

Work and Flexibility in European Countries: A cross-national comparison

Claire Wallace

In association with Endre Sik, Christine Cousins, Jiri Vecernik, Annet Jager, Pavle
Sicherl, Siyka Kovcheva, Manuela Stanculescu, Alexander Chvorostov,
Petra Stepankova, Thomas Boje,

Contact:
Institute for Advanced Studies
Stumpergasse 56, Vienna, Austria
Wallace@ihs.ac.at

Abstract

Flexibility is often attributed to the extent of de-regulation, meaning the removal of worker protection, the withdrawal of state interference in the labour market, the lowering of social protection and weakening the power of worker's representation such as Trades Unions. Another measure is the extent of so-called "a-typical" work such as part time employment, fixed term contracts and sometimes also self-employment. Based upon a study of that compared flexibility in 8 countries (UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria) using a representative sample survey of those between 18 and 65 carried out in 2001 (N=10123) and a study of policy frameworks, we argue that such assumptions are misleading. We consider the different regimes of regulation in each country and we argue that it is precisely the regulation of flexibility that can help to create employment and provide a flexible labour market rather than the opposite. Increasingly, in some countries, a more progressive form of employee-lead or negotiated flexibility is taking over from employer-lead flexibility in the individualisation of work contracts and conditions. Furthermore, the enlightened regulation of flexibility can help to lead to "good" forms of flexibility, marked by employee satisfaction and control over the work process, whilst lack of regulation can lead to "bad" forms of flexibility where the worker has little control and little satisfaction.

The opening of capital flows and subjection of national economies to global competition in the 1980s and 1990s has forced European countries to introduce flexible labour markets in order to remain competitive. This was done rather successfully in the three North Western countries that we are considering (the UK, The Netherlands, Sweden), but using different strategies. In all these countries levels of participation in the labour market are very high and there was growth and prosperity through the 1990s, reflected in the optimistic and positive attitudes of respondents to economic conditions in those countries (Wallace, Nagaev, Chvorostov 2003). In these North Western EU countries there has been a shift from employer-lead styles of flexibility to employee-lead styles of flexibility. That is, flexibility has become more individualised, reflecting employee needs.

In ECE countries, by contrast, the regimes of full employment which were in place until the end of the 1980s were characterised by state control of the labour market, with low wages compensated by price subsidies and high levels of social protection (for example support for working women). Here we are considering the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria. From the end of the 1980s, these rather inflexible labour markets were torn apart by the introduction of market de-regulation. This took mainly the form of employer-lead flexibilisation and led to the deterioration in living standards and job loss for large parts of the population. It was mainly experienced by the populations of those countries as negative, although there was an increase in prosperity after the mid-1990s and the creation of new jobs and opportunities, especially for educated people. This is reflected in the fact that the vast majority of HWF respondents in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary are dissatisfied with their economic situation and felt that it had deteriorated even in the last five years. In Slovenia and the Czech Republic where the impact of transition was less harsh, only just over half of respondents were satisfied with the economic condition of their household (Wallace, Nagaev et al. 2003).

Whilst flexibility is much discussed, it can actually mean a range of things (Pollert 1991). Apart from the well documented distinction between functional and numerical flexibility (Pollert 1988), for some, flexibility means the removal of regulations and institutions protecting workers (Riboud, Silva-Jauregui et al. 2001). For others flexibility is defined rather narrowly in terms of the extent of part-time work, the extent of fixed term contracts and the extent of self-employment. However, in most cases, flexibility is assumed from external variables. That is, it is assumed that if there is less regulation, people will be more flexible.

Many studies have pointed to the implications of flexibility for creating a more precarious labour market for low paid employees (often women or young people) (Dex 1997; Perrons 1998; Burchell, Day et al. 1999; Beck 2000; Bradley, Erikson et al. 2000; Standing 1999), whilst others have argued for the potential for using flexibility to enhance personal development and the family-work balance (Handy 1994; Hörning, Gerhard et al. 1995; Bridges 1996; Hill, Hawkins et al. 2001; Auer 2002; Spoonley and Firkin 2002; Tietze and Musson 2002). In other words, are people able to take advantage of flexibility to enhance their lives or are they rather the victims of flexibility?

Whilst time flexibility has been rather well documented (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions 2002) (Dex 1997; O'Reilly and Fagan 1998; Conditions 2002) the emphasis has been mostly on the increasingly important role of part-time and a variety of flexible hours contracts (annualised hours, shift working, evening and weekend working, time sharing, term-time working etc.) which have enabled employees to meet the demands of longer opening hours, round the clock demand, just in time production and so on. However, whilst part-time work, for example, is often seen as evidence of flexibility, part-time workers can be rather „rigid” in the sense of working only fixed hours. Part-time work need not be precarious and it has been the policy goal in countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands to introduce security for part time workers with comparable conditions to full time workers (Boje and Strandh 2003; Jager 2003). Contract flexibility has

also been rather well discussed in terms of jobs often with fixed term contract duration. However, flexibility of place has enjoyed much less discussion, except in the analysis of telework and other IT professionals (Huws 1996; Hochgerner 1998). Nevertheless, we can see this as another way in which the needs of the labour market and the availability of the workers come together in different ways. These are all sources of flexibility within a job. Another source of flexibility which is seldom considered is the extent to which people might combine several jobs or several sources of income. This kind of additional flexibility can provide new opportunities for some (for example it can be way of venturing into self employment) or a source of hyper-exploitation as people undertake several jobs with declining wages to make ends meet (Nelson and Smith 1999). Additional job holding has been a common source of economic activity in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe in order to augment low or declining wages.

Methods

In order to explore these issues we have looked at flexibility in comparative perspective as part of an EU project funded under the Fifth Framework Programme “Households Work and Flexibility” (HWF). The countries chosen were designed to illustrate contrasting flexibility regimes. The first research strategy was to collect national statistics and contextual knowledge to describe and analyse the patterns of work and household behaviour in general in the target countries.

The second research strategy was to implement a standardized representative sample survey in each country (face-to-face and telephone), aiming at a representation of the working age population between 18 and 65 in each country. The survey was designed to examine the ways in which the activities of different household members combine, covering all forms of work, including domestic work, childcare, work in the informal economy, self-provisioning, additional casual and occasional jobs, and various kinds of regular employment, and to look at attitudes to flexibility as well as actual behaviour, the ways people arrange their work and their preparedness to be flexible (N=10123). More detailed results of the survey can be found in (Wallace 2003; Wallace 2003; Wallace, Nagaev et al. 2003).

