

# OUR OWN TIME

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

## Welcome

June 2023

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 Work-Time Network 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 **16th 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](#).



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## 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)

# Network Updates

## European Work-Time Network: Rebranding

The European Network for the Fair Sharing of Working Time has rebranded, and is now named the 'European Work-Time Network'.

We are in the process of launching a new website, and formalising as an Association in France. Updates on this process will be shared in the September newsletter and via email.

## Webinar series

The European Work-Time Network's webinar series on working time reduction is being held between April and November 2023. Speakers from trade unions, campaigns, academia and business are providing updates and insight on progress towards shorter working weeks around Europe.

The next webinar will be held on **Wednesday 27th September, 12pm UK time/1pm Paris time on Working Time Reduction and the Environment**. Juliet Schor and Mehtap Akgüç will be speaking.

You can sign up to the webinar via Eventbrite [here](#).

You can watch the recordings of the first three webinars on our website [here](#).

Those on the Network's mailing list will receive additional information about the webinars via email. The sessions will be held on the last Wednesday of the month.

If you are interested in speaking on a panel in one of these webinars, please contact our Coordinator, India, at [workingtimenetwork.europe@gmail.com](mailto:workingtimenetwork.europe@gmail.com).

# Faroe Islands

## Quarterly Update

A new government in the Faroe Islands aims to reduce working time in the country by law.

Currently, the regular working week is 40 hours by legislation, but the new legislation aims for 37 hours. It looks to mirror the law in Denmark, where the standard is 37 hours per week. Working hours are set to be reduced by one hour every two years via contracts between government, employers and unions, until the 37 hours are reached.

Unions have called for a reduction of hours for a number of years. Employers however, have fought against such change, saying that employees in the Faroe Islands already enjoy a paid lunch which employees in Denmark do not - implying that their working hours are really the same.

Reduction of working time in the Faroe Islands was a popular demand in recent national elections.

Recently, the two private companies, car dealerships in Tórshavn, announced that they will reduce the working time of their staff while pay will remain the same. Their aim is 36 hours per week. They hope that this will result in happier staff and customers alike.

# Germany

## Four-Day Week in Germany Industry: Steel Industry as Pioneer?

*Sophie C. Jänicke, IG Metall*

There is not a day in Germany in which there is not a report on the four-day week – the media is full of it. However, the media debate is bigger than the reality. If you look at the economy as a whole, there are only a few companies that are currently experimenting with the four-day week in Germany, particularly in the tech and craft sectors.

IG Metall has now made a push to implement the four-day week in industry as well. The news that IG Metall is discussing a four-day week for the steel industry in Germany made it into the most popular daily evening news on German television.

The German steel industry is characterised by economic fluctuations and staff reductions. Securing employment by reducing working hours has therefore played a role for many years. Already today, about 50 percent of the 89,000 employees in the steel sector work a 33- or 32-hour week on the basis of collective agreements to secure employment – with significant advantages for work-life balance – but so far without compensation for wages.

The industry is currently in the midst of a major transformation. The energy-intensive industry wants to become sustainable – with green hydrogen produced from renewable energies. This will also have an impact on employment in the industry.

IG Metall is therefore currently preparing to demand a four-day week in the steel collective bargaining round in autumn 2023. Our collective bargaining commissions in the steel industry are discussing the issue and will decide on their demand in September.

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Should IG Metall actually conduct a collective bargaining round on the four-day week in the steel industry in Germany, it will be dependent on a wide range of support. If it is possible to implement the four-day week in the steel industry, this would be a pilot for other industries in Germany.

We will keep you up to date and rely on your solidarity!

## Greece

### Translation of UK Four-Day Week pilot underway

The Nicos Poulantzas Institute in Greece is in the process of translating the UK Four-Day Week Pilot report into Greek. It is hoped that this process will make the research more accessible to the population in Greece.



# Hungary

## Quarterly update

*Benedikt Lehmann, Eötvös Loránd University*

The four-day work week continues to gain traction in Hungarian public discourse in the form of regular news media articles in larger news outlets such as Telex and HVG. In one such article by Telex the four-day work week is discussed as a tool against labour shortages in certain sectors. Due to the popularity of the four-day work week (reportedly 84% of the Hungarian population would like to reduce their working hours in such a way), employers offering it could improve the chances of recruiting the needed personnel, especially from other sectors.

Elsewhere, the weekly politics and economics magazine, HVG, is reporting on the four-day work week, emphasising the need to differentiate between working time reduction and working time compression. They highlight that while interest in a shorter working week is significant, many would not be able to cope with the longer work days that would result from the working time compression model.

Most recently, Telekom Hungary invited representatives from other companies and researchers to a panel discussion that occurred at the beginning of June to share their insights on their own four-day work week trials for IT-workers.

