

The impact of the crisis differs across the Member States. It has been more balanced in the Nordic countries, particularly Sweden. This is related to the universal and generous social protection system, the fiscal and monetary policies conducted by the Swedish government, and the particularities of the industrial relations system. Other countries in the sample have been hit severely by the crisis, including Lithuania, Spain and, above all, Greece (Eurofound, 2014c, pp. 79–80). As a result, various changes to labour market and employment policies were initiated across Europe. These included approving short-time work schemes, removing barriers on temporary contracts, easing dismissal procedures and tightening the rules on obtaining sickness leave or sickness benefit (Eurofound, 2013c). For instance, in the UK, under the eligibility criteria for claiming unfair dismissal protection,

the required length of employment with the employer was lengthened to two years, and high fees were introduced for cases taken to employment tribunals. Similarly, redundancy compensation payments were reduced in Greece, together with a shortening of the notice period in the event of contract termination. In Spain, it became possible for an employer to dismiss a worker for economic reasons.

OSH is another area significantly affected by recent policy measures. For instance, supervisory authorities have faced substantial staff and funding cuts in Germany and the UK. The numbers of inspectors and company visits have decreased in Belgium, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands. The State Labour Inspectorate in Lithuania has been given many more functions without a corresponding increase in funding.

Industrial relations in general and the negotiation power of employees in particular have also been affected. In a number of Member States, including Belgium and Poland, the role of tripartite social dialogue institutions has been weakened considerably (Eurofound, 2014c). An accelerated trend towards decentralisation in collective bargaining from the industry/sectoral level to the enterprise level has been observed in Greece and Spain.

The recession created additional challenges for gender equality. The crisis levelled out the gender gaps across the EU in employment and unemployment rates and wages. This was primarily a result of employment falling and unemployment rising more dramatically for men than for women (de Jong, 2013) due to labour market segregation (Ghosh, 2013). Because of this, dual-earner households lost ground in the downturn almost exclusively to the advantage of female breadwinner couples, who increased their share of household types with at least one breadwinner to almost 10% in the EU (Bettio et al, 2013). Across Europe, however, female workers still encountered a growing number of challenges related to sustainable work, especially in countries that underwent the most significant fiscal consolidation. The increase in working time for civil servants and budget and salary cuts in the public sector (as in Greece, Spain and the UK) had a substantial effect primarily on women. In addition, family policies have suffered in some of the selected countries. For example, child tax credits have been reduced in the UK and abolished altogether in Greece. In Spain, the policy of awarding €2,500 to new parents introduced in 2007 was repealed, and fiscal consolidation measures targeted the country's parental leave schemes (Karamessini and Rubery, 2013).

Notably, these trends have often presented workers across Europe with a trade-off of either accepting non-standard forms of employment, lower pay and poorer working conditions or becoming unemployed. Involuntary part-time and temporary work rose in the EU during the recession (Erhel et al, 2012; Nardo and Rossetti, 2013; Eurofound, 2014c). Temporary contracts accounted for over 90% of the new recruitments in Spain in 2014, while about half of all new open-ended contracts were part time, with a substantial proportion associated with involuntary part-time work (European Commission, 2015g). The rates of temporary contracts also grew in Lithuania, the Netherlands and the UK (Eurofound, 2014c, p. 54). Despite this trend, the sample also included some notable exceptions. In Sweden, for example, the crisis affected essentially fixed-term contracts and did not affect the proportion of involuntary part-time work.

