



SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

OPINION

Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship

**Working time, the efficiency of the economy and the well-being of workers
(including in the context of digital change and work automation): a legal and
comparative analysis of the situation in EU Member States
(exploratory opinion at the request of the Polish presidency)**

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1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

- 1.1 The EESC considers that working time is one of the aspects of work with the greatest impact on people's quality of life (well-being) and is key to the efficient organisation of economic activity in companies. Appropriate working-time arrangements can make enterprises more sustainable and improve their productivity. This view is shared by the social partners. The EESC considers the definition of working time reduction as working fewer hours per reference period with the same salary levels, to clearly differentiate between shorter working days in the form of part-time work and compressed working days (that is, the same number of hours worked in fewer days, for example, 4 days of 10 hours).
- 1.2 The EESC notes that technological innovations resulting from the digitalisation of the economy and social life create numerous challenges and opportunities for economic growth and improved employee well-being. In this respect, experiments in reducing working time agreed between social partners at a company level on a voluntary basis can improve the physical and mental well-being of workers.
- 1.3 The EESC welcomes the Commission's interpretative communication on Directive 2003/88/EC. The purpose of this instrument is twofold. Firstly, to contribute to the effective implementation, application and enforcement of existing Community legislation. Secondly, to improve legal certainty for companies as regards the scope of their working-time obligations and the scope for flexible management.
- 1.4 Although, according to Eurostat data, the average European working week is 37.1 hours, the EESC notes that there are major differences between countries and sectors of activity. Available scientific evidence based on pilot projects shows that there may be a positive relationship between a shorter working week and productivity: the shorter the average working week, the higher the productivity. In this context, sector-specific experiments and pilot projects on the relationship between a reduced working week and productivity should be further explored. The diverse experiments of reduced working time in the various countries produce different effects and require different solutions. In general, these experiments have been assessed as very positive in terms of improving workers' well-being and increasing productivity, although there are considerable differences between sectors, companies and countries.
- 1.5 The EESC recognises that the sectoral and company-based nature of most of these experiences has allowed such practices to be promoted through collective bargaining. The EESC considers that social partners are the key actors in promoting measures to ensure that the highest number of sectors and companies adopt arrangements they deem appropriate. However, it should be borne in mind that not in all countries, nor in all sectors, do the social partners have the same capacity to reach such agreements. The EESC believes that the EU institutions and Member States should be encouraged to create favourable conditions in the form of incentives or legislation, for sectors and/or companies wishing to test or adopt such arrangements. That in no case should be understood as a call for a new increase in part-time work, especially unwanted part-time work, which has a negative effect on wages and pensions.

- 1.6 The EESC encourages the introduction of flexible forms of working-time organisation to take into account the situation of different vulnerable groups, with guarantees of decent work that may include greater self-determination. Scientific research shows that working-time management that takes into account the needs of workers at different stages of life facilitates work-life balance. Among other advantages, these models of flexible working-time management allow other needs to be addressed, such as vocational (re)training or a more gradual transition to retirement for workers who might otherwise leave the labour market altogether. The impact on wages and pension entitlements needs to be carefully monitored.
- 1.7 The EESC notes that a majority of companies organise working time according to the EU and national legislation in place, including derogations. Any lack of compliance with the applicable rules should be eliminated. Social partners at all levels have an important role to play to discuss flexible arrangements, including related to reduction of working time. The EESC believes that social partners need active encouragement and support, through all necessary means, in order to increase the health, work-life balance and efficiency benefits of shorter and/or more flexible working hours.
- 1.8 Firmly convinced of the added value of introducing new models of flexible work organisation agreed by social partners, including the four-day working week and/or working-time reduction, the EESC also recommends promoting them to support work-life balance. Flexible working-time arrangements strike a balance between employers' interest in increasing productivity and workers' interest in improving their work-life balance and the feeling of having an influence on their working time arrangements. They are key to attracting and retaining talent in companies.
- 1.9 The EESC highlights among the pilot projects on working-time reduction the Eurofound one: 'Working-time reduction with a focus on the four-day week', which states in its first conclusions: 'Reduced working time improves productivity, enhances mental health and reduces stress, and is key to a sustainable balance in the current context of digital transformation. It also contributes to preventing work-related illnesses and strengthening the general well-being of working people'. In this regard, the EESC highlights the positive effects of reduced working time on society, such as demographic renewal, gender equality, a reduced burden on the healthcare system and potentially keeping workers in the world of work for longer, thus creating a positive environment conducive of creativity and innovation. A good social environment not only benefits the state but also companies and workers.
- 1.10 The EESC encourages the EU institutions, national governments and social partners to accelerate the recognition of digital disconnection as a right for all EU workers. According to case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union of 19 December 2024, C-531/23, *Loredas*¹), digital disconnection policies and time recording systems in organisations are essential safeguards to ensure the effectiveness of working-time rules, including, where appropriate, rules on the reduction of working time.

¹ See [link](#).

2. Background

- 2.1 The EESC believes that working time is an aspect of work that has a very significant impact on people's quality of life. It is also key to the efficient organisation of companies' economic activity, according to various ILO studies². In European Union law, Directive 2003/88/EC (concerning certain aspects of working-time organisation to be developed and improved through collective bargaining) stands out, with extensive and protective European Court of Justice case law³.
- 2.2 The EESC points out that the proper organisation of working time has different dimensions that contribute to this regulatory and management complexity and is therefore affected by other, more recent directives, in addition to the framework directive on health and safety at work (Directive 89/391/EEC). This is the case, as regards the promotion of a proper work-life balance through leave and flexible working arrangements, with Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of 20 June; as regards uncertain working-time patterns, it is also the case with Directive (EU) 2019/1152 of 20 June on transparent and predictable working conditions in the EU.
- 2.3 The EESC notes that on 24 March 2023 the European Commission published an updated version of the Commission report on the implementation by Member States of Directive 2003/88/EC concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time (COM(2023) 72 final)⁴. The report points out that, in general terms, most Member States are complying with the minimum requirements of the directive, and some are even improving on them. The EESC also welcomes the Commission's interpretative communication on Directive 2003/88/EC⁵.
- 2.4 The EESC considers it appropriate to point out that Article 2.1 of the European Social Charter provides for a legal obligation on the European States that have ratified it 'to provide for reasonable daily and weekly working hours, the working week to be progressively reduced to the extent that the increase of productivity and other relevant factors permit;'
- 2.5 The EESC notes that the last two decades of the 20th century were characterised by discussions on striking a work-life balance, including appropriate working-time arrangements and in some Member States, job sharing (e.g. Loi Aubry, France). At the beginning of the 21st century, however, Member States introduced regulatory changes to allow for both increases and decreases in working time⁶. Working time has also been a subject of collective bargaining, often with a view to embracing digitalisation and managing it in a way that is beneficial for workers and employers. Appropriate modalities for disconnecting have also been discussed. All this has gradually led to the issues of well-being and work-life balance becoming a central concern of working-time policies, including in collective bargaining in the various European countries, in order to promote the interests of both companies and employees.

² ILO, [Working time and the future of work](#), 2018.

³ Eurofound, [Rest breaks from work - Overview of regulations, research and practice](#), 2019.

⁴ [COM/2023/72 final](#).

⁵ See [link](#).

⁶ Eurofound, [Working time reduction with a focus on the four - day week: Literature review](#), Introduction, page 1, 2024.

- 2.6 The EESC notes that since 2015 there has been an increase in working-time reduction initiatives in various countries and in different ways (e.g. 4 Day Week Global⁷). As a result, according to Eurostat data⁸, the average European working week is 37.1 hours, although there is a large difference between countries and sectors of activity as shown by Eurofound studies⁹.
- 2.7 Against a backdrop of profound technological and organisational change, in particular due to intense digitalisation, as well as widespread debate across Europe and beyond on the reduction of working time, Poland has asked the EESC for an exploratory opinion on working time, economic efficiency and workers' well-being. The EESC acknowledges the fact that many EU Member States are engaged in a debate on working-time reform (e.g. Spain)¹⁰.
- 2.8 The EESC has already suggested that in relation to teleworking, and in accordance with European and national legislation on telework and collective bargaining agreements at national, regional, sectoral and company level, companies should use appropriate mechanisms to measure normal working hours and overtime (EESC opinion on the *Challenges of Teleworking: organisation of working time, work life balance and the right to disconnect*¹¹). It has also expressed the need for a balance between work and family life in the road transport sector, relating to both the passenger and goods transport sectors¹².
- 2.9 The EESC takes note of the scientific evidence provided by the ILO and the WHO, which shows that long working hours, exceeding 55 hours a week, significantly increase the risk of physical accidents at work, as well as cerebrovascular accidents and coronary heart disease. It is also significantly linked to increasing mental health problems¹³. However, when working hours and breaks are of appropriate length and are organised well, they act as protective factors for well-being by reducing adverse effects on health and contributing to improved performance¹⁴.
- 2.10 The EESC recalls that the UN and the 2030 Agenda link proper organisation of working time to the SDGs: in particular Goal 5, target 5.4 (introduce services, infrastructure and policies (e.g. working-time limits) to provide more time for both women and men to contribute more equally to unpaid care and domestic work); and Goal 8, target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote a safe and secure working environment for all workers).

⁷ Business Insider, '[Why the four-day workweek works](#)', 2023.

⁸ Eurostat, [Average number of usual weekly hours of work in main job, by sex, age, professional status, full-time/part-time and economic activity](#).

⁹ Eurofound, [Working time in 2021–2022](#), 2023.

¹⁰ See [related links](#) on the web page of this opinion.

¹¹ [OJ C 220, 9.6.2021, p. 1](#).

¹² EESC opinion on *Driving and rest time periods, working time and posting of workers*, [OJ C 197, 8.6.2018, p. 45](#).

¹³ Eurofound, [Psychosocial risks to workers' well-being - Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic](#), chapter 5, 2023.

¹⁴ Eurofound, [Working time reduction with a focus on the four-day week - Literature review](#), 2024.

3. General comments

- 3.1 The EESC notes that Eurostat data¹⁵, combined with data from a study on productivity¹⁶ show an inverse relationship between the number of hours worked and productivity: countries with shorter average working hours, taking into account full time and part-time together, have higher productivity, while countries with longer average working hours have lower productivity, according to 2023 data. The EESC is convinced that appropriate regulation of the organisation and limits of working time is a necessary measure to facilitate the reconciliation of work, family and personal life and to protect the physical and mental health of workers, without harming productivity, but, rather, improving it. Hence the win-win approach of appropriate working time and working-time organisation, as reflected in Directive 2003/88/EC and Article 2.1 of the European Revised Social Charter.
- 3.2 Over the last two decades, the regulation and management of working time has been affected by new forms of work organisation and employment and by the impact of technological innovation (e.g. mobile working, on-demand working, platform working, teleworking, flexible working, smart working, more self-employment, several contracts for one person, etc.).
- 3.3 The EESC notes that these changes are caused and/or accelerated by digitalisation in the economy. Flexible working time and digitalisation, if not properly managed, can blur the distinction between work and rest and may result in greater fragmentation of work, both in terms of place and time. Technology creates new possibilities to control working time, for the benefit of employers and workers.
- 3.4 The world of work has also been profoundly affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which brought home-based telework combined with on-site presence, so that workers are increasingly doing 'hybrid work', as illustrated by Eurofound studies on this subject¹⁷. The spread of teleworking took place during the pandemic and although its use has since significantly declined in relation to the COVID-19 crisis, it has not disappeared and continues to be an option for work organisation.
- 3.5 Even more recently, the effects of anthropogenic climate change have highlighted new challenges for the organisation of working time, including the need to ensure the health and safety of workers and that work is able to be organised in a safe and healthy way. The great Dana tragedy in Spain and the Spanish government's regulations highlight this impact. Although it is true that other countries have experienced tragic events linked to climate emergencies (droughts, floods), the Spanish case is particularly significant both because of the number of victims (226 people killed, thousands affected) and the solution adopted, based on major legislative changes (e.g. Royal Decree-Law 7/2024 of 11 November¹⁸). In addition, increasing heatwaves caused 47 000 deaths in Europe in 2023 (the hottest year on record

¹⁵ Eurostat, [Actual and usual hours of work](#), 2024.

¹⁶ Fundación BBVA, IVIE, [Los diez países de la UE-27 con mejores cifras de productividad por hora trabajada disponen de una comisión para impulsar su mejora](#), 2024.

¹⁷ Eurofound, [The rise in telework - Impact on working conditions and regulations](#), page 71, 2022, updated in 2023.

¹⁸ See [link](#).

worldwide, and the second hottest in Europe) according to a study published in Nature Medicine¹⁹.

- 3.6 The EESC warns of the risk posed by ‘short-term’ visions: although more employees working longer hours may initially help to increase a company’s output and improve their financial situation, in the medium term it tends to decrease, while risks to workers’ health increase²⁰. Scientific studies provide strong reasons for the positive effects of appropriate working-time limits not only for workers but also for third parties (patients and clients), such as improved quality of services provided. Employers benefit from a more efficient use of resources and avoid the risk of losing customers due to reduced quality of service, production losses and waste associated with overworked staff, or even the risk of an increased number of accidents at work²¹.
- 3.7 The EESC notes that many companies have good working-time policies, but there are also worrying practices. It notes that poorly organised working time can result not only in health problems for workers, but also loss of productivity for companies. According to studies, inadequate working time can place companies in breach of applicable laws and expose them to operational risks associated with excessive working hours. This in turn can lead to people leaving companies, reduced productivity and higher rates of absenteeism and sickness. In addition, there is significant consequent damage to a business’s reputation when problems are made public.
- 3.8 The EESC welcomes the open debate and the pilot experiments being carried out in all Member States²² to test new models for reducing and/or reorganising working time. The Eurofound publications show different existing arrangements for working-time reduction which are giving new impetus for discussing the reduction and reorganisation of working time. They include the following patterns: working 6 days per week, 5 hours per day and the more widespread 4 days per week, 8 or 9 hours per day on average (‘compressed work week’). It is also important to note that Eurofound’s key findings indicate that while the reduction of working hours is perceived in literature as a positive factor in terms of worker well-being and health, the effects on employment, productivity, and the environment are more uncertain²³.
- 3.9 The EESC notes that evaluations²⁴ of pilot projects involving a four-day working week with reduced working hours and maintained wages have had a very wide geographical spread (North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) in certain companies, but they remain fragmented. Similarly, the sectors involved are much more diverse, although IT and business services are represented more than the industrial sector. The sectoral and enterprise-based nature of most of these pilot projects has allowed for discussions on the feasibility of

19 Nature Medicine, [‘Heat-related mortality in Europe during 2023 and the role of adaptation in protecting health’](#), 2024.

20 Eurofound, [Overtime in Europe - Regulation and practice](#), 2022.

21 Eurofound, [Opting out of the European Working Time Directive](#), 2015.

22 See [related links](#) on the web page of this opinion.

23 Eurofound, 2024.

24 Eurofound, 2024.

these solutions for companies/sectors through collective bargaining. However, the EESC would encourage the EU institutions and Member States to reflect on how working-time reduction can be supported at national level to benefit workers and employers, using incentives or legislation to facilitate that as many sectors and companies as possible try out these arrangements, whenever appropriate.

3.10 The EESC emphasises the importance of including the people with the greatest needs in pilot projects, such as people with disabilities. Without taking a position on the different pilot projects, the EESC notes that companies may face increased costs. The EESC highlights the following practical developments in working-time reduction:

- The German government, with productivity above the EU average, promoted an experimental programme to promote the 100-80-100 model (100% salary, 80% working hours and 100% performance) audited by the organisation 4 Day Week Global²⁵, with the result that productivity was maintained and even slightly increased. 73% of the 41 companies that participated in the experiment have adopted the model definitively and do not plan to return to the previous model.
- In Ireland, there was a pilot programme that promoted a four-day week in the participating companies in 2023. Results of this pilot project in 2024 confirmed improvements in gender equality, improved mental health – a 35% reduction in work-related stress and anxiety – and a positive impact on pollution reduction.
- Iceland has expanded a four-day work week pilot programme from 1% of the population to more than 86% of the population.
- In November 2022, the Portuguese government promoted a pilot project entitled ‘Four-day working week’ to apply for six months, during which private sector companies could reduce working hours to 32, 34 or 36 hours per week.

