



Developments in collectively agreed working time 2013

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This report is available in electronic format only.

*In 2013, the average collective agreed weekly working time in the European Union was 38.1 hours, the same as in 2012. However, the working week was, on average, 30 minutes shorter in the pre-2004 EU15 Member States, and more than 90 minutes longer in the more recent Member States. If the collectively agreed normal annual working time is taken as the pattern, in 2013, full-time workers in the EU will have worked, on average, nearly 1,712 hours (1,676 hours in the EU15 and 1,819 hours in the recent Member States). Of the three sectors examined, the **civil service** sector recorded the shortest average agreed normal working week at 38 hours – although this represents an increase of 0.2 hours compared with 2012. In the **chemicals sector** and in **retail trade**, the average agreed working times were 38.1 and 38.3 hours, respectively, both representing an increase of 0.1 hours compared with 2012. Collectively agreed paid annual leave entitlements stood at 25.4 days across the EU. These were slightly higher in the EU15 countries (26.8 days) and considerably lower in the more recent Member States (20.8 days).*

Introduction

This annual report covers several issues related to the length of working time in the European Union and Norway in 2013. It is based mainly on contributions from the national correspondents to Eurofound's European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO). This edition includes data from Croatia, which became a Member State on 1 July 2013. The report looks specifically at:

- average weekly working hours set by collective agreements, both economy-wide and for three specific sectors: **chemicals**, the **retail trade** and the **civil service**;
- statutory limits on weekly and daily working time;
- average actual weekly working hours;
- annual leave entitlements, as set by collective agreements and law;
- estimates of average collectively agreed annual working time.

The report provides a general overview of the present status of working time and any recent major developments. The figures provided should be treated with caution, and the various notes and explanations should always be borne in mind. Making international comparisons of the length of working time is difficult, because comparable data are not collected in all countries. Additional factors are:

- there are different reference periods (annual, monthly, weekly) for calculating working time;
- working time reductions in some countries have been introduced through extra days off or cuts in annual hours, leaving the normal working week relatively unchanged;
- there is an increasing use of schemes whereby weekly hours may vary considerably, with an average being maintained over a different reference period;
- the treatment of part-time workers;
- the differing roles of collective bargaining and legislation, with legislation having an impact on actual hours in some countries, but acting only to set a maximum 'safety net' in others.

Figures for normal weekly working hours are also problematic when comparing working time in different countries, as these do not take into account factors such as overtime, the length of annual (and other forms of) leave, or the use of flexible forms of working time organisation.

This report follows the two previous editions for calculating averages for the groups of EU Member States. The three groups used are:

- EU28 = current 28 Member States
- EU15 = 15 Member States up until enlargement in 2004 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom).

- NMS13 = 13 ‘new’ Member States – countries which joined in 2004 (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania) and 2013 (Croatia).

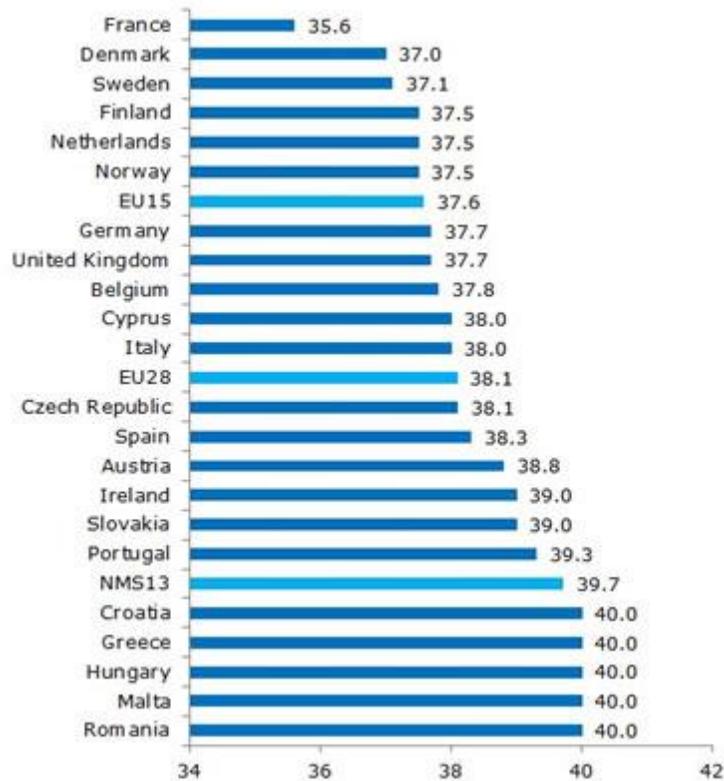
The average figures provided for these country groupings are weighted in order to reflect the relative country sizes in terms of people aged 15 to 64 who are employed full time, according to Eurostat’s Labour Force Survey (EU LFS).

Average collectively agreed weekly hours

Collective bargaining plays an important role in determining the duration of working time in most of the EU28 countries, though to a lesser or sometimes negligible extent in some of the Member States that have joined the EU since 2004 (the NMS13). The nature and extent of this role also differs widely across countries, with bargaining at different levels (intersectoral, sectoral and company level) playing more, or less, important roles. Bargaining coverage also varies considerably, although it is generally higher in the EU15 than in the NMS13. The importance of bargaining may also differ greatly among sectors of economic activity and groups of workers. The relationship between bargaining and legislative provisions on working time continues to vary considerably between countries.

Figure 1 depicts the average collectively agreed normal weekly hours in the countries where those data exist. In some Member States, such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland and Slovenia, working time is not generally defined through collective bargaining, and therefore they are not represented in the chart. In Bulgaria, although collective bargaining covers working time in parts of the economy, there are no data available for any estimate to be made. In the case of Croatia, Greece, Hungary and Malta, the estimates assume that most collective agreements replicate the statutory maximum working week of 40 hours. In Romania, an estimate based on administrative data available points to an average collectively agreed normal working week of 40 hours. For the majority of countries it is, however, possible to present average agreed hours in 2013. With very few exceptions, there were no major changes in comparison with 2012 ([TN1305017S](#)). The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the UK were the only countries registering changes between 2012 and 2013. The Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the UK registered an increase of 0.1 hours per week, while Spain recorded a collectively agreed weekly working time which was 0.3 hours higher in 2013 than in 2012. Sweden registered a decrease of 0.2 hours compared with 2012. All things considered, these changes did not affect the estimate for the European Union (including Croatia), which remains at 38.1 hours in 2013, the same as in the two previous years.

Figure 1: Average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours, 2013



Note: The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the [notes in Annex 1](#); EU28, EU15 and NMS13 figures are the author's calculations of weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (Eurostat, EU LFS, 2013).

Source: EIRO

France remains the country with the shortest average collectively agreed working week, of 35.6 hours, still reflecting the effects of the Aubry law which, in 2000, established a statutory working week of 35 hours ([FR0001137F](#)). Besides France, the Nordic countries (including Norway) together with the Netherlands constitute the group of countries registering an average agreed normal working week below the EU15 average of 37.6 hours in 2013.

Collectively agreed weekly hours by sector

This section looks at the average normal weekly working hours for full-time workers as set by collective bargaining in the three sectors selected to represent the manufacturing industry, services and the public sector – chemicals, retail trade and civil service. The more specific sectoral figures presented here are more accurate than the overall average data given in the previous section as they show the specificities of the sectors analysed.