The third strategy was to document and compare flexibility and family policies in different national contexts.. This was done mainly by asking consortium partners in the consortium to provide accounts of labour market and family policies and by putting these accounts together in comparative tables. These can be found in the HWF reports (Wallace 2003; Wallace 2003)

Regimes of regulation

The Western EU countries in our HWF project have all embraced flexibilisation as a way of modernizing the labour market. However, they have used different strategies and these take place within the context of different prevailing regimes of regulation (Regini 2000). The regimes of regulation are based upon government policies and the different kinds of social dialogue traditions in different countries. They are also affected by the different traditions of family policy which integrate family and work in different ways, although this is usually ignored by regulation theorists (Lewis 1992). However, regulation regimes are also affected by the culture of the work as well as the culture of care: the extent to which people are prepared to work part time, full time and under what circumstances depends upon the way in which family is organized and traditions of work in different contexts (Wallace, Nagaev and Chvorostov 2003).

The HWF countries can be classified according to their labour market regulation regimes. In the UK the de-regulatory policies of the 1980s and early 1990s have been replaced with policies such as a minimum income and better conditions for part time workers. We might term this a move from de-regulatory towards “partially deregulated flexibilisation”. In Sweden, flexibilisation strategies were adopted to pull the country out of the recession of the 1990s and they took the form of making work more flexible within the context of a the norm of regular full time work for both men and women. In the Netherlands since the 1980s, a distinctive strategy was adopted of getting more women into the labour market by encouraging part time work. This was extended to a concern with managing the working timetable so that hours of work could be made flexible and individualized for all employees. However, this was in the context of job protection and offering job security, what has been dubbed “flexicurity”. Both Sweden and the Netherlands therefore practice what we might call “regulated flexibility”, but with different contexts.

The Accession countries of ECE did not at first set themselves the goal of becoming “flexible” but nevertheless provisions for self-employment and part-time work as well as fixed term contracts were introduced in the early 1990s. Indeed at that time, the neo-liberal model of reform prevailed, which implied that it was better to get rid of all regulations and let the market free to take its own course. There was therefore an ideological consensus against regulation. The disastrous effects of this policy in terms of unemployment, impoverishment and the criminalisation of the economy lead to a backlash against market reform in some countries and the election of governments that instead put on the brakes. Once again there was no really successful strategy for regulated flexibilisation. However, a great deal of spontaneous flexibilisation in fact took place as people moved jobs, moved professions, became self-employed or took on casual work. Informal methods of flexibilising rather rigid rules also took place, for example with regard to official salaries on which social insurance was paid and top-up salaries which were provided unofficially. At least some of this was hidden by the grey economy as the legislation to control and incorporate economic activities often did not keep pace with the changes in economic behaviour. Where there have been progressive labour market and taxation policies, more and more activities have moved out of the grey economy and into the formal economy, as is the case in the Czech Republic and Hungary (Wallace and Haerfer 2002). We might call these “partially regulated flexibilisation” as a result, even if they did not embrace flexibility in the same way as the Northern European countries did. Slovenia, by contrast is a country that has been slow to introduce reforms, buoyed up by a prosperous economy and levels of GDP closer to the EU average. It could begin such reforms only after the independence in 1991 and not earlier as in the Czech Republic or Hungary (Sicherl, Stanovnik et al. 2003).

In general the economies of all three of the more “prosperous” Accession countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia – started to recover after the middle of the 1990s and have generally been improving since then. In the Czech Republic, an ideological battle between liberalization and social protection has raged around the concept of flexibility (Vecernik 2003). Nevertheless a range of legislation has been introduced which can aid flexibility and its implementation was assisted by the buoyant labour market with very low unemployment in the first part of the 1990s, enabling people to move between jobs with little risk of ending up unemployed. In Hungary, by contrast, there were rather progressive labour market reforms and attempts to introduced flexible measures, such as part-time work, from the beginning. However, these had rather limited success, since the take up was not good and many policies were subsequently abandoned or abolished¹ (Kopasz 2003). High rates of

¹ One programme introduced subsidies to encourage self-employment in 1991. By 1997 only 1-2% of the self-employed who were eligible had taken up such opportunities and this is the same story in many other ECE countries, such as Romania. It is doubtful if unemployed people make the best candidates for self-employment and they often live in depressed areas, where any kind of business initiative is difficult. A second scheme in Hungary tried to encourage the employers to employ the unemployed as casual workers. The employers were given a free “work book” and they received subsidies for their social security. The unemployed had an incentive to participate because they became eligible once more for unemployment benefit after a certain of number of days work.

unemployment make flexibility by employees into a personal risk. There are even important differences in the way in which labour markets were flexibilised in the Czech Republic and Hungary (Keune 2003)

In all Accession countries, transition led to increasing polarization of income, differentiation within the workforce, job loss and rising poverty. Ethnic groups such as Roma were especially affected but so were young people and those in rural areas. Poverty was especially acute in the two least prosperous Accession countries, Romania and Bulgaria, whose economies did not pick up from the transition slump until the end of the 1990s (Kovacheva and Pancheva 2003; Stanculescu and Berevoescu 2003). This improvement affected the population in very patchy ways with a small number prospering and large numbers remaining poor or getting even poorer. Labour market and social security reforms were slow and often inappropriate or contradictory and could not match the impoverishment of the population, so that many people fell out of coverage altogether. The result was that more activities were pushed into the informal economy as people had to make ends meet without official incomes and inadequate or no social benefits (Wallace and Haerfper 2002). In Romania, this job loss accompanied by land restitution led to large numbers (many of whom had been forcibly urbanized in the recent past) returning to the land and to subsistence production as a household strategy (Wallace 2002). In Bulgaria and Romania, therefore, there is a labour market divided between those still holding traditional (inflexible) jobs and a very flexible sector, where people live from casual work, self-employment, agriculture and could be said to be socially excluded – people are forced to be flexible. This flexibility takes place in spite of the lack of reform and so we might call this “unregulated flexibility”. However, it is also a product of the over-regulation and over taxation of some sectors such as self employment making it very difficult for people to legally become entrepreneurs. However, the outcomes are also different in Bulgaria where most of the workforce has become precarious, and Romania where there is strong segregation between a protected sector and an unprotected (extremely flexible) sector (Sik and Wallace 2003).

The process of EU integration has introduced a new dynamic into this picture by including various labour market and social policy reforms as part of the Accession negotiations. In all countries it has been necessary to set up a National Employment Action Plan in response to the EU Employment Strategy.