3.11 The EESC also notes that in Greece the possibility of working a sixth day a week has been introduced by law, effective from 1 July 2024 (Law 5053/2023, Articles 25 and 26). This rule was introduced to combat undeclared work, as well as to increase the employees’ salaries (on the 6th day, salaries are increased by 40%). This mainly concerns companies that operate five days a week, 24 hours a day, with a rotating shift system. This regulation is favoured by employers and opposed by trade unions.

3.12 The EESC points out that the average working week in Greece is 39.8 hours, the longest in the EU, followed by Poland and Cyprus. The Netherlands has the shortest working week, with 32.2 hours per week in the main job²⁶.

3.13 The EESC notes that Eurostat data²⁷, combined with data from a study on productivity²⁸, show an inverse relationship between the number of hours worked and productivity: countries with

²⁵ [4 Day Week Global](#).

²⁶ Eurostat, [‘How many hours per week do Europeans work?’](#), 2024.

²⁷ Eurostat, [‘Actual and usual hours of work’](#), 2024

shorter average working hours, taking into account full time and part-time together, have higher productivity, while countries with longer average working hours have lower productivity, according to 2023 data²⁹.

4. Specific comments

- 4.1 The EESC notes that flexible forms of working time organisation – such as shorter working weeks, staggered working-time arrangements, annualised working hours, flexitime, on-call duty and availability work – present both new opportunities and challenges. In this context, the EESC welcomes the CJEU case law that requires working-time arrangements to comply not only with Directive 2023/88, but also with the framework directive on health and safety, in order to prevent the risks of stress at work, even if such on-call time does not qualify as actual work. However, the EESC considers it more appropriate to address these issues through social dialogue and collective bargaining at the appropriate levels.
- 4.2 It notes that with the working-time experiments of 30 hours per week over 6 days, or 32 hours per week over 4 days, the main objective is a better balance between the well-being of employees and increasing the efficiency of companies; many such company-based arrangements for reducing working time are intended to attract skilled labour³⁰.
- 4.3 The EESC reaffirms that practical experience has shown that well-designed working-time arrangements, including reduction of working time, if agreed at the appropriate level, can be mutually beneficial for both workers and employers, as they can enable workers to obtain a better balance between paid work and their personal lives, without harming productivity. In this respect, while it is true that reduced working time has the best impact on work-life balance, the organisation of working time in a flexible but predictable way, taking into account workers' needs, also has a positive impact on the relationship between work and personal life, according to Eurofound³¹.
- 4.4 In addition, appropriate working-time arrangements can make companies more sustainable and improve their productivity. This view is shared by employers' organisations, which are in favour of relying on collective bargaining at the appropriate level, and by trade unions, which additionally call for greater involvement of public policy and regulation to strengthen the power of collective bargaining in reducing and reorganising working time. The EESC notes that evaluations of the pilot projects to date with these new national legal and promotional frameworks confirm the positive effects on people's physical and mental health and on business efficiency.

28 Fundación BBVA, IVIE, [Los diez países de la UE-27 con mejores cifras de productividad por hora trabajada disponen de una comisión para impulsar su mejora](#), 2024

29 Fundación BBVA, IVIE, [Los diez países de la UE-27 con mejores cifras de productividad por hora trabajada disponen de una comisión para impulsar su mejora](#), 2024

30 Eurofound, [Working time reduction with a focus on the four-day week - Literature review](#), page 55-56, 2024 and Japan Labor Issues, vol.3, no.16, July 2019, [Current State of Working Hours and Overwork in Japan: Part I: How Has It Changed Over the Years?](#).

31 Eurofound, [Striking a balance - Reconciling work and life in the EU](#), 2018.

- 4.5 The EESC points out that working between 35 and 40 hours/week significantly decreases the risk of coronary heart disease (40%) and stroke (19%) compared to working over 55 hours/week³². The EESC believes that the EU (within the framework of its competences) and the Member States (through proper social dialogue) must promote the right conditions of all types – including legal, economic, organisational and technical conditions – to get people talking about and to implement the various forms of flexible working time, including reduced working time.
- 4.6 The EESC believes that any discussions on working-time arrangements should include the social partners. Such involvement also allows for responses that are better tailored to each sector and company, and therefore more flexible and efficient. It should be borne in mind that these solutions for reducing and reorganising working time are highly favoured by workers, who are aware of their benefits. If properly designed they are also supported by employers, as they contribute to the company's productivity and effective human resource management.
- 4.7 The EESC takes note of experiences showing how the four-day working week can act as a lever to drive other changes within organisations, encouraging companies to optimise their processes to make them more efficient and productive.
- 4.8 The EESC is firmly convinced of the added value of designing and testing different models of shaping working time, including a four-day working week, in cases agreed by the social partners. In view of the current significant labour shortage, the shrinking working-age population and the increasing search for a work-life balance, offering flexible working time becomes an important factor that can help to attract talent.

Brussels, 11 March 2025.

The president of the Section Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship
Cinzia DEL RIO

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N.B.: Annexes overleaf.

³² WHO and ILO, [Long working hours increasing deaths from heart disease and stroke](#), 2021.

ANNEX I: PILOT PROJECTS FOR THE REDUCTION OF WORKING TIME: STATE OF PLAY

EUROFOUND pilot project

Context and objectives

Eurofound, in collaboration with the European Commission, is developing the pilot project Less hours, more well-being: Paving the way for a new EU working time regime. This study aims to analyse best practices in working time reduction and their impact on productivity, job satisfaction and work organisation in Europe.

Project methodology and phases

The project, launched in 2023 with a duration of four years and a large budget, consists of several phases:

- Theoretical review and policy mapping: Previous studies on working time reduction, including the four-day working week, have been analysed. This first phase has culminated in the publication of the report Working Time Reduction: The Four-Day Working Week - Literature Review, which compiles the most relevant scientific literature on the subject.
- Expansion of case studies: Initially planned in a small number, they will now be extended to 50 cases in 5-6 countries, including Spain.
- Development of case studies (2025-2026): Different models of reduced working hours will be investigated, such as a four-day week or reduced hours with no change in working days.
- Employee survey: This will be based on the European Working Conditions Survey 2024, with the aim of measuring the effects on productivity, well-being and working conditions.

Key findings and challenges

The initial report highlights that shorter working hours can improve workers' productivity, well-being and job satisfaction. However, it also points to challenges such as the long-term sustainability of these models and the need for greater stakeholder involvement in their implementation.

Next steps

Eurofound will carry out case studies in different European countries, including visits to Spain to collect information from companies, employers and workers. In addition, the next project report, reviewed by the European Commission, is expected to be published later this month or early next month, which will mark the next stages of the research and its potential impact on future EU labour policies.

BELGIUM

In 2022, Belgium introduced a labour reform that allowed employees to opt for a 4-day working week, instead of the traditional 5-day working day, while maintaining the same weekly working hours. This reform was presented as a way to improve work-life balance while maintaining productivity levels. The system is based on voluntariness.

Context and operation of the reform:

Until the beginning of 2022, workers in Belgium followed a standard 5-day working week of 36 to 40 hours per week. The reform offered employees the option to organise their working time over 4 days, with working hours of up to 10 hours per day, instead of 5 days of 7 or 8 hours. This option, available to employees, does, however, not oblige companies to adopt the model - and is therefore based on voluntariness both from the company and employee side, but it does give them the opportunity to adjust their operations to allow for the short-time working option. In addition, a six-month trial period is provided so that employees can assess whether this working pattern suits their needs.

The principle behind this reform is to give employees more autonomy to organise their time and thus improve well-being and flexibility in their lives³³.

Potential benefits:

- **Better work-life balance:** One of the main attractions of this model is that it allows workers to have an extra day off each week, which could improve the balance between work and personal responsibilities. This extra time could help employees reduce the stress and burnout associated with long hours.
- **Greater flexibility:** The option to choose how to distribute working hours is a significant advantage, especially for those with family or personal responsibilities, as it allows them to adapt their working day according to their needs.
- **Potential productivity improvement:** Some studies suggest that concentrating the workday into fewer days may improve employee productivity and concentration, as they have more time to rest and recuperate between shifts. The theory behind this is that with more time off, workers are more motivated and focused.
- **Increased job satisfaction:** The possibility of choosing more flexible working hours and having an additional day off could improve job satisfaction and, as a consequence, increase employees' commitment to their company.

³³ Euronews (2022). Belgium approves four-day week and gives employees the right to ignore their bosses after work. Available at: <https://www.euronews.com/next/2022/02/15/belgium-approves-four-day-week-and-gives-employees-the-right-to-ignore-their-bosses>.

Challenges:

However, this reform also presents important challenges and limitations that should not be ignored:

- **Longer working hours and fatigue:** 10-hour days are not suitable for all workers. While some may be able to adapt to these extended hours, many may find them too tiring and fatiguing. In the long term, such long hours may affect the physical and mental well-being of employees, as well as making it difficult to manage family or personal tasks after a long day's work. For some sectors, this model may not be sustainable, as the necessary rest between working days may be compromised.
- **Compatibility with sectors requiring daily presence:** The reform does not take into account the uneven impact it may have on sectors that rely on the constant presence of employees, such as commerce, customer services, or health. For these sectors, the 4-day working day could require a significant reorganisation of staff management, which can be costly and logistically complex. In addition, maintaining service quality on all days of the week can be a challenge for many companies.
- **Impact on productivity:** While some studies suggest that concentrated working hours can improve productivity, not all sectors may experience the same results. Ten-hour days may result in reduced efficiency as employees become fatigued throughout the week. Productivity depends not only on hours worked, but also on factors such as motivation, time management and working conditions.
- **Lack of real reduction in hours:** A critical aspect of this reform is that it does not reduce total working hours, but merely redistributes them. This means that the benefit of an extra day off is offset by significantly longer working hours. If the aim is to improve well-being and reduce work-related stress, simply redistributing hours does not seem to be a complete solution. In many cases, longer hours may be less effective in the long run³⁴.

DENMARK

In 2019, the municipality of Odsherred in Denmark implemented an innovative 35-hour working week spread over 4 days. This model, pioneered in the public sector, aims to give employees more time off without sacrificing their income or workload³⁵.

How the 4-day model works in Odsherred:

The 4-day model applies to workers in administrative functions and is implemented in combination with a decision in the municipality to have administrative services closed for the public on Fridays, but with longer opening hours on Monday to Thursday.

³⁴ The Brussels Times (2024). The work-life balance Belgium wants? Four-day work week not catching on. Available at: <https://www.brusselstimes.com/1275369/the-work-life-balance-belgium-wants-four-day-work-week-not-catching-on>.

³⁵ The local DK (2019). Odsherred Municipality is to become the first local authority in Denmark to implement a four-day working week. Available at: <https://www.thelocal.dk/20190916/danish-municipality-introduces-four-day-working-week>.

The system allows workers to concentrate their 37-hour working week into 4 working days, working on average for 32 hours a week from Monday to Thursday. This leaves an additional 5 hours, which the worker can decide to allocate outside the agreed working hours. The worker is allowed to leave Friday as a full day off for a minimum of 34 weeks a year. This allows employees to enjoy a three-day long weekend, which can improve work-life balance.

Although the model involves longer working hours, it is designed so that employees maintain the same number of hours per week (35), so there is no loss of pay or benefits. However, out-of-hours availability is also required: employees must be prepared to attend to emails and calls outside their official hours, which can place an additional burden on their personal time.

Expected benefits:

- **Increased time off:** The main attraction of this model is the additional day off, which offers a better work-life balance, reducing stress and improving the overall well-being of workers.
- **Motivation and productivity:** The 4-day working day has been shown in other contexts to reduce burnout and increase motivation, which could translate into increased productivity on working days. With more time off, employees feel more engaged and rested.
- **Attractiveness for new talent:** The reform also makes the municipality more attractive to workers seeking a better quality of life, which could help retain existing employees and attract new talent.

Challenges of the model:

- **Long hours:** Despite the reduction in working days, 8.75-hour days can be exhausting, especially for those who perform intensive or highly concentrated tasks.
- **Out-of-hours availability:** The flexibility required outside working hours to answer emails and deal with emergencies could create additional pressure, making it difficult to fully disconnect from work.
- **Compatibility with all sectors:** While in administrative and office areas this model works well, in sectors that require continuous presence (such as emergency services or customer service), it may be more difficult to implement without affecting the quality of service.

The municipality of Copenhagen has also initiated a in Denmark is following the trend with a 4-day working week pilot programme starting in 2024. This project will be implemented in some sectors of local government and aims to assess the feasibility of a reduced working week in the public sector. The pilot programme involves 17 institutions in the municipality and has currently been prolonged until April 2025³⁶.

³⁶ DR.dk (2024). Nu får ansatte i Københavns Kommune mulighed for at få en fire dages arbejdsuge. Available at: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/nu-faar-ansatte-i-koebenhavns-kommune-mulighed-faa-en-fire-dages-arbejdsuge>.

Objectives of the Copenhagen experiment:

The initiative has several key objectives:

- **Reduce stress:** By giving employees an extra day off, it is expected that stress levels will decrease, which could lead to greater job satisfaction and less burnout.
- **Improve productivity:** Proponents of the model argue that with more time off, employees will be more focused and motivated during their working day, which translates into greater efficiency.
- **Compatibility:** Shorter working hours must support and be compatible with core work functions and cooperation within the municipality.
- **Service:** The pilot programme must not result in lower service standards.
- **Voluntary participation:** The individual worker's participation in the pilot programme must be entirely voluntary.
- **More free days:** The allocation of working hours must provide the possibility for more free working days for the workers.

Aspects to be evaluated:

- **Impact on public sector efficiency:** The pilot project will measure whether reduced working hours can maintain or even improve productivity levels in public sectors where efficiency and coverage are essential.
- **Compatibility with service provision:** As with other short-time working models, compatibility with key sectors, such as customer service or emergency services, will be one of the main challenges. However, it is expected that the model will be adjusted according to the needs of each area.

FRANCE

The 4 Day Week pilot in France, launched in 2024, is an innovative project that aims to explore the impact of a shorter working week without a reduction in pay. In partnership with *Emlyon Business School*³⁷ and supported by *4 Day Week Global*³⁸, the project allows 50 French companies to adopt a 32-hour working week instead of the traditional 35 hours that are common in the country, while maintaining the same salary for employees.

³⁷ Emlyon Business School (2024). Available at: em-lyon.com.

³⁸ 4DayWeekGlobal. Available at: <https://www.4dayweek.com/>.

This pilot aims to improve the work-life balance of workers by allowing them more free time to rest, engage in personal or family activities, and thus improve their overall well-being. The aim is to test whether shorter working hours can improve productivity, without negatively affecting companies' profitability or the quality of work³⁹.

Context and objectives of the pilot:

- **Participation of 50 companies:** 50 companies from different sectors will be selected to participate, allowing the impact of the measure in a variety of working environments to be analysed.
- **No reduction in salary:** Employees will continue to receive their full salary, which reinforces the idea that productivity can be maintained or even improved without the need for longer working hours.
- **Impact on productivity and well-being:** Organisers expect that workers, with more time off, may have higher motivation and satisfaction in their work, which could translate into greater efficiency and better results for companies.

How does the pilot work?

The specific details of the programme include the implementation of a 4-day working day (Monday-Thursday or Tuesday-Friday, depending on the company), where employees would work 32 hours, flexibly spread over the working days. During the trial period, the companies involved will be required to monitor the impact on both employee well-being and company productivity.

Importantly, applications to participate in the pilot close on 31 July 2024, giving interested companies until that date to submit their applications.

Potential impact:

- **For employees:** The possibility of an additional day off per week has great potential to improve overall well-being, reducing stress and promoting work-life balance.
- **For businesses:** While the cost of a day less work might seem high, the model seeks to demonstrate that the gains in productivity, creativity and employee satisfaction can outweigh any potential loss of working time.

GERMANY

In Germany (where the annual working hours are already amongst the lowest in the world) there has started its first 4-day work week pilot project, in a collaboration between *4 Day Week Global*⁴⁰, *Intraprenör*⁴¹ and the University of Münster⁴²⁴³. This trial started in September 2023 with the

³⁹ 4jours.work (2024). Available at: <https://4jours.work/formation-semaine-de-4-jours-en-france>.

⁴⁰ 4DayWeekGlobal. Available at: <https://www.4dayweek.com/>.

