OUR OWN TIME
European Work-Time Network Newsletter

December 2025

Welcome

The debate on working time is one of the most salient topics on work and politics across Europe today, and there is a growing movement that is 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 **26th issue**. If you would like to see the previous issues, please use this link.

The newsletter is produced by the Autonomy Institute, and is supported by ATTAC (Germany – Group ArbeitFAIRTeilen), 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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Network Updates

Working Time Reduction in Europe: Policies, Practices, and Perspectives

On Thursday 20th November, members of the network attended a public event in Brussels, hosted by the **EFA-Green Group in European Parliament**, which brought together researchers, trade unions, civil society, and policymakers to explore the promise of working time reduction as a path toward more meaningful work, sustainability, and economic justice.

Thanks to everyone who took part – join the network to receive advance notice of future events like this!

Join us!

The European Work-Time Network is open to new members!

We are working for a Europe where the normal full-time working week is shortened, such as a 4-day working week, without reduction of pay. The Network consists of individual and organisational members.

The conditions of membership are as follows:

- Relevant professional or extracurricular interest and/or engagement with working time reduction.
- Subscription to the quarterly newsletter and mailing list (with an annual renewal).
- Contribution (sending updates on national debates, campaigns, trials etc.) to the quarterly newsletter where relevant.
- Attendance at Network events when possible, including monthly webinars and our annual members' event.

The Network's activities consist of:

- Quarterly newsletters
- Monthly webinars
- Biannual conferences

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- Annual members' meetings
- Membership coordination

You can find out more and join the Network here.

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EWTN Monthly Webinars

The next webinar will take place on **Wednesday January 28th at 1pm CET**, with a presentation on **Technology and Work-Time Reduction** from Dr. Anastasia Siapka and Dr. Philipp Frey. Anastasia will be specifically discussing AI for Less and Better Work: Naïve Optimism or Liberatory Hope?

You can watch the recordings of our previous webinars on our website here.

These include:

- **April**: Maria del Carmen Barrera Chamorro presented the EESC's Opinion on Working time, the efficiency of the economy and the well-being of workers. Watch the recording here.
- **June**: Maritza López Novella, Damaris Castro and Brent Bleys to discuss the drivers and challenges of implementing collective working time reduction in Belgium. Watch the recording here.
- **September**: India Burgess and Ana B. Muñoz Ruiz presented research findings from their work in a recent ETUCLEX study exploring working time reduction through collective agreements around Europe. Watch the recording here.
- **October:** Charles Stevenson (REAL Project) discussed the relationship between a Jobs Guarantee and working-time reduction. You can watch the recording here.
- **November:** Suryadeepto Nag (University of Lausanne) discussed his research on work-time reduction's impact on the Global South. The recording will be available on the EWTN YouTube channel shortly.

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Events

The European Work-Time Network will be hosting a conference in the latter half of 2026. Stay tuned for more information!

Call for submissions

The newsletter is dependent on contributions from the Network's members and our dedicated Country Leads.

If you would like to become a Country Lead, or have any information you think should be included in the next newsletter, please contact the Network Coordinator, Grace, at: workingtimenetwork.europe@gmail.com.

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Germany

Margareta Steinrücke, Attac! Germany

Resistance to proposed abolition of the 8 hours maximum daily working time

The German Minister of Labour has promised, after huge protests from the doctors' trade union against the abolition of an 8 hour maximum daily working time, a new weekly maximum working time, so that reforms should not jeopardize occupational safety and improve the compatibility of work and family life.

The German trade unions confederation DGB strengthened its campaign "Mit Macht für die 8!", with the trade unions Ver.di (for all services), IG Metall and NGG (food and gastronomy) supporting it with their own campaigns against the abolition of the 8 hours maximum daily working time.

In December, the DGB-Index Gute Arbeit (a survey) "Wöchentliche Arbeitszeiten zwischen Wunsch und Wirklichkeit" ("Weekly working hours between desire and reality") was published. 72% of those surveyed said that they absolutely did not want to work more than 8 hours a day.

A human chain was also formed on the 10th December around the Bremen state parliament in protest against plans to introduce a 41-hour work week for civil servants and teachers.

New shorter working weeks in Germany

A nursing home run by the German Red Cross in Sangerhausen will introduce a 32-hour week with full pay compensation from January 2026 (after already introducing a 4-day week in 2023).

ZF, one of the largest automotive suppliers in Friedrichshafen, has also introduced a 31.5-hour week

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without wage compensation until March 2026 in order to secure jobs.

The company health insurance fund BKK Firmus, based in Bremen, has also introduced the 4-day week with 35 hours to increase employers' attractiveness and to secure employee retention.

Working time reduction events in Germany

The Attac-AG ArbeitFairTeilen concluded its 6-part webinar series "The new relevance of working time reduction. 28-hour week now!" with a contribution of Katrin Mohr about the collective bargaining battles over working time reduction in the metal industry.

