

# Trend of converging working time across 28 EU Member States has stalled

(Dublin, Ireland): The difference in working time between workers in the 28 EU Member States remains large and is especially marked between the 'older' 15 EU Member States and the 13 new Member States that joined the EU since 2004, according to new research from Eurofound. This is particularly apparent when comparing annual leave entitlements for workers: a gap of 2.5 working weeks is evident between the most generous and the least generous. The trend of converging working time between the 28 EU Member States has clearly stalled.

The latest annual report, [Developments in working time 2015–2016](#), shows significant disparities in the average amount of collectively agreed annual leave days between workers in the EU Member States. With the addition of public holidays, 'high-leave' countries include Croatia with 41 leave days, Denmark with 39 days and Germany with 37. These should be compared with the figures for 'low-leave countries', such as Ireland, Hungary and Estonia, all which come in at just 28 days annual leave. The average figure for the EU28 was 33.8 days – 34.7 days in the EU15 and 31.3 days in the Member States that have joined the EU since 2004 (the NMS13).

Collective bargaining plays an important role in determining the duration of working time in many of the EU28 countries; it plays a lesser or sometimes negligible role in some of the NMS13. The nature and extent of this role also differs widely across countries, with bargaining at different levels (intersectoral, sectoral and company level) being more or less important.

The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK were the only countries registering changes to collectively agreed weekly hours between 2015 and 2016. Over the same period, the EU15 average was reduced from 37.6 hours to 37.5; consequently, this resulted in a reduction for the EU28 from 38.1 to 38 hours. At 35.6 hours, France remains the country with the shortest average collectively agreed working week in the EU. In some Member States – Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia – working time is not generally defined through collective bargaining.

The 'actual hours worked' are the hours that individuals spend in work activities, including production activities, ancillary activities, short breaks, and education and training necessary for successfully carrying out the job tasks. In the EU, full-time employees in the UK report the longest usual weekly working hours in their main jobs in 2016 – 42.3 hours, 0.1 hours less than in 2014 and 2015. They are followed by employees in Cyprus (41.7 hours), Austria (41.4 hours), Greece (41.2 hours), Poland and Portugal (41.1 hours). Employees in Denmark report the shortest weekly hours (37.8 hours). This is 4.5 hours less per week than their counterparts in the UK – the equivalent of more than five working weeks per year.

The report also looks at working time across selected sectors, including

chemicals, metalworking, banking, retail, and public administration. It finds that across all selected sectors, the NMS13 countries work significantly more hours compared to EU15.

The report aims to provide a definitive sense of which EU workers work the most hours. It complements Eurofound's database of wages, working time and collective disputes, which since 2000 has provided information about the systems in place that define working time as well as some of the main outcomes of these systems. In addition, the report updates and complements the report [Working time developments in the 21st century](#), which covers data on a range of aspects of working time, including collectively agreed working hours between 2000 and 2014.

**Publication:** [Developments in working time 2015–2016](#)

[Database of wages, working time and collective disputes](#)

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## [Daily News 16 / 08 / 2017](#)

### **EU and Switzerland to link their Emissions Trading Systems**

The EU has today moved one step closer to linking its [Emissions Trading System \(EU ETS\)](#) for the first time. The Commission adopted two proposals to finalise an agreement with Switzerland on linking the EU ETS with the Swiss emissions trading system. Linking the European system with other systems expands opportunities for emissions reductions and reduces costs. Once the agreement with Switzerland takes effect, participants in the EU ETS will be able to use units from the Swiss system for compliance, and vice versa. Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel **Arias Cañete** said: *"After much hard work on both sides, I am proud of the progress we have made with our Swiss colleagues. As the world's largest cap and trade system, we have always aimed to promote the growth of the international carbon market."* Negotiations between the Commission and Switzerland opened in 2010. A linking agreement was initialled in January 2016 but the signature and conclusion of the agreement were put on hold following the Swiss referendum. Following high-level contacts and a change in Swiss legislation, a meeting between Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** and Swiss President Doris Leuthard in April (see [press conference](#) and [SPEECH/17/897](#)) opened the path for today's decisions. The Commission's proposal for the signature of the agreement and a proposal for its conclusion (ratification) will now be discussed by the Council of Ministers of the European Union. The Council will require the consent of the European Parliament in order to conclude the agreement. Subject to conclusion, the agreement could be signed before the end of 2017 enabling the entry into force to take place early 2018. The EU ETS is a key tool to tackle climate change with a view to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is the world's first major carbon market and its biggest one. In October 2014, the European Council agreed on the 2030 climate and energy

policy framework for the EU setting an ambitious economy-wide domestic target of at least 40% greenhouse gas emission reduction for 2030. The [Paris Agreement](#) vindicates the EU's approach (see [IP/16/3284](#)). Read more [here](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