⁴¹ Intraprenör (2024). Available at: <https://www.intraprenoer.de>.

participation of 45 companies of various sectors and sizes, and aims to explore how a shortened working week can improve productivity, employee well-being and work-life balance. The pilot will run for a period of six months, with a final report due in October or November 2024, providing a comprehensive analysis of the results obtained.

Main aspects of the trial until mid-way through the project:

So far, the pilot has shown promising progress and has yielded significant data on the feasibility and benefits of a 4-day working week in German companies.

- **Labour retention:** Importantly, 93% of the companies that started the trial remain committed to the 4-Day model, reflecting a high level of satisfaction and interest on the part of participating companies. This retention rate is a positive indication that companies consider that the benefits of the 4-day week outweigh the initial challenges.
- **High participation of small companies:** 54% of the participating companies are small companies, with between 10 and 49 employees. This shows that small and medium- sized enterprises are also willing to try this model, despite initial concerns about the feasibility of implementing it in smaller organisations.
- **Diversity of sectors:** The 45 participating companies come from 13 different industry sectors, providing a global view of the potential impact of the 4-day working week on different types of businesses and sectors, from technology and services to manufacturing and education. This allows for an assessment of how this reduced working time may affect different types of work and economic sectors.
- **Broad inclusion:** Importantly, 60% of companies include between 90% and 100% of their staff in the trial. This ensures that the pilot has a broad representation of employees, which improves the quality of the results obtained, as it reflects the experience of the majority of staff and not just management or senior management.
- **Reduction of working time:** Approximately 38% of the participating companies have managed to reduce their working time by 20%, which is in line with the objectives of the 4-day working week, which aims to reduce working time without affecting employees' pay and productivity. This reduction in working time seems to be aligned with the desire to offer more time off while maintaining work efficiency.

Potential benefits of the 4-day working week:

Although the pilot is still ongoing, the data collected so far has revealed several promising benefits for both employees and employers:

1. **Attractiveness for employers:** The 4-day working week has proven to be an attractive factor for more job seekers. Companies have noticed an increase in the quality and quantity of

42 Universität Münster (2024). Available at: <https://www.uni-muenster.de/en/>.

43 4tagewoche (2024). Germany: A glimpse into the engine room. Available at: [4DW-Germany-Midtrial-Report_english_final](#).

candidates interested in working with them, which could make it easier to attract and retain talent, especially in competitive sectors or sectors with a shortage of skilled labour.

2. Employee engagement: Employees participating in the pilot are more motivated and committed to their work. They are more willing to identify opportunities for improvement, optimise processes and contribute creatively to the work. This increased motivation has had a positive impact on overall productivity, as employees are better focused and have more energy during their working day.
3. Better work-life balance: The additional day off provided by the 4-day work week improves employees' work-life balance, reducing stress and fatigue. This also contributes to greater emotional engagement with the company, as employees can have more time to rest, spend with their families, or simply have time for themselves, which improves their overall well-being and makes them more productive on the days they do work.
4. Potential for innovation: With more free time and a better work-life balance, employees can feel more inspired and innovative. With reduced burnout, they can devote their energy more efficiently to generating new ideas and improving existing processes in the company.

Challenges and considerations:

While progress so far is promising, some challenges have also been identified that need to be managed during the remainder of the pilot, for instance:

- Operational adjustments: Companies need to make adjustments to ensure that work remains smooth, even with fewer working days. This may include reorganising schedules, redefining roles or implementing new tools to ensure projects are completed efficiently.
- Long-term sustainability: Although preliminary results are positive, the long-term effects of working time reduction need to be monitored further. The key question is whether the benefits gained are sustained over time or whether attrition from extended working hours could become a problem.

ICELAND

Iceland has gained considerable international attention for its successful 4-day working week model, driven by pilot studies conducted between 2015 and 2019. This project, which involved more than 2,500 mostly public sector workers, explored the effects of reducing the working week from 40 to 35 or 36 hours, with no reduction in pay. The initiative was driven by the Icelandic government, in collaboration with Reykjavik City Council and local trade unions, with the aim of assessing the effects of this reduction on productivity, employee well-being and work-life balance⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ Common dreams (2024). How's Iceland's 4-Day Work Week Working? 'Incredibly Well,' Study Says. Available at: <https://www.commondreams.org/news/iceland-4-day-workweek>.

Positive results from the pilot studies:

Pilot studies conducted between 2015 and 2019 showed very positive results for both employees and employers:

- Improvements in well-being and work balance: Workers reported significant improvements in their overall well-being, resulting in reduced stress and burnout. They also reported an improvement in their work-life balance, as having more free time allowed them to devote more attention to their family, friends and personal activities.
- Maintaining or improving productivity: A key finding was that, despite the reduction in hours, productivity in many cases remained at the same level or even improved in certain sectors. Employers reported that, in general, the quality of work and service were not affected by the reduction in hours, and that in some cases efficiency and performance increased due to greater focus and energy on the part of employees.
- Widespread acceptance: The positive results of the pilot generated interest and support among both workers and employers, which prompted the expansion of the model to more areas within the public sector and favoured its general acceptance.

Expansion of the model at national level:

Due to the success of the pilots, Iceland has taken important steps to adopt this 4-day working week model more widely at the national level:

- Access to short-time working: Based on the positive results, approximately 86% of Icelandic workers now have access to the option of a 4-day working week, mainly in the public sector. This achievement has been made possible through union negotiations and collective agreements, which have allowed employees to adjust their working hours according to the needs of each sector, while maintaining wage levels.
- Key trade union negotiations: Trade union negotiations have been essential in facilitating this transition. Trade unions have played a crucial role in promoting reduced working hours without loss of income for workers. This has helped to achieve a high level of acceptance among employers, especially in the public sector, which has been the main driver of change.
- Sectoral adaptability: Collective agreements allow for flexible adaptation of working time according to the characteristics of each sector. This means that companies can choose how to distribute working hours efficiently, so that operations continue to run smoothly.

Implementation Challenges:

While the 4-day work week model has been successful in many respects, it has also presented certain challenges, especially in sectors with high demand for continuous services:

- Sectors with constant high demand: In areas such as health, education and other essential public services, the reduction in working hours has required significant organisational adjustments. Health care and education, for example, are sectors that cannot afford service

disruption, so companies and organisations have had to reorganise their shifts or, in some cases, hire additional staff to cover the lost hours.

- Logistical and organisational adjustments: The implementation of reduced working hours has also required the reorganisation of work structures and internal processes in some institutions. These adjustments have been necessary to ensure that the benefits of reduced working hours do not interfere with the quality of service or the performance of daily tasks.
- Long-term adaptation: The Icelandic government and trade unions have seen these challenges as part of an adaptation process necessary to ensure that the benefits of reduced working time remain sustainable in the long term.

IRELAND

In Ireland, the reduction of working time to four days has gained momentum in recent years, thanks to pilot programmes run by organisations such as *Four Day Week Ireland*⁴⁵ and *4 Day Week Global*⁴⁶. These initiatives are based on the 100:80:100 model, which proposes to maintain 100% of salary, reduce working time to 80% and achieve 100% productivity. One of the most prominent programmes of this type was the pilot launched in January 2022, which involved companies from different sectors and lasted six months⁴⁷.

Positive results of the pilot programme:

The 2022 pilot in Ireland yielded a number of positive results for both employees and employers, showing the potential of the 4-day work week to improve quality of life and productivity.

- Improvements in physical and mental well-being: During the pilot, employees reported significant improvements in their physical and mental well-being. Reduced working hours contributed to less fatigue and reduced stress, allowing workers more time to rest and engage in personal activities, improving their overall health.
- Better work-life balance: The majority of workers highlighted a better work-life balance, as the extra day off allowed them to spend more time with their families, look after their personal well-being or pursue hobbies and interests outside work.
- Reduced work-related conflict: A decrease in work-related conflict was also observed, especially in relation to the demands of family life. Employees had more time to fulfil their personal responsibilities, which reduced stress and conflict due to lack of time or work overload.
- Increased productivity: A key finding of this pilot was that most participating companies reported an increase in productivity, despite the reduction in hours worked. Employees felt

⁴⁵ 4DayWeekIreland (2024). Available: <https://fourdayweek.ie/>.

⁴⁶ 4DayWeekGlobal. Available at: <https://www.4dayweek.com/>.

⁴⁷ 4DayWeekIreland (2023). The US/Ireland 4 Day Week Trial Results. Available: <https://www.4dayweek.com/us-ireland-results>.

more motivated, focused and engaged, leading to greater efficiency and higher work output during working days.

- **Increased job satisfaction:** The majority of employees expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the new working hours, which also contributed to higher talent retention and improved morale within the companies.

Economic and environmental impact:

In addition to the employment and welfare benefits, the 4-day work week pilot programme also had a positive impact on other areas, such as the economy and the environment:

- **Reduced commuting hours:** By having an additional day off, commuting hours were reduced, which not only benefited employees in terms of time savings, but also reduced costs associated with transport, such as fuel or the use of public transport.

More sustainable behaviours: The reduced working day also had a positive impact on the environment. Companies saw a decrease in energy consumption by having offices closed on additional non-working days. This resulted in energy savings and a lower environmental impact due to reduced emissions associated with the operation of the facilities⁴⁸.

Model continuity and expansion:

The success of the pilot led to many of the participating companies deciding to maintain the 4-day working week after the trial ended. The positive evidence on productivity, employee wellbeing and job satisfaction generated strong interest in expanding this model to more companies and sectors in Ireland.

- **Political interest:** The results of the pilot programme were presented to political leaders in Ireland, which generated a great deal of interest in the possibility of adopting this model more widely in the country. The authorities showed interest in exploring how this practice could be implemented nationally, especially in the private sector and in organisations of other sizes.
- **Challenges for certain sectors:** Despite the positive results, some sectors in Ireland, such as health and education, present additional challenges for the implementation of the 4-day working week. The continued demand for services in these fields makes the reduction of working hours more difficult to implement without affecting the quality or availability of the service. However, some sectors are already exploring ways to adapt the model, such as organising flexible shifts or hiring additional staff to cover lost hours.

Implementation challenges:

While the pilot has been a success in many respects, there are challenges to mass adoption:

1. **Adapting to different industries:** Some industries have a constant demand for work, which can make it more difficult to implement a 4-day schedule without compromising the quality

⁴⁸ UCD Dublin Research (2024). The 4-day week: making work healthier and more sustainable. Available at: <https://www.ucd.ie/research/impact/casestudies/the4-dayweekmakingworkhealthierandmoresustainable/>.

or continuity of services. Companies in these sectors may need to reorganise their operations, streamline processes or hire more staff to compensate for reduced hours.

2. Resistance to change: In certain sectors or companies, there may be resistance to change due to fears about loss of competitiveness or the difficulty of adjusting work processes. However, the results of the pilot show that the benefits outweigh the potential drawbacks, and the experience of other companies could help to reduce this resistance.
3. Inequality in sectoral adoption: While sectors such as technology or professional services have shown considerable success with the 4-day work week, sectors such as health, education and some customer services face more complex logistical challenges. Specific strategies need to be developed to implement this model in these sectors without affecting service quality.

PORTUGAL

Portugal has recently launched a government-backed four-day working week pilot programme, which started in June 2023 and lasts for six months. The experiment involves 41 private sector companies and more than 1,000 employees, with the aim of assessing how reducing the working week affects workers' mental health, work-life balance, economic performance, and social and environmental effects⁴⁹.

The initiative is being coordinated by 4 Day Week Global in collaboration with researchers from Birkbeck University London and Henley Business School. Participating companies have committed to maintaining full salaries despite the reduction in working hours.

Positive results of the pilot programme:

The first results of the pilot programme in Portugal have been extremely positive, with improvements for both employees and companies:

- Better work-life balance: Employees have reported a significant improvement in their work-life balance. Many of them reported that they now have more time for their families, which has led to reduced stress and a better quality of life.
- Reduced stress and burnout: Employees reported a noticeable decrease in stress and fatigue. In addition, burnout levels decreased by 19%, reflecting an overall improvement in psychological and physical well-being.
- Increased productivity: Participating companies observed an increase in productivity, as workers were more engaged and creative during their reduced working hours. This increased motivation and energy during working hours resulted in better performance in daily tasks.
- Improved quality of work: The quality of work also improved, as employees, feeling less exhausted, were able to maintain a high level of concentration and efficiency during their working day, allowing them to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

⁴⁹ 4DayWeekPortugal (2024): The 4 Day Week Portugal Trial Results. Available at: <https://www.4dayweek.com/portugal-2024-pilot-results>.

- High job satisfaction: Satisfaction in the work environment increased significantly, with 85% of employees saying they would only consider changing jobs if the job offer included a 5-day working week and a salary that was at least 20% higher. This suggests that the 4-day work week model may be a key factor in talent retention.

Impact on mental health and well-being:

One of the main focus areas of the programme is employee mental health, and the results have been very encouraging:

- Reduced anxiety: Anxiety levels were reduced by 21%, reflecting an improvement in employees' mental health due to the additional time off.
- Decreased fatigue: Fatigue experienced by employees was also reduced by 23%, allowing workers to feel more energised and better able to cope with their work and personal responsibilities.
- Improved sleep quality: Sleep problems also decreased by 19%, which may indicate that the reduction in working hours has helped employees to rest better and get more restful sleep, contributing to their overall well-being.
- Reduced depression and emotional stress: Symptoms of depression and emotional stress were reduced by 21%, suggesting that shorter working hours have a positive impact on employees' psychological health.
- Reduced loneliness: Feelings of loneliness decreased by 14%, which could be related to the increased free time workers can devote to their social and family relationships.

Impact on work-life balance:

One of the most notable achievements of the programme has been the improvement in work- life balance:

- Reducing difficulties in reconciling work and family: The percentage of workers who found it difficult to reconcile their work and family responsibilities fell from 46% to 8%, showing great progress in employees' ability to balance both aspects of their lives.
- More time with family: Some 65% of employees reported that they now spend more time with their families, which not only improves personal well-being, but also strengthens family ties and improves overall quality of life.

Economic and productivity results:

The economic impact of the pilot programme has also been very positive:

- Stable or increasing revenues: Despite the reduction in hours, company revenues remained stable or even increased in some cases. This suggests that shorter working hours do not negatively affect business profitability.

- Better talent recruitment: Companies reported that the process of recruiting new talent has been improved, as the 4-day working week has made companies more attractive to potential candidates. This model appears to be a competitive benefit in attracting talent to the labour market.
- Employee retention: In addition, employee retention has improved, indicating that shorter working hours not only improve employee well-being, but also enhance employee loyalty and loyalty to the company.

SPAIN

Spain is undertaking a number of public and private initiatives around the implementation of the four-day working week, with the aim of improving employee well-being, productivity and work-life balance. These experiences, which include pilot programmes and trials in different sectors, could lay the foundations for a wider adoption of this reduced working day at national level.

Public Initiatives

- Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade pilot programme

In 2022, the MITC launched a pilot programme aimed at reducing working hours in small and medium-sized companies in the industrial sector. This programme is endowed with a budget of 10 million euros and offers subsidies of up to 150,000 euros per company for companies that adopt the four-day week without reducing wages. The aim is to evaluate the effects of this model on productivity and employee well-being, with a requirement to maintain the model for at least two years to assess its long-term impacts. This measure was made possible thanks to an agreement with the political party Más País, which advocates shorter and more flexible working hours. The project seeks to analyse whether a reduction in working hours can improve business efficiency without affecting profitability⁵⁰.

- Valencia City Council experiment

In 2023, Valencia City Council launched a pilot programme that implements the four-day, 32-hour working week across the board for municipal workers. Approved in plenary session by Mayor Joan Ribó, this experiment took place from 10 April to 5 May 2023. The main objective of the pilot was to assess the effects of a shorter working week on the productivity of municipal public sector employees, their well-being and the performance of public services.

⁵⁰ Ministry of Industry and Tourism (2024). The EOI resolves the call for grants for pilot projects to reduce working hours in industrial SMEs. Available in: <https://www.mintur.gob.es/es-es/GabinetePrensa/NotasPrensa/2024/Paginas/Resolucion-definitiva-proyecto-piloto-reduccion-jornada-laboral-EOI.aspx>

During this period, employees maintained their full salary, enjoying an additional day off each week. Preliminary results showed improvements in workers' quality of life and a decrease in work-related stress⁵¹.