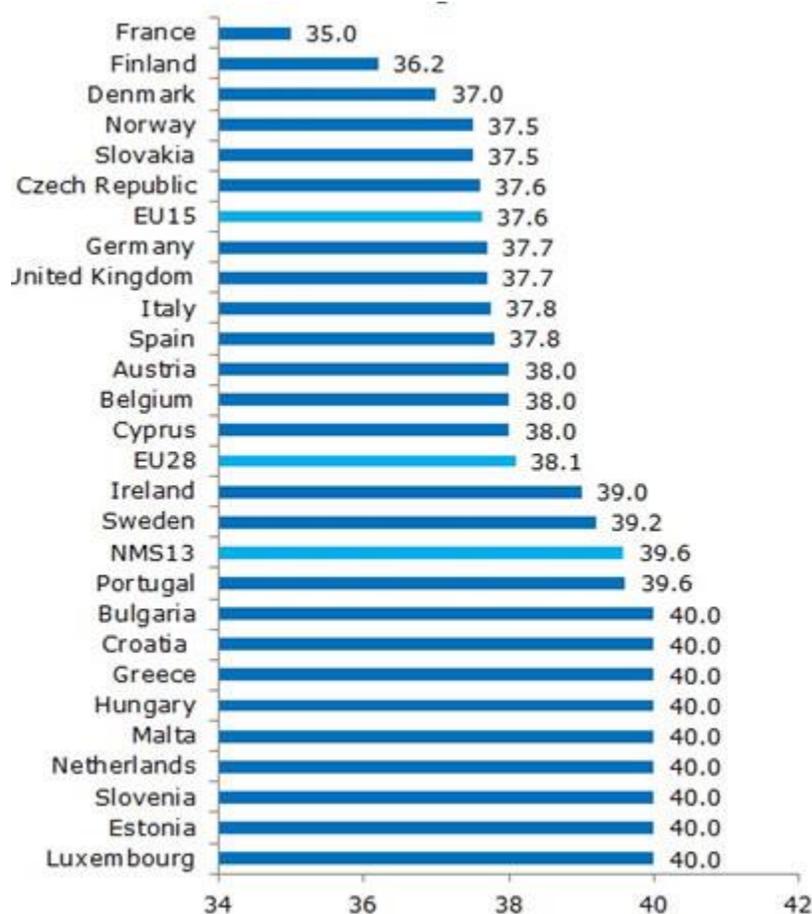
The sectors analysed here do not differ significantly in terms of average agreed normal weekly working hours in the EU: the civil service registered 38 hours; the chemicals sector, 38.1 hours; and retail, 38.3 hours. The agreed weekly working hours were higher in the NMS13 than in the EU15 in all three sectors. The largest difference can be found in the civil service, in which the average normal agreed working week in the NMS13 was 2.3 hours longer than in the EU15. The reference working week for workers in the chemicals and retail sectors, in the NMS13, was two hours longer than for workers in the EU15.

In most of the NMS13 a uniform 40-hour working week, which corresponds in general to the statutory normal week in those countries, was used for the calculation of the averages for the EU28 and NMS13. Other countries also had uniform agreed weekly working hours across the three sectors, though these were shorter (38 hours in Belgium, 37.5 hours in Norway, 37 hours in Denmark and 35 in France). Relatively little variation between the sectors was registered in Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and United Kingdom – countries in which none of the three sectors differed by more than two hours. Wider differences, of more than two hours (and in some cases four hours) between the three sectors analysed were evident in Austria, Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden.

Chemicals sector

Figure 2 shows collectively agreed normal weekly hours in the chemicals sector in 2013, according to the relevant sectoral collective agreements, except where specified in the notes relating to the figure (see Annex 2). There was a slight increase of 0.1 hours in the EU15 average between 2012 and 2013. Consequently, a similar increase was registered in the EU28 average figure. There was virtually no change to the 2012 figures for weekly working hours in most countries, with the exception of a rise of 0.1 hours in Finland and the UK, from 36.1 to 36.2 and from 37.6 to 37.7 hours, respectively. Sweden registered the highest increase, from 39 to 39.2 hours per week. In the EU as a whole, the average agreed weekly working time in chemicals was identical to the overall whole-economy average: 38.1 hours.

Figure 2: Average collectively agreed normal weekly hours in the chemicals sector, 2013



Note: The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the [notes in Annex 2](#); EU28, EU15 and NMS13 figures are the authors' own calculations of weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (Eurostat, EU LFS, 2013).

Source: EIRO

In 2013, the average agreed working week in the chemicals sector represented half an hour more per week than the average of 37.6 hours for the EU15, much lower than the average for the most recent members of the European Union, which stood at 39.6 hours.

Within the EU15, the longest agreed weekly hours in the chemicals sector in 2013 were registered in Greece and the Netherlands (40 hours) and the shortest in France (35 hours) and Finland (36.2 hours). Working hours in the chemicals sector are higher than the national whole-economy average in the Netherlands (2.5 hours more) and Sweden (2.1 hours more). They are notably lower in Finland (1.3 hours less) but also in Austria (0.8 hours less). Overall, the average agreed working week for workers in the chemicals sector in the EU15 was the same as the average for those across all the sectors of economic activity.

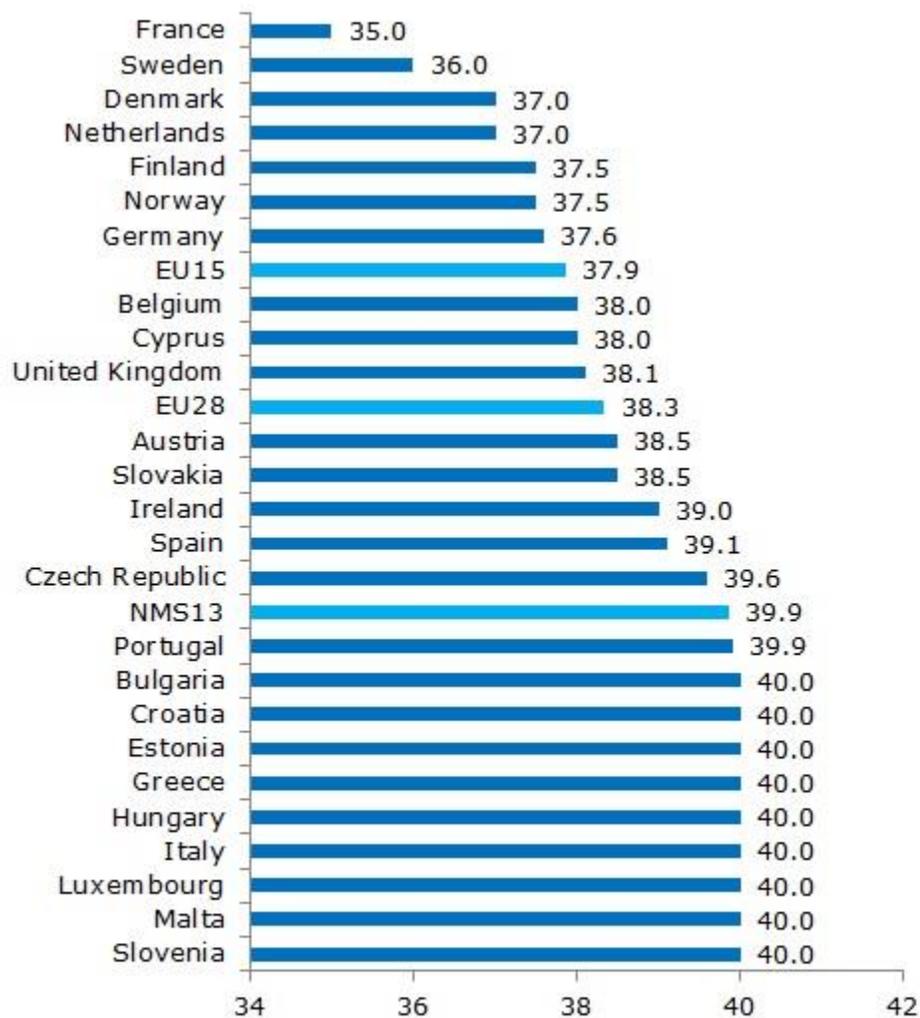
In the NMS13, average weekly hours in chemicals were 39.6 in 2013 – exactly the same as in 2012. In the countries not shown in the chart – Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania – working time in the chemicals sector is, in general, not defined by collective agreements. Within the NMS13 group it is important to note that the Czech Republic and Slovakia are the only countries with an average agreed weekly working time below the EU15 average, while most of the other

NMS13 stand at 40 hours. Cyprus is also an exception, with average collectively agreed weekly working time in chemicals of 38 hours.

Retail trade sector

In 2013, the average collectively agreed normal working week in the retail sector was 38.3 hours in the EU28 (Figure 3). This represents an increase of 0.1 hours compared with 2012 which is the outcome of the decreases registered in Sweden (0.3 hours less), Slovakia (0.2 hours less) and the UK (0.1 hours less) counterbalanced by an increase of 0.4 hours in Czech Republic. In the EU as a whole, the average agreed weekly working time in retail was 0.2 hours longer than the overall whole-economy average.

Figure 3: Average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in the retail sector, 2013



Note: The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the [notes in Annex 3](#); EU28, EU15 and NMS13 figures are the authors' own calculations of

weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (Eurostat, EU LFS, 2013).

Source: EIRO

In the EU15, the average weekly hours for retail workers stood at 37.9 in 2013; the same as 2012. The longest agreed weekly hours in retail were found in Greece, Italy and Luxembourg (40 hours per week), and Portugal (39.9 hours). The shortest working weeks are in France (35 hours) and Sweden (36 hours). Working hours in retail are higher than the national whole-economy average in Spain (0.8 hours more) and Portugal (0.6 hours more), but lower in the Netherlands (0.5 hours less per week), France (0.6 hours less), and Sweden (1.1 hours less). Overall, the average agreed working week in retail is 0.2 hours above the whole-economy average for the EU15 group.