# Iceland

## Quarterly Update

*Guðmundur D. Haraldsson, ALDA*

In June, [a law was passed](#) in Alþingi, the Icelandic Parliament, making accurate recording of working hours by employers compulsory. The law was passed after years of complaints from the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) on the lack of such a requirement, and at the end of last year a threat of a lawsuit by the Authority. Iceland is required under the European Economic Area contract to implement certain European Union laws, including the Working Time Directive.

A [recent study](#) on the Icelandic employment market by the Social Science Research Institute conducted for the Icelandic government highlighted work and working time. The study indicates that more than half (51%) of working people in Iceland have been able to reduce their working hours due to contracts signed in 2019–2020. Around 8% were not able to reduce their hours and 41% have not been offered a reduction of hours. Of those who received shorter working time, 80% say that staff was consulted on how reduction was implemented. 78% report being satisfied with their working time and 62% report being more satisfied with their working time after the reduction while around 4% are less satisfied. Overall, the results indicate that the reduction in working time negotiated in 2019–2020 was successful. Previous studies have indicated that the governmental sector was more successful than the private sector.

New contracts have been signed in the Icelandic labour market recently. Negotiations centred mostly on pay this time around. Some of the unions postponed discussion on working time until a later time. SSF, the union of workers in finance, [attempted to negotiate](#) shorter working time with the SA Confederation of Icelandic Enterprise, the main contractual body on behalf of employers. Their demand of a 20

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minute reduction per week was repeatedly denied by SA.

# United Kingdom

## Four-Day Week Mini-Manifesto launched

The UK's Four-Day week campaign has launched its Mini Manifesto, a cross organisation joint initiative which has been backed by the 4 Day Week Campaign, the New Economics Foundation and the think tanks Autonomy and Common Wealth.

The manifesto has been launched in the run-up to the UK's 2024 General Election, and calls for:

- A reduction to the maximum working week from 48 hours per week to 32 hours per week by 2030
- An amendment to official flexible working guidance to include the right for workers to request a four-day, 32-hour working week with no loss of pay
- A £100 million fund to support companies in the private sector to move to a four-day, 32-hour working week
- A fully funded four-day week pilot in the public sector
- A Working Time Council bringing together trade unions, industry leaders and business leaders to coordinate on policy and implementation of a shorter working week

You can read it [here](#), and see coverage from the [Guardian](#).

## Local government four-day week trial extended

South Cambridgeshire District Council, trialling the first local government four-day week in the UK, has [extended](#) its trial.

The three month trial was deemed a success and approval has been unanimously granted for a further year extension.

## Welsh politicians set up a working group to explore a four-day week pilot

Politicians in the Welsh Senedd have [set up](#) a working group to explore a four-day week pilot. This follows a debate on the subject in the Senedd with cross-party support.

## The public expect the four-day week by 2030

Polling [shows](#) that UK workers believe the four-day week will be the normal way of working by 2030.

## Report published on the four-day week in the British health sector

The UK's four-day week campaign have [published](#) a report on the four-day week in the NHS. The report calls for a shorter working week to tackle burnout, overwork and poor staff retention rates.

See coverage in the [Guardian](#).

## Europe

### Four-day week discussed at the European Youth Event

At a panel on 'Jobs of Tomorrow' at the European Parliament's European Youth Event, the Network's coordinator India [spoke](#) about the four-day week with MEP Christophe Grudler and Sean Ellul.

The audience unanimously wanted a four-day week, and there was fruitful discussion on its value in relation to AI and automation, and encouraging workers to join green industries.

## Beyond Europe

### Bernie Sanders backs the four-day week

Taking to [Twitter](#) and the [Guardian](#), Senator Bernie Sanders calls for a four-day week in response to Washington Post coverage of the UK's pilot. Increased worker productivity, enabled by technology, was his justification for calling for shorter hours with no loss in pay.

### Progressive organisation Justice Democrats adopts four-day work week

The group that helped elect lawmakers like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez [embraces](#) a four-day week policy.

Justice Democrats, which has helped elect progressive lawmakers like Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, shifted to a four-day working week for its 20 employees starting last August on a six-month trial basis. In March, the group decided to extend the policy indefinitely after its employees reported the change allowed them to better manage the gruelling nature of campaign work.

### Oxfam Australia adopts a four-day week

The charity's employees [will be](#) working less hours for the same pay as the case for the four day work week gathers momentum around Australia.

Full time employees at Oxfam Australia will see their working time reduced to just 30 hours a week, following negotiations between the Australian Services Union (ASU) and the employer. This is the first instance for this

to be formalised within an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement.

Oxfam, which has 97 full-time and 37 part-time employees in Australia, of which about 90 are permanent, has committed to a six-month pilot as part of its latest negotiations with the union.