From a life-course perspective, all the transitions can be found to have been impeded by the recent downturn (including transitions to and from parenthood), although young adults transitioning from education to the labour market have faced the most severe challenges. Since the onset of the recession, youth unemployment has increased sharply in Europe, markedly surpassing unemployment rates for all ages. The evidence shows that young men and women, particularly those on temporary

or part-time employment contracts, are the contemporary ‘buffers’ – workers who are laid off first when a downturn occurs (Davis and von Wachter, 2011; Bettio et al, 2013; Banerji et al, 2015). Correspondingly, it is the young cohorts who are more often employed in precarious and insecure jobs, such as low-paid temporary jobs, with lower employment security than adult workers (Nardo and Rossetti, 2013). As long spells of unemployment are associated with depreciated human capital and skills, and a lower probability of future employment and lower wages, the prospects of sustainable work in countries suffering from high rates of youth unemployment (especially Greece and Spain) are significantly hampered (Banerji et al, 2014).

Sustainable work: Policy pointers

Sustainable work means that work:

- does not diminish but regenerates personal resources, including health and well-being as well as skills of the worker, throughout working life;
- corresponds to the abilities, needs and personal circumstances of each worker;
- adapts to the changing abilities, needs and personal circumstances of workers depending on life stage (youth, parenthood, old age) and significant life-changing events (such as illness).

Sustainable work encourages workers to maintain links to and remain active in the labour market through the development and mobilisation of their abilities. Unsustainable work exhausts workers so that they cannot, or do not want to, continue working or are unavailable to take part in the labour market because, for example, they need to provide care for their children or ageing and other dependent relatives.

Sustainable work benefits:

- individuals – it helps to maintain health, develop skills and achieve financial security, work–life balance, meaningful work and sense of self-fulfilment in the workplace;
- companies – it supports a more able and motivated workforce;
- the society as a whole – it delivers higher levels of employment and makes better use of human capital.

In this context, state policies do have a role to play – from setting standards, providing relevant public services and making investments to handing out grants and subsidies to relevant projects, encouraging discussion and promoting exchange of experience. These should be complemented with company practices and collective agreements.

This study showed that all Member States have policy frameworks addressing the key themes of sustainable work: employment and career protection; health and well-being at work; reconciliation between work and private life; and continuous learning and skills development. Given that the term ‘sustainable work’ is relatively new, the relevant actions are usually framed in a more general or more specific way. They are aimed, for instance, at improving the quality of work, supporting young workers, supporting people with care responsibilities or addressing the challenges posed by the ageing society. Yet introducing such a term into the policy agenda would help to make it richer. Indeed, sustainable work could become a concept connecting different policies into an overarching agenda with a long-term goal: to help workers remain healthy and active in the labour market and ensure a proper balance between work and non-work responsibilities. Such a long-term goal is

especially relevant in the wake of the recent financial and economic crisis. Adding the concept of sustainable work to the policy discussion could make it more balanced. After all, recent measures such as cutting expenditure on health and safety at work may have negative long-term implications for workers' health, reduce the pool of workers in the labour market, decrease levels of employment and add more pressure to the state budget in the future.

The study also showed that Member States have been discussing or adopting horizontal strategies aimed at dealing with demographic challenges, fostering workers' health or addressing skills shortages. Often these have been primarily discussion frameworks, involving many stakeholders and encouraging the exchange of ideas and good practices. Such frameworks are important to exchange points of view, share experiences and discuss solutions – which are likely to be diverse and could contradict one another. It is important that these frameworks are followed by specific policies with budgets, implementing agencies and oversight of results.

There is no trade-off between horizontal and issue-specific policies. While adopting overarching sustainable work strategies might help to mainstream the relevant ideas, this has to be supported with specific actions and implementation arrangements that include clear institutional ownership and responsibility. Yet proper inter-institutional coordination is the key, whether on the basis of more formal or informal procedures, depending on the policy tradition in specific Member States. Coordination is important to plug policy gaps and to address inconsistencies.

A life-course perspective helps in identifying some important challenges that have the potential to shorten the duration of working life and hinder the development of individual capacities over time, thus making work less sustainable. Firstly, the study has reported an increase in temporary, short-term, casual jobs (including zero-hours contracts in the UK) and civil work or agency work contracts. While these jobs and contracts make labour markets more flexible, they can trap part of the labour force in positions of low job quality. Prolonged exposure to such jobs may have negative effects on individuals and reduce their ability to remain active in the labour market. Some specific groups are especially at risk, such as young people.