Private Initiatives

– Delsol Software

In 2020, Software Delsol implemented the four-day work week for all its employees, becoming one of the pioneering companies in Spain. Since its adoption, the company has increased its turnover and improved the satisfaction of its customers, who rate its services 9.81 out of 10. The implementation of this reduced working day has strengthened employee loyalty and commitment, which has generated benefits for both the company and its customers. This case has been seen as a successful example of how shorter working hours can be beneficial to companies without sacrificing performance⁵².

– Telefónica and other large companies

Telefónica has carried out limited trials in some of its departments, where it has offered employees the option of working reduced working hours. However, the company has not implemented this model across the board due to concerns about possible impacts on the company's competitiveness and productivity. Telefónica's caution reflects a common challenge in large companies: accommodating short-time working without affecting overall performance. Despite this, some large corporations are beginning to experiment with flexible working models⁵³.

– Other experimental companies and sectors

Companies in sectors such as technology and fashion are exploring the four-day week model. One prominent example is Desigual, which in 2021 allowed employees in its offices to opt for this reduced working day. The implementation of the four-day week has enabled Desigual to attract talent and improve job satisfaction, resulting in greater organisational engagement. This type of initiative is increasingly common in innovative companies seeking new ways to attract and retain talent in a competitive labour market⁵⁴.

SWEDEN

Sweden is leading initiatives to implement the four-day working week, a model promoted by 4 Day Week Global, with the aim of improving productivity, employee well-being and work-life balance.

⁵¹ ElPaís (2023). Valencia's four-day trial improved health, reduced pollution but hurt trade. Available at: <https://elpais.com/economia/2023-10-17/la-prueba-de-jornada-de-cuatro-dias-en-valencia-mejoro-la-salud-redujo-la-contaminacion-pero-perjudico-al-comercio.html>

⁵² SoftwareDelSol (2020). We are the first company in Spain to introduce the four-day working week. Available at: <https://softwaredelisol.com/noticias/semana-laboral-4-dias>.

⁵³ CincoDías (2024). Telefónica will start in July the process of reducing working hours in Spain to 36 hours in 2026. Available at: <https://www.telefonica.com/es/sala-de-prensa/semana-laboral-reducida>.

⁵⁴ Desigual (2021). Desigual employees approve the 4-day working week by a large majority. Available at: https://www.desigual.com/es_IC/Desigual-employees-approve-the-4day-working-week.html.

Starting in June 2024, a new six-month pilot project with several companies in Sweden will explore both the benefits and practical challenges of a reduced working week.

Background to the four-day working week in Sweden

– Pilot project in Gothenburg

In 2015, Sweden carried out a pioneering pilot project in Gothenburg, where a four-day working week was implemented, but not following the traditional 32-hour working week model. Instead, a schedule of six hours per day was applied, totalling 30 hours per week. This initiative used the ‘100:80:100’ approach, which meant that employees received 100% of their salary for working 80% of their usual time, with no loss of productivity (100% effectiveness).

The programme was funded by local government, and was carried out in the public sector, allowing government institutions to participate without reducing employees’ salaries. This experiment lasted almost two years, making it one of the longest of its kind.

The experiment in Gothenburg involved 80 employees from the orthopaedic unit of a hospital and two nursing homes. The results were remarkably positive:

- At the hospital, no sick leave was reported during the 24-month trial.
- In the nursing homes, the reduced working day of six hours per day increased activities with patients by more than 80% compared to the control group, which maintained the eight-hour working day.

However, the project cost \$120,000 per month, which led to its discontinuation after a change of government⁵⁵. Although it was not continued at the state level, the positive results on employee productivity and welfare were significant and set a precedent for other experiments.

Companies in Sweden implementing the four-day week

Several Swedish employers have successfully adopted the four-day working week model in various industries.

Seably

Seably, a company founded by the Swedish Shipowners’ Association and dedicated to providing training in the maritime sector, adopted the four-day week in September 2022. Following the ‘100:80:100’ model, most employees enjoyed Fridays off. The trial was successful, with a marked improvement in employee satisfaction, reduced burnout and increased productivity. In addition, the model contributed to a better work-life balance for employees⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ The Guardian (2015). Efficiency up, turnover down: Sweden experiments with six-hour working day. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/17/efficiency-up-turnover-down-sweden-experiments-with-six-hour-working-day>.

⁵⁶ Seably (2022). Seably is now part of a Four-Day Week Trial. Available at: <https://www.seably.com/blog/seably-four-day-week-trial>.

Sandqvist Bags

Renowned backpack and accessories brand Sandqvist Bags adopted the four-day week in February 2023, with the aim of improving employee wellbeing without reducing salaries. The implementation resulted in improved employee wellbeing, sustained performance and increased talent attraction and retention. This change also increased employee satisfaction and engagement, aligning with the company's vision to improve performance through greater work flexibility⁵⁷.

Toyota

Car giant Toyota has also tested the four-day week in Sweden. In this case, mechanics worked longer hours over four days instead of the traditional five. Employees who opted for the reduced 30-hour week showed higher levels of productivity than those on the regular working week. In addition, they experienced less absenteeism, higher job satisfaction and lower staff turnover. Customer satisfaction also increased, attributed to a more motivated and rested team⁵⁸.

The national pilot project in 2024

Starting in June 2024, Sweden will conduct a new pilot project involving several companies in the country. The six-month experiment will assess both the benefits and practical challenges of the four-day working week. Among the aspects to be analysed are:

- Impact on the mental health of employees.
- Effects on work-life balance.
- Productivity of enterprises.
- Associated costs and organisational adaptation.

This pilot will be a key evaluation to decide whether the short-time working model can be adopted more widely in Sweden and possibly in other countries.

SWITZERLAND

In Switzerland, the idea of implementing a four-day working week is gaining popularity, although it has not yet been officially adopted at the national level. However, in 2024, a major pilot experiment will be conducted with the aim of assessing the feasibility of this model in the Swiss context. This project, which will involve between 10 and 50 companies, will run from October 2024 to March 2025 and its main purpose is to assess the effects of reduced working hours on the health and productivity of workers⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ Sandqvist (2023). Sandqvist introduces four-day week. Available at: <https://www.drapersonline.com/news/sandqvist-introduces-a-four-day-week#:~:text=Sandqvist%20the%20Swedish%20handbag%20brand,to%20improve%20work/life%20balance.&text=The%20new%20way%20of%20working,same%2C%20despite%20the%20r educed%20hours>.

⁵⁸ Woohoo (2016). Introducing a 30-hour work week at Toyota Gothenburg. Available at: [Introducing a 30-hour work week at Toyota Gothenburg – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj8v8v8v8v8).

⁵⁹ 4dayweek (2024). Switzerland. Available at: <https://4dayweek.io/country/switzerland>.

Objectives and collaboration of the pilot project

The Swiss experiment will be coordinated by 4 Day Week Global⁶⁰, together with Hailperin Consulting⁶¹ and the Bern University of Applied Sciences⁶². During the trial, participating companies will reduce their working hours by at least four hours per week, while maintaining employees' wages. This follows the '100:80:100' model, in which employees work 80% of their usual time (around 32 hours instead of 40) but still receive 100% of their salary, without compromising productivity.

Expected impacts

The main focus of the project will be to investigate the implications for workers' health and productivity. The expected results are similar to those of previous studies in countries such as the UK and Iceland, where a shorter working week has shown significant benefits, such as:

- Stress reduction.
- Increased job satisfaction.
- Better work-life balance.

In addition, the study also aims to assess the impact on workers' mental health, looking at whether reduced working hours contribute to reducing problems such as anxiety, burnout and fatigue⁶³.

Context and challenges

Although Switzerland is known for its high productivity and strong economy, the implementation of the four-day working week faces structural challenges. Swiss companies are often geared towards maximising efficiency, and many sectors are accustomed to 40-hour working weeks. However, this pilot project aims to demonstrate that a shorter working week can improve productivity without increasing working hours.

In addition, it is hoped that the results of the experiment can serve as a basis for future labour policies in Switzerland and other European countries considering adopting similar models.

Methodology and evaluation

The pilot project will be carried out in a variety of companies in different sectors, with the aim of gaining a broad picture of the impact of the four-day week in a variety of work contexts. During the trial period, data will be collected on:

- Employee productivity, through work performance metrics.

⁶⁰ [4 Day Week Global](#)

⁶¹ [4-Tage Woche & Systemische Beratung für Organisationen | Veit Hailperin | Zürich.](#)

⁶² [Bern University of Applied Sciences | BFH.](#)

⁶³ A piece of Switzerland (2024), Switzerland Embarks on Largest-Ever 4-Day Workweek Trial. Available: <https://www.apieceofswitzerland.ch/switzerland-embarks-on-largest-ever-4-day-workweek-trial/>.

- Mental health and well-being of workers, using surveys and interviews.
- Employee retention and overall satisfaction in the participating companies.

The trial will be conducted under rigorous academic supervision, and the results will be analysed to assess the feasibility of the four-day work week in Switzerland.

Potential benefits

Based on the results of similar tests in other countries, a shorter working week in Switzerland is expected to have several benefits for both companies and employees:

- Improvements in workers' quality of life, with more time to rest and enjoy their personal activities.
- Increased productivity, as more rested employees tend to be more efficient and motivated.
- Reduced stress and anxiety in workers, which can improve their mental health.
- Increased employee satisfaction and loyalty, contributing to higher retention and lower staff turnover.

UNITED KINGDOM

In 2022, the UK launched one of the world's largest pilot programmes to test the reduction of the working day to four days. Coordinated by 4 Day Week Global, in collaboration with researchers from Oxford, Cambridge and Boston University, this experiment involved 70 companies from more than 30 sectors and involved more than 3,300 workers. The aim of the project was to assess the effects of reduced working hours on productivity, well-being and employee retention⁶⁴.

Business and productivity results

The business results of the pilot were remarkably positive. At the end of the project, 92% of participating companies decided to permanently adopt the four-day work week. Companies reported an average increase in revenue of 1.4%, which suggests that productivity was not only maintained, but improved with the reduction in hours. Satisfaction with performance and productivity scored a solid 7.5 out of 10.

One of the most notable benefits was the 57% reduction in staff turnover, which reflects a very positive impact on employee retention and commitment to the company.

Employee benefits

The benefits for employees were equally significant. Some 90% of workers said they would prefer the four-day work week over the five-day work week. Some 55% reported an improvement in their skills and performance during the reduced workday.

⁶⁴ <https://www.4dayweek.co.uk/pilot-programme>.

Another interesting finding is that 15% of respondents said they would not accept a job with a five-day working day, regardless of the salary offered, suggesting a strong commitment to the short-time working model.

Regarding mental health, 71% of employees experienced a reduction in burnout and 39% reported a decrease in stress. In addition, 43% experienced fewer mental health problems, and 54% reported fewer negative emotions. A decrease in fatigue and sleep problems was also observed, benefiting 46% and 40% of participants, respectively.

Improvements in work-life balance

A key aspect of the project was the impact on work-life balance. Seventy-three percent of the employees indicated greater satisfaction with their free time, and 60% noted that the reduced working hours made it easier to balance their work and family responsibilities. This additional time also allowed for better social reconciliation, which was appreciated by 62% of employees.

In addition, there was a significant increase in men's participation in childcare, which doubled compared to women's participation, underlining the potential of the shorter working day to transform traditional gender roles in the family setting.

Improvements in quality of life and well-being

Reduced working hours also allowed workers to spend the extra day on hobbies, leisure activities, household chores and self-care, rather than on additional paid work. In addition, commuting times were reduced by an average of 30 minutes, which contributed to an improvement in quality of life.

The overall level of satisfaction was high, with an average rating of 8.5 out of 10, indicating that both employers and employees saw short-time work as a transformative experience in terms of performance and well-being.

On the other hand, the Scottish Government in September 2023 announced plans to pilot the four-day working week for public sector employees. This pilot project, which will be carried out on 100% pay and will last for one year, aims to assess the effects of the reduced working week on productivity and work-life balance of public sector employees⁶⁵.

Details of the pilot project

The trial will start in early 2024 and will cover a number of public sector employees, with the aim of obtaining relevant data for possible larger-scale implementation. During the trial period, workers will continue to receive their full salary, but with a reduction in working hours. At the end of the pilot, the results will be analysed to assess the feasibility of wider implementation in the public sector, and if the results are positive, it could be extended to other areas of the economy.

⁶⁵ <https://4dayweek.io/country/scotland>.

Possible implications for the private sector

The project advisors hope that if the four-day week model is successful in the public sector, there will be a positive contagion effect that will motivate the private sector to adopt a similar approach. It is hoped that this will not only improve productivity, but also the overall well-being of workers, contributing to a better work-life balance.

Government support for the initiative

In 2021, the Scottish government also committed £10 million to help businesses participate in four-day working week pilots. This funding shows the government's commitment to improving working conditions and modernising working patterns.

LITHUANIA

In Lithuania, the parliament passed legislation in 2023 to implement a four-day working week for public sector employees with children under the age of three. This change aims to improve the work-life balance of workers and support families with young children⁶⁶.

Details of the new measure

The measure will come into effect at the beginning of 2024 and will allow employees to reduce their weekly working hours while maintaining their full salary. This benefit is targeted exclusively at parents in the public sector with young children, and aims to promote a more flexible and parent-friendly working environment.

Potential effects on society and the private sector

The Lithuanian government hopes that this policy will inspire a cultural shift towards more flexible working hours, not only in the public sector but also in the private sector. While the project will initially benefit only public employees, the Lithuanian parliament believes that, if successful, this measure could motivate the private sector to adopt similar policies to promote family well-being and increase productivity.

Legislative and social support

This initiative reflects Lithuania's commitment to advance progressive labour policies adapted to the needs of today's society.

⁶⁶ Quartz (2022). Lithuania will give a four-day workweek to parents with young kids. Available at: <https://qz.com/work/2157973/lithuania-will-give-a-four-day-workweek-to-new-parents>.