The Erich Fromm Society, in cooperation with FES (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, a social-democratic foundation) and HBS (trade unions foundation), organized a conference entitled "The 4-Day Week in Light of Exhaustion and Psychological Needs" on the 28th November.

The KDA Bremen (Services for the world of labour) is also considering making working time reduction a focus of its activities in 2026.

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Greece

Maria Jaidopulu Vrijea, Nicos Poulantzas Institute

Greece introducing a 13hour work day

Contrary to the European trend of shorter working hours, Greece's right-wing government has introduced a compressed four-day working week, extended the six-day working week to more industries in the private sector, and permitted a 13-hour working day this year.

These are all occurring on a voluntary basis, in a country where collective agreements have been dismantled by austerity programmes, and whose employees are among the most overworked in Europe, with one of the lowest purchasing powers. The General Confederation of Greek Workers is calling for a shorter working week of 37.5 hours without cuts to salaries, a move supported by 94% of employees.

Greece, however, is not an exception, but rather an example of a global trend towards the normalisation of longer working hours – as has been explained by Elena Papagiannaki, Lecturer in Economics at Edinburgh Napier University, in her article for The Conversation.

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Iceland

Guðmundur D. Haraldsson, Alda

New reduced hours contracts for Pharmacists

The Icelandic Association of Pharmacists agreed to a new contract with employers in November. The new contract, according to the union, provides members with higher pay, but also a reduction of working time by eight hours a month. From September 1st, 2026, weekly working time in pharmacies will go down to 38 hours and five minutes, while in the pharmaceutical industry weekly hours are to go down to 37.34 hours. It should be noted that this contract only applies to pharmacists working in the private sector; another contract covers pharmacists working in the public sector (e.g., hospitals and health clinics).

Reducing working time in playschools

In October 2025, Reykjavík City proposed a new pay schedule for playschools. The stated aim is to reduce hours of stay in playschools by pupils down to 38 hours a week or less. The main motivation is a long-term staffing crisis that has plagued playschools during the last decade, primarily in the capital area. The staffing problems are exacerbated by elevated levels of staff illness and burnout. In some cases playschools go down below minimum staffing required and are forced to ask parents to collect their children early. Many schools do not meet the minimum legal ratio of certified teachers to non-certified. Hours spent by pupils in playschools in Iceland is the highest of all European countries.

The new pay schedule is linked to parental income, dual/single household income status, and hours that children spend at playschools. Higher income households will pay more, as will dual income ones, while lower income and single income households will pay less. A 25% discount is set to be given to children who leave by 14:00 on Fridays. A special charge will be levied for days around Christmas and in the New Year. This is to protect those with lower incomes and those who have less flexibility of hours while motivating

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others to reduce the hours of their children at playschools. Regular operating hours at playschools will not change and as before siblings will get a 100% discount.

Similar arrangements have been in place in a neighbouring town, Kópavogur, for some time. These have been criticised on the basis of being harmful to gender equality – women would be more likely to reduce their hours of work – and harming the middle class. Also, critics point out that a majority of parents still work 40 hours a week, which remains the baseline in the private sector. The private sector has not followed step with the public sector in reducing hours in both scope and amount of hours.

It remains to be seen if the new arrangements will be put in place in Reykjavík.

Discussion of new Bank Holiday

The Prime Minister, Kristrún Frostadóttir, has suggested that December 1st should become a bank holiday. On that day in 1918, Iceland became a sovereign state when a treaty with Denmark became effective. The country became fully independent from Denmark in 1944, on June 17th , which is a Bank Holiday. Commentators routinely point out that December 1st is a more important day than June 17th, as home rule was formally reached on that day, which then led to independence a few decades later.

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Netherlands

Yvette Becker, Policy Advisor on working hours at FNV

FNV feasibility studies into the four-day week – and other developments

Interest in the four-day working week continues to grow in the Netherlands and remains a key priority within our labour-conditions coordination efforts from the FNV. Over the past period, several concrete steps have been taken to move from exploration to practical testing.

The four-day workweek is for us 10 to 20% working time reduction without loss in pay. Different models are possible. For example, you can have 4 days with 8 hours a day, 5 days with 6 hours a day, or free series in shifts.

We have launched multiple feasibility studies across different sectors to assess organisational, financial, and operational impact. The first pilot is now approaching, offering an opportunity to gather insights and to evaluate various models of reduced working hours in practice. To ensure alignment and engagement across stakeholders, presentations have been delivered within the professional framework groups, as well as to union leadership and employer representatives. These sessions have helped broaden awareness, highlight preliminary findings, and invite input from across the labour market.

Also, a new landing page has been launched (Vierdaagse werkweek - FNV) where we explain more in depth the four-day week how it can work, and address FAQs for both employees and employers, share success stories of different type of companies in and outside of the Netherlands (from child care, municipalities, consultancy firms, tech companies, etc.)

A number of SPDI-projects (Social Partners for Sustainable Employability) have been initiated to explore innovative scheduling, productivity improvements, and wellbeing outcomes associated with shorter working weeks in irregular working patterns and shift schedules. Also a research study in hospitals on the normal working week week is on its way and will start in January 2026.