Secondly, with state policies focusing on vulnerable target groups, workers in the prime age group (30–50 years) are frequently left out of the policy focus. Yet the sustainable work perspective draws attention to the changing needs and circumstances of this group. In particular, the state should provide options for the skills development and continuous learning of these workers because companies and employers are not always willing to or capable of investing in their own human resources. ALMP should prioritise the development of high-level, long-term skills. Policies that support the development of family leave and long-term care services should be evaluated in the framework of sustainable work. There is a need to develop policy approaches that encourage combining care with active participation in the labour market. The last point also has a clear gender dimension; indeed, policies aiming at equal opportunities in the labour market are usually advantageous from a sustainable work perspective.

Finally, the sustainable work perspective also suggests some important pointers to the policy debate concerning the ageing workforce and transition to retirement. First and foremost, across Member States, considerable effort has been aimed at restraining early retirement options, increasing the retirement age and developing funded or contributory pension systems. Yet these measures have to be combined with additional skills development and working time options for older workers and provisions that will help adaptation of their work roles and tasks.

Policy options for making work more sustainable are not always clear and straightforward; there are trade-offs between short-term relief and long-term investment, and policies may have different effects on various target groups. Companies are at the centre of making work sustainable, and their decisions with regard to pay, recruitment, promotion and the work environment have long-term implications for their workers. While the state can enact a policy framework and decide on standards, companies and workers bear the key responsibility for organising work and allocating tasks, and nurturing less tangible elements such as the work atmosphere. In this context, cooperation between employers and employees is of paramount importance. This study found many instances where the social partners agreed and implemented relevant actions at the national/industry or company levels. At the same time, there is a clear imperative for company- or industry-level, regional or national frameworks to discuss and agree actions concerning the quality of workplaces and the changing needs of the workforce. The concept of sustainable work can inform such discussion and suggest decisions that are beneficial to individuals, companies and the wider society.

Eurofound's conceptual framework has the potential to guide Member States as to how their policies fit within this context of sustainable work over the life course. Among countries, there are a series of policies that address all the issues, albeit with differences in intensity (or depth), at different stages of development or in a different economic situation and context. It is clear that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach and that whatever policies are in place, constant reflection is needed to determine whether they still fit the overarching goal. The issue at stake for each Member State is to reflect on:

- whether its policies form a coherent whole;
- how these policies are taken on board and are adapted to;
- adapting economic policy, labour market institutions, the social protection system and social infrastructure accordingly.

This could lead to 'sustainability-proofing' of policies, in the sense that for new policy measures in a particular field and the overall policy body, it could be useful to have ex-ante and ex-post impact assessments of the sustainability of work for men and women throughout the life course.

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Annex: Additional data

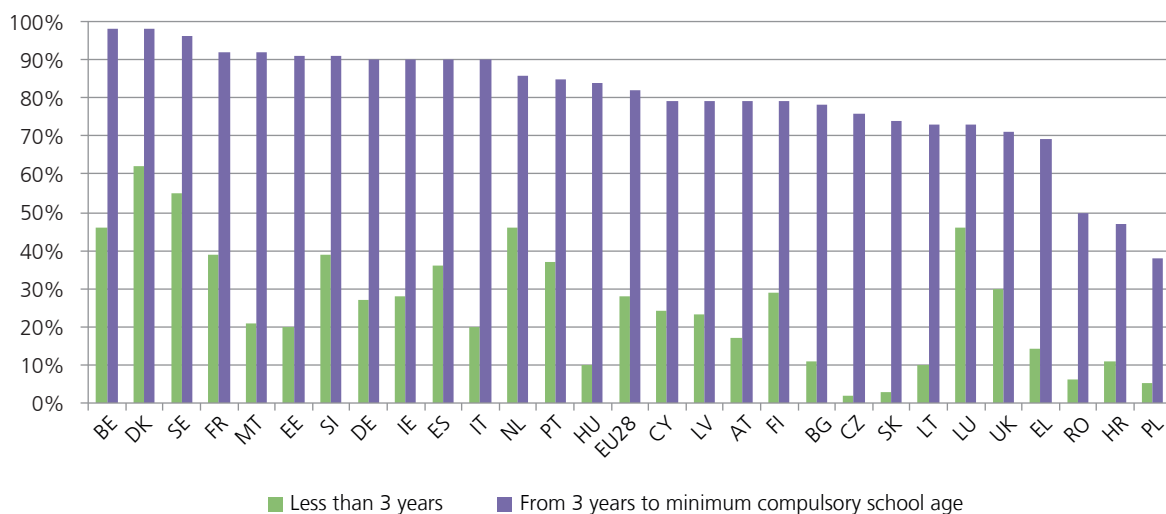
Table A1: Projected age-related expenditure in percentage of GDP, 2013–2060, by country

