Press Release

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**Eurofound launches its flagship annual working time update 2012 report:**

**Differences in working time remain large across Europe**

**(Dublin, Ireland): The average collectively agreed weekly working time in the European Union, including Croatia, stood at 38.1 hours in 2012, the same as for the EU27 in 2011, according to Eurofound’s latest annual working time update. The working week was on average 30 minutes shorter in the pre-2004 EU15 countries and over 1 hour and 30 minutes longer in the new Member States. The new report provides a snapshot of working time developments in the European Union and Norway in 2012 as agreed between the social partners by collective agreements. The combined total of agreed annual leave and public holidays in the EU varied from 40 days in Germany to 28 days in Estonia – a difference of over 2 working weeks.**

Collective bargaining plays an important role in determining the duration of working time in most of the 28 Member States of the European Union, though to a lesser or sometimes negligible extent in some of the Member States that joined the EU since 2004, the NMS13. This annual report provides a general overview of collectively agreed working time and any major developments taking place in 2012, and it includes data from Croatia, a Member State of the European Union from 1 July 2013, and Norway.

Belgium, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the UK were the only countries registering changes between 2011 and 2012. Slovakia continued in a decreasing trend whereas Spain halted an upward trend: both countries registered a fall of 0.1 hours in collectively agreed weekly hours. Sweden and the UK registered an increase of 0.1 hours per week, while Belgium recorded the highest increase, of 0.2 hours per week.

The report also looks at the average normal weekly working hours for full-time workers as set by collective bargaining in three sectors representing the manufacturing industry, services and the public sector – metalworking, banking and local government. The banking sector recorded the shortest average agreed normal weekly working hours from the three in the EU, with 37.6 hours, followed by the local government sector, with 37.8 hours, and metalworking, with 37.9 hours.

Actual weekly hours worked by full-time employees were longer than the average normal collectively agreed working week in 21 of the 29 countries analysed in the report. In the EU, full-time employees in Romania reported the longest actual weekly hours in their main jobs in 2012 – 41.2 hours, or 0.1 hours less than in 2011. They were followed by employees in Luxembourg (41.1 hours), the UK (40.8 hours), Germany (40.5 hours), Croatia and Cyprus (both 40.3 hours), and Bulgaria (40.2 hours). Employees in Finland worked the shortest hours (37.6). This was 3.6 hours less than their counterparts in Romania, or over 4.5 weeks of work in Romania in a full year.

Across the EU28, men worked on average 2 hours more than women. In the EU15, men worked 2.3 hours more per week than women; by contrast, in the NMS13, men worked around 1 hour and 30 minutes more than women. Again, these averages conceal more stark national situations: men’s actual weekly hours exceeded women’s by 3 hours or more in Ireland, the UK and Italy (3.6, 3.4 and 3 hours, respectively), by less than 1 hour in Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania, and by less than 20 minutes in Bulgaria.

An important factor in the overall length of working time is the paid annual leave to which workers are generally entitled, the report points out. All 28 countries studied have a statutory minimum period of paid annual leave, and the average figure for the EU28, including paid leave and public holidays, stood at 35.1 days – 36.6 days in the EU15 and 30.3 days in the NMS13. The report reveals big differences between countries, with employees in Germany enjoying up to 40 days of leave in total in 2012, followed by employees in France and Italy (39 days), while other notably low-leave countries included Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, with 29 days, and Estonia with 28 days.

Taking into account the agreed weekly hours, the days of leave and the public holidays, in 2012, the average collectively agreed annual normal working time was approximately 1,712 hours in the EU28, 1,678 hours in the EU15, and 1,824 hours in the NMS13.

The ***Developments in collectively agreed working time 2012*** report is available online and to download from http://bit.ly/wtupd13

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**NOTES TO THE EDITOR**

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social and work-related policies. Eurofound was established in 1975 by [Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75.](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:01975R1365-20050804:EN:NOT)

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