This can be summarized in the chart below. Here we contrast the past (1980s) with the present and the last decade when flexibilisation became a debate in many countries and there were attempts to respond to pressures to flexibilise. We concentrate only on a very general national level here. In the UK there was a movement from de-regulation by removing social protection and labour market controls, to one of partially regulated flexibility under “New Labour”. However, the legislation passed under New Labour (much of it arising from EU Directives) is regarded as the UK partners on the HWF project as minimal. In the Netherlands and Sweden we see the change in already strongly regulated labour markets to introduce flexibility within the context of continuing strong regulation and relatively strong involvement of the Trades Unions. In the Post-Communist countries we can see a movement of strong state control of the labour market and a deliberate (official) policy of anti-flexibility

However, this scheme was also not a great success. An Act to encourage part-time work, introduced in 1991 through subsidising employers to make people part time rather than lay them off. This at first attracted 30 000 participants, but later the numbers fell off to just one sixth of the original numbers and in 1997 it was replaced with another similar scheme targeted at particular groups of employees, but this was also unpopular. It is possible that such flexibility measures were introduced too soon, before either employers or employees were ready for them and that there will be more take up in future.

towards various degrees of regulated flexibility. In Hungary, there has been the most attempt to embrace such legislation, in the Czech Republic and in Slovenia more reluctant attempts. In Bulgaria and Romania the general economic crisis and lack of coherent policies have led to a situation where flexibilisation is largely unregulated, even though some reform measures are in place. There are differences between these two countries also however. Whilst in Bulgaria precarious employment has become very widespread. In the words of the Bulgarian Minister of Labour and Social Care “I do not accept the term temporary employment because there is no permanent employment nowadays. We just offer new working places” (Newspaper Now 17 January 2003, p.5). However, in Romania there is a strong segmentation between secure and precarious jobs (Sik and Wallace 2003).

Table 1 Regimes of Regulation

1980s	1990s and 2000s	
De-regulated flexibility	Partially de-regulated flexibility	UK
Regulated non-flexibility	Regulated flexibility	The Netherlands Sweden
Strongly regulated anti-flexibility	Partially regulated flexibility	Hungary (enthusiastic flexibilisation) Czech Republic (reluctant flexibilisation) Slovenia (very reluctant flexibilisation)
Strongly regulated anti-flexibility	Mainly unregulated flexibility	Bulgaria (widespread precariousness) Romania (sectoral precariousness)

In all countries under consideration, some policies, which could be considered as leading towards flexibilisation, have been introduced. In the North Western EU countries, part time work and self-employment had already existed, but new legislation facilitating this along with temporary work was introduced from the 1980s and especially in the 1990s. In the ECE countries, such measures only became possible after 1989. However, the extent to which such policies have been introduced and the extent to which they have been effective is variable. Since 1997, many a-typical jobs are regulated by EU Directives rather than on a national level in any case, so this is no longer an issue of national policies. EU directives have been concerned to protect the situation of precarious workers and women through directives on working time and parental leave. They have made the situation of flexible workers more secure. This coincides also with the Accession of ECE countries (excluding Bulgaria and Romania) to the EU.

Traditional flexibility

Let us begin with the conventional definitions of flexibility – part-time, self-employment and work on fixed term contracts, sometimes called “a-typical” employment. We can see from Table 2. Starting with part-time work, we can see that it is most often carried out in the North Western EU countries and in those countries it is mainly women who do this work. In ECE countries, part-time work is marginal and is as likely to be done by men as by women. Self-employment was rather common in the Western European countries and in the Czech Republic and Hungary. It was represented a small but significant share of the workforce in all countries. In all countries, men are more likely to be self-employed than are women. However, whilst for some this was a way of being better off, for many people especially in Bulgaria and Romania, self-employment meant simply doing marginal work (such as selling stuff on a market) which was an alternative to unemployment. We can see from this table, that especially part-time work shows very large variations between countries. However, many different forces are hidden behind these trends. Furthermore what this table does not show is the casualisation of large parts of the workforce in countries such as Romania where 20% of respondents classified themselves as “farmers” and 7% as casual workers. In fact these are often people who have returned to the land when they have lost their jobs and are extremely flexible but mostly very poor.

According to this table, the extent of part time work does seem to reflect the regime of regulation with most part time workers found in the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden. The extent of self-employment does not seem to reflect this so much, although those countries that have introduced regulated flexibility also have relatively high numbers of

entrepreneurs. Both of these trends could be affected by the structure of the labour market as much as by the regimes of regulation, with a well developed service sector in the North Western EU countries and much larger numbers employed in agriculture in ECE countries, especially Romania. Furthermore, we have to bear in mind that the culture of care and work in the ECE countries meant that it is usual for women to work either full time or to stay full time at home to care for children. In Sweden women are encouraged to participate fully in the labour market through state lead support for children and in the UK and the Netherlands the problem of care for children is solved by women working part time.

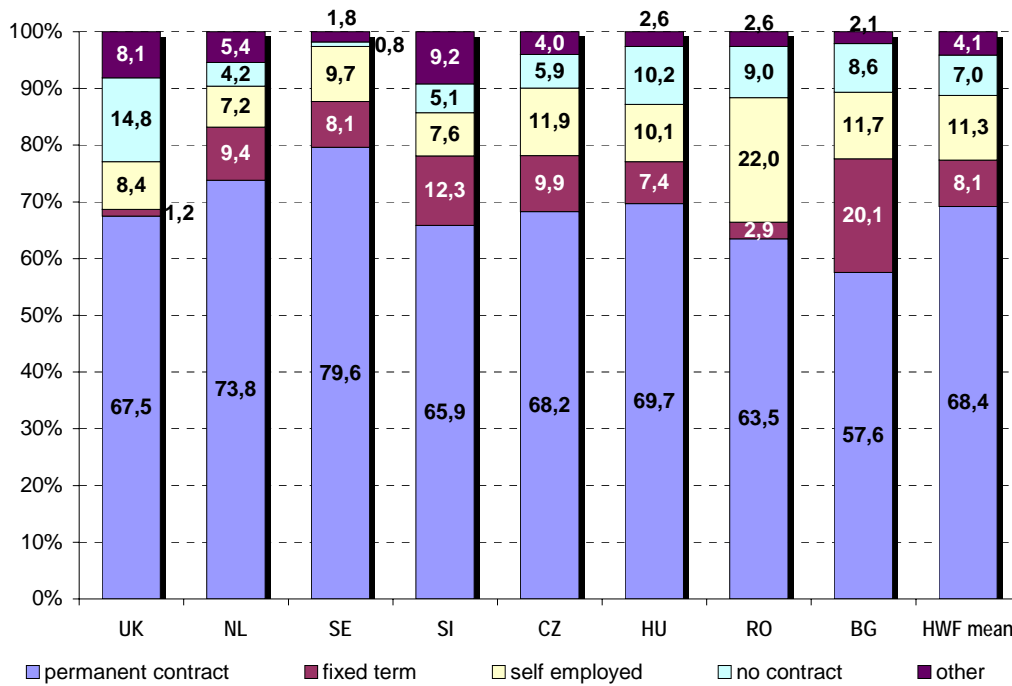
Chart 1 indicates which sort of contract people held. We can see that whilst the majority of people have permanent contracts, there is much variation from country to country. By this definition (people least likely to have a permanent contract) we might see Bulgaria as the most flexible country, whilst in Sweden and the Netherlands, where there have been policies to encourage permanent contracts along with flexibility within them, the majority of people do indeed have permanent contracts. Countries where the number of fixed term contracts are high include Bulgaria, Slovenia and the Netherlands. The most enthusiastically de-regulatory country, the UK has very few fixed term contracts, but that is because it is easier to dismiss people more generally, but a large number of people there are working on no contracts (14.8%) and this is also the case in many of the ECE countries where many jobs escape regulation. In ECE countries this is an indicator of the black economy, although this might not necessarily be the case in the UK. Self-employed contracts are also a way that employers can avoid the obligations of regular employment. Looking at this chart therefore, we could say that the regulated flexibility regime does lead to security of employment and fewer people working on with no contracts or in the black economy, whilst de-regulation and especially un-regulation lead to a variety of atypical kinds of contracts.