### **€69 million of EU funds for upgraded water management networks in Slovenia**

Almost €69 million from the [Cohesion Fund](#) is invested in new facilities to collect and treat waste water in Ljubljana and the cities of Medvode and Vodice in Slovenia. 310 000 citizens living in the area will benefit from a modern and extended waste water treatment system. This EU co-financed project will also contribute to protecting the groundwater and reducing pollution in the region. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *“Protecting the environment and improving the citizens’ everyday life: this project is a great example of Cohesion Policy in action.”* The project includes the construction of 131 km of sewage networks. More information on the European Structural and Investment Funds in Slovenia is available [here](#) and on the [Open Data Platform](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

### **La politique de Cohésion contribue à la rénovation énergétique de bâtiments publics en Pologne**

94 millions d’euros du fonds de cohésion sont investis dans des travaux de rénovation énergétique dans 187 bâtiments publics appartenant au Ministère polonais de la Culture et du Patrimoine Culturel à travers le pays. Ces bâtiments, dont près de la moitié sont classés, abritent des écoles d’art publiques. La Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu** a commenté: «Ce projet montre notre attachement tant à la protection du patrimoine culturel de nos Etats membres qu’à la nécessaire transition énergétique partout en Europe, conformément aux objectifs de [l’Union de l’Energie](#). Les investissements de la politique de Cohésion sont d’ailleurs l’un des principaux moteurs de cette Union.» Ces 94 millions d’euros vont servir à renforcer l’isolation thermique des bâtiments, à remplacer portes et fenêtres, à rénover les systèmes de chauffage, de ventilation ou d’air conditionné ou bien encore à installer des systèmes d’énergie renouvelable (panneaux solaires, pompes à chaleur...). Plus d’informations sur les investissements de la politique de Cohésion sont disponibles sur la [plateforme Open Data](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

### **Vers une chaîne d’approvisionnement alimentaire plus équitable: la Commission sollicite les contributions des citoyens**

La Commission européenne lance aujourd’hui une consultation publique à l’échelle de l’UE sur la manière de rendre la chaîne d’approvisionnement alimentaire plus équitable. Les agriculteurs, les citoyens et les autres parties intéressées sont invités à communiquer leur point de vue sur le fonctionnement de la chaîne d’approvisionnement alimentaire, dans le cadre

d'une consultation en ligne ouverte jusqu'au 17 novembre. Le Commissaire Phil **Hogan** chargé de l'agriculture et du développement rural, a déclaré à ce propos: «*Les agriculteurs constituent le premier maillon de la chaîne et sans eux, il n'y aurait pas d'aliments à transformer, vendre ou consommer. Nous observons toutefois qu'ils restent souvent le maillon le plus faible. C'est pour remédier aux faiblesses de la chaîne d'approvisionnement alimentaire que nous prenons l'initiative d'agir, fidèles au soutien dont la Commission fait preuve de longue date envers les agriculteurs. J'encourage tous les citoyens, les agriculteurs et les parties prenantes de l'UE à nous faire part de leur avis à travers cette consultation en ligne.*» Il y a des raisons de penser que la valeur ajoutée n'est pas correctement répartie entre les différents maillons de la chaîne d'approvisionnement alimentaire, notamment en raison de différences de pouvoir de négociation entre les acteurs de petite taille, plus vulnérables, au rang desquels figurent les agriculteurs et les petites entreprises, et leurs partenaires commerciaux plus puissants économiquement et fortement concentrés. La [consultation](#) est en ligne dès aujourd'hui en anglais et sera disponible dans toutes les autres langues de l'UE d'ici le 25 août. Le [questionnaire](#) peut être quoi qu'il en soit complété dans toutes les langues officielles de l'UE. Un [communiqué de presse](#) est disponible dans toutes les langues (*Pour plus d'informations: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383*)

### **Le PIB en hausse de 0,6% tant dans la zone euro que dans l'UE28**

Au cours du deuxième trimestre 2017, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 0,6% dans la zone euro (ZE19) ainsi que dans l'UE28 par rapport au trimestre précédent, selon l'estimation rapide publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Au cours du premier trimestre 2017, le PIB avait crû de 0,5% dans les deux zones. En comparaison avec le même trimestre de l'année précédente, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a enregistré une hausse de 2,2% dans la zone euro et de 2,3% dans l'UE28 au deuxième trimestre 2017, après respectivement +1,9% et +2,1% au premier trimestre 2017. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (*Pour plus d'informations: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: + 32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976*)