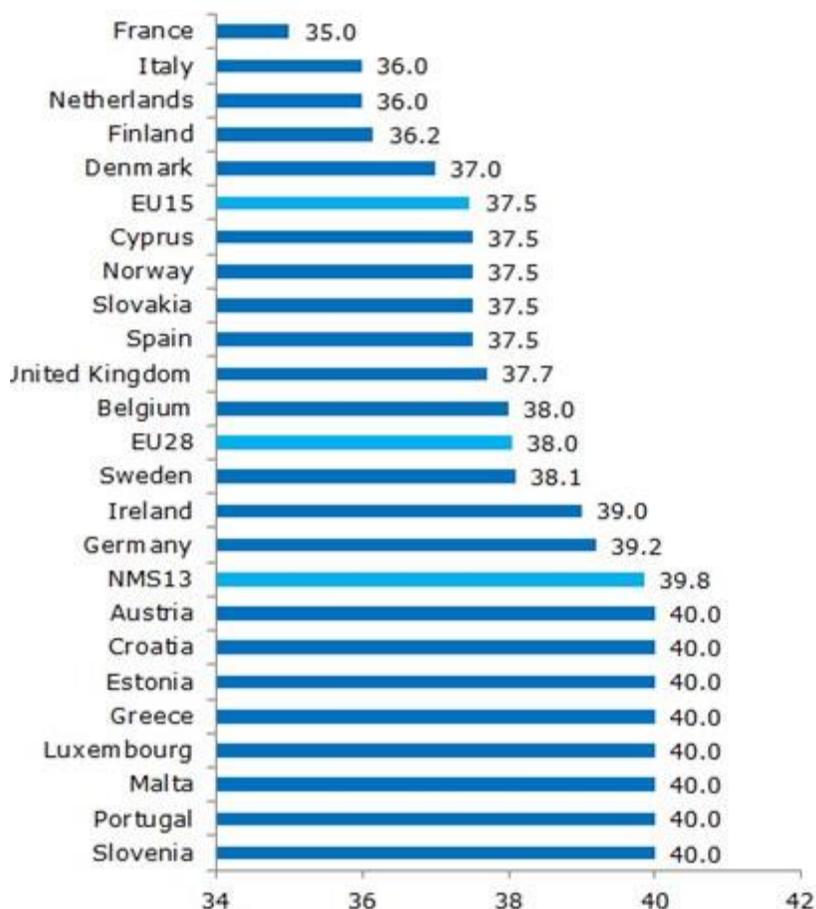
In the NMS13, average weekly hours in retail were 39.9 hours in 2013; practically the same as in 2012. The 2013 retail weekly average for the NMS13 was almost two hours above the EU15 average for the sector and just 0.1 hours above the whole-economy average for this group of countries. Cyprus, the Czech Republic and Slovakia were the only NMS13 with average agreed weekly hours in the sector below the NMS13 average. Cyprus, with an average collectively agreed weekly working time for the sector at 38 hours, was the only country from this group in which the figure was below the average figure for the whole EU. In the Czech Republic, agreed weekly hours in retail were 1.5 hours more than the whole-economy national average.

Civil service sector

Legislation, rather than bargaining, plays the most important role in setting weekly hours for the civil service sector in many Member States. There were very few changes from 2012 in the 'collectively agreed' normal weekly hours in the sector in the European Union. The exceptions were Sweden, where the agreed weekly working time decreased by 0.1 hours, and Portugal, where the normal weekly working time increased from 35 to 40 hours since August 2013. The normal working week in the Portuguese public sector was increased from 35 to 40 hours in September 2013 through [Law No. 68/2013 \(in Portuguese, 945 KB PDF\)](#) as part of the government's austerity measures to cut costs in the sector ([PT1402039I](#)).

Across the EU28, the average agreed weekly working time in the civil service sector was 38 hours in 2013 (Figure 4), 0.2 hours more than in 2012 and about 0.1 hours less than the overall whole-economy average.

Figure 4: Average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in the civil service sector, 2013



Note: The data should be interpreted in conjunction with the [notes in Annex 4](#); EU28, EU15 and NMS13 figures are the authors' own calculations of weighted averages based on relative country sizes in terms of employment (Eurostat, EU LFS, 2013).

Source: EIRO

In the EU15, average weekly working hours in the civil service sector rose slightly to 37.5 in 2013 – 0.2 hours more than in 2012. In 2013, the longest weekly hours in the sector were recorded in Austria, Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal (40 hours per week), and the shortest in France (35 hours), and in Italy and the Netherlands (36 hours). Working hours in the civil service are markedly higher than the national whole economy average in Germany, Austria and Sweden, and lower in Italy, the Netherlands and Finland. Overall, the average agreed working week in local government was just 0.1 hours below the whole-economy average.

In the NMS13, in 2013, average weekly hours in the civil service sector were 39.8 hours, 2.4 hours more than the EU15 average. Cyprus and Slovakia were the only countries where the figures were closer to the average for the EU15. In these two countries, weekly hours in the civil service were even below the whole-economy national averages. Overall, the average agreed working hours for the civil servants in the NMS13 were just 0.1 hours above the whole-economy average.

Statutory maximum working time

Collective bargaining on the length of working time in the EU and Norway takes place within the framework of statutory rules on maximum working hours. These must, as a minimum, respect the provisions of the [EU Working Time Directive](#). This includes:

- a provision for an average maximum 48-hour working week (over a reference period not exceeding four months);
- a minimum daily rest period of 11 hours;
- a daily limit of eight hours for night workers.

As Figure 5 shows, most countries fall into one of two main groups: those that set their maximum weekly hours at the 48 hours specified by the Working Time Directive, and those that operate a lower limit of 40 hours, which may be extended up to 48 hours or more under certain conditions. Belgium, France and Germany continue to constitute exceptions, as described further below.

Figure 5: Statutory maximum working week, EU, 2013



Source: EIRO

In Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, Malta and the UK, shown in yellow in Figure 5, the statutory 48-hour maximum is more than the average collectively agreed weekly working hours (see Figure 1) and more than the average actual weekly hours (see Figure 7), and appears to operate essentially as a safety net.

It is important to underline that, in these cases, the statutory 48-hour maximum includes overtime. In several countries, individual workers (generally or only in specified sectors) can, as permitted by the Working Time Directive, opt out of the 48-hour weekly maximum (this is the case, for instance, in Malta and the UK).

In the second group of 21 countries (shown in green in Figure 5), the statutory maximum for a normal week of work is, in some cases, much closer or identical to the average agreed weekly

working hours. This may indicate that working time is governed more by law rather than by individual or collective negotiation. However, overtime is not included in this figure and the 'maximum' may function, in practice, as a statutory normal working week. Such statutory working weeks exist in some countries, with a 48-hour maximum in most countries. The exceptions are Latvia, where a minimum of 42 consecutive hours of weekly rest period is established within a seven-day period, and Austria, Sweden and Hungary, where the established maximums are, respectively, 50, 52 and 60 hours per week.

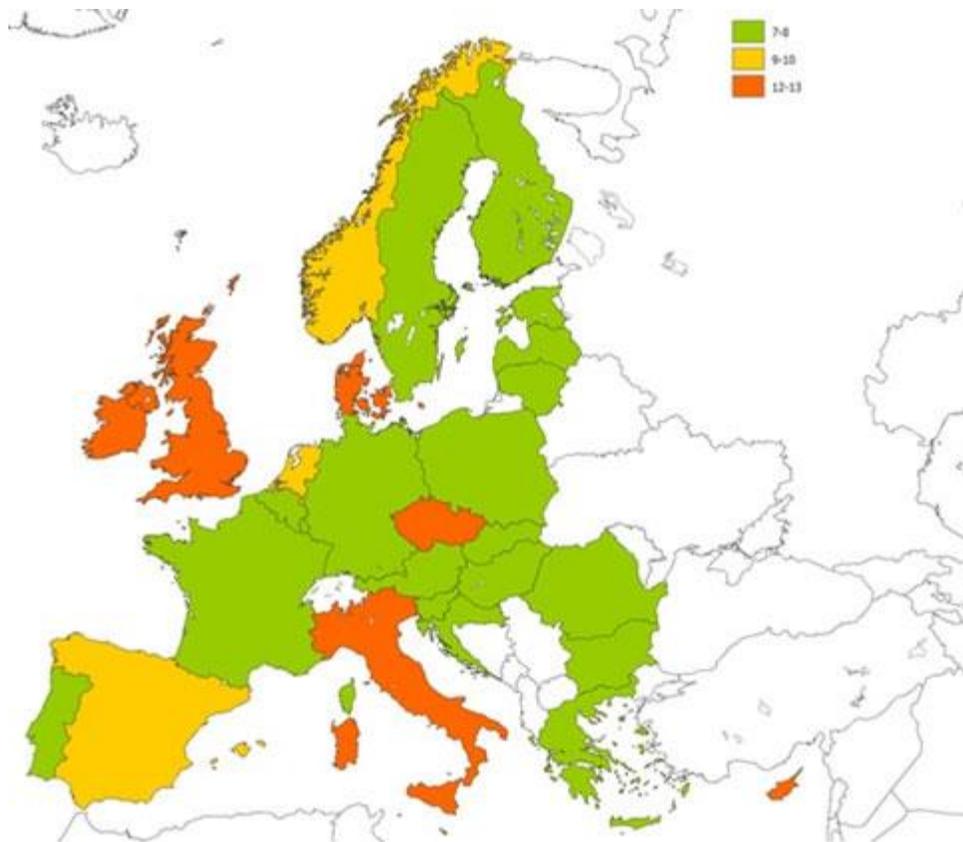
The limits referred to may be exceeded in many countries where working time flexibility schemes allow weekly hours to be varied around an average over a reference period, as permitted by the Working Time Directive. Weekly maximum working time under such hours-averaging schemes may itself be subject to a ceiling, such as 60 hours. In the Netherlands, for example, weekly working time – including overtime – may not exceed 48 hours, on average, over a 16-week reference period, or 55 hours per week on average over a four-week reference period, unless otherwise agreed by the employer and trade union or works council, subject to an absolute weekly limit of 60 hours.