	Pensions			Healthcare			Long-term care			Education			Strictly age-related items		
	2013	2040	2060	2013	2040	2060	2013	2040	2060	2013	2040	2060	2013	2040	2060
AT	13.9	14.7	14.4	6.9	7.9	8.2	1.4	2	2.7	4.9	4.8	4.9	27.1	29.5	30.2
BE	11.8	15.2	15.1	6	6.1	6.1	2.1	3	3.7	5.8	6	6.1	25.7	30.3	31
BG	9.9	8.4	9.5	4	4.4	4.4	0.4	0.5	0.6	3	2.9	3.4	17.3	16.3	17.8
CY	9.5	9.4	9.4	3	3.3	3.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	7.3	5.4	6.1	20	18.5	19.2
CZ	9	9	9.7	5.7	6.4	6.7	0.7	1.1	1.4	3.4	3.7	4.1	18.9	20.3	22
DE	10	12.2	12.7	7.6	8.3	8.2	1.4	2.3	2.9	4.1	4.2	4.4	23.1	27	28.2
DK	10.3	8	7.2	8.1	8.9	9	2.4	3.8	4.4	7.6	7.2	6.9	28.4	27.9	27.5
EE	7.6	6.9	6.3	4.4	5	5	0.6	1	1.3	4.4	4.5	5.2	17	17.3	17.6
EL	16.2	14.1	14.3	6.6	7.5	7.9	0.5	0.7	0.9	4.1	2.7	3	27.4	25	26
ES	11.8	11.9	11	5.9	7	7	1	1.6	2.4	4.6	3.2	3.8	23.2	23.6	24
FI	12.9	13.6	13	7.8	8.5	8.5	2.4	4.2	4.5	6.1	6.3	6.4	29.2	32.6	32.4
FR	14.9	13.8	12.1	7.7	8.6	8.6	2	2.6	2.8	5	4.9	4.8	29.6	29.9	28.3
HR	10.8	7.8	6.9	5.7	7.3	7.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	3.7	3.2	3.3	20.7	18.8	18.2
HU	11.5	9.6	11.4	4.7	5.3	5.5	0.8	1	1.2	3.6	3.1	3.4	20.5	18.9	21.4
IE	7.4	10.1	8.5	6	7.3	7.2	0.7	1.1	1.4	6	5.3	6	20	23.6	23
IT	15.7	15.8	13.8	6.1	6.7	6.8	1.8	2.2	2.7	3.7	3.4	3.5	27.3	28.1	26.8
LT	7.2	9.4	7.5	4.2	4.7	4.3	1.4	2.2	2.3	3.9	4.2	4.8	16.7	20.5	18.9
LU	9.4	12.7	13.5	4.6	4.8	5.1	1.5	2.2	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	18.8	23.1	25.2
LV	7.7	5.4	4.6	3.8	4.4	4.4	0.6	0.7	0.7	3.8	3.8	4.6	15.9	14.4	14.3
MT	9.6	9.8	12.8	5.7	7.5	7.8	1.1	2	2.3	5.9	5.5	6	22.2	24.7	28.8
NL	6.9	8.4	7.8	7.2	8.2	8.2	4.1	5.8	7.1	5.2	4.8	4.7	23.4	27.2	27.8
PL	11.3	9.9	10.6	4.2	5	5.4	0.8	1.3	1.7	4.4	3.8	4.3	20.7	20.1	22
PT	13.8	14.8	13.1	6	7.7	8.5	0.5	0.7	0.9	5.2	4	4.2	25.5	27.3	26.8
RO	8.2	8.4	8.1	3.8	4.6	4.8	0.7	1.2	1.6	2.6	2.8	3	15.3	17	17.4
SE	8.9	7.5	7.5	6.9	7.3	7.3	3.6	4.6	5.1	5.7	5.9	5.9	25.1	25.3	25.8
SI	11.8	14.4	15.3	5.7	6.8	6.9	1.4	2.4	2.9	5.3	5.4	6.1	24.2	28.9	31.2
SK	8.1	8.1	10.2	5.7	7.1	7.7	0.2	0.4	0.6	3.4	2.8	3	17.4	18.4	21.5
UK	7.7	8.5	8.4	7.8	8.8	9.1	1.2	1.5	1.6	5.1	5.1	5.1	21.8	23.8	24.2
EU28	11.3	11.7	11.1	6.9	7.7	7.8	1.6	2.3	2.7	4.7	4.5	4.7	24.6	26.2	26.4