ANNEX to the OPINION
of the
Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship

The following amendments, which received at least a quarter of the votes cast, were rejected in the course of the debate (Rule 60(2) of the Rules of Procedure):

AMENDMENT 8

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Point 3.5

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELÉ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>Even more recently, the effects of anthropogenic climate change have highlighted new challenges for the organisation of working time, including the need to ensure the health and safety of workers and that work is able to be organised in a safe and healthy way. <i>The great Dana tragedy in Spain and the Spanish government's regulations highlight this impact. Although it is true that other countries have experienced tragic events linked to climate emergencies (droughts, floods), the Spanish case is particularly significant both because of the number of victims (226 people killed, thousands affected) and the solution adopted, based on major legislative changes (e.g. Royal Decree-Law 7/2024 of 11 November[1]). In addition, increasing heatwaves caused 47 000 deaths in Europe in 2023 (the hottest year on record worldwide, and the second hottest in Europe) according to a study published in Nature</i></p>	<p>Even more recently, the effects of anthropogenic climate change have highlighted new challenges for the organisation of working time, including the need to ensure the health and safety of workers and that work is able to be organised in a safe and healthy way.</p>

<p><i>Medicine</i>[2].</p> <p>[1] See link.</p> <p>[2] <i>Nature Medicine, ‘Heat-related mortality in Europe during 2023 and the role of adaptation in protecting health’, 2024.</i></p>	
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Outcome of the vote:	
In favour:	26
Against:	41
Abstention:	01

AMENDMENT 13

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Point 3.11

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELĚ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>The EESC also notes that in Greece the possibility of working a sixth day a week has been introduced by law, effective from 1 July 2024 (Law 5053/2023, Articles 25 and 26). This rule was introduced to combat undeclared work, as well as to increase the employees’ salaries (on the 6th day, salaries are increased by 40%). This mainly concerns companies that operate five days a week, 24 hours a day, with a rotating shift system. This regulation is favoured by employers and opposed by trade unions.</p>	<p>The EESC also notes that in Greece the possibility of working a sixth day a week has been introduced by law, effective from 1 July 2024 (Law 5053/2023, Articles 25 and 26). This rule was introduced to combat undeclared work, as well as to increase the employees’ salaries (on the 6th day, salaries are increased by 40%). This mainly concerns companies that operate five days a week, 24 hours a day, with a rotating shift system. This regulation is favoured by employers and opposed by trade unions. <i>It should be mentioned that there is a high number of employees that are willing to use this option to increase their income.</i></p>

Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	28
Against:	44
Abstention:	02

AMENDMENT 39

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Point 1.9

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELÉ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>The EESC highlights <i>among the pilot projects on working-time reduction the Eurofound one: ‘Working-time reduction with a focus on the four-day week’, which states in its first conclusions: ‘Reduced working time improves productivity, enhances mental health and reduces stress, and is key to a sustainable balance in the current context of digital transformation. It also contributes to preventing work-related illnesses and strengthening the general well-being of working people’.</i> In this regard, the EESC highlights the positive effects of reduced working time on society, such as demographic renewal, gender equality, a reduced burden on the healthcare system and potentially keeping workers in the world of work for longer, thus creating a positive environment conducive of creativity and innovation. A good social environment not only benefits the state but also</p>	<p>The EESC highlights <i>that shortened working week, if agreed by social partners at company level, may have</i> positive effects on society, such as demographic renewal, gender equality, a reduced burden on the healthcare system and potentially keeping workers in the world of work for longer, thus creating a positive environment conducive of creativity and innovation. A good social environment not only benefits the state but also companies and workers.</p>

companies and workers.	
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Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	27
Against:	42
Abstention:	03

AMENDMENT 40

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Point 1.10

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
 BLIJLEVENS René
 CLEVER Peter
 DANISMAN Mira-Maria
 JONUŠKA Alfredas
 LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
 MINCHEVA Mariya
 MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
 PILAWSKI Lech
 POTTIER Jean-Michel
 RUŽELĚ Emilis
 SCHWENG Christa
 SMOLE Jože
 SOETE Paul
 YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>The EESC encourages <i>the EU institutions</i>, national governments and social partners to <i>accelerate the recognition of digital disconnection as a right for all EU workers</i>. According to case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union of 19 December 2024, C-531/23, Loredas[1], digital disconnection policies and time recording systems in organisations are essential safeguards to ensure the effectiveness of working-time rules, including, where appropriate, rules on the reduction of working time.</p> <p>[1] See link.</p>	<p>The EESC encourages national governments and social partners, <i>especially at company level</i>, to <i>continue discussions on how to promote a right to disconnect, which, in case of some types of jobs, can help to better manage working time both for workers and employers</i>. At the same time the EESC acknowledges that <i>right to disconnect will not solve the challenge of over- /use of digital tools for private purposes</i>.</p>

Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	23
Against:	42
Abstention:	03

Annex Amendments:

AMENDMENT 41

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Title of the ANNEX

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELĚ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
ANNEX I: PILOT PROJCTCS FOR THE REDUCTION OF WORKING TIME: STATE OF PLAY	ANNEX I: PILOT PROJECTS FOR THE REDUCTION OF OR CONDENSING WORKING TIME: STATE OF PLAY

Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38
Abstention:	02

AMENDMENT 42

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Explanation after the title of the annex

Insert new point

Position: After existing point - Same level

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELÉ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
	<i>This Annex includes examples selected by the Rapporteur of the opinion. These examples are based on voluntary experiments by the companies covered. They involve diverse forms of projects/experiments (4 or 4,5 day working week, teleworking, etc). The feedback or conclusions that can be extracted from each of them are very uneven and hence it is not possible to draw general conclusions on the basis of this Annex.</i>

Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	33
Against:	42
Abstention:	01

AMENDMENT 43

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Belgium – Potential benefits

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELÉ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
Potential benefits: – Better work-life balance: One of the main attractions of this model is that it allows workers to have an extra day off each week, which could improve the balance between work and personal responsibilities. This extra time could help employees reduce the stress <i>and burnout associated with long hours</i> .	Potential benefits: – Better work-life balance: One of the main attractions of this model is that it allows workers to have an extra day off each week, which could improve the balance between work and personal responsibilities. This extra time could help employees reduce the stress.

Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38
Abstention:	02

AMENDMENT 44

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Belgium – Challenges

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELÉ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>Challenges:</p> <p>However, this reform also presents important challenges <i>and limitations that should not be ignored</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Longer working hours and fatigue: 10-hour days are not suitable for all workers. While some may be able to adapt to these extended hours, many may find them too tiring and fatiguing. In the long term, such long hours may affect the physical and mental well-being of employees, as well as making it difficult to manage family or personal tasks after a long day's work. For some sectors, this model may not be sustainable, as the necessary rest between working days may be compromised.– Compatibility with sectors requiring daily presence: The reform does not take into account the uneven impact it may have on sectors that rely on the constant presence of employees, such as commerce, customer services, or health. For these sectors, the 4-day working day could require a significant reorganisation of staff management, which can be costly and logistically complex. In addition, maintaining service quality on all days of the week can be a challenge for many companies.– Impact on productivity: While some studies suggest that concentrated working hours can improve productivity, not all sectors may	<p>Challenges:</p> <p>However, this reform also presents important challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Longer working hours and fatigue: 10-hour days are not suitable for all workers. While some may be able to adapt to these extended hours, many may find them too tiring and fatiguing. In the long term, such long hours may affect the physical and mental well-being of employees, as well as making it difficult to manage family or personal tasks after a long day's work. For some sectors, this model may not be sustainable, as the necessary rest between working days may be compromised.– Compatibility with sectors requiring daily presence: The reform does not take into account the uneven impact it may have on sectors that rely on the constant presence of employees, such as commerce, customer services, or health. For these sectors, the 4-day working day could require a significant reorganisation of staff management, which can be costly and logistically complex. In addition, maintaining service quality on all days of the week can be a challenge for many companies.– Impact on productivity: While some studies suggest that concentrated working hours can improve productivity, not all sectors may experience the same results. Ten-hour days may

<p>experience the same results. Ten-hour days may result in reduced efficiency as employees become fatigued throughout the week. Productivity depends not only on hours worked, but also on factors such as motivation, time management and working conditions.</p> <p>– Lack of real reduction in hours: A critical aspect of this reform is that it does not reduce total working hours, but <i>merely</i> redistributes them. This means that the benefit of an extra day off is offset by <i>significantly</i> longer working hours. If the aim is to improve well-being and reduce work-related stress, simply redistributing hours <i>does</i> not seem to be a complete solution. <i>In many cases, longer hours may be less effective in the long run</i>[1].</p> <p>[1] The Brussels Times (2024). The work-life balance Belgium wants? Four-day work week not catching on. Available at: https://www.brusselstimes.com/1275369/the-work-life-balance-belgium-wants-four-day-work-week-not-catching-on .</p>	<p>result in reduced efficiency as employees become fatigued throughout the week. Productivity depends not only on hours worked, but also on factors such as motivation, time management and working conditions.</p> <p>– One aspect of this reform is that it does not reduce total working hours, but redistributes them. This means that the benefit of an extra day off is offset by longer working hours <i>in the remaining working days</i>). If the aim is to improve well-being and reduce work-related stress, simply redistributing hours <i>might</i> not seem to be a complete solution.[1].</p> <p>[1] The Brussels Times (2024). The work-life balance Belgium wants? Four-day work week not catching on. Available at: https://www.brusselstimes.com/1275369/the-work-life-balance-belgium-wants-four-day-work-week-not-catching-on .</p>
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Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38
Abstention:	02

AMENDMENT 45

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Denmark – Introductory point

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELÉ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
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<p>DENMARK</p> <p>In 2019, the municipality of Odsherred in Denmark implemented <i>an innovative 35- hour working day spread over 4 days. This model, pioneered in the public sector, aims to give employees more time off without sacrificing their income or workload</i>[1].</p> <p>[1] <i>The local DK (2019). Odsherred Municipality is to become the first local authority in Denmark to implement a four-day working week.</i> Available at: https://www.thelocal.dk/ 20190916/ danish-municipality- introduces- four- day- working-week.</p>	<p>DENMARK</p> <p>In 2019, the municipality of Odsherred in Denmark implemented <i>a 3- year pilot programme with a 4 -day working week for specific workers. Based on the evaluation of the pilot programme, a new model for flexible working hours was introduced</i> in the municipality in 2023[1].</p> <p>[1] <i>Odsherred Kommune (2025) Aftale om fleksibel arbejdstid..</i> Available at: https://www.odsherred.dk/ da/ se- mere- om-kommunen/karriere- i- odsherred-kommune/aftale-om-fleksibel-arbejdstid/.</p>
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Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38
Abstention:	02

AMENDMENT 46

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Denmark – Rest of the text

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELÉ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>How the 4-day model works in Odsherred:</p> <p>The 4-day model applies to workers in administrative functions and is implemented in combination with a decision in the municipality to have administrative services closed for the public on Fridays, but with longer opening hours on Monday</p>	<p>How the 4-day model works in Odsherred:</p> <p>The 4-day model applies to workers in administrative functions and is implemented in combination with a decision in the municipality to have administrative services closed for the public on Fridays, but with longer opening hours on Monday</p>

<p>to Thursday.</p> <p>The allows workers to concentrate their 37-hour working week into 4 working days, working on average for 32 a week from Monday to Thursday. This leaves an additional 5 hours, which the worker can decide to allocate outside the agreed working hours. The worker is allowed to leave Friday as a full day off for a minimum of 34 weeks a year. This allows employees to enjoy a three-day long weekend, which can improve work-life balance.</p> <p>Although the model involves longer working hours, it is designed so that employees maintain the same number of hours per week (35), so there is no loss of pay or benefits. <i>However, out-of-hours availability is also required: employees must be prepared to attend to emails and calls outside their official hours, which can place an additional burden on their personal time.</i></p> <p>Expected benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Increased time off: The main attraction of this model is the additional day off, which offers a better work-life balance, reducing stress and improving the overall well-being of workers.</i> – <i>Motivation and productivity: The 4-day working day has been shown in other contexts to reduce burnout and increase motivation, which could translate into increased productivity on working days. With more time off, employees feel more engaged and rested.</i> – <i>Attractiveness for new talent: The reform also makes the municipality more attractive to workers seeking a better quality of life, which could help retain existing employees and attract new talent.</i> <p>Challenges of the model:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Long hours: Despite the reduction in working days, 8.75-hour days can be exhausting, especially for those who perform intensive or highly concentrated tasks.</i> – <i>Out-of-hours availability: The flexibility required outside working hours to answer emails and deal with emergencies could create additional pressure, making it difficult to fully disconnect from work.</i> 	<p>to Thursday.</p> <p>The <i>model</i> allows workers to concentrate their 37-hour working week into 4 working days, working on average for 32 a week from Monday to Thursday. This leaves an additional 5 hours, which the worker can decide to allocate outside the agreed working hours. The worker is allowed to leave Friday as a full day off for a minimum of 34 weeks a year. This allows employees to enjoy a three-day long weekend <i>most of the year</i>, which can improve work-life balance.</p> <p>Although the model involves longer working hours <i>on some days</i>, it is designed so that employees maintain the same number of hours per week (35), so there is no loss of pay or benefits.</p> <p>The municipality of Copenhagen has also initiated a 4- day working day pilot programme starting in 2024. This project will be implemented in some sectors of local government and aims to assess the feasibility of a reduced working week in the public sector. The pilot programme involves 17 institutions in the municipality and has currently been prolonged until April 2025[1].</p> <p>[1] <i>Ritzau (2025). Københavns Kommune forlænger forsøg med fleksible arbejdsuger.. Available at: https:// via.ritzau.dk/pressemeddelelse/ 14030966/ kobenhavns-kommune- forlaenger- forsog- med- fleksible- arbejdsuger?publisherId=13559194&lang=da.</i></p>
---	--

- *Compatibility with all sectors: While in administrative and office areas this model works well, in sectors that require continuous presence (such as emergency services or customer service), it may be more difficult to implement without affecting the quality of service.*

The municipality of Copenhagen has also initiated *a in Denmark is following the trend with* a 4- day working day pilot programme starting in 2024. This project will be implemented in some sectors of local government and aims to assess the feasibility of a reduced working week in the public sector. The pilot programme involves 17 institutions in the municipality and has currently been prolonged until April 2025[1].

[1] *DR.dk (2024). Nu får ansatte i Københavns Kommune mulighed for at få en fire dages arbejdsuge.* Available at: [https:// www.dr.dk/nyheder/ indland/ nu-faar-ansatte-i-koebenhavns- kommune -mulighed- faa- en- fire- dages- arbejdsuge.](https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/nu-faar-ansatte-i-koebenhavns-kommune-mulighed-faa-en-fire-dages-arbejdsuge)

Outcome of the vote

In favour: 32
 Against: 38
 Abstention: 02

AMENDMENT 47

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

France

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELÉ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>FRANCE</p> <p>The 4 Day Week pilot in France, launched in 2024, is an innovative project that aims to explore the impact of a shorter working week without a reduction in pay. In partnership with Emlyon Business School[1] and supported by 4 Day Week Global[2], the project allows 50 French companies to adopt a 32-hour working week instead of the traditional 35 hours that are common in the country, while maintaining the same salary for employees.</p> <p>This pilot aims to improve the work-life balance of workers by allowing them more free time to rest, engage in personal or family activities, and thus improve their overall well-being. The aim is to test whether shorter working hours can improve productivity, without negatively affecting companies' profitability or the quality of work[3].</p> <p>Context and objectives of the pilot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Participation of 50 companies: 50 companies from different sectors will be selected to participate, allowing the impact of the measure in a variety of working environments to be analysed.– No reduction in salary: Employees will continue to receive their full salary, which reinforces the idea that productivity can be maintained or even	<p>FRANCE</p> <p><i>The French reference cited below is only one example of the various experiments taking place in France on the 4-day week. No official conclusion has been made on these experiments which were carried out companies on a voluntary basis.</i></p> <p>The 4 Day Week pilot in France, launched in 2024, is an innovative project that aims to explore the impact of a shorter working week without a reduction in pay. In partnership with Emlyon Business School[1] and supported by 4 Day Week Global[2], the project allows 50 French companies to adopt a 32-hour working week instead of the traditional 35 hours that are common in the country, while maintaining the same salary for employees.</p> <p>This pilot aims to improve the work-life balance of workers by allowing them more free time to rest, engage in personal or family activities, and thus improve their overall well-being. The aim is to test whether shorter working hours can improve productivity, without negatively affecting companies' profitability or the quality of work[3]. <i>However, harshly felt consequences and difficulties for companies have been reported in the press.^[4]</i></p> <p>Context and objectives of the pilot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Participation of 50 companies: 50 companies from different sectors will be selected to participate, allowing the impact of the measure

<p>improved without the need for longer working hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Impact on productivity and well-being: Organisers expect that workers, with more time off, may have higher motivation and satisfaction in their work, which could translate into greater efficiency and better results for companies. <p>How does the pilot work?</p> <p>The specific details of the programme include the implementation of a 4-day working day (Monday-Thursday or Tuesday-Friday, depending on the company), where employees would work 32 hours, flexibly spread over the working days. During the trial period, the companies involved will be required to monitor the impact on both employee well-being and company productivity.</p> <p>Importantly, applications to participate in the pilot close on 31 July 2024, giving interested companies until that date to submit their applications.</p> <p>Potential impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – For employees: The possibility of an additional day off per week has great potential to improve overall well-being, reducing stress and promoting work-life balance. – For businesses: While the cost of a day less work might seem high, the model seeks to demonstrate that the gains in productivity, creativity and employee satisfaction can outweigh any potential loss <p>of working time.</p> <p>[1] Emlyon Business School (2024). Available at: em-lyon.com.</p> <p>[2] 4DayWeekGlobal. Available at: https://www.4dayweek.com/.</p> <p>[3] 4jours.work (2024). Available at: https://4jours.work/formation-semaine-de-4-jours-en-france.</p>	<p>in a variety of working environments to be analysed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No reduction in salary: Employees will continue to receive their full salary, which reinforces the idea that productivity can be maintained or even improved without the need for longer working hours. – Impact on productivity and well-being: Organisers expect that workers, with more time off, may have higher motivation and satisfaction in their work, which could translate into greater efficiency and better results for companies. <p>How does the pilot work?</p> <p>The specific details of the programme include the implementation of a 4-day working day (Monday-Thursday or Tuesday-Friday, depending on the company), where employees would work 32 hours, flexibly spread over the working days. During the trial period, the companies involved will be required to monitor the impact on both employee well-being and company productivity.</p> <p>Importantly, applications to participate in the pilot close on 31 July 2024, giving interested companies until that date to submit their applications.</p> <p>Potential impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – For employees: The possibility of an additional day off per week has great potential to improve overall well-being, reducing stress and promoting work-life balance. – For businesses: While the cost of a day less work might seem high, the model seeks to demonstrate that the gains in productivity, creativity and employee satisfaction can outweigh any potential loss of working time. <i>However, there has been reports on harshly felt consequences and difficulties for companies.</i> <p><i>The discussions in 2023 National Labour Conference under the aegis of the National Council for Refoundation concluded i.a. "There is currently no overall study on alternative working time organizations, particularly over four days without a reduction in pay; relating to business negotiation, these particular organizational arrangements take such varied forms that it is more appropriate to speak of "four-day weeks": thus, some companies propose to concentrate working time on 4 days or 4 days and a half, some reserve these arrangements for non-teleworking jobs while</i></p>
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	<p><i>others combine 4-day weeks and hybrid work; More broadly, the reasons for using these organizations vary greatly and cover very different situations."</i>[5]</p> <p>[1] Emlyon Business School (2024). Available at: em-lyon.com.</p> <p>[2] 4DayWeekGlobal. Available at: https://www.4dayweek.com/ .</p> <p>[3] 4jours.work (2024). Available at: https://4jours.work/formation-semaine-de-4-jours-en-france.</p> <p>[4] https://www.lesechos.fr/travailler-mieux/vie-au-travail/la-semaine-de-4-jours-et-le-100-teletravail-ont-conduit-ma-boite-a-deposer-le-bilan-2136863</p> <p>[5] <i>Conseil national de la refondation: Assise du travail – Re-considérer le travail, 18 Avril 2023 .</i></p>
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Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38
Abstention:	02

