

# OUR OWN TIME

*The Newsletter of the European Network  
for the Fair Sharing of Working Time*

## Welcome

The debate on working time is one of the most salient topics on work and politics across Europe today, with a growing movement pushing for a more just distribution of labour and leisure time.

The European Network for the Fair Sharing of Working Time coordinates organisations, be they trade unions, political parties or civil society organisations, around the subject of working time reduction and adaptation.

This newsletter collates and shares the latest information on working time reduction from across Europe. The newsletter is released quarterly, and this is the **14th issue**. If you would like to see the previous issues, please use [this link](#).

The newsletter is produced by Autonomy, and is coordinated by ATTAC (Germany – Group ArbeitFAIRTeilen) and Réseau Roosevelt (France). It is supported by the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung's Brussels Office and funded by the German Federal Foreign Office.

If you would like to subscribe to receive this email, please sign up [here](#).



RESEAU  
ROOSEVELT

ROSA  
LUXEMBURG  
STIFTUNG  
BRUSSELS OFFICE

attac

## In this issue - #14

<a href="#"><u>Call for submissions</u></a>	2
<a href="#"><u>Conference - Summary</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>France</u></a>	4
<a href="#"><u>Germany</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Greece</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>Iceland</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Italy</u></a>	11
<a href="#"><u>Portugal</u></a>	12
<a href="#"><u>Spain</u></a>	13
<a href="#"><u>Sweden</u></a>	14
<a href="#"><u>United Kingdom</u></a>	15
<a href="#"><u>Europe</u></a>	17
<a href="#"><u>Beyond Europe</u></a>	18

## Call for submissions

The newsletter is dependent on contributions from the Network's members. All members need to provide is a link to the relevant update and a one/two-line explanation in English.

If you would like to become a Lead Contact, or have any information you think should be included in the next newsletter, please contact the Network Coordinator, India, at:

[workingtimenetwork.europe@gmail.com](mailto:workingtimenetwork.europe@gmail.com)

## European Network for the Fair Sharing of Working Time Conference 2022 - Summary

The Network's biannual conference took place in October 2022, with in-person registrations at capacity and over 400 online participants. Attendees from across Europe joined panels on working time reduction in the public and private sector, opportunities and risks around the four-day week, and the role of trade unions in achieving a shorter working week across Europe.

Individual country updates from the Network's members, discussed in the internal workshop, can be found below in the newsletter.

You can find the recordings of the public sessions via [this link](#).

# France

## Conference update

Victorien Pâté and Denis Meynent represented the union CGT at the conference. They shared that since 2002 there has been no legislative reduction in working time, and some in government are pushing the idea of increasing France's working hours (currently at 35 hours per week). In 2021, the CGT launched a campaign to promote the 32-hour week without cutting wages, and some businesses are trialling a 32-hour week.

Anne Eydoux from LISE at CNAM shared that some NGOs have been pushing working time reduction in France, but that many unions are indifferent towards the subject. The cost of living crisis means it is not on the agenda.

# Germany

## Conference update

Margareta Steinrücke provided an update from Attac and IG Metall. In 2018, IG Metall won the first collective bargaining action for working-time reduction in 20 years. Currently, the cost of living crisis means their working time calls are paused. Attac continues to raise awareness and share information on working-time reduction.

Due to Covid and the war in Ukraine, the policy of 'Kurzarbeit' has been used widely in the country, whereby companies reduce their employees' working hours (and pay) to avoid making staff redundant.

Philipp Frey from the ZET reported that the Hans Boeckler Stiftung was supporting the development of a four-day week pilot in Germany.

A growing number of small and medium-sized enterprises are introducing a four-day week to make themselves more attractive to potential employees, due to a lack of personnel. This includes restaurants, painters, plumbers, hotels and a fashion house.

## Youth members of the Social Democratic Party bring 25-hour weeks onto the table

The youth members in the SPD have successfully [brought](#) the 25-hour work week into the SPD's programme, at their recent national convention.

## 30-hour work week introduced in a glass manufacturing business

A glass business has [introduced](#) a 30-hour work week trial, with employees receiving full pay.

The trial organises the workers into two shifts, and early results are promising.