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A shorter working week in nursing and healthcare

Recruitment activities for new members at the Nursing Experience on the topic of the 32-hour working week have provided valuable signals from the healthcare sector, where interest in reduced working hours is especially strong due to high work pressure and ongoing labour shortages. Although most workers in the health care sector already work part time, we believe – based on evidence in similar sectors – that it is a way to lower sick leave and staff turnover, that more people are willing to work a few hours more, because it can lead to less fragile and better and more stable working schedules.

Looking ahead, preparations are being made for further knowledge-sharing sessions, expanded sector outreach, and the design of additional pilot formats tailored to different organisational structures. Together, these efforts represent a significant step forward in building an evidence-based approach to a more sustainable labour market in the Netherlands.

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Poland

Polish government-backed four-day week trial set to begin on 1st January 2026 – involving more than 5,000 workers

From the start of 2026, stage II of the Polish government's major four-day week pilot scheme will begin, as 90 selected employers (comprising small and large businesses, as well as organisations from the public and private sector) will begin testing shorter working hours for no loss in pay over the following 12 months.

Nearly two thousand companies and institutions applied to take part, and now more than 5,000 workers are set to test a shorter working week for no loss in pay and conditions.

Organisations taking part can receive up to 1 million zlotys (€240,000), dependent on their size, to support them in testing out shorter working hours – for instance through expert consultation, evaluation support, and so on.

Further details can be viewed on the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy website.

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Spain

Joan Sanchis (Universitat de València)

Partial measures included in Spanish bill to cut work week to 37.5 hours implemented by government decree

Since the legislative proposal to reduce the standard working week to 37.5 hours failed to secure enough support in Parliament, the debate over work-time reduction has stalled in Spain. The Minister of Labour, Yolanda Díaz, has indicated that she may revisit the debate in the future once sufficient support is secured. In the meantime, some measures originally included in the bill have been implemented by government decree, such as authorising labor authorities to remotely monitor time-keeping records in order to combat unpaid working hours in the Spanish economy.

New publication from the Time Use Initiative

The Time Use Initiative has published a new agenda – Towards a More Rational and Sustainable Working Time Local and Regional Time Agenda – which presents 19 working time public policies implemented at various levels of urban governance that are already changing working conditions for the better.

The showcased policies are complemented by expert insights from Tatiana Pignon and Alexandra Arntsen, from the European Working Time Network, and those of Marta Junqué Surià and Nadia García Ruiz, from the Time Use Initiative. Together, they offer a pathway to understand the varying dimensions of how to conceive local and regional public policies that create a more rational and sustainable working time.

The agenda can be viewed/downloaded on their website.

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Switzerland

Noémie Zurlinden. University of St. Gallen

Care workers demand working time reduction

In February 2025, Unia published the Care-manifesto, which was created in collaboration between care workers and researchers from the University of Applied Sciences of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI) and the Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH). Among one of several measures to tackle the care-crisis, the manifesto demands a significant working time reduction. In November, more than 5000 people, mostly healthcare workers, demonstrated to demand a safe healthcare system and better working conditions, such as a reduction in working time.

- Care-Manifest (German)
- Manifeste du Care (French)
- Manifesto del Care (Italian)

Swiss 4 Day Week pilot study

The Swiss 4 Day Week pilot study, conducted by the organizational consulting firm Hailperin and 4 Day Week Global, started in January 2025. The scientific partner of the project is the Institute New Work at the Bern University of Applied Sciences.

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United Kingdom

Jack Kellam, The Autonomy Institute

Business and charity leaders urge ministers to lead England's transition to four-day week

In a letter co-ordinated by the 4 Day Week Foundation, in October, over 100 business and charity leaders called on ministers to "lead the country's transition toward a shorter working week", after the local government secretary criticised a council for shifting to a four-day work pattern.

This came following a letter leaked to the Telegraph, in which the minister, Steve Reed, claimed an independent report into South Cambridgeshire's four-day week pilot had shown performance "declined in key housing-related services including rent collection, reletting times and tenant satisfaction with repairs".

Campaign for four-day week for schools gains ground following 4 Day Week Foundation report

In November, the 4 Day Week Foundation released new research, analysing the available evidence on the four-day week for schools. With UK schools facing tremendous pressures with recruitment, retention and a lack of flexibility for teachers, the report sets out existing evidence around shorter working weeks in schools and UK case studies.

The report made the national news cycle with the Autonomy Institute's Jack Kellam discussing the proposal on BBC Radio 5 Live, alongside a number of articles that appeared about the subject in the Guardian offering support (see here and here), as well as critical ones in the right-wing press.

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Beyond Europe

World Economic Forum blog on the four-day week explores global experimentation with the trend

The post drew on recent research by 4 Day Week Global which shows that since 2019, trials in more than 10 countries have seen 92% of participating companies keep the policy, citing lower stress, reduced sick leave and stable or higher revenues.

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