AMENDMENT 48

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Germany

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELÉ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>GERMANY</p> <p>In Germany (where the annual working hours are already amongst the lowest in the world) there has started its first 4-day work week pilot project, in a collaboration between 4 Day Week Global[1],</p>	<p>GERMANY</p> <p>In Germany (where the annual working hours are already amongst the lowest in the world) there has started its first 4-day work week pilot project, in a collaboration between 4 Day Week Global[1],</p>

<p>Intraprenör[2] and the University of Münster[3][4]. This trial started in September 2023 with the participation of 45 companies of various sectors and sizes, and aims to explore how a shortened working week can improve productivity, employee well-being and work-life balance. The pilot will run for a period of six months, with a final report due in October or November 2024, providing a comprehensive analysis of the results obtained.</p> <p>Main aspects of the trial until mid-way through the project:</p> <p>So far, the pilot has shown promising progress and has yielded significant data on the feasibility and benefits of a 4-day working week in German companies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Labour retention: Importantly, 93% of the companies that started the trial remain committed to the 4-Day model, reflecting a high level of satisfaction and interest on the part of participating companies. This retention rate is a positive indication that companies consider that the benefits of the 4-day week outweigh the initial challenges. – High participation of small companies: 54% of the participating companies are small companies, with between 10 and 49 employees. This shows that small and medium- sized enterprises are also willing to try this model, despite initial concerns about the feasibility of implementing it in smaller organisations. – Diversity of sectors: The 45 participating companies come from 13 different industry sectors, providing a global view of the potential impact of the 4-day working week on different types of businesses and sectors, from technology and services to manufacturing and education. This allows for an assessment of how this reduced working time may affect different types of work and economic sectors. – Broad inclusion: Importantly, 60% of companies include between 90% and 100% of their staff in the trial. This ensures that the pilot has a broad representation of employees, which improves the quality of the results obtained, as it reflects the experience of the majority of staff and not just management or senior management. – Reduction of working time: Approximately 38% of the participating companies have managed to reduce their working time by 20%, which is in 	<p>Intraprenör[2] and the University of Münster[3][4]. This trial started in September 2023 with the participation of 45 companies of various sectors and sizes, and aims to explore how a shortened working week can improve employee well-being and work-life balance. The pilot will run for a period of six months, with a final report due in October or November 2024, providing a comprehensive analysis of the results obtained. However, this pilot was not representative of the German economy as it covered only a small number of mostly small companies that were not bound by a collective agreement. Furthermore, none of them were from the industrial sector.</p> <p>As indicated on the 4 Day Week Global website, the majority of participating organizations reduced working hours more conservatively in Germany than in the classic 100:80:100™ model. In nearly 40% of the organizations, the 4 day week was not piloted with the entire organization but with selected employees or teams.[5]</p> <p>Main aspects of the trial until mid-way through the project:</p> <p>So far, the pilot has shown developments and has yielded some data on the feasibility and benefits of a 4-day working week in the participating German companies. However, it should be pointed out that the participating organisations are based on "positive selection" meaning that only companies that had an interest in 4-day working week participated. This means there is no comparison group. Furthermore, the pilots totally disregard one major parameter linked to any discussion on working time reduction, namely employee productivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Labour retention: Importantly, 93% of the companies that started the trial remain committed to the 4-Day model, reflecting a high level of satisfaction and interest on the part of participating companies. This retention rate is a positive indication that companies consider that the benefits of the 4-day week outweigh the initial challenges. – High participation of small companies: 54% of the participating companies are small companies, with between 10 and 49 employees. This shows that small and medium- sized enterprises are also willing to try this model, despite initial concerns about the feasibility of implementing it in
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<p>line with the objectives of the 4-day working week, which aims to reduce working time without affecting employees' pay and productivity. This reduction in working time seems to be aligned with the desire to offer more time off while maintaining work efficiency.</p> <p>Potential benefits of the 4-day working week:</p> <p>Although the pilot is still ongoing, the data collected so far has revealed several promising benefits for both employees and employers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attractiveness for employers: The 4-day working week has proven to be an attractive factor for more job seekers. Companies have noticed an increase in the quality and quantity of candidates interested in working with them, which could make it easier to attract and retain talent, especially in competitive sectors or sectors with a shortage of skilled labour. 2. Employee engagement: Employees participating in the pilot are more motivated and committed to their work. They are more willing to identify opportunities for improvement, optimise processes and contribute creatively to the work. This increased motivation <i>has had</i> a positive impact on overall productivity, as employees are better focused and have more energy during their working day. 3. Better work-life balance: The additional day off provided by the 4-day work week improves employees' work-life balance, reducing stress and fatigue. This also contributes to greater emotional engagement with the company, as employees can have more time to rest, spend with their families, or simply have time for themselves, which improves their overall well-being and makes them more productive on the days they do work. 4. Potential for innovation: With more free time and a better work-life balance, employees can feel more inspired and innovative. With reduced burnout, they can devote their energy more efficiently to generating new ideas and improving existing processes in the company. <p>Challenges and considerations:</p> <p><i>While progress so far is promising, some</i> challenges have also been identified that need to be managed during the remainder of the pilot, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Operational adjustments: Companies need to make adjustments to ensure that work remains smooth, even with fewer working days. This may include reorganising schedules, redefining roles or implementing new tools to ensure 	<p>smaller organisations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Diversity of sectors: The 45 participating companies come from 13 different sectors, providing a global view of the potential impact of the 4-day working week on different types of businesses and sectors, from technology and services to manufacturing and education. This allows, <i>within the scope of these pilots</i>, for an assessment of how this reduced working time may affect different types of work and economic sectors. – Broad inclusion: Importantly, 60% of companies include between 90% and 100% of their staff in the trial. This ensures that the pilot has a broad representation of employees, which improves the <i>scope</i> of the results obtained <i>within a particular company</i>, as it reflects the experience of the majority of staff and not just management or senior management. – Reduction of working time: Approximately 38% of the participating companies have managed to reduce their working time by 20%, which is in line with the objectives of the 4-day working week, which aims to reduce working time without affecting employees' pay and productivity. This reduction in working time seems to be aligned with the desire to offer more time off while maintaining work efficiency. <p>Potential benefits of the 4-day working week:</p> <p>Although the pilot is still ongoing, the data collected so far has revealed several promising benefits for both employees and employers <i>in the participating companies</i>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attractiveness for employers: The 4-day working week has proven to be an attractive factor for more job seekers. Companies have noticed an increase in the quality and quantity of candidates interested in working with them, which could make it easier to attract and retain talent, especially in competitive sectors or sectors with a shortage of skilled labour. 2. Employee engagement: Employees participating in the pilot are more motivated and committed to their work. They are more willing to identify opportunities for improvement, optimise processes and contribute creatively to the work. This increased motivation <i>can have</i> a positive impact on overall productivity, as employees are better focused and have more energy during their working day. 3. Better work-life balance: The additional day off
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<p>projects are completed efficiently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Long-term sustainability: Although preliminary results are positive, the long-term effects of working time reduction need to be monitored further. The key question is whether the benefits gained are sustained over time or whether attrition from extended working hours could become a problem. <p>[1] 4DayWeekGlobal. Available at: https://www.4dayweek.com/.</p> <p>[2] Intraprenör (2024). Available at: https://www.intraprenoer.de.</p> <p>[3] Universität Münster (2024). Available at: https://www.uni-muenster.de/en/.</p> <p>[4] 4tagewoche (2024). Germany: A glimpse into the engine room. Available at: 4DW-Germany-Midtrial-Report_english_final.</p>	<p>provided by the 4-day work week improves employees' work-life balance, reducing stress and fatigue. This also contributes to greater emotional engagement with the company, as employees can have more time to rest, spend with their families, or simply have time for themselves, which improves their overall well-being and makes them more productive on the days they do work.</p> <p>4. Potential for innovation: With more free time and a better work-life balance, employees can feel more inspired and innovative. With reduced burnout, they can devote their energy more efficiently to generating new ideas and improving existing processes in the company.</p> <p>Challenges and considerations:</p> <p><i>Some</i> challenges have also been identified that need to be managed during the remainder of the pilot, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Operational adjustments: Companies need to make adjustments to ensure that work remains smooth, even with fewer working days. This may include reorganising schedules, redefining roles or implementing new tools to ensure projects are completed efficiently. – Long-term sustainability: Although preliminary results <i>within the participating companies</i> are positive, <i>the pilot was short (6 months) and gives no information on</i> the long-term effects of working time reduction <i>that</i> need to be monitored further. The key question is whether the benefits gained are sustained over time or whether attrition from extended working hours could become a problem. <p>[1] 4DayWeekGlobal. Available at: https://www.4dayweek.com/.</p> <p>[2] Intraprenör (2024). Available at: https://www.intraprenoer.de .</p> <p>[3] Universität Münster (2024). Available at: https://www.uni-muenster.de/en/ .</p> <p>[4] 4tagewoche (2024). Germany: A glimpse into the engine room. Available at: 4DW-Germany-Midtrial-Report_english_final.</p> <p>[5] https://www.4dayweek.com/germany-2024-pilot-results</p>
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Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38

AMENDMENT 49

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Ireland

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
 BLIJLEVENS René
 CLEVER Peter
 DANISMAN Mira-Maria
 JONUŠKA Alfredas
 LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
 MINCHEVA Mariya
 MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
 PILAWSKI Lech
 POTTIER Jean-Michel
 RUŽELĚ Emilis
 SCHWENG Christa
 SMOLE Jože
 SOETE Paul
 YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>IRELAND</p> <p>In Ireland, <i>the</i> reduction of working time to four days has gained momentum in recent years, thanks to pilot programmes run by organisations such as Four Day Week Ireland[1] and 4 Day Week Global[2]. These initiatives are based on the 100:80:100 model, which proposes to maintain 100% of salary, reduce working time to 80% and achieve 100% productivity. One of the most prominent programmes of this type was the pilot launched in January 2022, which involved companies from different sectors and lasted six months[3].</p> <p>Positive results of the pilot programme:</p> <p>The 2022 pilot in Ireland yielded a number of positive results for both employees and employers, showing the potential of the 4-day work week to improve quality of life and productivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improvements in physical and mental well-being: During the pilot, employees reported significant improvements in their physical and mental well-being. Reduced working hours contributed to less fatigue and reduced stress, allowing workers more time to rest and engage in personal activities, improving their overall health. 	<p>IRELAND</p> <p>In Ireland, <i>there have recently been some discussions focused on hybrid working. The</i> reduction of working time to four days has gained <i>some</i> momentum in recent years, thanks to pilot programmes run by <i>campaign</i> organisations such as Four Day Week Ireland[1] and 4 Day Week Global[2]. These initiatives are based on the 100:80:100 model, which proposes to maintain 100% of salary, reduce working time to 80% and achieve 100% productivity. One of the most prominent programmes of this type was the pilot launched in January 2022, which involved companies from different sectors and lasted six months[3]. <i>There have also been some trials of compressed work week within companies.</i></p> <p>Positive results of the pilot programme:</p> <p>The 2022 pilot in Ireland yielded a number of positive results for both employees and employers, showing, <i>within the companies participating in the pilot</i>, the potential of the 4-day work week to improve quality of life and productivity. <i>However, it must be pointed out that while a 4-day working week may suit some organisations, it does not suit all of them (for instance for operational reasons).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improvements in physical and mental well-

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Better work-life balance: The majority of workers highlighted a better work-life balance, as the extra day off allowed them to spend more time with their families, look after their personal well-being or pursue hobbies and interests outside work. – Reduced work-related conflict: A decrease in work-related conflict was also observed, especially in relation to the demands of family life. Employees had more time to fulfil their personal responsibilities, which reduced stress and conflict due to lack of time or work overload. – Increased productivity: A key finding of this pilot was that most participating companies reported an increase in productivity, despite the reduction in hours worked. Employees felt more motivated, focused and engaged, leading to greater efficiency and higher work output during working days. – Increased job satisfaction: The majority of employees expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the new working hours, which also contributed to higher talent retention and improved morale within the companies. <p>Economic and environmental impact:</p> <p>In addition to the employment and welfare benefits, the 4-day work week pilot programme also had a positive impact on other areas, such as the economy and the environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reduced commuting hours: By having an additional day off, commuting hours were reduced, which not only benefited employees in terms of time savings, but also reduced costs associated with transport, such as fuel or the use of public transport. <p>More sustainable behaviours: The reduced working day also had a positive impact on the environment. Companies saw a decrease in energy consumption by having offices closed on additional non-working days. This resulted in energy savings and a lower environmental impact due to reduced emissions associated with the operation of the facilities[4].</p> <p>Model continuity and expansion:</p> <p>The success of the pilot led to many of the participating companies deciding to maintain the 4-day working week after the trial ended. The positive evidence on productivity, employee wellbeing and</p>	<p>being: During the pilot, employees reported significant improvements in their physical and mental well-being. Reduced working hours contributed to less fatigue and reduced stress, allowing workers more time to rest and engage in personal activities, improving their overall health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Better work-life balance: The majority of workers highlighted a better work-life balance, as the extra day off allowed them to spend more time with their families, look after their personal well-being or pursue hobbies and interests outside work. – Reduced work-related conflict: A decrease in work-related conflict was also observed, especially in relation to the demands of family life. Employees had more time to fulfil their personal responsibilities, which reduced stress and conflict due to lack of time or work overload. – Increased productivity: A key finding of this pilot was that most participating companies reported an increase in productivity, despite the reduction in hours worked. Employees felt more motivated, focused and engaged, leading to greater efficiency and higher work output during working days. – Increased job satisfaction: The majority of employees expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the new working hours, which also contributed to higher talent retention and improved morale within the companies. <p>Economic and environmental impact:</p> <p>In addition to the employment and welfare benefits, the 4-day work week pilot programme also had a positive impact on other areas, such as the economy and the environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reduced commuting hours: By having an additional day off, commuting hours were reduced, which not only benefited employees in terms of time savings, but also reduced costs associated with transport, such as fuel or the use of public transport. <p>More sustainable behaviours: The reduced working day also had a positive impact on the environment. Companies saw a decrease in energy consumption by having offices closed on additional non-working days. This resulted in energy savings and a lower environmental impact due to reduced emissions</p>
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job satisfaction generated strong interest in expanding this model to more companies and sectors in Ireland.