### **Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of joint control over FHHGL by Brookfield and Engie**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over FHH (Guernsey) Limited by Brookfield Renewable UK Hydro Limited, ultimately controlled by Brookfield Asset Management Inc. of Canada and IP Karugamo Holdings (UK) Limited, ultimately controlled by Engie S.A. of France. FHHGL owns and operates two pumped storage electricity assets in the UK and is active in the wholesale supply of electricity. It is currently jointly controlled by Engie and Mitsui Power Ventures Limited. Brookfield is a global asset manager whose portfolio is focused on property, renewable power, infrastructure and private equity.

Engie is a global player active across the entire energy value chain in the fields of gas, electricity and energy services. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the very limited overlap between the companies' activities. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8530](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

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## [Flash estimate for the second quarter of 2017-GDP up by 0.6% in both the euro area and the EU28-+2.2% and +2.3% respectively compared with the second quarter of 2016](#)

Seasonally adjusted GDP rose by 0.6% in both the **euro area** (EA19) and the **EU28** during the second quarter of 2017, compared with the previous quarter, according to a flash estimate published by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. In the first quarter of 2017, GDP grew by 0.5% in both zones.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

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## [Towards a fairer food supply chain: European Commission asks for input](#)

Farmers, citizens and other interested parties are invited to share their views on the functioning of the food supply chain through an online consultation that runs until 17 November.

There are indications that the added value in the food supply chain is not adequately distributed across all levels of the chain due, for instance, to differences in bargaining power between smaller and thus more vulnerable operators including farmers and small businesses, and their economically

stronger and highly concentrated commercial partners.

Agriculture and rural development Commissioner Phil **Hogan** said: *“Farmers are the first link in the chain and without them, there would not be food to process, sell and consume. However, we notice that they often remain the weakest link. It is to address the shortcomings in the food supply chain that we are leading the way to act, in accordance with the Commission’s longstanding position to stand by European farmers. I encourage all EU citizens, farmers, stakeholders to share their views with us through this online consultation.”*

The European Commission is interested in gathering input to assess the necessity and expedience of possible measures to be taken at the EU level to address or regulate unfair trading practices with respect to agri-food products.

The Commission is also keen to assess the level of market transparency across the chain and where it can be improved. Considering the need for some degree of competition, the consultation will help judging whether the introduction of supplementary EU market transparency arrangements is necessary.

Finally, the questionnaire scans the level of interest in producer cooperation and the use of so-called value sharing agreements (namely the sharing of market bonuses and losses resulting from evolutions of the relevant market prices), which are already in use in some sectors such as sugar.

### **Building on work of the Agricultural Market Taskforce**

The consultation draws on the work of the [Agricultural Markets Task Force](#) (AMTF), set up by Commissioner **Hogan** in January 2016. The [AMTF suggested a number of concrete ways](#) to strengthen the position of farmers in the food supply chain, and the consultation will build on this work to inform the Commission’s potential future work.

An [inception impact assessment](#), detailing a range of possible policy options, has also been published for consultation and feedback, and a full impact assessment will also be carried out on any future initiative to improve the food supply chain.

Any future proposals from the Commission will also be coherent with the broader approach to simplify and modernise the [Common Agricultural Policy](#).

### **For More Information**

[Public consultation on the initiative to improve the food supply chain](#) – soon available in all EU languages

[Inception impact assessment on the food supply chain](#)

[Contribute to law-making](#) and [EU public consultations](#)

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## [New survey launched to improve reporting of collective bargaining in the EU](#)

Eurofound provides systematic and comparable data on national industrial relations systems and developments in working life. This is done through monitoring and reporting tools integrated in the European Observatory of Working Life (EurWORK).

Eurofound has launched a stakeholder survey in an effort to improve the way in which it reports on collective bargaining, and to transition from an initial focus on wage-bargaining outcomes to cover collective bargaining in a more holistic way,

The survey is aimed at governments, social partner organisations (employer representatives and trade unions) in all EU Member States, as well as the European Commission. The survey is designed to ascertain which kinds of data and information about collective bargaining are most useful and worthwhile for stakeholders. The survey will remain open until 30 September 2017.

To complete the survey, please visit

<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/StakeholderSurvey>

*Since its inception in 1976, Eurofound has developed as a centre of expertise for monitoring and analysing trends in industrial relations, including social dialogue and collective bargaining. It aims to support the policymaking activities of EU institutions, governments, employers, trade unions and civil society organisations with comparative research data, findings and analysis.*