Similarly, in Portugal, the weekly limit of 40 hours may be periodically extended to 60 hours, although it must not exceed a bi-monthly average of 50 hours a week and an annual average of 40 hours a week. In Croatia, overtime work may amount to eight hours per week, 32 hours per month and 180 hours per year, but these limits can be exceeded in cases of an extraordinary event, unexpected increases in work and other emergencies.

The complexity of the European picture relating to weekly working time, overtime and flexible working time is best illustrated by the exceptions of Belgium, France and Germany (shown in orange in Figure 5). Whereas, in France, the working week can extend from 35 hours up to a maximum of 48 hours (including overtime), in Belgium the rule is 38 hours as the lower limit (on condition that more than 40 hours work is considered as overtime, with an upper limit of 50 hours per week). In Germany, the statutory maximum is a working day of eight hours, rather than weekly hours (excluding overtime).

All the countries examined also have a form of statutory maximum working day, as set out in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Statutory maximum working day (in hours), 2013



Source: EIRO

In Cyprus, Denmark, Ireland, Italy and the UK there is no explicit maximum working day, but in most circumstances a 13-hour maximum can be inferred from the application of the Working Time Directive's minimum 11-hour daily rest period. The maximum daily hours stipulated in each country vary more across Europe than does the weekly maximum:

- Cyprus, Denmark, Ireland, Italy and the UK (13 hours);
- Malta (12.5 hours);
- the Czech Republic (12 hours, after the Labour Code's requirement of 9 hours was amended);
- Slovenia (10 hours);
- the Netherlands, Norway and Spain (9 hours);
- France (7 hours);
- the remaining 17 countries (8 hours).

In most countries, daily hours may often be longer under certain conditions, such as working time flexibility schemes, and as the following examples show.

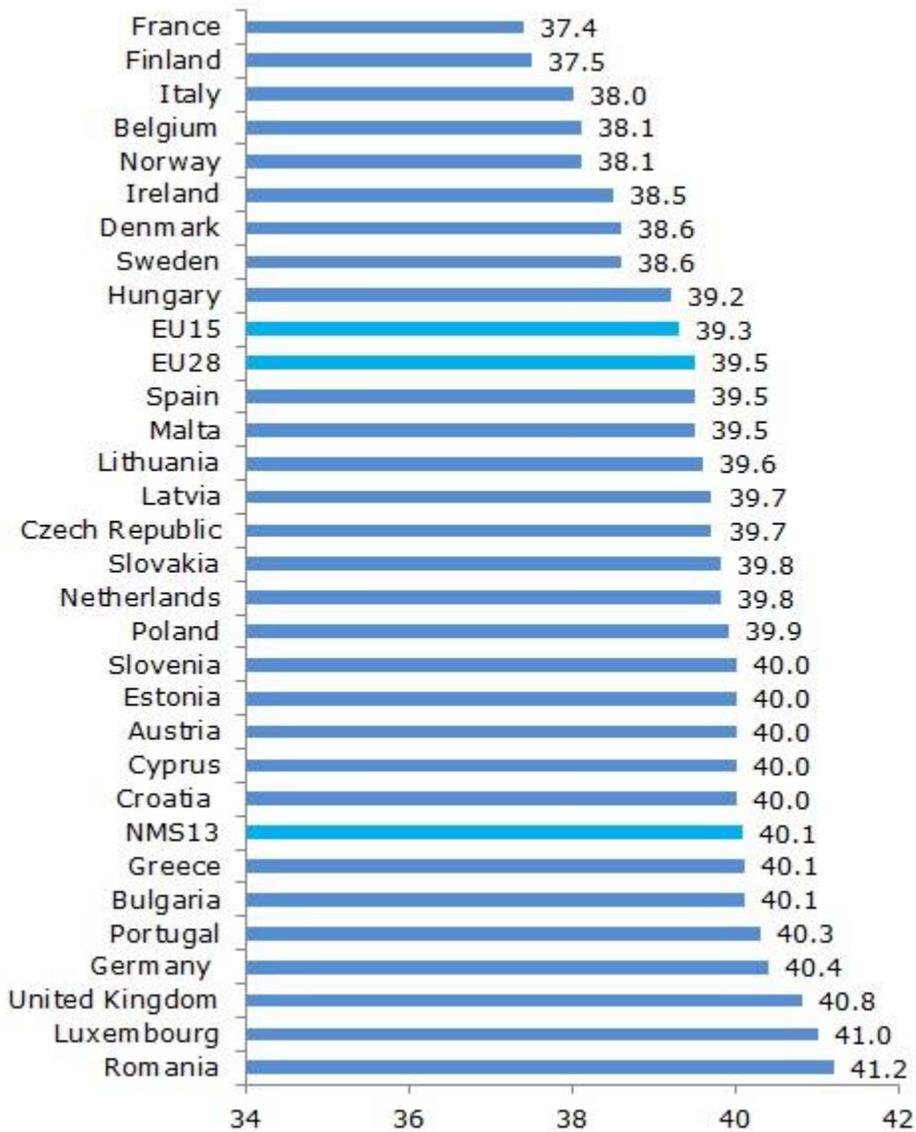
- In Belgium, the maximum number of hours per working day (including overtime) depends on the specific case or sector and can go up to 9, 10, 11 or 12 hours. In some cases, this requires a preliminary agreement (by decree or by the in-company trade union's delegation), but in other cases no agreement is needed.
- In Bulgaria, the working day may be extended from 8 to 10 hours, but only for a total of 60 working days a year and for not more than 20 consecutive working days.

- In the Czech Republic, a daily maximum for working hours including overtime work is not stipulated either by the Labour Code or by any other regulation. The overtime-work regulation is based on the stipulated weekly working hours.
- In France, derogations to the statutory maximum working day of 10 hours can be requested from the Labour Inspectorate.
- In Germany, a working day may be extended to 10 hours as long as an 8-hour average is maintained over a 24-week or 6-month reference period.
- In Croatia and Latvia, the length of a rest within a period of 24 hours, in general, shall not be less than 12 consecutive hours, implying a daily maximum of 12 working hours.

Actual weekly working hours

In order to see how many hours workers really work in a given week, it is necessary to turn to data on actual weekly hours worked which include factors such as overtime and absence. These data are typically measured in labour force surveys. Figure 7 provides harmonised EU LFS data on the ‘average number of actual weekly hours of work in the main job’ of full-time employees in 2013, whether they are paid or not. According to Eurostat, the ‘actual hours worked’ in the reference week are the hours the person spent in work activities during that week. Work activities include production activities, ancillary activities, short breaks, and education and training necessary for successfully carrying out the job tasks. Travel time between home and the place of work, main meal breaks, absences from work within the working period for personal reasons, and education and training hours not necessary for carrying out the job tasks are excluded.

Figure 7: Average number of actual weekly hours of work in main job, full-time employees, 2013



Notes: The NMS13 average was calculated by the authors.

Source: Eurostat, EU LFS, 2013

In the EU, full-time employees in Romania reported the longest actual weekly working hours in their main jobs in 2013 – 41.2 hours, the same as in 2012. They were followed by employees in Luxembourg (41 hours), the UK (40.8 hours), Germany (40.4 hours), Portugal (40.3 hours), Bulgaria and Greece (both 40.1 hours). Employees in France worked the shortest hours (37.4 hours). This was 3.8 hours less or the equivalent to 4.8 weeks a year by their counterparts in Romania.

Twelve of the 13 NMS registered actual weekly working hours at or above the EU28 average of 39.5 hours. Of the NMS13, only Hungary had an actual working week that was slightly shorter than the EU28 average (39.2 hours). In the EU15, the longest actual hours worked by full-time

employees were in Luxembourg (41), the UK (40.8) and Germany (40.4) and the shortest in, France (37.9) Finland (37.4) and Italy (38).

