

Paving the road to enlargement

Workers in the acceding and candidate countries work longer and report a higher level of risk to their health and safety than their counterparts in the EU, according to the latest working conditions survey by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the Dublin-based EU-agency. The survey is part of a series of report wide-ranging new data and analysis on living and working conditions in the current EU Member States and in the acceding and candidate countries (ACC) made available by the Foundation in the run-up to enlargement in May 2004.

According to the *Working conditions in acceding and candidate countries* survey, workers in the ACC work longer hours in less service-related industries than in the current EU Member States. They also suffer higher exposure to various physical risk factors such as dangerous substances, fumes and noise.

"The survey provides a first comprehensive overview of working conditions in the 13 acceding and candidate countries, using the same methodology as in the previous European working condition surveys carried out by the Foundation in 1990, 1995 and 2000," says **Willy Buschak**, the Foundation's Acting Director. "The results provide a solid benchmark on the situation in these countries as ten of them move towards membership in May 2004."

Despite convergence in recent years, one of the principal conclusions of the report, *Working conditions in acceding and candidate countries*, is that there exist significant differences in terms of work-force structure and working conditions between the old and new EU Member States.

Measuring living conditions and quality of life in Europe

Before enlargement, and in collaboration with the European Commission, the Foundation will also provide wide-ranging data and analysis on living conditions in the acceding and candidate countries. The living conditions survey will focus on quality of life and personal satisfaction, social exclusion, income, deprivation and economic strain, as well as work and quality of work, healthcare and access to services, family aspects, and fertility and migration trends. The analysis of living conditions will be followed by the publication of the Foundation's *Quality of Life in Europe monitoring* initiative. It will focus on employment, economic resources, family life, community life, health and education. In short, it measures the



Summary of main findings of the working conditions in acceding and candidate countries survey

- Working hours are longer, less gender differentiated (incidence of female part-time work is low) and unsocial hours (such as shift and night work) more frequent. Part-time work is less frequent in CCs (7%) than in EU (17%).
- Self-reported work-related health problems are higher in the CCs, in particular overall fatigue and musculoskeletal disorders.
- More workers consider their health and safety at risk because of work (CCs 40%, EU 27%).
- Work organisation is:
 - less client driven ;
 - less decentralised (workers have less responsibilities and autonomy) ;
 - more hierarchical.
- Exposure to physical risk factors (such as noise, extremes of temperatures, noxious fumes etc.) is higher.
- Work is less client-oriented than in the EU and relies less on computer technology.
- Job demands, although of a different nature, are high and job control (the autonomy workers have to regulate their work) is lower. However support provided by colleagues is higher.
- The dual workload (the combination of paid work and unpaid household / caring work) is more gender balanced, although still far from being evenly balanced.
- More workers over 40 are in employment.
- Fewer workers receive training and work does not provide as many learning opportunities.

Note : The conclusions above are based on average figures. They can, therefore, hide significant differences, in particular between countries. This means that some of these conclusions might not always reflect the particular situation of a country within the ACC group. The same remark also applies to any national comparisons between EU Member States.

quality of life in the 15 Member States and 13 acceding and candidate countries.

Levels of collective bargaining high in Europe

According to the recent annual overview industrial relations released by the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO), the levels of collective bargaining coverage is on average almost four times higher in the European Union than in the USA and three times higher than in Japan. "It's the single most marked difference between the EU and its two competitors" says Willy Buschak. "The recently published annual overview *Industrial relations in the EU, Japan and USA* shows that, on average, 67% of the workforce in the new enlarged European Union is covered by collective bargaining, i.e. agreements in which workers - partially or fully - have their pay and conditions set."

Collective bargaining levels are lower in the new than in the current EU Member States. Still, taking into account the differences between union and non-union sectors, workers' pay and conditions across Europe of 25 are agreed collectively to a much greater extent than in Japan and the USA, reflecting a difference in the nature and extent of employment and labour law between three competitors.

A road map to labour peace

By combining social dialogue and tripartite concertation with the foresight model of establishing scenarios for the future, the Foundation-led project *Social dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms* has produced national development plans outlining effective industrial relations systems in all 10 candidate countries. The project, which is based on previous European Foundation projects on social dialogue and EMU in the current and new EU Member States, will come to an end on 31 March 2004 with a conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

"The workshops on conflict resolution have led to real dialogue between participants," says **Frank Pullicino**, Director of the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations in Malta. "For us in Malta, the project will contribute to a wider use of tripartite concertation, leading peaceful industrial relations."

More information is available at <http://www.eurofound.eu.int>.



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

BUILDING OSH KNOWLEDGE

The European Agency's work with Acceding and Candidate Countries

**Eusebio Rial-González
and Brenda O'Brien**

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Bilbao, Spain

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work is based in Bilbao, and its main role is to "provide the Community bodies, the Member States and those involved in the field with the technical, scientific and economic information of use in the field of safety and health at work"¹. This article aims to explain briefly how the Agency has been working with the Acceding and Candidate Countries to achieve a smooth transition into their full membership of the Agency network and also to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practice across the EU25.

Preparing for EU enlargement : sharing knowledge and good practice

Over the last five years, the Agency has been preparing to ensure that the Acceding and Candidate Countries (ACCs) would be able to participate as full members of its network from May 2004. The Agency has a "Focal Point" in each Member State and EFTA

country to act as its reference centre. The relevant national OSH authorities in all the ACCs appointed a Focal Point during 2000.

They have been involved in Agency activities and developed their own websites with support from the Agency's PHARE programmes.

¹ Article 2 of the Agency's Founding Regulations : <http://agency.osha.eu.int/agency>.