## **Industrial business leaders call for a 42-hour week**

The confederation of Germany's industrial employers, the BDI, has [called](#) for the reintroduction of the 42-hour work week - and an increase in the retirement age to 70 years old.

See Philipp Frey's response [here](#).

## **Court orders employers to record employees' working hours**

The German Federal Labour Court has [enforced](#) a 2019 European Court of Justice Ruling that employers must record the working hours of their employees.

## **The union Ver.di makes collective agreement gains**

Ver.di has concluded trend-setting collective agreements on working time in recent months. These include the Workers' Welfare Association in Augsburg, where working hours in care, social and educational services are being reduced from 39 to 35 hours per week with no loss in pay. In public banks, weekly working time has been reduced by one hour to 38 hours per week.

# Greece

## Conference update

Maria Jaidopulu Vrijea represented the Nicos Poulantzas Institute, and shared news of a new labour law allowing people to work a compressed week in four days.

- A survey run by the Institute showed that the vast majority of workers understood the benefits of WTR, and 60% of workers thought it was possible without a reduction in wages.
- However, workers' main demand currently remains fighting to raise salaries and the minimum wage.

Greece has the longest working week in the EU, with youth unemployment also at 35% and low wages - 1/3 of households in Greece have difficulties meeting basic needs.

# Iceland

## Conference update

Dagný Aradóttir Pind, from the BSRB union, discussed the public sector trial in Iceland. The trial began in 2014, and a collective agreement was reached in 2020 to cement working-time reduction to a 36-hour week across the public sector, with shift worker agreements down to 32 hours. The national statutory working week remains 40 hours.

In the private sector, some unions have provisions for workers to negotiate for a 36-hour week at the company level: these agreements are expiring in the next few weeks. Iceland has very strong trade union representation.

BRSB has not yet decided what to do on working time reduction when the agreement runs out in the Spring.

## Union demands for shorter working hours

VR, the store and office worker's union, one of the country's largest unions, is demanding a four-day week (32 hours) in their negotiations. Their case argues that it is logical given advancements in technology and automation, and given the fact that shortening of working time in the industry's most recent contracts was very successful. The union further emphasises that the demand is very popular among its members, and covid has demonstrated that people can work in a different way to before. They have also pointed out that for office workers, who already are granted 35.5 hours a week, the leap to 32 hours is not large at all.

VR calls on the government to overhaul a 1971 law which stipulates that a normal work week is 40 hours, with the aim of lowering the normal weekly hours. The union has been vocal in its support and demand of a 4 day week.

[Return to contents](#)

Efling, another large union, representing labour workers in both the private and public sector (factory workers, rubbish collectors, transport workers and more) – demands serious discussion of how shorter hours can be implemented for its members without added workload or more intense work. No specific target is set in the demands.

BHM, the confederation of university educated workers, demand that the 1971 law stipulating a normal full-time work week to be 40 hours be updated to 35 hours. For shift-workers the normal full-time work-week would be 32 hours. There is no demand for shorter hours via contracts per se.

VM, union of marine engineers and metal technicians, along with most other unions of craftsmen, have set forward a demand for a 32 hour work-week.

Among the associations yet to make their demands public is BSRB, the confederation of public sector worker unions, which successfully negotiated the largest shortening of hours in the last negotiation round. Their contracts expire later than most other contracts. The confederation has held a workshop to discuss the overall achievement of the shorter work-week implemented in 2021, and a report will be published in early 2023.

## **4-Day Week event hosted by the union VR**

VR recently held a public event focussing on the possibility of a four-day, 32-hour week. Speakers were:

Guðmundur D. Haraldsson, board member of Alda – Association for Sustainable Democracy, who focussed on the necessary long-term goals associated with shortening hours to 32 a week

Magnús Már Guðmundsson, CEO of BSRB and former council-member at Reykjavík City, who

presented the results and outcomes of the shorter hours trial at Reykjavík City;

Juliet Schor, professor at Boston College;

Charlotte Lockhart, co-founder and CEO of 4-Day Week Global.

Juliet and Charlotte jointly presented initial results of trials of shorter hours currently ongoing in multiple countries around the globe.