Table 2 Types of Flexible work* by sex by country

	Part time			Self-employed		
	M	F	All	M	F	All
UK	4	25	16	13	4	8
NL	*		26	9	7	8
Sweden	6	25	16	11	4	8
Slovenia	1	1	1	8	2	5
Czech Republic	1	3	2	12	7	9
Hungary	2	3	3	10	4	7
Romania	4	3	4	6	2	4
Bulgaria	4	4	4	8	5	7

*In the Netherlands there is the most part time work, done mainly by women, but in the HWF questionnaire this question was asked in a different form in the NL (see Jager 2003).

Chart 1 Types of contract by country



The de-regulation of the labour market is generally supposed to lead to higher flexibility and therefore rising rates of employment at the same time as unemployment should sink. Considering Table 3 below, we find that the rate of employment is highest in the the three North Western countries and highest of all in the Netherlands. All of these countries are higher than the EU average. From this we could say that although de-regulation might increase the rate of employment, so does regulated flexibility. The rate of employment is very low in Bulgaria and Hungary, so that the extensive precariousness in Bulgaria does not seem to have raised the rate of employment. Female participation is highest in the North Western countries, especially Sweden with a highly regulated labour market. Unemployment is very low in the three North Western countries and lowest of all in the Netherlands (in 2001). Unemployment is very high in the countries where flexibility is least regulated (it is disguised in this table in Romania by the high numbers of casual workers or subsistence farmers who do not count as unemployed). We could say therefore that although deregulation UK style is associated with high employment and low unemployment, so is regulated flexibility. The worst option is unregulated flexibility which is associated with low employment and high unemployment.

Table 3.: Comparative employment and unemployment rates by sex, 2001.

	Employment Rate			Unemployment Rate		
	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female
EU	63.9	73	54.9	7.4	6.4	8.7
UK	71.7	78.3	65.1	5	5.5	4.4
Sweden	71.7	72.2*	70.4	5.1	5.2	4.9
NL	74.1	82.8	65.2	2.4	1.9	3
Slovenia	63.6	68.5	58.6	5.7	5.4	6
Czech Republic	65	73.2	57	8	6.7	9.6
Hungary**	56.3	63.3	49.6	5.7	6.3	4.9
Bulgaria	50.7	53.6	47.9	19.9	20.8	18.9
Romania	63.3	68.6	58.2	6.6	7	6

Source: Employment in Europe 2002 // DG Employment and Social Affairs, Brussels*2000

The de-regulationists would argue that high social protection is a barrier to flexibility, by lessening incentives to take different kinds of jobs and changing working patterns. Although we could not obtain this data for all countries, we can see the relative rates of social protection as per cent of GDP in Table 4 below. We can see that all three North Western countries (especially Sweden) have high levels of social protection and so does Slovenia. However, social protection is especially low in Bulgaria and Romania where many people are not covered at all. This would be an extreme case of incentives provided by lowering benefits and yet in those countries rates of employment participation are low and unemployment levels (including unofficial unemployment) is high. The Czech Republic and Hungary are somewhere in the middle.



Table 4.: Social protection as % of GDP, 2000.

UK	26.9
NL	28.1
Sweden	32.9
Slovenia	26.5*
Czech Republic	19.50*
Hungary	23.20*
Bulgaria	17.9*
Romania	13.90*

Source: The Social Situation in the European Union, 2002

* CVG Report, 2002, Social Protection in Applicant countries

DG Employment and Social Affairs, Brussels

Table 5.: Union membership in comparative perspective

	Union density (%) (percent of all salaried workers that belong to a union)
EU average	44.4
Netherlands	25.6
Sweden	91.1
UK	29
Slovenia	42
Czech Republic	25-40*
Hungary	19.7

Adapted from Riboud, Silva-Jauregui and Sanchez-Paramo, World Bank, 2001 and updated by Vecernik, Sik, Cousins, Sicherl

*Different estimates from different sources (see Vecernik 2003).

De-regulationists also claim that trades unions stand in the way of flexibilisation. If we look at Table 5 we can see the comparative rates of unionization and we find that Sweden has by far the highest rates, followed by the Czech Republic (higher estimate) and Slovenia. The Netherlands appears to have even lower rates of unionization than the UK, but in that country the Unions have been instrumental in negotiating regulated flexibility. Moreover, rates of unionization do not necessarily indicate the coverage of the union negotiations which is relatively high in the Netherlands, more than in de-centralised and “voluntary” systems such as the UK. The very different rates of unionization do not really explain the similar levels of flexibility in the three Northwestern countries, so we could say, looking at this table that unionization appears to be rather irrelevant to flexibilisation. However, that would not take into account the pro-active role of the unions in the Netherlands.

Thus, looking at flexibilisation from traditional perspectives, we could say that the strategies in the North Western countries adopted to promote flexibility have been successful in many respects, irrespective of unionisation and the amount of social protection spent on GDP. In those countries, levels of part time work, self employment and labour market participation are all relatively high. The main difference between the regulated regimes and the less regulated is that there are fewer people on irregular contracts in the former: flexibilisation takes place within the context of secure employment.

New ways to look at flexibility

Thus far we have looked at traditional definitions of a-typical work and we find that there is some relationship to the regimes of flexibility. The regulation of flexibility leads to less people on irregular contracts and in the black economy. Although the numbers of people in part time work appear to be higher in those countries with de-regulatory and regulatory regimes this probably has as much to do with the traditions of work and care as with the regimes of regulation. As we have seen, attempts to introduce part time work in Hungary and elsewhere did not lead to much take up because of the lack of tradition of part time work, the low wages for part time workers and the tradition of women as full time workers. Finally, the number of temporary workers is likely to be a response to the lack of flexibility in labour market regulations rather than their existence. Where it is easy to dismiss workers, as in the UK, there is less reason to offer fixed term contracts. For these reasons, we do not regard these conventional indicators as being very good measures of flexibility in comparative perspective.

