

OUR OWN TIME

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

Welcome

September 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 **17th 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.

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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

Network Updates

Annual Members Event

The Network's Annual Members event will be held on Monday 23rd October in London.

We will be discussing country updates on working time reduction, the Network's 2023 activities, future plans for the Network and the 2024 conference.

If you have not already registered your attendance, please contact our Coordinator, India, for additional information, at: workingtimenetwork.europe@gmail.com.

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 today - 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](#).

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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.

Belgium

Four-day week trial announced

The Belgian government is [launching](#) a private sector four-day week trial, with no loss in pay for employees. The announcement was made in Le Echo by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Economy and Work, Pierre-Yves Dermagne.

France

Lyons testing compressed hours for public sector employees

The local authority of Lyon, Lyon Metropole, is [trialling](#) a year-long initiative allowing 5,500 of its 9,600 employees to change their 35-hour week. Staff can compress their hours in four days, four and a half days or 9-day fortnight.

Employees on fixed schedules, such as waste collectors, are not eligible to take part.

There is no working time reduction, strictly speaking, but the authority hopes it will reduce burnout and narrow the gender pay gap.

Germany

Updates from the Institut Solidarische Moderne

Renée Harster, ISM

On July 13th there was a first digital network meeting, initiated by the ISM. A variety of political actors participated: movements, unions, academia and political parties. We engaged in shared analysis around what demands we can agree on. The group is staying connected to advance the political effort for work-time reduction.

The ISM working group on work-time has started writing a concept paper to solidify our shared analysis and distil shared demands for a work-time reduction that is in solidarity, transformative and emancipatory. This paper is currently in a feedback process with the participants of the networking meeting.

We are planning an in-person meeting on November 17th in Berlin, where we want to develop and potentially finalise the shared demands and strategize around how to start a campaign around them.

More info:

<https://www.solidarische-moderne.de/de/article/678.arbeitszeitverkürzung.html>

Hungary

Quarterly update

Benedikt Lehmann, Eötvös Loránd University

In the last few months Hungary has seen the launch of a new magazine named “4 Nap Munka” (translation: 4 days work), which gives a platform to research on working time reduction, presents case studies of companies that have introduced a four-day week, and provides information on what is necessary for the four-day week to be effective in companies. The magazine was founded by the management services company, Kaizen Pro, which also seeks to introduce readers to a method they have developed for the introduction of the four-day work week.

In addition, a glass industry company named CE Glass with over 300 employees has recently revealed its experience with the introduction of a four-day work week, which was rolled out for the entire workforce. The switch first began in January 2023 and was preceded by several months of preparation, which included consultation with employees. Following this, the first month was focused on facilitating a smooth transition to the new work schedules, which require 36 hours of work in offices and 40 hours in the production and loading areas. The experiment is intended to run until December 2023, when a decision will be made on its future. So far, employees seem to be happy with the experience and the company has reported no reduction in their productive capacity.

Finally, working time reduction has also been discussed in the Hungarian parliament recently. The topic was introduced by Tímea Szabó, a member of the left-wing green party, Párbeszéd, who proposed the introduction of a four-day work week. In doing so, she highlighted significant engagement with the idea in countries like Japan, Germany, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, while suggesting that it can be beneficial for workers and employers

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alike. She also mentioned successful trials in Hungary, including Telekom's. While this experiment was initially extended until it ended in August 2023, she was keen to highlight its successes in improving productivity despite the shorter working week. She also suggested that this might be a way for Hungary to improve its chronically low productivity rates compared to other EU countries, while simultaneously enabling workers to spend more time with their families and resting.

Norway

Two pilot projects in nurseries

Two nurseries in Stavanger and Oslo are [trialling](#) a four-day week for staff. The one in Stavanger is operating a 30-hour, 4-day week; the one in Oslo is trialling a 30-hour, 5-day week with 6-hour days.

Portugal

Update on the Four-Day Week Pilot

Pedro Gomes and Rita Fontinha have prepared an initial report on the Portuguese Government's four-day week private sector pilot, providing an update on the first phase (communication and registration of firms) and the companies moving to the second phase (preparation of the pilot).

46 companies have decided to proceed to the second phase, the majority of which are small organisations. The trials began in the summer.

The report with full details can be found [here](#).

United Kingdom

Scottish Government Public Sector Four-Day Week Trial Announced

A four-day week trial for civil servants in Scotland is going to be [launched](#) later this year.

The Scottish first minister, Humza Yousaf, has supported the project, which will be carried out at an arm's length from ministerial bodies.

South Cambridgeshire Council Four-Day Week Trial Continued and Expanded - Defying Government Calls to Stop

South Cambridgeshire District Council launched a three-month pilot but in May [announced](#) it would be extended to a year, and expanded from office-based staff to include refuse workers.

The council said the pilot had increased staff retention and cut costs.

In July, Lee Rowley, the UK local government minister, [wrote to the council](#), urging it to drop the "experiment" and arguing it was poor value for money. South Cambridgeshire defended its decision and has carried on with the expanded scheme. To date, the government has taken no action to stop it doing so.

Europe

Employment commissioner favours EU-wide four-day week

The European Union should push for implementing a four-day working week, namely for sectors with labour shortages, EU Commissioner for Employment and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, [told Lusa](#) in an interview.

“I think it is something that is progressively moving forward [...] because the new generations that have a certain vision about the balance between work and personal life”, said Schmit. “I am open to that”, he added.

Beyond Europe

‘One Year On’ Study on the US and Canadian Pilots from Four-Day Week Global

A new one-year study into the long-term effects of the four-day week has been [published](#) by 4 Day Week Global. 100% of the 41 companies noted in the study are keeping the four-day week, work-life balance increased by 35%, burnout decreased by 17% and revenue grew by 15%. Furthermore, 57% of employees recorded greater productivity levels and recruitment and retention were both much improved.

See coverage in The Times [here](#).