Actual weekly hours worked by full-time employees were longer than the average normal collectively agreed working week in 18 of the 29 countries analysed here (see also Figure 1). The extent to which the average actual working week exceeded the agreed normal week varies across the European Union, according to the following patterns:

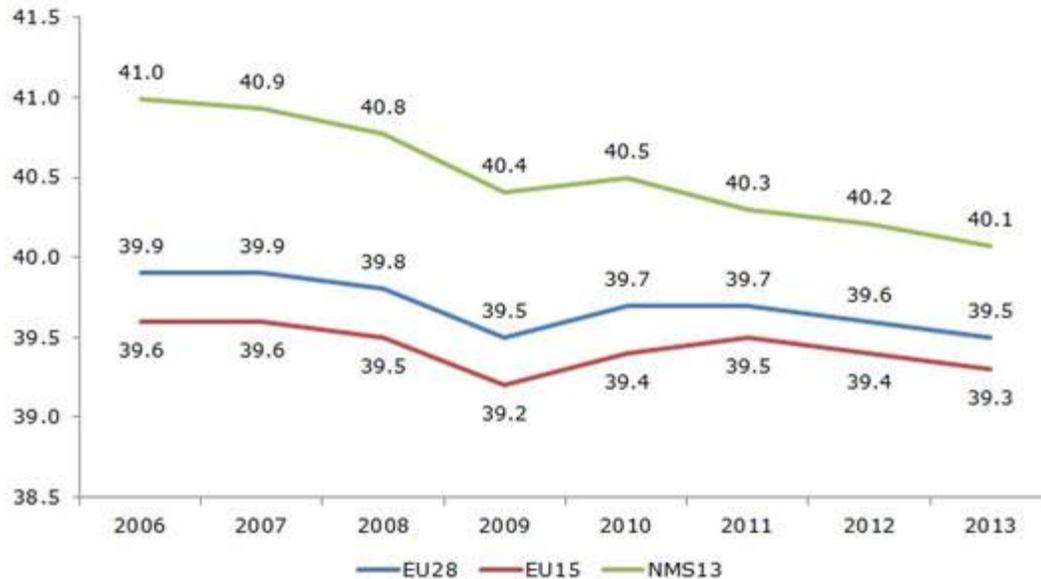
- by less than an hour in Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovakia and Norway;
- by between one and two hours in Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden;
- by two hours or more in Cyprus, Germany, the Netherlands and United Kingdom.

In a group of recent Member States – Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Poland - and in Ireland, the actual weekly hours of work of full-time employees fell short of their ‘average collectively agreed normal weekly hours’ by less than one hour.

In the EU28, the actual working week was 39.5 hours in 2013, 0.1 hours less than in 2012; this was about 1 hour and 24 minutes more than the average agreed working hours. In the EU15, the working week was 39.3 hours, about 1 hour and 42 minutes longer than the agreed hours. In the NMS13, the working week was 40.1 hours, about 24 minutes longer than the average agreed working hours.

The annual figures for actual weekly working hours in the EU, since 2006, indicate that the EU15 reversed the upward evolution registered in 2010 and 2011, and that the NMS13 continued the downward trend since 2010 and reached a record minimum, in the period considered, of 40.1 hours in 2013 (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Average number of actual weekly hours of work in main job, full-time employees, European Union, 2006–2013



Note: Average number of actual weekly hours of work in main job, full-time employees; the NMS13 average was calculated by the author.

Source: Eurostat, EU LFS.

In both the EU15 and the NMS13, the actual working week was 0.1 hours shorter than in 2012. However, the variation between 2012 and 2013 is considerable across the Member States. It is possible to distinguish three groups of countries:

- In Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Norway, Poland and Sweden, actual working hours decreased in 2013 (by between 0.1 and 0.3 hours). In France there was a decrease of 0.5 hours.
- Denmark, Italy, Lithuania, Romania and the United Kingdom did not show any changes.
- Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia, registered modest increases between 0.1 and 0.2 hours. Full time employees in Slovenia and in Spain registered the largest increases in 2013: full-time employees actually worked on average 0.3 hours more per week in Slovenia, and 0.4 hours in Spain, compared to 2012.

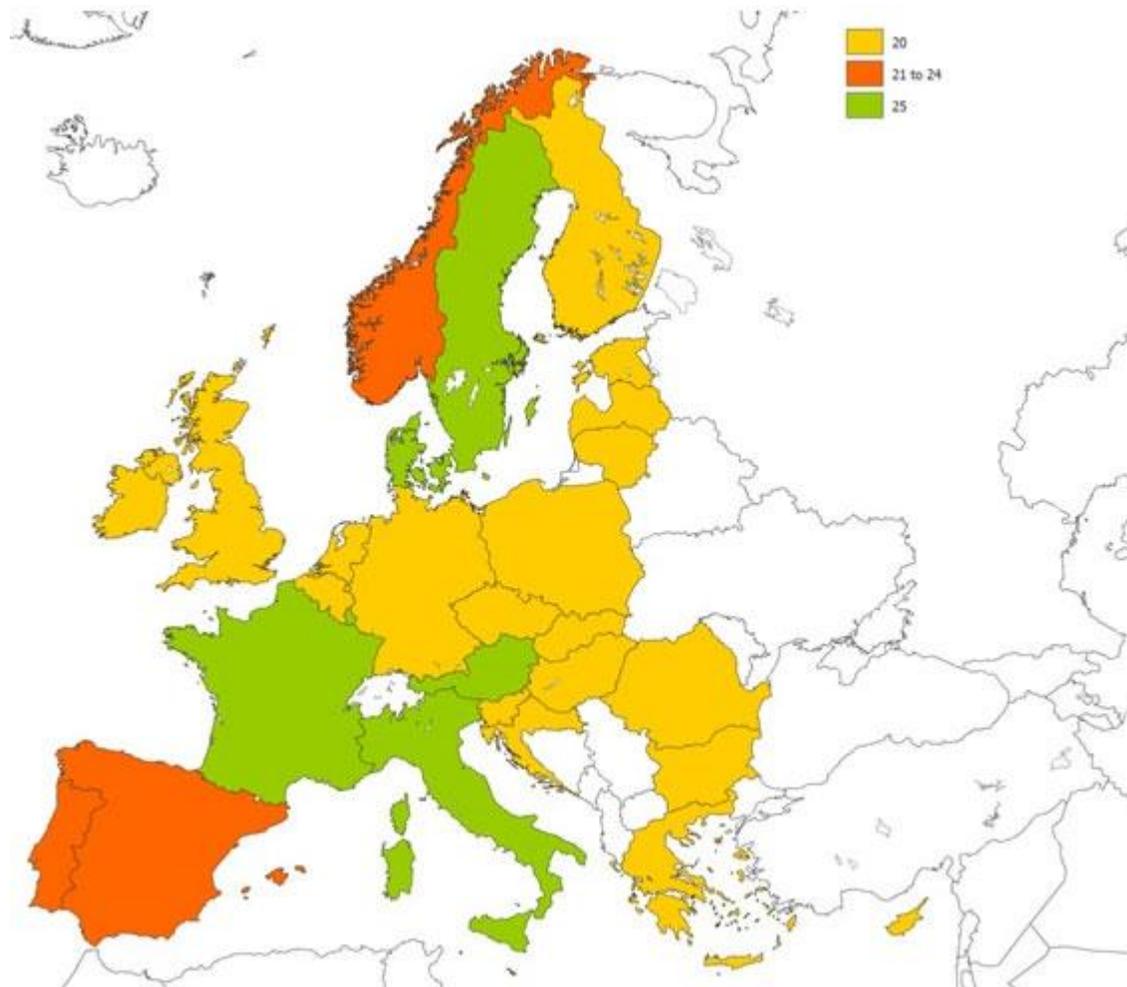
In 2013, actual weekly hours worked by male full-time employees in their main jobs continued to exceed those of their female counterparts in all Member States, including Croatia. The same was observed in Norway. Across the EU28, in 2013, men worked on average two hours more than women. The gap is wider in the EU15 than in the NMS13. In the EU15, men worked 2.3 hours more per week than women. By contrast, in the NMS13, men worked around 1.4 hours more than women. Again, these averages conceal more stark national situations: men's actual weekly hours exceeded women's by three hours or more in Ireland and the UK (3.3 and 3.4 hours more, respectively), by 2.8 hours in Italy and by between two and 2.4 hours in Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, and Norway.