A panel afterwards composed of Haraldsson, Ragnar Þór Ingólfsson, leader of VR, and Lóa Birna Birgisdóttir, head of HR at Reykjavík City, discussed specific aspects of a four-day work-week.

# Italy

## Conference update

Fausto Durante, a coordinator at CGIL, discussed how his recent book on working-time reduction has helped to catalyse a movement within the union and motivated the inclusion of working-time reduction in the national and sector levels of collective bargaining rounds. This follows a long period of silence on the subject (without cutting wages).

Other unions are following suit, with commitments agreed at a union federation meeting, and the banking sector considering a 4DW experiment with unions.

# Portugal

## Conference update

Pedro Gomes has been invited to coordinate Portugal's 4DW pilot.

A new government was formed in January, with a manifesto pledge to study the applicability of a 4DW and promote public debate - this is not a promise to introduce a shorter working week.

One member of parliament is responsible for coordinating a trial, with public details released soon. There will be a voluntary pilot to cut hours (maintaining pay) starting in the private sector.

Pedro is coordinating the pilot, where the impact on intermediate costs, workers and productivity will be measured.

# Spain

## Conference update

Joan Sanchis and Enric Nomdedéu came from the regional Valencian government and explained that due to the decentralisation of powers in Spain, regional governments have the right to develop work policies.

The progressive party came into power with a coalition government and conducted a preliminary study into changing how employment policy is managed in 2019 with Autonomy.

In May 2022, the city held a four-day week summit.

Valencia is running a private sector trial to support companies to reduce their working time to 32-hours a week. Companies are given a subsidy according to staff numbers and salaries.

Spain works some of the longest hours in Europe, but is one of the least productive economies. They are working with the Spanish government to develop a similar state-level programme

# Sweden

## Conference update

Hampus Andersson attended, representing the Swedish union Kommunal - the second largest union in Sweden with 500,000 workers mainly in the public sector.

There has been no legislation on working-time reduction in Sweden since 1973, when the 40-hour week was established. The subject is politically not receiving much attention, though it's being pushed by the left party.

Some local trials have happened with good results (e.g. a nursing home with 6-hour days instead of 8-hours over 2 years, no loss in pay), but there's a need for bigger scale trials to see real impact.

There is some potential in Sweden as many people already work part-time. Many union collective agreements involve working-time reduction, for example night workers can work 34 hours per week.

Kommunal is working to achieve a 30-hour week through legislation and collective bargaining.

# United Kingdom

## Conference update

Will Stronge and Joe Ryle, from Autonomy and the 4-day Week Campaign UK, emphasised that the four-day week is a popular idea in the UK and support is building, but there's a long way to go. They are co-running a large 6-month private sector trial, involving 3000 employees (32-hour week, no loss in pay).

There's been a big uptick in the number of firms interested in running trials.

There's a more advanced discussion in Scotland: 30-hour week is in discussion at the PCS Trade Union and funding secured by the Scottish government to promote a trial.

## 100 companies sign up for the UK's four-day week accreditation scheme

The 4-day Week Campaign UK runs an accreditation scheme for recognising companies who have reduced hours. 100 companies have now [signed up](#) to a permanent four-day week, with the milestone gaining coverage in the Guardian and elsewhere.

## Growing support for a four-day week in the UK

Research from the Institute of Employment Rights [surveyed](#) 2400 workers, across a number of industries including shipbuilding, automotives and engineering. The research found that 93% want a shorter working week without a loss in pay.

## Four-Day Week Bill reaches House of Commons

A member of parliament has [brought forward](#) a bill on the four-day week. It has passed its first reading in the House of Commons and cleared the first parliamentary hurdle.

Under the 1998 Working Time Regulations Act, the maximum working week is currently 48 hours.

# Europe

## European Commission hosts working time workshop

A European Commission workshop series, “Real Utopias for a Social Europe” hosted a session on working-time reduction and the four-day week.

The recording can be found [here](#). Real Utopias for a Social Europe is a series of technical debate-type workshops on bold and innovative social policy proposals.

## Beyond Europe

### Unilever's four-day week trial extended to Australia.

The company has been [running](#) an 18-month pilot scheme in New Zealand, where they recorded happier and more engaged staff.

Following positive results, they are extending the trial to 500 employees in Australia.