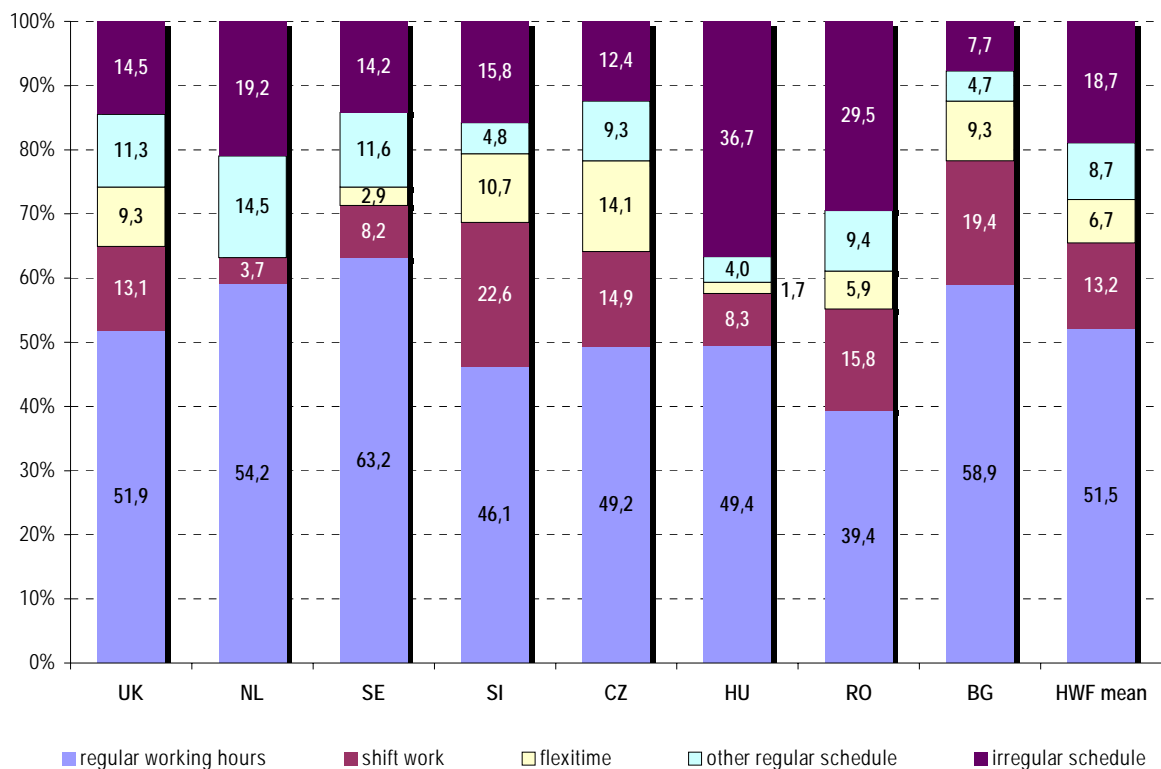
Thus, we have developed some new ways of looking at flexibility. We consider flexibility to mean the way in which people will vary their place or time of work. Seen in this way, we can measure flexibility as something related to typical rather than a-typical employment. In other words we can measure the degree of flexibility within regular, full time jobs or part time jobs. This is a broader notion of flexibility and more close to the variety of working patterns that do in fact exist. In addition we take into account the extent that people can control their hours of work and their reasons for doing flexible work. Below we explain in more detail some of these measures.

Flexibility of time

In order to capture all forms of flexibility, we asked firstly about the regular working schedule, Monday to Friday and then about deviations from that schedule (assuming that the precise peculiarities of the schedule would differ from country to country) . According to this question, the respondents in Sweden were most likely to have a regular working schedule, with almost two thirds (63%) responding positively to this question. Bulgaria came next with 59% and the

Netherlands, 54%. In the UK 52% of people had a regular working schedule and in Hungary (50%) and the Czech Republic 50%. This fell to 46% in Slovenia and 39% in Romania. The regular Monday to Friday schedule was most often found among those with better educational levels and better incomes. We can assume that having a regular schedule was a privileged situation in most countries, although less so in the UK and the Czech Republic.

Chart 2 Working schedule by country



Flexitime schedules were most often found in the Czech Republic (14.1%) and Slovenia (10.7%) followed by Bulgaria and the UK (9.3%). Hungary had the least number of flexitime people with only 2%. In the Czech and Slovenia and those with high incomes who had this kind of freedom, but often those with high income who had flexitime schedules. In Bulgaria it was men and in the UK, women who were likely to have such schedules. In most places flexitime was associated with higher incomes so we could say that it was a privileged kind of working schedule.

Around 8.7% had an “other regular working schedule”. However, in the Netherlands this went up to 14.5%, in Sweden 11.6%, in the United Kingdom, 11%. This probably reflects the prevalence of part time work in those countries. The ECE countries had generally less “other” schedules. Slovenia, Bulgaria and Hungary had the least number of people with these kinds of schedules.

A large number of people had an irregular working schedule (around one fifth). The highest numbers were found in the Hungary (36.7%) and Romania (29.5%) with substantially above the HWF mean. The lowest numbers with irregular working schedules were found in Bulgaria

(7.7%). The Netherlands, the UK and Sweden were around the same with between 14% and 19%. The Czech Republic had 12.4% and Slovenia 15.8%.

Hence the regimes of regulation do affect the working schedule, with the most regulated countries having the most regulated working hours and various other kinds of working schedule being more common in ECE countries (with the exception of Bulgaria). However, this is partly on account of the prevalence of shift work in those countries, reflecting the dominance of industrial production (if people are working).

In fact there were many ways of varying time flexibility both in the context of full time regular work as well as outside of it and we need not assume that it was only the introduction of precarious contracts that could lead to flexibility (Wallace 2003). The places where the working schedule was most likely to be irregular, was Romania, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary (Romania probably because of the high number of farmers). The regulation of flexibility, does seem to lead to more people on regular working schedules, although so does general precariousness (as we see in Bulgaria).

Control over Flexibility

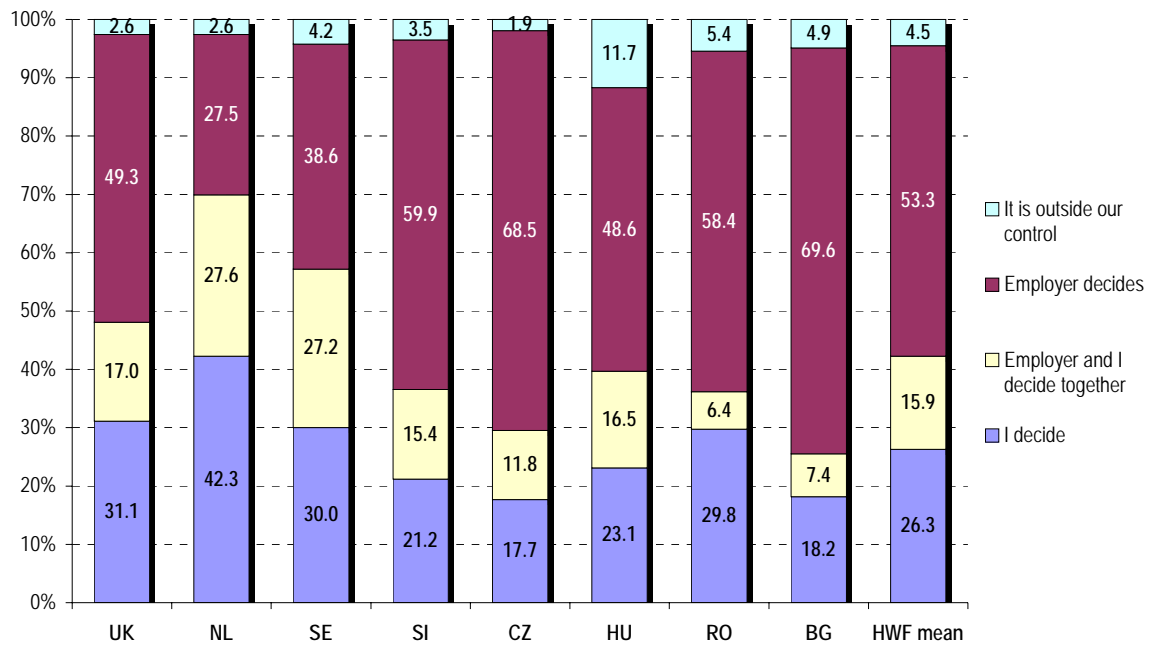
A very important factor to emerge from the literature reviews is the extent to which people have control over the flexibility that they experience. Respondents were given the options “I decide” “employer decides” “employer and I decide together” “it is outside of our control”. We asked about the control of the working schedule, the control of the hours of work, control over overtime hours and control over the place of work.