- Political interest: The results of the pilot programme were presented to political leaders in Ireland, which generated *a great deal of* interest in the possibility of adopting this model more widely in the country. The authorities showed interest in exploring how this practice could be implemented nationally, especially in the private sector and in organisations of other sizes.
- Challenges for certain sectors: Despite the positive results, some sectors in Ireland, such as health and education, present additional challenges for the implementation of the 4-day working week. The continued demand for services in these fields makes the reduction of working hours more difficult to implement without affecting the quality or availability of the service. However, some sectors are already exploring ways to adapt the model, such as organising flexible shifts or hiring additional staff to cover lost hours.

Implementation challenges:

While the pilot has been a success in many respects, there are challenges to mass adoption:

1. Adapting to different industries: Some industries have a constant demand for work, which can make it more difficult to implement a 4-day schedule without compromising the quality or continuity of services. Companies in these sectors may need to reorganise their operations, streamline processes or hire more staff to compensate for reduced hours.
2. Resistance to change: In certain sectors or companies, there may be resistance to change due to fears about loss of competitiveness or the difficulty of adjusting work processes. However, the results of the pilot show that the benefits outweigh the potential drawbacks, and the experience of other companies could help to reduce this resistance.
3. Inequality in sectoral adoption: While sectors such as technology or professional services have shown considerable success with the 4-day work week, sectors such as health, education and some customer services face more complex logistical challenges. Specific strategies need to be developed to implement this model in these sectors without affecting service quality.

[1] 4DayWeekIreland (2024). Available: <https://fourdayweek.ie/>.

associated with the operation of the facilities[4].

There are also increased costs and complexities for employers.

Furthermore, certain roles cannot be compressed into four days without reducing the corresponding service offering to four days, which for many businesses, organisations, clients and service users is simply not feasible.

Model continuity and expansion:

The success of the pilot led to many of the participating companies deciding to maintain the 4-day working week after the trial ended. The positive evidence on productivity, employee wellbeing and job satisfaction generated strong interest *by some stakeholders* in expanding this model to more companies and sectors in Ireland.

- Political interest: The results of the pilot programme were presented to political leaders in Ireland, which generated *some* interest in the possibility of adopting this model more widely in the country. The authorities showed interest in exploring how this practice could be implemented nationally, especially in the private sector and in organisations of other sizes.
- Challenges for certain sectors: Despite the positive results, some sectors in Ireland, such as health and education, present additional challenges for the implementation of the 4-day working week. The continued demand for services in these fields makes the reduction of working hours more difficult to implement without affecting the quality or availability of the service. However, some sectors are already exploring ways to adapt the model, such as organising flexible shifts or hiring additional staff to cover lost hours.

Implementation challenges:

As a relatively new concept, the emerging evidence is mixed and for some organisations the complexity and cost of managing a four-day workforce over a five-day (or seven day) working week has been and will be prohibitive. While the pilot has been a success in many respects, there are challenges to mass adoption:

1. Adapting to different industries: Some industries have a constant demand for work, which can make it more difficult to implement a 4-day schedule without compromising the quality or continuity of services. Companies in these sectors may need to

<p>[2] 4DayWeekGlobal. Available at: https://www.4dayweek.com/.</p>	<p>reorganise their operations, streamline processes or hire more staff to compensate for reduced hours.</p>
<p>[3] 4DayWeekIreland (2023). The US/Ireland 4 Day Week Trial Results. Available: https://www.4dayweek.com/us-ireland-results.</p>	<p>2. Resistance to change: In certain sectors or companies, there may be resistance to change due to fears about loss of competitiveness or the difficulty of adjusting work processes. However, the results of the pilot show that the benefits outweigh the potential drawbacks <i>in the companies covered by the pilots</i>, and the experience of other companies could help to reduce this resistance.</p>
<p>[4] UCD Dublin Research (2024). The 4-day week: making work healthier and more sustainable. Available at: https://www.ucd.ie/research/impact/casestudies/the4-dayweekmakingworkhealthierandmoresustainable/.</p>	<p>3. Inequality in sectoral adoption: While sectors such as technology or professional services have shown considerable success with the 4-day work week, sectors such as health, education and some customer services face more complex logistical challenges. Specific strategies need to be developed to implement this model in these sectors without affecting service quality.</p>
<p>[1] 4DayWeekIreland (2024). Available: https://fourdayweek.ie/.</p>	<p>[1] 4DayWeekIreland (2024). Available: https://fourdayweek.ie/.</p>
<p>[2] 4DayWeekGlobal. Available at: https://www.4dayweek.com/.</p>	<p>[2] 4DayWeekGlobal. Available at: https://www.4dayweek.com/.</p>
<p>[3] 4DayWeekIreland (2023). The US/Ireland 4 Day Week Trial Results. Available: https://www.4dayweek.com/us-ireland-results.</p>	<p>[3] 4DayWeekIreland (2023). The US/Ireland 4 Day Week Trial Results. Available: https://www.4dayweek.com/us-ireland-results.</p>
<p>[4] UCD Dublin Research (2024). The 4-day week: making work healthier and more sustainable. Available at: https://www.ucd.ie/research/impact/casestudies/the4-dayweekmakingworkhealthierandmoresustainable/.</p>	<p>[4] UCD Dublin Research (2024). The 4-day week: making work healthier and more sustainable. Available at: https://www.ucd.ie/research/impact/casestudies/the4-dayweekmakingworkhealthierandmoresustainable/.</p>

Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38
Abstention:	02

AMENDMENT 50

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Portugal

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
 BLIJLEVENS René
 CLEVER Peter
 DANISMAN Mira-Maria
 JONUŠKA Alfredas
 LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
 MINCHEVA Mariya
 MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
 PILAWSKI Lech

POTTIER Jean-Michel
 RUŽELĚ Emilis
 SCHWENG Christa
 SMOLE Jože
 SOETE Paul
 YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>PORTUGAL</p> <p>Portugal has recently launched a government-backed four-day working week pilot programme, which started in June 2023 and lasts for six months. The experiment involves 41 private sector companies and more than 1,000 employees, with the aim of assessing how reducing the working week affects workers' mental health, work-life balance, economic performance, and social and environmental effects[1].</p> <p>The initiative is being coordinated by 4 Day Week Global in collaboration with researchers from Birkbeck University London and Henley Business School. Participating companies have committed to maintaining full salaries despite the reduction in working hours.</p> <p>Positive results of the pilot programme:</p> <p>The first results of the pilot programme in Portugal have been <i>extremely</i> positive, with improvements for both employees and companies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Better work-life balance: Employees have reported a significant improvement in their work-life balance. Many of them reported that they now have more time for their families, which has led to reduced stress and a better quality of life. – Reduced stress and burnout: Employees reported a noticeable decrease in stress and fatigue. In addition, burnout levels decreased by 19%, reflecting an overall improvement in psychological and physical well-being. – Increased productivity: Participating companies observed an increase in 	<p>PORTUGAL</p> <p>Portugal has recently launched a government-backed four-day working week pilot programme, which started in June 2023 and lasts for six months. The experiment involves 41 private sector companies and more than 1,000 employees, with the aim of assessing how reducing the working week affects workers' mental health, work-life balance, economic performance, and social and environmental effects[1].</p> <p>The initiative is being coordinated by 4 Day Week Global in collaboration with researchers from Birkbeck University London and Henley Business School. Participating companies have committed to maintaining full salaries despite the reduction in working hours.</p> <p>Positive results of the pilot programme:</p> <p>The first results of the pilot programme in Portugal have been positive, with improvements for both employees and companies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Better work-life balance: Employees have reported a significant improvement in their work-life balance. Many of them reported that they now have more time for their families, which has led to reduced stress and a better quality of life. – Reduced stress and burnout: Employees reported a noticeable decrease in stress and fatigue. In addition, burnout levels <i>reported by employees</i> decreased by 19%, reflecting an overall improvement in psychological and physical well-being. – Increased productivity: Participating companies observed an increase in productivity, as workers were more engaged and creative during their reduced

<p>productivity, as workers were more engaged and creative during their reduced working hours. This increased motivation and energy during working hours resulted in better performance in daily tasks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improved quality of work: The quality of work also improved, as employees, feeling less exhausted, were able to maintain a high level of concentration and efficiency during their working day, allowing them to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. – High job satisfaction: Satisfaction in the work environment increased significantly, with 85% of employees saying they would only consider changing jobs if the job offer included a 5-day working week and a salary that was at least 20% higher. This suggests that the 4-day work week model may be a key factor in talent retention. <p>Impact on mental health and well-being:</p> <p>One of the main focus areas of the programme is employee mental health, and the results have been very encouraging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reduced anxiety: Anxiety levels were reduced by 21%, reflecting an improvement in employees' mental health due to the additional time off. – Decreased fatigue: Fatigue experienced by employees was also reduced by 23%, allowing workers to feel more energised and better able to cope with their work and personal responsibilities. – Improved sleep quality: Sleep problems also decreased by 19%, which may indicate that the reduction in working hours has helped employees to rest better and get more restful sleep, contributing to their overall well-being. – Reduced depression and emotional stress: Symptoms of depression and emotional stress were reduced by 21%, suggesting that shorter working hours have a positive impact on employees' psychological health. – Reduced loneliness: Feelings of loneliness decreased by 14%, which could be related 	<p>working hours. This increased motivation and energy during working hours resulted in better performance in daily tasks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improved quality of work: The quality of work also improved, as employees, feeling less exhausted, were able to maintain a high level of concentration and efficiency during their working day, allowing them to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. – High job satisfaction: Satisfaction in the work environment increased significantly, with 85% of employees saying they would only consider changing jobs if the job offer included a 5-day working week and a salary that was at least 20% higher. This suggests that the 4-day work week model may be a key factor in talent retention. <p>Impact on mental health and well-being:</p> <p>One of the main focus areas of the programme is employee mental health, and the results based on employee reporting have been very encouraging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reduced anxiety: Anxiety levels were reduced by 21%, reflecting an improvement in employees' mental health due to the additional time off. – Decreased fatigue: Fatigue experienced by employees was also reduced by 23%, allowing workers to feel more energised and better able to cope with their work and personal responsibilities. – Improved sleep quality: Sleep problems also decreased by 19%, which may indicate that the reduction in working hours has helped employees to rest better and get more restful sleep, contributing to their overall well-being. – Reduced depression and emotional stress: Symptoms of depression and emotional stress were reduced by 21%, suggesting that shorter working hours have a positive impact on employees' psychological health. – Reduced loneliness: Feelings of loneliness decreased by 14%, which could be related to the increased free time workers can
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<p>to the increased free time workers can devote to their social and family relationships.</p> <p>Impact on work-life balance:</p> <p>One of the most notable achievements of the programme has been the improvement in work-life balance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reducing difficulties in reconciling work and family: The percentage of workers who found it difficult to reconcile their work and family responsibilities fell from 46% to 8%, showing great progress in employees' ability to balance both aspects of their lives. – More time with family: Some 65% of employees reported that they now spend more time with their families, which not only improves personal well-being, but also strengthens family ties and improves overall quality of life. <p>Economic and productivity results:</p> <p>The economic impact of the pilot programme has also been <i>very</i> positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stable or increasing revenues: Despite the reduction in hours, company revenues remained stable or even increased in some cases. This suggests that shorter working hours do not negatively affect business profitability. – Better talent recruitment: Companies reported that the process of recruiting new talent has been improved, as the 4-day working week has made companies more attractive to potential candidates. This model appears to be a competitive benefit in attracting talent to the labour market. – Employee retention: In addition, employee retention has improved, indicating that shorter working hours not only improve employee well-being, but also enhance employee loyalty and loyalty to the company. <p>[1] 4DayWeekPortugal (2024): The 4 Day Week Portugal Trial Results. Available at: https://www.4dayweek.com/portugal-2024-pilot-</p>	<p>devote to their social and family relationships.</p> <p>Impact on work-life balance:</p> <p>One of the most notable achievements of the programme has been the improvement in work-life balance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reducing difficulties in reconciling work and family: The percentage of workers who found it difficult to reconcile their work and family responsibilities fell from 46% to 8%, showing great progress in employees' ability to balance both aspects of their lives. – More time with family: Some 65% of employees reported that they now spend more time with their families, which not only improves personal well-being, but also strengthens family ties and improves overall quality of life. <p>Economic and productivity results:</p> <p>The economic impact of the pilot programme has also been positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stable or increasing revenues: Despite the reduction in hours, company revenues remained stable or even increased in some cases. This suggests that shorter working hours do not negatively affect business profitability. – Better talent recruitment: Companies reported that the process of recruiting new talent has been improved, as the 4-day working week has made companies more attractive to potential candidates. This model appears to be a competitive benefit in attracting talent to the labour market. – Employee retention: In addition, employee retention has improved, indicating that shorter working hours not only improve employee well-being, but also enhance employee loyalty and loyalty <i>to the company</i>. <p><i>The project was presented to the social partners in a meeting of the Social Concertation Standing Committee (SCSC) where employer's confederations have</i></p>
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[results.](#)

manifested some doubts about the project.

The CCP – Confederação do Comércio e Serviços de Portugal has expressed the following views about the pilot project on the four days working week:

1. The pilot study points to the possibility of holding the 4-day week in all sectors. However, in sectors such as commerce, where the opening hours of establishments are clearly longer than working hours, the implementation of 4 days a week will lead to the need to increase the number of workers, at least at certain times of the year. As the final report points out, companies had difficulties adjusting the 4-day week, namely during vacation periods.

2. Although there are some positive results, it should be noted, as mentioned in the final report, that many companies have given up or postponed the implementation of the project for various reasons.

"Many companies, both in the first and second phases of the project, faced several challenges that led them to give up or postpone the implementation of the test. In the first phase, macroeconomic issues, such as international political instability and high inflation, generated uncertainty. In addition, the complexity of implementation, the investment required, and the preference for other benefits were also cited as reasons for not moving forward. In the second phase, the timing of the start of the test in June was an obstacle for many companies, which were involved in other projects or facing internal changes. Others faced difficulties with customers. Some multinationals did not obtain approval from headquarters. Legal concerns, such as the framing of the new work formats, were also raised." [2]

3. The study also shows that some companies have adopted a relatively different model.

Week of 4 days or period of two weeks of 9 days?

- 51,2% in favour of a week of 4 days
- 48,8% in favour of a period of 9 days

4. On the other hand, companies that adopted the 4-day week had to make investments, more or less significant, as the report acknowledges. The success of the four-day week as a management practice and its sustainability depend on the organizational changes adopted to increase efficiency and performance. 75% of companies have implemented at least one organizational change, the most frequent being the reduction of meeting lengths. Other changes included the adoption of management software, process automation, and improvements in communication.[3]

5. It is also important to note that almost half of the companies will not proceed with the model as proposed in the pilot project.

Will your company maintain the 4 days week after the study?

Answer:

- 19% - No
- 23,8% - Yes, but in a small scale
- 4,8% - Yes, but with adjustments
- 52,4% - Yes, in the same model of the study

To sum up views of CCP: In summary: The implementation of the 4-day week needs to be carefully considered, due to multiple factors, namely the lack of manpower, the growing regulation in areas such as the improvement of work-family balance, which already introduce significant difficulties in the management of people. The introduction of the 4-day week would require a look at the entire model of industrial relations in Portugal.