Annual leave

Workers are generally entitled to paid annual leave which is also an important factor in the overall length of working time every year. The Working Time Directive established that 'Member States shall take the measures necessary to ensure that every worker is entitled to paid annual leave of at least four weeks', which 'may not be replaced by an allowance in lieu'. All the EU Member States and Norway have a statutory minimum period of paid annual leave, as set out in

Figure 9. In the figure, the leave is expressed in days and harmonised on the basis of a five-day working week. The number of days represents only the basic entitlement, since entitlement may increase with length of service, for example. The majority of countries, 19 out of 28, have a 20-day minimum entitlement as laid down in the Working Time Directive. This group includes Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands and the UK, as well as all the NMS13 except Malta (24 days). Six countries have a 25-day minimum – Austria, Denmark, France, Italy, Luxembourg and Sweden – while the entitlement is 22 days in Portugal and Spain, and 21 in Norway.

Figure 9: Statutory minimum annual paid leave (in days), 2013



Note: The figure should be read in conjunction with the [notes in Annex 5](#).

Source: EIRO

The statutory annual paid leave is, in many cases, just the basis upon which workers' leave entitlement is defined, apart from the national public holidays. The total number of annual leave days may depend on the type of occupation performed, years of service or the sector of economic activity and, in many cases, is part of collective agreements. However, collectively agreed annual leave is an aspect about which data can be difficult or even impossible to find. Whereas, in some countries, no statistics are available, in others collectively agreed rules on leave entitlements are too complex to enable even a rough estimate to be produced.

In Austria, the 1976 Paid Leave Act (UrlG) establishes that employees with up to 25 years of service are entitled to an annual paid leave of 30 calendar days (including Saturdays). After completion of 25 years of service, employees are entitled to an annual paid leave of 36 calendar days.

In Belgium, sectoral agreements may provide for a general addition of up to five days to the statutory minimum annual paid leave of 20 days. Such agreements may also provide for additional days of leave after a certain period of service – one extra day after 10 years' service, for instance. Further additional days of leave may also be given as compensation for workers with a normal weekly working time above the sectoral norm.

In Germany, according to the WSI Collective Bargaining Archive, the average agreed annual paid leave is 30 days, considerably more than the 20 days for a five-day week of work (or the 24 days of leave corresponding to a six-day week).

In Slovakia, data from the ISPP (Information System on Working Conditions) indicate that, on average, 5.1 working days over the statutory minimum of 20 days had been agreed in companies surveyed in 2013.

In other countries for which it was possible to obtain estimates of agreed annual paid leave – the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands – these estimates amounted to an extra five days on top of the national statutory minimum. In the UK the average agreed annual leave is an extra 4.8 days over the statutory minimum while, in Ireland and Norway, it is four days more. In Romania, the difference is minimum one day extra over the statutory, and increases with the seniority of workers.

In Estonia, collective agreements cover only a small part of the total workforce, but there is no exact information about the number of agreements establishing annual paid leave which differs from the statutory minimum of 20 days.

Annual working time

In order to calculate an annual estimate for collectively agreed normal working time in all countries for 2013, data for the average collectively agreed normal weekly hours (see Figure 1) is multiplied by a five-day working week for 52 weeks a year.

From this total annual figure, the average collectively agreed annual paid leave is subtracted or, where no data are available on this point, the minimum statutory annual leave (see Figure 9) is subtracted. As noted above, in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia and the UK, the average agreed leave is higher than the statutory minimum. Use of the statutory minimum leave in calculating collectively agreed annual normal working time thus makes the total figure higher than it might actually be, rendering the estimates for these countries particularly crude.

The number of annual public holidays is also subtracted (excluding those falling on Sundays). Where there are varying numbers of regional public holidays (as in Germany), an attempt has been made to give a mid-range figure. It should also be noted that additional holidays may be observed locally or on the basis of collective agreements or custom, while the number of public holidays may vary from year to year, especially in countries that do not award a substitute holiday when a public holiday falls at the weekend. It must be noted that these variations are the main source of year-on-year changes in annual hours in many countries.

The resulting annual figures do not take into account factors such as overtime working, other forms of time off and leave (such as sick leave or parental/maternity leave), or exceptional reductions of normal working time such as short-time working. They are only very rough estimates, but they allow some broad observations to be made.

Table 1 shows details of the calculation of the average collectively agreed normal annual working time. It shows that the number of public holidays in 2013 (excluding those falling on Sundays) varied from a minimum of eight in Ireland, Portugal, the Netherlands and the UK up to 14 in Spain. In 2013, the average number of public holidays in the EU28 was 9.9, with the NMS13 having on average more days (10.2 days) than the EU15 (9.9 days).

Table 1: Average collectively agreed normal annual working time, 2013

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Country	Weekly hours	Gross annual hours (A x 52)	Annual leave (days)	Public holidays (days)**	All leave (C + D) expressed in hours	Annual hours (B - E)
Estonia	40	2080	20*	10	240.0	1840.0
Hungary	40	2080	20*	10	240.0	1840.0
Poland	40	2080	20*	10	240.0	1840.0
Romania	40	2080	21	9	240.0	1840.0
Bulgaria	40	2080	20*	11	248.0	1832.0
Latvia	40	2080	20*	11	248.0	1832.0
Croatia	40	2080	20*	12	256.0	1824.0
Lithuania	40	2080	20*	12	256.0	1824.0
Slovenia	40	2080	20*	12	256.0	1824.0
Greece	40	2080	23	11	272.0	1808.0
Luxembourg	40	2080	25*	9	272.0	1808.0
Malta	40	2080	24*	10	272.0	1808.0
Portugal	39.3	2043.6	22*	8	235.8	1807.8
Ireland	39	2028	24	8	249.6	1778.4
Slovakia	39	2028	25.1	10	273.8	1754.2
Belgium	37.8	1965.6	20*	9	219.2	1746.4
Austria	38.8	2017.6	25*	11	279.4	1738.2
Cyprus	38	1976	20*	13	250.8	1725.2
Spain	38.3	1991.6	22*	14	275.8	1715.8
UK	37.7	1960.4	24.8	8	247.3	1713.1
Czech Republic	38.1	1981.2	25	11	274.3	1706.9
Netherlands	37.5	1950	25	8	247.5	1702.5
Italy	38	1976	28*	9	281.2	1694.8
Finland	37.5	1950	25	10	262.5	1687.5

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Country	Weekly hours	Gross annual hours (A x 52)	Annual leave (days)	Public holidays (days)**	All leave (C + D) expressed in hours	Annual hours (B - E)
Norway	37.5	1950	25	10	262.5	1687.5
Sweden	37.1	1929.2	25*	11	267.1	1662.1
Germany	37.7	1960.4	30	10	301.6	1658.8
Denmark	37	1924	30	9	288.6	1635.4
France	35.6	1851.2	30*	10	284.8	1566.4
EU28	38.1	1980.7	25.4	9.9	268.9	1711.8
EU15	37.6	1954.3	26.8	9.9	275.9	1678.5
NMS13	39.7	2065.2	20.8	10.2	246.2	1819.0

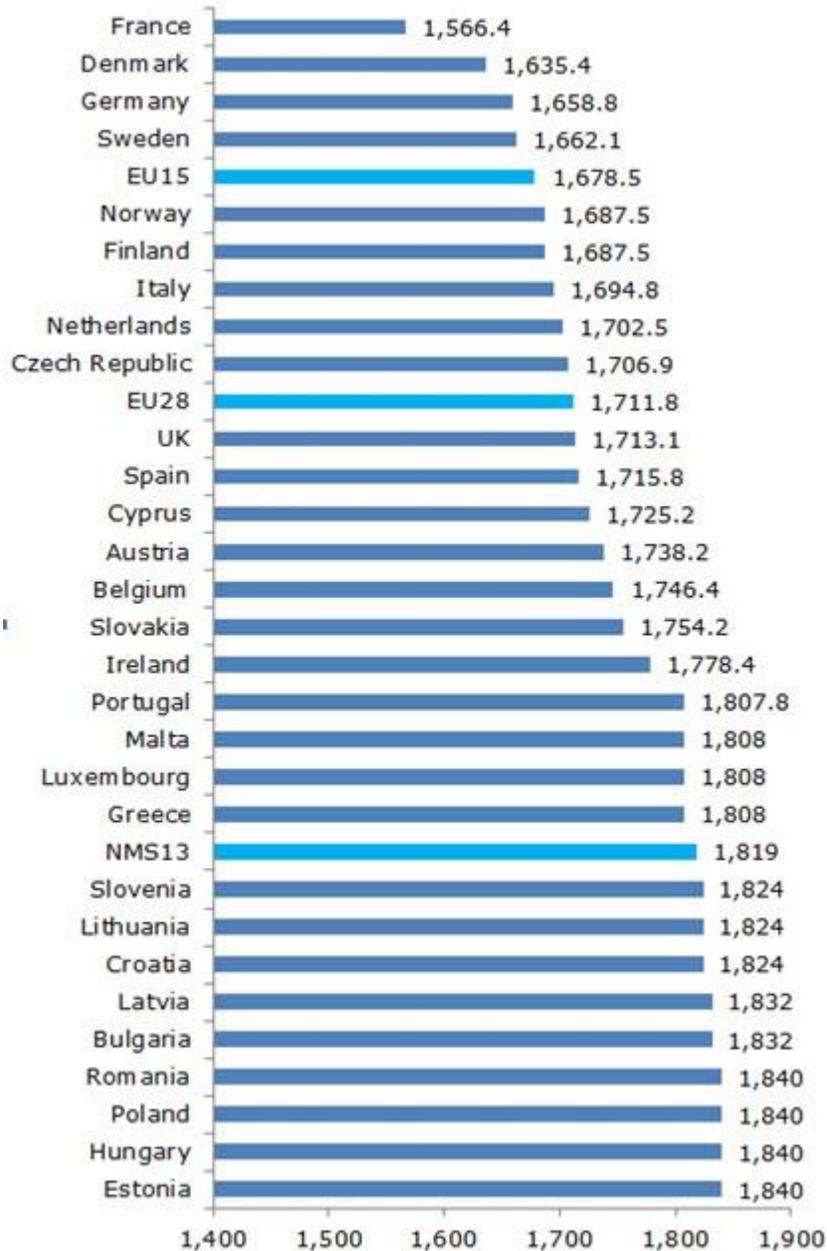
*Note: * statutory minimum paid annual leave; ** public holidays falling on Sundays are subtracted.*