It was the employer who mainly controlled the hours of work in the Accession countries as well as the UK— this was the case for half or more than half of respondents in each country. In Sweden and the Netherlands people were more likely to state that they control the hours of work or that they decide together with their employer. This was especially the case in the Netherlands, where more than forty per cent of people claimed to be able to control their hours of work themselves or together with an employer. This is perhaps an outcome of the employee-lead flexibilisation policies in the Netherlands. In Romania a rather high number of people controlled their hours of work, but we can assume that this is because of the large agricultural sector rather than on account of flexibilisation policies.

Thus the control over the working hours, working schedule and overtime was most developed in those countries with regulated flexibility regimes and least developed in other regimes. The exception was once again Romania, because of the large number of peasant farmers.

Men are more likely to be able to decide on their hours than women, and older workers more than younger workers. Those with better education controlled their hours more than those with lower education. In all countries, the higher income groups controlled their hours the most. There seemed to be more control over the hours of work for employees in the Netherlands and Sweden, but less so in the UK. In ECE countries, lack of control of the hours of work reflects a more traditional pattern.

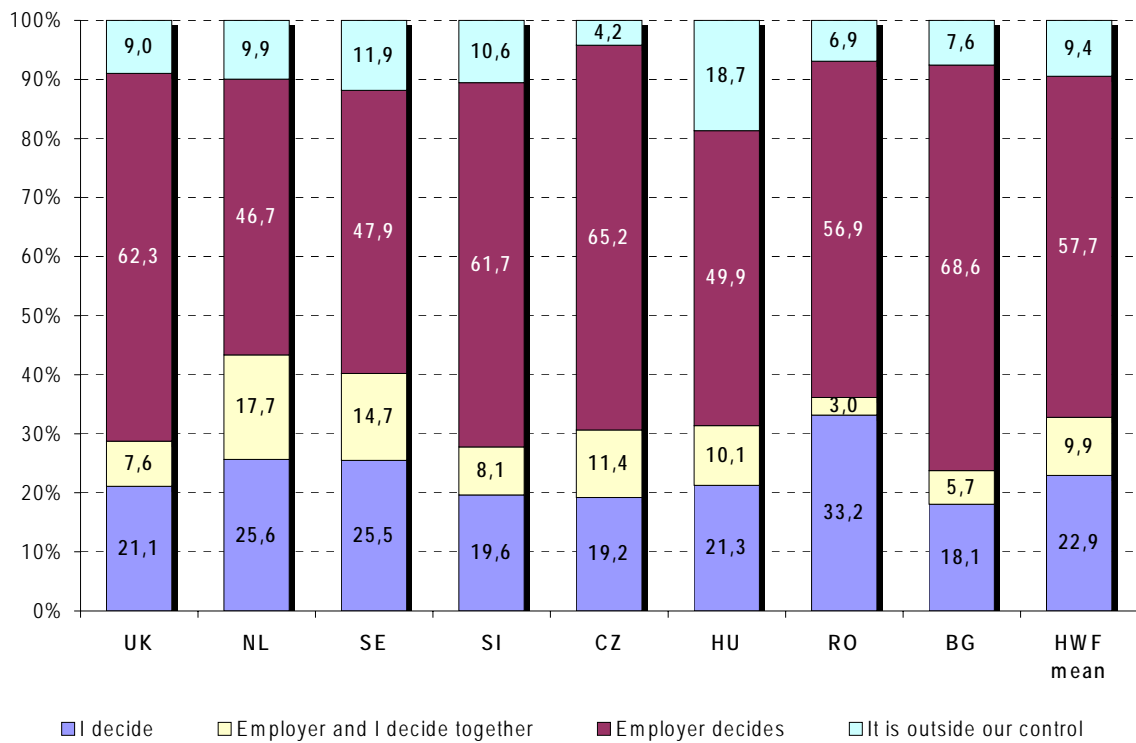
Figure 1. Control over the general working schedule (main activity).



Note: HWF Questionnaire, Q1.24: The main income-earning activity: "Regarding this activity, do you decide or someone else decide on: WORKING SCHEDULE?"

Source: HWF Survey 2001 – Unified international data collection.

Chart 4 Control over the over place of work (main activity)



Note: HWF Questionnaire, Q1.24: The main income-earning activity: "Regarding this activity, do you decide or someone else decide on: PLACE OF WORK?"

Source: HWF Survey 2001 – Unified international data collection.

Almost one quarter of respondents controlled their place of work themselves, and these were most likely to be found in Romania (33.3%), Sweden (25.5%) and the Netherlands (25.6%). Employers decided for 57.7% of respondents and these were most often found in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania and the United Kingdom. The place of work was negotiated with the employer in 9.9% of cases, most often in the Netherlands (17.7%), Sweden (14.7%), the Czech Republic (11.4%) and Hungary (10.1%). In 9.4% of cases it was outside of everybody's control. Sweden and the Netherlands therefore, do seem to have negotiated flexibility where the employee has a good deal of control. In Romania the employee also has control, but for different reasons.

The ability to control flexibility is important since it helps to distinguish good flexibility from bad flexibility. One quarter of respondents could control their hours of work, their working schedule, overtime and place of work. Generally speaking these were better-educated people, older people and people with higher incomes. Men had more control over their flexibility than women. Those in Western countries, especially Sweden and the Netherlands had the most control (although Romania was included in those countries with the most control, this is because the high number of farmers – Romanians were also in the category of people with the least control).