Notes: The healthcare and long-term care EU averages are weighted according to GDP. The level of healthcare and long-term care expenditure in 2013 is the first year of the projected expenditures based on the latest available data. Healthcare expenditure excludes long-term nursing care.

Source: European Commission, 2015a

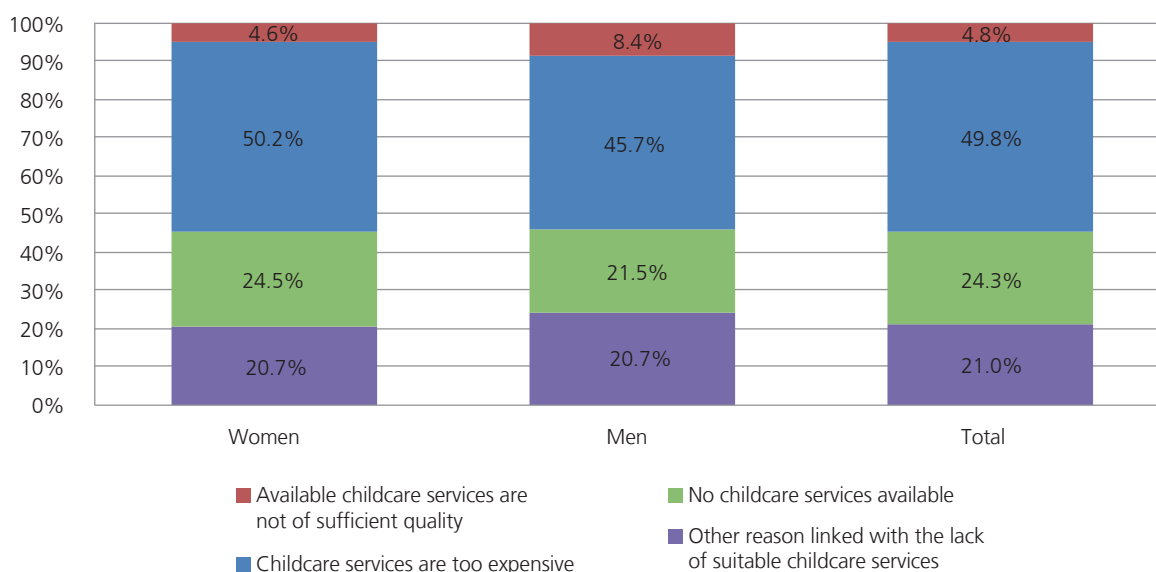
Figure A1: Use of formal childcare, EU Member States, 2013



Notes: Percentage of the population of each age group; coverage rates of children receiving at least one hour per week of formal childcare.