Source: EIRO

The combined total of agreed annual leave and public holidays in the EU varied from 40 days in Germany and France to 29 days in Belgium – a difference of more than two working weeks. Other notably high-leave countries in 2013 are Denmark (with 39 leave days in total) and Italy (with 37), while other notably low-leave countries included Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, with 30 days. The average figure for the EU28 was 35.3 days – 36.7 days in the EU15 and 31 days in the NMS13.

Looking at the ranking of the 29 countries in terms of the length of their agreed working hours, the countries with the longest and shortest weekly hours are generally also those with the longest and shortest annual hours. However, the annual perspective results in rather different rankings for some countries than those provided by the figures for weekly hours. Some countries, such as Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, have a relatively lower position in the ‘ranking’ for normal annual hours than in the table for normal weekly hours (in other words, their hours are relatively ‘shorter’ if counted annually) because of the effects of relatively long annual leave and/or a relatively high number of public holidays. Conversely, other countries are relatively higher in the table for normal annual hours than in the table for normal weekly hours because of the effects of a relatively low number of public holidays and/or relatively limited annual leave. Countries in this category include Austria, Belgium, Finland, Italy and Spain. In Belgium, however, the annual leave figures used are for minimum statutory leave due to an absence of data on agreed leave.

Figure 10: Average collectively agreed normal annual working time (hours), 2013



Source: EIRO

In 2013, the average collectively agreed annual normal working time was approximately 1,712 hours in the EU28, 1,679 hours in the EU15, and 1,819 hours in the NMS13. Workers in the NMS13 thus worked, on average, 140 hours longer than their counterparts in the EU15 – the equivalent of over three and a-half working weeks in the NMS13. The Czech Republic is the only country in the NMS13 with an average agreed annual working time below the average for the EU28. Overall, the EU’s longest hours were worked in Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Romania, while the shortest were worked in France, Denmark, Germany and Sweden. In 2013, employees in Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Romania on average worked 274 hours more than their

counterparts in France – which in Estonia, for example, works out to the equivalent to six weeks and four days of work (Figure 10).

Jorge Cabrita, Eurofound

Annexes

Annex 1

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Figure 1: Average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours, 2013

The data in Figure 1 should be read in conjunction with the following notes.

Austria – Estimate is on the basis of the most important collective agreements that in general provide for 38.5 to 39 hours a week.

Belgium – The figure is an estimate calculated by the [Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue](#). The calculation takes into account (only) the provisions of sectoral collective agreements in the private sector. These agreements cover a very high proportion of the private sector, but not all employees. For example, the company agreements of state enterprises, such as railways or postal services, are not included. These sector agreements can furthermore be amended by company agreements (such as working time reduction or alternative working time regimes). It is also important to note that managerial staff (*kaderleden/cadres*) are generally not bound by Belgian working time rules and legislation. The Federal Public Service normally publishes not the exact figure, but separate indices for blue-collar and white-collar workers. For both categories this index has remained unchanged since the beginning of 2003.

Bulgaria – Normal weekly working time is rarely collectively agreed. No data available.

Croatia - Estimate based on the assumption that provisions on working time in collective agreements are the same as provisions of the Labour Act on working time.

Cyprus – Source: Cyprus Labour Institute ([INEK-PEO](#)).

Czech Republic – The figure applies to the private sector in which 93.7% of company-level collective agreements (CLCAs) contain provisions on the number of working hours. The figure is an estimate based on the Working Conditions Information System ([WCIS](#)), 2013, a regular annual survey of wages and working conditions negotiated in collective agreements for the relevant year.

Denmark – Estimate based on weekly working hours provided by various collective agreements.

Estonia – there is no information available on the contents of collective agreements; figure as set by law.

Finland – The figure is an estimate, based on typical provisions of sectoral agreements.

France – The average collective weekly working hours figure is from the Ministry of Labour's Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics ([DARES](#)).

Germany – Source: Collective Bargaining Archive of the Economic and Social Research Institute ([WSI](#))

Greece – Under the National General Collective Employment Agreement ([EGSSE](#)) of the Greek General Confederation of Labour ([GSEE](#)) of 14/2/1984, the 40-hours week become applicable as of 1/1/1984 for all workers employed by any employer throughout Greece under a private law employment agreement.

Hungary – Collective agreements usually reiterate the statutory working week of 40 hours. Although the Labour Code allows collective agreements to stipulate a shorter period, in practice deviations from the statutory hours are relatively rare.

Ireland – The figure is an estimate based on the Programme for National Recovery (PNR), from 1987, which set a framework agreement on the shortening of the working week by one hour in cases where the normal working week was 40 hours or more; the implementation was to be negotiated locally, on an organisation-by-organisation basis.

Italy – The figure represents an estimate based on 36–40 hours per week provided in collective agreements.

Lithuania – as set by law.

Latvia – as set by law.

Luxembourg – as set by law.

Malta – The figure is an estimate based on the fact that, while no statistical data exist, most collective agreements tend to specify a normal weekly working time of 40 hours.

Netherlands – Source: Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, agreements on sustainable employability and collective funds. These are the [CAO-afspraken 2012, which include data for 2013 \(in Dutch, 120KB PDF\)](#).

Norway – The figure represents ‘normal working hours’ for employees covered by collective agreements; employees working shifts, or at night, work fewer weekly hours.

Poland – as set by law.

Portugal – Source: Ministry of Economy and Employment, Quadros de Pessoal, 2012.

1. **Romania** – Estimate based on collective agreements and addenda signed in 2013; source: [Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly \(in Romanian\)](#).

Slovakia – Average figure is based on a sample survey conducted in companies employing about 37% of employees in the economy. Source: Information system on Working Conditions (ISPP), 2013, by The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic ([MPSVR SR](#)) and statistical research firm [Trexima Bratislava](#).

Slovenia – as set by law.

Spain – Own calculation based on provisional average agreed annual working time of 1,748.25 hours in 2013 (Statistics of collective agreements, [Ministry of Employment](#)), on the assumption of a six-day working week and 274 working days per year.

Sweden – Source: Statistics Sweden ([SCB](#)).

UK – 2013 figure based on a database of information from 270 organisations (‘Review of basic working hours’, October 2013, [IDS](#)).

Annex 2

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Figure 2: Average collectively agreed normal weekly hours in the chemicals sector, 2013

The data in Figure 2 should be read in conjunction with the following notes.

Austria - estimate based on collective agreements in the sector.

Belgium – At the sector level the rule is 38 hours. However, company agreements are important in the sector – especially in relation to working time regimes, including the annualisation of working hours (the conversion of weekly hours into annual working hours) and the link with shift

work and night work. Belgium's large chemical companies generally have a shorter working time arrangement. Examples exist of 33.5 hours as an average working week. No general overview exists of these company practices.

Bulgaria – There is no collective agreement signed at sectoral level. Collective agreements of individual companies in the industry refer to the provisions of the Labour Code regarding weekly working time. The companies in the sector often calculate individual working time on a monthly basis – 168 hours. Source: [CITUB National Labour Federation \(in Bulgarian\)](#) 'Chemistry and Industry' (NLF 'Chemistry and Industry').

Croatia – Collective agreements in the sector tend to adhere to the provisions of the Labour Act for a 40-hour working week.