The project was presented and developed in Portugal at an inopportune and premature time, taking into account not only the

	<p><i>international economic context, but fundamentally, because companies have not yet been able to take advantage of all the potential of the ongoing transformations, namely technological.</i></p> <p><i>On the other hand, in Portugal, it is not foreseeable that low levels of productivity will be able to absorb such a scenario in the coming years, taking into account the Portuguese business structure, with a majority of very small companies: 99% of the Portuguese companies are SME and the majority of them, have less than 10 workers.</i></p> <p><i>In the current circumstances, the reduction of the working week would have disastrous consequences in most sectors: without significant increases in productivity, companies would have to hire more workers for the same level of production, which represents an increase in labour costs and greater difficulties in organizing schedules, and this in a context of labour shortages.</i></p> <p><i>Occasionally in some high-tech sectors or in some types of companies this path can be taken, but it would always be based on individual negotiation between companies and workers or on collective bargaining agreements.</i></p> <p>[1] 4DayWeekPortugal (2024): The 4 Day Week Portugal Trial Results. Available at: https://www.4dayweek.com/portugal-2024-pilot-results.</p> <p>[2] <i>Four-Day Week: Results from Portuguese Trial Final Report, page 9.</i></p> <p>[3] <i>Four-Day Week: Results from Portuguese Trial Final Report, page 50.</i></p>
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Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38
Abstention:	02

AMENDMENT 51

Tabled by:
ARDHE Christian

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Spain

Amend as follows

BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELÈ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>SPAIN</p> <p>Spain is undertaking a number of public and private initiatives around the implementation of the four-day working week, with the aim of improving employee well-being, productivity and work-life balance. These experiences, <i>which</i> include pilot programmes and trials in different sectors, <i>could lay the foundations for a wider adoption of this reduced working day at national level.</i></p>	<p>SPAIN</p> <p>Spain is undertaking a number of public and private initiatives around the implementation of the four-day working week, with the aim of improving employee well-being, productivity and work-life balance. These experiences, include pilot programmes and trials in different sectors.</p>

Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38
Abstention:	02

AMENDMENT 52

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Sweden

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
 BLIJLEVENS René
 CLEVER Peter
 DANISMAN Mira-Maria
 JONUŠKA Alfredas
 LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
 MINCHEVA Mariya
 MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
 PILAWSKI Lech
 POTTIER Jean-Michel
 RUŽELÉ Emilis
 SCHWENG Christa
 SMOLE Jože
 SOETE Paul
 YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>SWEDEN</p> <p>Sweden <i>is leading</i> initiatives to implement the four-day working week, a model promoted by 4 Day Week Global, <i>with the</i> aim of improving <i>productivity</i>, employee well-being and work-life balance. Starting in June 2024, a new six-month pilot project with several companies in Sweden <i>will explore</i> both the benefits and practical challenges of a reduced working week.</p> <p>Background to the four-day working week in Sweden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pilot project in Gothenburg <p>In 2015, <i>Sweden carried out a pioneering</i> pilot project in Gothenburg, where a four-day working week was implemented, but not following the <i>traditional</i> 32-hour working week model. Instead, a schedule of six hours per day was applied, totalling 30 hours per week. This initiative used the "100:80:100" approach, which meant that employees received 100% of their salary for working 80% of their usual time, with no loss of productivity (100% effectiveness).</p> <p>The programme was funded by local government, and was carried out in the public sector, <i>allowing government institutions to participate without reducing employees' salaries</i>. This experiment lasted almost two years, making it one of the longest of its kind.</p> <p>The experiment in Gothenburg involved 80</p>	<p>SWEDEN</p> <p><i>In Sweden there have been</i> initiatives to implement the four-day working week, <i>following for instance</i> a model promoted by 4 Day Week Global, <i>with the</i> aim of improving, employee well-being and work-life balance. Starting in June 2024, a new six-month pilot project with several companies in Sweden <i>explored</i> both the benefits and practical challenges of a reduced working week <i>in participating companies</i>.</p> <p>Background to the four-day working week <i>experiments</i> in Sweden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pilot project in Gothenburg <p>In 2015, a pilot project <i>was carried out</i> in Gothenburg <i>in public sector, involving 80 employees from the orthopaedic unit of a hospital and two nursing homes</i>, where a four-day working week was implemented, but not following the 32-hour working week model. Instead, a schedule of six hours per day was applied, totalling 30 hours per week. This initiative used the "100:80:100" approach, which meant that employees received 100% of their salary for working 80% of their usual time, with <i>the stated aim of</i> no loss of productivity (100% effectiveness).</p> <p>The programme was funded by local government, and was carried out in the public sector. This experiment lasted almost two years, making it one of</p>

<p>employees from the orthopaedic unit of a hospital and two nursing homes. The results were remarkably positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At the hospital, no sick leave was reported during the 24-month trial. – In the nursing homes, the reduced working day of six hours per day increased activities with patients by more than 80% compared to the control group, which maintained the eight-hour working day. <p>However, the project cost \$120,000 per month, which led to its discontinuation after a change of government[1]. Although it was not continued at the state level, the positive results on employee productivity and welfare were significant <i>and set a precedent for other experiments</i>.</p> <p>Companies in Sweden implementing the four-day week</p> <p><i>Several</i> Swedish employers have successfully adopted the four-day working week model in various industries.</p> <p>Seably</p> <p>Seably, a company founded by the Swedish Shipowners' Association and dedicated to providing training in the maritime sector, adopted the four-day week in September 2022. Following the "100:80:100" model, most employees enjoyed Fridays off. The trial was successful, with a marked improvement in employee satisfaction, reduced burnout <i>and increased</i> productivity. In addition, the model contributed to a better work-life balance for employees[2].</p> <p>Sandqvist Bags</p> <p>Renowned backpack and accessories brand Sandqvist Bags adopted the four-day week in February 2023, with the aim of improving employee wellbeing without reducing salaries. The implementation resulted in improved employee wellbeing, sustained performance and increased talent attraction and retention. This change also increased employee satisfaction and engagement, aligning with the company's vision to improve performance through greater work flexibility[3].</p>	<p>the longest of its kind.</p> <p>The experiment in Gothenburg involved 80 employees from the orthopaedic unit of a hospital and two nursing homes. The results were remarkably positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At the hospital, no sick leave <i>of the participating workers</i> was reported during the 24-month trial. – In the nursing homes, the reduced working day of six hours per day increased activities with patients by more than 80% compared to the control group, which maintained the eight-hour working day. <p>However, the project <i>was expensive with the</i> cost \$120,000 per month <i>to make up for the hours not covered by staff working six-hour days</i>, which led to its discontinuation after a change of government [1]. Although it was not continued at the state level, the positive results on employee productivity and welfare were significant.</p> <p>Companies in Sweden implementing the four-day week</p> <p><i>Some</i> Swedish employers have successfully adopted the four-day working week model in various industries.</p> <p>Seably</p> <p>Seably, a company founded by the Swedish Shipowners' Association and dedicated to providing training in the maritime sector, adopted the four-day week in September 2022 <i>as part of the 4 Day Week Global project that included 150 companies globally</i>.. Following the "100:80:100" model, most employees enjoyed Fridays off <i>except for the customer support teams, who changed their work pattern to increase the level of support to 24/7</i>. The trial was successful, with a marked improvement in employee satisfaction, reduced <i>employee reported</i> burnout. <i>Shorter hours are often associated with higher per-hour</i> productivity. In addition, the model contributed to a better work-life balance for employees[2].</p> <p>Sandqvist Bags</p> <p>Renowned backpack and accessories brand Sandqvist Bags adopted the four-day week in February 2023, with the aim of improving employee</p>
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<p>Toyota</p> <p>Car giant Toyota has also tested the four-day week in Sweden. In this case, mechanics worked longer hours over four days instead of the traditional five. Employees who opted for the reduced 30-hour week showed higher levels of productivity than those on the regular working week. In addition, they experienced less absenteeism, higher job satisfaction and lower staff turnover. Customer satisfaction also increased, attributed to a more motivated and rested team[4].</p> <p>The national pilot project in 2024</p> <p>Starting in June 2024, Sweden will conduct a new pilot project involving several companies in the country. The six-month experiment will assess both the benefits and practical challenges of the four-day working week. Among the aspects to be analysed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Impact on the mental health of employees. – Effects on work-life balance. – Productivity of enterprises. – Associated costs and organisational adaptation. <p><i>This pilot will be a key evaluation to decide whether the short- time working model can be adopted more widely in Sweden and possibly in other countries.</i></p> <p>[1] The Guardian (2015). Efficiency up, turnover down: Sweden experiments with six-hour working day. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/17/efficiency-up- turnover-down-sweden-experiments-with-six-hour-working-day.</p> <p>[2] Seably (2022). Seably is now part of a Four-Day Week Trial. Available at: https://www.seably.com/blog/seably-four-day-week-trial.</p> <p>[3] Sandqvist (2023). Sandqvist introduces four-day week. Available at: https://www.drapersonline.com/news/sandqvist-introduces-a-four-day-week#:~:text=Sandqvist%20the%20Swedish%20handbag%20brand,to%20improve%20work/life%20balance.&text=The%20new%20way%20of%20working,same%2C%20despite%20the%20reduced%20hours.</p> <p>[4] Woohoo (2016). Introducing a 30-hour work week at Toyota Gothenburg. Available at: Introducing a 30-hour work week at Toyota</p>	<p>wellbeing without reducing salaries. The implementation resulted in improved employee wellbeing, sustained performance and increased talent attraction and retention. This change also increased employee satisfaction and engagement, aligning with the company's vision to improve performance through greater work flexibility[3].</p> <p>Toyota</p> <p>Car giant Toyota has also tested the four-day week in Gothenburg. In this case, mechanics worked longer hours over four days instead of the traditional five. Employees who opted for the reduced 30-hour week showed higher levels of productivity than those on the regular working week. In addition, they experienced less absenteeism, higher job satisfaction and lower staff turnover. Customer satisfaction also increased, attributed to a more motivated and rested team[4].</p> <p>The national pilot project in 2024</p> <p>Starting in June 2024, 4 Day Week Global together with a country partner has conducted a new pilot project involving several companies in the country. The six-month experiment will assess both the benefits and practical challenges of the four-day working week. Among the aspects to be analysed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Impact on the mental health of employees. – Effects on work-life balance. – Productivity of enterprises. – Associated costs and organisational adaptation. <p><i>Working time reduction is a politically controversial issue in Sweden. It is on the political agenda of the Social Democrats, the Green Party and the Left Party. The Swedish Confederation of Labour (LO) has expressed that its long- term strategy is to reduce working hours to 30 hours per week.</i></p> <p><i>On the other hand, the political parties in Government and employers' organisations, both public and private are warning that shortening working hours through law or in negotiations would risk Sweden's welfare and competitiveness. If companies want to introduce such solutions and develop the working life of the future it must be</i></p>
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<p>Gothenburg – YouTube.</p>	<p><i>handled directly by the companies and employees, and not through legislation or national collective agreements.</i></p> <p><i>Calculations by the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise show that a 35-hour workweek would cost Sweden 509 billion kronor in reduced GDP, every year. As a comparison, all sick leave over 14 days in Sweden costs 71 billion kronor over a year.</i></p> <p>[1] The Guardian (2015). Efficiency up, turnover down: Sweden experiments with six-hour working day. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/17/efficiency-up-turnover-down-sweden-experiments-with-six-hour-working-day.</p> <p>[2] Seably (2022). Seably is now part of a Four-Day Week Trial. Available at: https://www.seably.com/blog/seably-four-day-week-trial.</p> <p>[3] Sandqvist (2023). Sandqvist introduces four-day week. Available at: https://www.drapersonline.com/news/sandqvist-introduces-a-four-day-week#:~:text=Sandqvist%20the%20Swedish%20handbag%20brand,to%20improve%20work/life%20balance.&text=The%20new%20way%20of%20working,same%2C%20despite%20the%20reduced%20hours.</p> <p>[4] Woohoo (2016). Introducing a 30-hour work week at Toyota Gothenburg. Available at: Introducing a 30-hour work week at Toyota Gothenburg – YouTube.</p>
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Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38
Abstention:	02

AMENDMENT 53

SOC/819

Working time, efficiency of the economy and well-being of workers

Lithuania

Amend as follows

Tabled by:

ARDHE Christian
BLIJLEVENS René
CLEVER Peter
DANISMAN Mira-Maria
JONUŠKA Alfredas
LE BRETON Marie-Pierre
MINCHEVA Mariya
MISSLBECK-WINBERG Christiane
PILAWSKI Lech
POTTIER Jean-Michel
RUŽELĖ Emilis
SCHWENG Christa
SMOLE Jože
SOETE Paul
YGLESIAS Isabel

<i>Draft opinion</i>	<i>Amendment</i>
<p>LITHUANIA</p> <p>In Lithuania, the parliament passed legislation in 2023 to implement a four-day working week for public sector employees with children under the age of three. This change aims to improve the work-life balance of workers and support families with young children[1].</p> <p>Details of the new measure</p> <p>The measure will come into effect at the beginning of 2024 and will allow employees to reduce their weekly working hours while maintaining their full salary. This benefit is targeted exclusively at parents in the public sector with young children, and aims to promote a more flexible and parent-friendly working environment.</p> <p>Potential effects on society and the private sector</p> <p>The Lithuanian government hopes that this policy will inspire a cultural shift towards more flexible working hours, not only in the public sector but also in the private sector. While the project will initially benefit only public employees, the Lithuanian parliament believes that, if successful, this measure could motivate the private sector to adopt similar policies to promote family well-being and increase productivity.</p>	<p>LITHUANIA</p> <p>In Lithuania, the parliament passed legislation in 2023 to implement a four-day working week for public sector employees with children under the age of three. This change <i>applies exclusively in the public sector and</i> aims to improve the work-life balance of workers and support families with young children[1].</p> <p>Details of the new measure</p> <p>The measure will come into effect at the beginning of 2024 and will allow <i>public sector</i> employees to reduce their weekly working hours while maintaining their full salary. This benefit is targeted exclusively at parents in the public sector with young children, and aims to promote a more flexible and parent-friendly working environment.</p> <p>Potential effects on society and the private sector</p> <p>The Lithuanian government hopes that this policy will inspire a cultural shift towards more flexible working hours, not only in the public sector but also in the private sector. While the project will initially benefit only public employees, the Lithuanian parliament believes that, if successful, this measure could motivate the private sector to adopt similar policies to promote family well-being and increase productivity.</p>

<p>Legislative and social support</p> <p>This initiative reflects Lithuania's commitment to advance progressive labour policies adapted to the needs of today's society.</p> <p>[1] Quartz (2022). Lithuania will give a four-day workweek to parents with young kids. Available at: https://qz.com/work/2157973/lithuania-will-give-a-four-day-workweek-to-new-parents.</p>	<p>Legislative and social support</p> <p>This initiative reflects Lithuania's commitment to advance progressive labour policies adapted to the needs of today's society.</p> <p><i>In addition, a shorter working week can be applied in the private sector, but it depends on the agreement between employers and employees.</i></p> <p><i>The Ministry of Social Security and Labour (SADM) informs that in Lithuania there are already possibilities to implement a shorter working week without changing the Labour Code. However, it is important to pay attention to both the opportunities and the possible challenges. There are all options for setting a shorter working week and this does not require changes to the Labour Code. Some Lithuanian employers have already shortened the working week of their employees, believing that this helps to attract and retain employees.</i></p> <p><i>According to the current Labour Code:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is possible to agree on a shorter mode of working time or other working time.</i> • <i>Employees and employers can negotiate an individual mode of working time, for example, 4 days of 10 hours.</i> • <i>In the public sector, there is already a 32-hour working week for parents raising children under 3 years old.</i> • <i>Some professions (e.g. teachers, healthcare professionals) already have a shorter working week.</i> <p><i>Potential challenges and risks</i></p> <p><i>Although a shorter working week may seem attractive, it is important to consider the possible negative consequences:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Intensification of workload: If 5 days of work is compressed into 4 days, this can lead to increased stress and the risk of burnout.</i> 2. <i>Lower salary: If working hours are simply shortened, this may mean a lower salary, unless the hourly rate is increased.</i>
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	<p>3. <i>Blurring the boundaries between work and personal time: longer working days can interfere with personal life and family obligations.</i></p> <p>4. <i>Productivity Challenges: Not all employees can maintain high productivity on a longer working day.</i></p> <p>5. <i>Customer service issues: In some sectors, a shorter work week can lead to poorer customer service.</i></p> <p><i>How to successfully implement?</i></p> <p><i>For the successful implementation of a 4-day working week, one should:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Conduct a pilot project and evaluate the results.</i> 2. <i>Make sure that the workload is properly distributed.</i> 3. <i>If possible, keep the same salary for a shorter week.</i> 4. <i>Invest in technology and process optimization.</i> 5. <i>Regularly assess the well-being and productivity of employees.</i> <p><i>What to do to employees and employers?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For employees: discuss flexible work schedules with employers. Assess whether a shorter week meets your needs and financial capabilities.</i> • <i>For employers: consider the possibility of a pilot project. Involve employees in decision-making and regularly evaluate the results.</i> <p><i>A shorter working week can be beneficial for both employees and employers, but it is important to carefully evaluate all aspects and find the right balance between productivity and employee well-being.</i></p> <p>[1] Quartz (2022). Lithuania will give a four-day workweek to parents with young kids. Available at: https://qz.com/work/2157973/lithuania-will-give-a-four-day-workweek-to-new-parents.</p>
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Outcome of the vote	
In favour:	32
Against:	38
Abstention:	02