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC (code: ilc_caindformal), 2013; authors' calculations

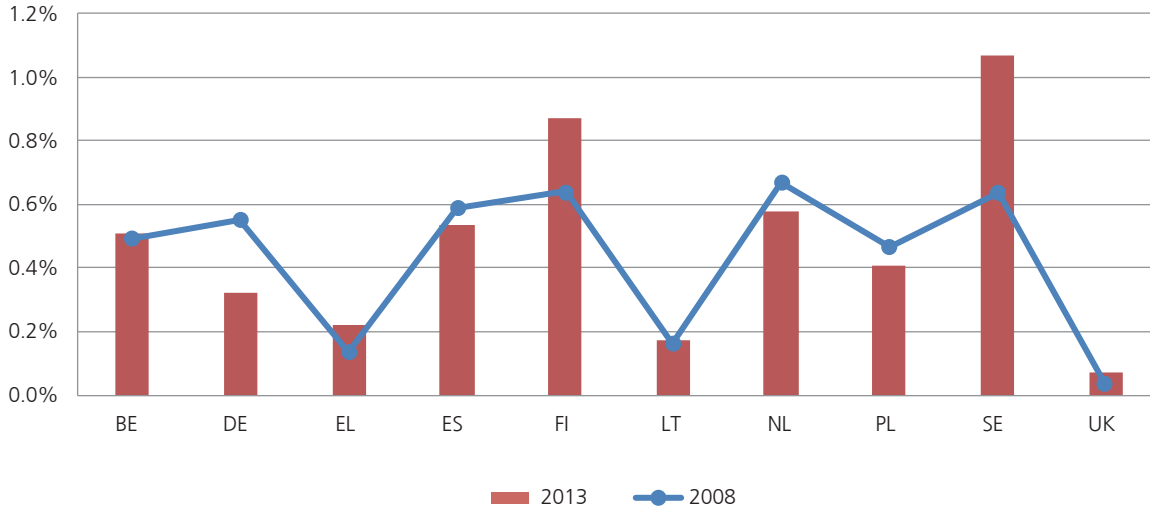
Figure A2: Main childcare-related reasons for not working or working part time, EU28, 2010



Note: Men and women aged 15–64 not working or working part time for reasons linked with childcare.

Source: Eurostat, EU-LFS ad hoc module (code: lfs0_10cnowchi), 2010; authors' calculations

Figure A3: Public expenditure on labour market policy measures as a percentage of GDP, case study countries, 2008 and 2013



Notes: Figure refers to labour market policy measures (categories 2–7), which cover activation measures for the unemployed and other target groups including the categories of training, job rotation and job sharing, employment incentives, supported employment and rehabilitation, direct job creation and start-up incentives; 2013 data for Greece and the UK refer to 2010; 2013 data for Spain refer to 2012.

Source: Eurostat, Labour Market Policy database (code: Imp_expsumm), 2013

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European countries face the challenges of ageing populations supported by shrinking workforces, more precarious types of employment, and in many cases, a decreasing number of jobs in the wake of the economic crisis. As a result, the issue of how to enable more people to participate in the labour market and to continue to do so until an older age has become a key policy issue in all EU Member States. These challenges might be met by adopting an approach to work that puts sustainability at its centre. Sustainable work means that 'living and working conditions are such that they support people in engaging and remaining in work throughout an extended working life'.

This study analyses national policies that help to achieve sustainable work in 10 EU Member States. It looks at how these policies are being implemented, whether they are integrated into a coherent framework, and whether they are complementary or contradictory.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social and work-related policies. Eurofound was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75, to contribute to the planning and design of better living and working conditions in Europe.