Cyprus – Source: five main collective agreements concluded between the sectoral trade unions (such as Cyprus Industrial Workers Federation, [OVIEK-SEK](#) and Cyprus Union of Workers Industry, Trade, Press and Printing and General Services, [SEVETTYK-PEO](#)) directly with the enterprises (single-employer agreements).

Czech Republic – figure provided by the Working Conditions Information System ([WCIS](#)), refers to hours set by company-level collective agreements, the more prevalent bargaining level.

Denmark – Source: industry agreement.

Estonia – as set by law.

Finland – estimate based on collective agreements in the sector.

France – Source: branch agreement in force since 1999.

Germany – Source: collective bargaining archive of the WSI.

Greece – figure from the National General Collective Employment Agreement (EGSSE).

Hungary – as set by law.

Ireland – based on the Programme for National Recovery (PNR), from 1987.

Italy – Source: National collective agreements of the sector collected in the National Archive of Collective Agreements ([Archivio Nazionale dei Contratti collettivi di lavoro](#)) of the National Council for Economic Affairs and Labour (CNEL).

Latvia – as set by law

Lithuania – as set by law.

Luxembourg – figure is an estimate calculated by the national correspondent.

Malta – figure is an estimate based on information provided by the Chemicals and Energy section of the General Workers' Union ()).

Netherlands – figure is an estimate calculated from a sample of eight company agreements, including all major ones.

Norway – standard for all national agreements.

Poland – as set by law.

Portugal – figure is estimate based on collective agreements in the chemical industries in 2012.

Romania – as set by law.

Slovakia – Chemical multi-employer collective agreement for 2012-2014.

Slovenia – as set by the Law on Labour Relations and the Collective Agreement for Chemical and Rubber Industry of Slovenia.

Spain – calculated on the basis of 2012 data from the [Statistics of Collective Agreements](#) of the Ministry of Employment (including NACE codes 20, 21 and 22) on the assumption of a six-day week and 274 working days per year.

Sweden – source: Statistics Sweden (NACE B-D, E39).

UK – figure from IDS is the average of (mainly company-level) agreements and refers to ‘engineering’ (including ‘electronics’); the figure for 2011 was 37.5 hours.

Annex 3

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Figure 3: Average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in the retail sector, 2013

The data in Figure 3 should be read in conjunction with the following notes.

Austria - estimate based on collective agreements in the sector.

Belgium – figure is an estimate based on the provisions of various subsectoral agreements.

Bulgaria – The figure corresponds to the provision of the Labour Code for a 40-hour working week.

Croatia – Collective agreements in the sector tend to adhere to the provisions of the Labour Act for a 40-hour working week.

Cyprus – Source: Cyprus Union of Workers Industry, Trade, Press and Printing and General Services, [SEVETTYK-PEO](#)).

Czech Republic – figure provided by the Working Conditions Information System ([WCIS](#)), refers to hours set by company-level collective agreements, the more prevalent bargaining level.

Denmark - Source: Retail agreement.

Estonia – as set by law.

Finland – estimate based on collective agreements in the sector.

France – The figure is an estimate based on collective agreements of some retail subsectors such as: ‘jewellery and watch making’, ‘fruits, vegetables, grocery and dairy products’, ‘non-alimentary products’ and ‘stationery retail’.

Germany – Source: Collective Bargaining Archive of the WSI.

Greece – as set by law.

Hungary - as set by law.

Ireland – based on the Programme for National Recovery (PNR), from 1987.

Italy – Source: National collective agreements of the sector collected in the National Archive of Collective Agreements ([Archivio Nazionale dei Contratti collettivi di lavoro](#)) of the National Council for Economic Affairs and Labour (Consiglio Nazionale dell’Economia e del Lavoro, CNEL).

Latvia – as set by law.

Lithuania – as set by law.

Luxembourg – figure is an estimate calculated by the national correspondent.

Malta – figure is an estimate based on information provided by the Hospitality and Food section of the General Workers’ Union (GWU).

Netherlands – figure is an estimate calculated on the basis of a sample of the major sector agreements.

Poland – as set by law.

Portugal – figure is estimate based on collective agreements in the retail sector in 2012.

Romania – as set by law.

Slovakia – Information system on Working Conditions (ISPP) data for NACE G (Wholesale, retail trade).

Slovenia – as set by the Law on Labour Relations and the Collective Agreement for the Commerce sector.

Spain – calculated on the basis of 2012 data from the [Statistics of Collective Agreements](#) of the Ministry of Employment (NACE code 47) on the assumption of a six-day week and 274 working days per year.

Sweden – source: Statistics Sweden (NACE G45-47).

UK – figure from Incomes Data Services, IDS, is an average of (company-level) agreements and refer to ‘finance’; the figure for 2011 was 35.3 hours.

Annex 4

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Figure 4: Average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in the civil service sector, 2013

The data in Figure 4 should be read in conjunction with the following notes.

Austria – Public sector employment law.

Belgium – figure corresponds to the general, statutory rule in the public sector.

Bulgaria – as set by law.

Croatia – collective agreements in the sector tend to adhere to the provisions of the Labour Act for a 40-hour working week.

Cyprus – figure provided by the Pancyprian Public Employees Trade Union ([PASYDY](#)).

Czech Republic – figure is set by labour law.

Denmark – source: State agreement.

Estonia – as set by law.

Finland – estimate based on collective agreements in the sector.

France – normal weekly working time for civil servants at central and regional levels.

Germany – source: Collective Agreement Archive of the WSI.

Greece – weekly working hours of civil servants as set by law.

Hungary - as set by law

Ireland - [The Public Service Stability Agreement 2013–2016](#).

Italy – Source: National collective agreements of the sector collected in the National Archive of Collective Agreements ([Archivio Nazionale dei Contratti collettivi di lavoro](#)) of the National Council for Economic Affairs and Labour (CNEL).

Latvia – as set by law.

Lithuania – as set by law.

Luxembourg – as set by law.

Malta – figure from the [Collective agreement for employees in the public service 2011–2016](#).

Netherlands – source: Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment ([SZW](#)).

Poland – as set by law.

Portugal – as set by law.

Romania – as set by law.

Slovakia - multi-employer collective agreements for civil service for 2012 and 2013.

Slovenia - as set by the Law on Labour Relations and the Collective Agreement for the Public Sector (CAPS).

Spain – as set by the Civil Service Statute.

Sweden – source: Statistics Sweden (NACE O and U).

UK – figure is from IDS; figure refers to ‘central government’ (IDS changed its sectoral classifications from 2012 to 2013).

Annex 5

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Figure 9: Statutory minimum annual paid leave (in days), 2013

The data in Figure 9 should be read in conjunction with the following notes.

Austria – Paid leave act (UrlG); 30 calendar days (including five Saturdays).

Belgium – The figure refers to the private sector; the minimum statutory entitlement in the public sector is 24 days.

Bulgaria – Higher statutory entitlements apply to such groups such as young workers (under 18 years old) and workers with reduced work capacity, who get 26 paid leave days, and workers in hazardous work or working irregular hours, with 25 days.

Croatia – Expressed as four weeks; that is, 20 working days for workers working a five-day week and 24 working days for workers on a six-day week; Labour Act, articles 55 and 56.

Cyprus – 25 days for those working a six-day week.

Czech Republic – Expressed as four weeks.

Denmark – Holiday Act, which contains provisions implementing parts of the Council Directive 93/104/EC of 23 November 1993 concerning working time organisation.

Estonia – Source: Employment Contracts act.

Finland – Source: Working hours act (605/1996); amended by several acts including No.164/2005.

France – Expressed as 30 working days for full-time workers, including Saturdays.

Germany – Expressed as 24 working days or four weeks (that is, Monday to Saturday).

Greece – 24 working days for those working a six-day week; entitlement increases after one year’s service.

Hungary – According to the Labour Code, minimum of 20 days complemented by additional days according to age and number of dependent children.

Ireland – Expressed as 20 working days in the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997.

Italy – Expressed as four weeks plus five compensation days (in relation to Law 54 of 1977).

Latvia – Expressed as four calendar weeks.

Lithuania – Expressed as 28 calendar days; certain groups, such as lone parents and people with disabilities, have an entitlement of 35 calendar days.

Malta – Expressed as 24 working days.

Netherlands – Expressed as four times the number of weekly working days or hours.

Norway – 21 days, in Annual Holiday Act.

Poland – Entitlement increases from 20 to 26 days after 10 years of employment.

Portugal – up to 25 days in case of low absenteeism.

Slovakia – Expressed as 20 working days or four weeks.

Slovenia – Source: employment relationship act.

Spain - expressed as 30 calendar days.

Sweden – Expressed as 25 working days in Annual Leave Act.

UK – Since April 2009, the statutory entitlement has included eight public holidays.

EF/14/30