Satisfaction and flexibility

An important factor in assessing flexibility is the extent to which people were satisfied with the different kinds of flexibility in different flexibility regimes of regulation. In general people in the North Western countries were most satisfied, but those in the regulated regimes were most satisfied than those in the de-regulated regime. Those living in countries that were more likely to have permanent contracts, were the most satisfied with the stability of their work. In the Netherlands they were also most satisfied with the duration of their contracts, although Hungary also rates highly on this indicator. In terms of the hours of work, those in the North Western countries are clearly the most satisfied, but when it comes to locality, less Swedes are satisfied than the Dutch and Hungarians remain the most satisfied. In terms of earnings, those in the high paid countries – especially the Netherlands – are most satisfied with their earnings, the Hungarians the least satisfied. Once again it is the North Western countries who seem to have the most successful mode of flexibilisation and the Netherlands is the country with the most satisfied workers on a range of dimensions.

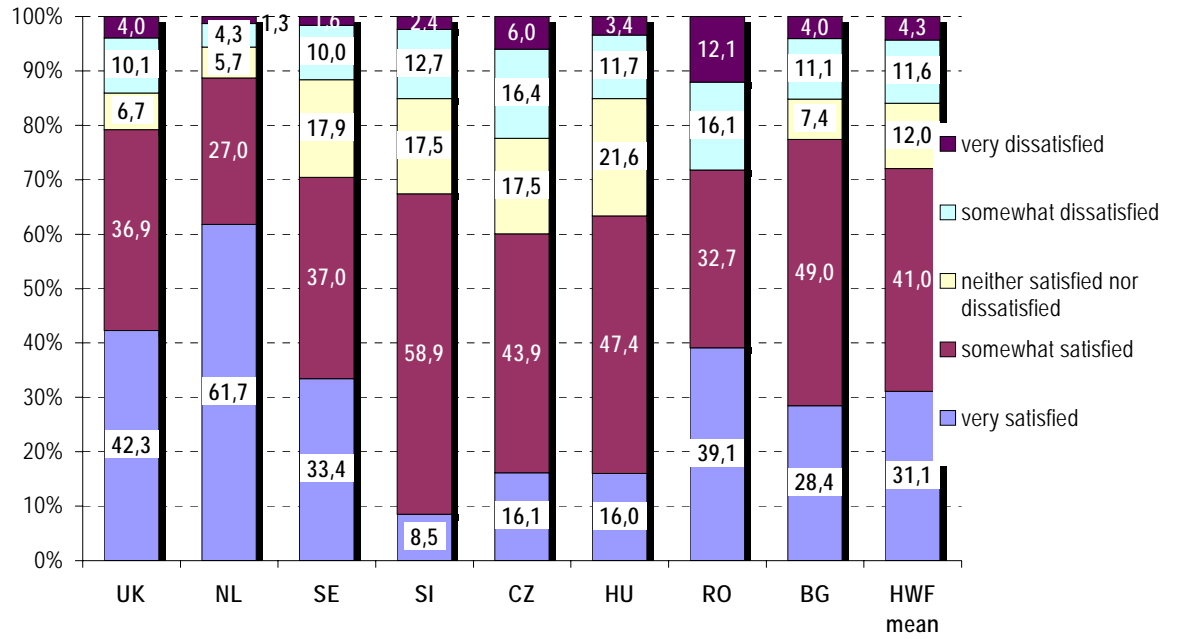
Table 6 Satisfaction in the main job (index)²

	Great Britain	Netherlands	Sweden	Slovenia	Czech Republic	Hungary	Romania	Bulgaria
Overall	78.2	84.9	81.1	68.8	64.3	65.2	65.4	67.2
1. Stability	86.2	91.1	89.1	72.7	71.1		69.2	67.8
2. Duration	75.8	85.9	72.7	64.5	62.0	77.1	67.7	71.7
3. Hours	83.3	83.6	84.6	74.7	70.9	65.3	73.5	74.1
4. Locality	62.0	71.2	59.6	51.5	49.1	73.8	41.0	44.2
5. Earnings	72.7	79.4	74.0	62.0	60.8	43.3	60.7	61.5
Average 1-5	77.4	82.6	77.5	66.2	63.0		64.7	64.5

Index is computed so that "very satisfied"=100 and "very dissatisfied"=0.

Chart 5: Subjective satisfaction with hours of work (valid per cent.)

² Taken from Vecernik (2003)



Note: HWF Questionnaire, Q1.29.4: "How satisfied are you in general with your hours of work?"

Source: HWF Survey 2001 – Unified international data collection.

The extent of flexibility in Europe

Now we can look at the numbers who have time, place, and contract flexibility, to which we can add income flexibility for those with multiple income sources. *Time flexibility* is defined as people on a non-regular or irregular working schedule³. *Place flexibility* is defined as people working at home either the whole time or part of the time, abroad or having an irregular place of work (commuters were excluded). *Contract flexibility* was defined as people having anything but a permanent regular contract (i.e. no contract, fixed term contract, on call, with a temporary work agency, on a fee only basis, subject to performance or on a work experience project). *Income flexibility* includes all those with more than one income source. As to the more complex flexibility measures, while *combined flexibility* covers those with time and/or place- and/or contract-flexibility, *cumulative flexibility* covers those characterised by all three forms of flexibility simultaneously.

Table 7: Income earners' Europe The rate of the different flexibility types by countries,(%)

	Income-flexibility	Time-flexibility	Place-flexibility	Contract-flexibility	Combined flexibility	Cumulative flexibility	N
United Kingdom	14	41	17	33	58	7	682
The Netherlands	10	40	11	28	55	4	785
Sweden	10	20	10	20	35	2	1185
Slovenia	7	30	19	34	51	7	584
Czech Republic	24	32	16	32	50	8	1072
Hungary	6	36	14	30	49	7	745
Romania	7	39	23	36	47	18	851
Bulgaria	9	21	9	42	45	5	1012
Total	11	31	15	32	47	7	6916

³ In the 2nd Table however time flexibility covers also those who work part-time (less than 29 hours a week).

In the table above we can see that the Czech Republic has the most income flexibility followed by the UK. However, the Netherlands has the most time flexibility along with the UK (mainly because of the large number of part time workers). Contract flexibility, however, was the lowest in the most regulated countries: the Netherlands and Sweden. Contract flexibility was very high in Bulgaria and Romania. Other countries had around one third of respondents with contract flexibility. Combined flexibility (flexible on more than one dimension) was most common in the UK and the Netherlands, implying that regulation was just as good as de-regulation in achieving this. It was also very common in Slovenia and the Czech Republic, but not so much in Sweden. Finally, few people counted as cumulatively flexible and they were most often found in Romania, where a form of pluriactivity was required to make ends meet.

Conclusions

In this paper we explored the relationship between regimes of flexibility in Europe and the actual kinds of flexibility that can be found. We looked first of all at traditional forms of flexibility including the amount of part-time and self-employed work and the numbers on temporary or non-permanent contracts. Here we found that the both the regulatory as well as the de-regulatory regime lead to high numbers of people in part time work and self employment. However, regulated regimes lead to less people in precarious contracts.

Although many would argue that unionization and social expenditure were factors inhibiting flexibility, in fact unionisation and the amount of money spent on social security did not seem to affect the regimes of regulation particularly, except that the very high levels of unionization in Sweden could perhaps be behind the tendency to have more regular working schedules and less precarious contracts.

Important factors in judging the type of flexibility taking place are how much control the worker has over their flexibility and how happy they are about it. Satisfaction was mostly associated with the North Western countries, especially the Netherlands. Control over flexibility was certainly associated with the more regulated employment regimes in Europe, especially with the Netherlands. We could say that this is perhaps paving the way towards more employee-lead flexibilisation rather than only employer-lead flexibilisation – flexibility that is negotiated according to needs between the worker and the employer.

Thus we can conclude that there are “good” and “bad” forms of flexibility. Some forms of flexibility are associated with job satisfaction and control over working hours. These are found most often in Western Europe. Bad flexibility by contrast, was associated with, short term contracts, little control over work and low job satisfaction. It was found in all countries, but was most widespread in Eastern and Central Europe, where flexibility has not yet been harnessed in a positive way to labour market reform. Good flexibility reflects the increasing trend in Western Europe towards employee-lead flexibility, allowing workers to negotiate the hours and place in their work contracts. In this analysis, the Netherlands stands out as not only the most flexible country (if we discount the exceptional situation in Romania) but also the country where flexibilisation has taken “good” or progressive forms that fit with employee needs. The kind of regulation regime developed in the Netherlands is in the sense the most successful of the countries that we have looked at.

References

- Auer, M. (2002). "The relationship between paid work and parenthood - a comparison of structures, concepts and developments in the UK and Austria." Community, Work and Family 5(2).
- Beck, U. (2000). The Brave New World of Work. Oxford, Polity.
- Boje, T. and M. Strandh (2003). Sweden. Country Contextual Reports. C. Wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Bradley, H., M. Erikson, et al. (2000). Myths at Work. Oxford, Polity Press.
- Bridges, W. (1996). Job Shift. How to prosper in a work place without jobs. London, Nicholas Brealy Publishing Ltd.
- Burchell, B., D. Day, et al. (1999). Job Insecurity and Work Intensification: flexibility and changing boundaries of work. Yorkshire, Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust.
- Conditions, E. F. t. I. o. L. a. W. (2002). Working conditions in candidate countries and the European Union. Resume. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Dex, S. (1997). Flexible Employment. London, Palgrave/Macmillans.
- Handy, C. (1994). The Empty Raincoat. UK, Hutchinson.
- Hill, E. J., A. Hawkins, J., et al. (2001). "Finding an extra day a week: the positive influence of perceived job flexibility on work and family life balance." Family Relations 50(1): 49-58.
- Hochgerner, J. (1998). Flexibilisierung durch Telearbeit. Flexibilisierung - Problem oder Lösung? H. G. Zilian and J. Flecker. Berlin, Sigma: 175-192.
- Hörning, K. H., A. Gerhard, et al. (1995). Time Pioneers. Flexible working time and new lifestyles. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Huws, U. e. a. (1996). Teleworking and Gender. Sussex, IES Report.
- Jager, A., Ed. (2003). The Netherlands. Country Contextual Reports. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Keune, M. (2003). Labour market flexibility in Central and Eastern Europe: an analysis of non-standard employment and working time arrangements in the Czech Republic and Hungary. HWF Survey Comparative Report Volume 2: Thematic Papers. C. Wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project. 2.
- Kopasz, M. (2003). Hungary. Country Contextual Reports. C. Wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Kovacheva, S. and T. Pancheva (2003). Bulgaria. Country Contextual Reports. C. Wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Lewis, J. (1992). "Gender and the development of welfare regimes." European Journal of Social Policy 2(3): 159-173.
- Nelson, M., K. and J. Smith (1999). Working Hard and Making Do. Surviving in Small Town America. Berkely, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press.
- O'Reilly, J. and C. Fagan (1998). Part-time Prospects. UK, Routledge.
- Perrons, D. (1998). Flexible Working and the Reconciliation of Work and Family Life - a New Form of Precariousness. Brussels, European Commission, Directorate General Employment and Social Affairs.

- Pollert, A. (1988). "The "Flexible Firm": Fixation or Fact." Work, Employment and Society 2(3): 281-316.
- Pollert, A., Ed. (1991). Farewell to Flexibility? Oxford, Basil Blackwell.
- Regini, M. (2000). The dilemmas of labour market regulation. Why Deregulate Labour Market? G. Esping-Andersen and M. Regini. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Riboud, M., C. Silva-Jauregui, et al. (2001). Does Eurosclerosis Matter? Institutional Reform and Labour Market Performance in Central and Eastern European Countries in the 1990s. Washington, World Bank Working Paper.
- Sicherl, P., T. Stanovnik, et al. (2003). Slovenia. Country Contextual Reports. C. Wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Sik, E. and C. Wallace (2003). How much work flexibility is there in Eastern and Western Europe? Comparative Survey Report, Volume 2, Thematic Papers. C. Wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Report no. 4.
- Spoonley, A. d. B. and P. Firkin (2002). "Managing non-standard work arrangements: choices and constraints." Journal of Sociology 38(4): 425-441.
- Stanculescu, M., Sofia and I. Berevoescu (2003). Romania. HWF Survey Report by Countries. C. Wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Stanculescu, M., Sofia and I. Berevoescu (2003). Romania. Country Contextual Reports. C. wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Stepankova, P. (2003). Flexibility and labour market segmentation. Comparative Survey Reports, Volume 2, Thematic Papers. C. Wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Report no.4.
- Tietze, S. and G. Musson (2002). "When "work" meets "home". Temporal flexibility as lived experience." Time and Society 11(2/3): 315-334.
- Vecernik, J. (2003). The Czech Republic. Country Contextual Reports. C. Wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Vecernik, J. (2003). Work Values in CEE and EU Countries. HWF Survey Comparative Report Volume 2: Thematic Papers. C. Wallace. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Wallace, C. (2002). "Household strategies: their conceptual relevance and analytical scope in social research." Sociology 36(2): 275-292.
- Wallace, C., Ed. (2003). Comparative Contextual Report. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna.
- Wallace, C., Ed. (2003). Country Contextual Reports. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Wallace, C., Ed. (2003). HWF Survey Comparative Report: Volume 2 Thematic Papers.
- Wallace, C., Ed. (2003). HWF Survey Report by Countries. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.
- Wallace, C. and C. Haerfper (2002). Patterns of participation in the informal economy in East-Central Europe, 1991-1998. The Social Impact of Informal Economies in Eastern Europe. R. Neef and M. Stanculescu, Sofia. Aldershot, Gower.
- Wallace, C., S. Nagaev, et al., Eds. (2003). HWF Survey Comparative Report, Volume 1. Vienna, Institute for Advanced Studies, HWF Project.

