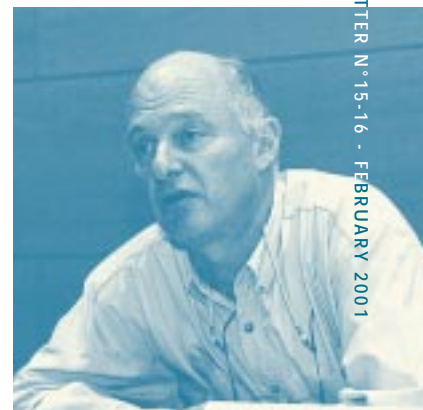


3. Tools for Assessment – Tools for Action



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Ten years of working conditions in the European Union

159 million people were in employment in the European Union in 2000, of whom 83% were employees and 17% self-employed.

In 2000, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions carried out its Third European Survey and questioned 21,500 workers in face-to-face interviews on their working conditions (1,500 in each Member State apart from Luxembourg where 500 were interviewed). The two previous surveys were carried out in 1990 (EU12) and in 1995 (EU15).

The 2000 Survey reveals that :

- The most common work-related health problems are :
 - back pain (reported by 33% of workers);
 - stress (28%);
 - muscular pains (neck and shoulders) (23%);
 - burn-out (23%).
- These health problems, which are on the increase, are related to poor working conditions.
- Exposure to stressful physical environments (noise, vibrations, dangerous substances, heat, cold, etc.) and to poor physical design (carrying heavy loads and painful positions) remains prevalent.
- There is a continuing intensification of work - this was already one of the main factors emerging from the previous surveys.
- The control that workers have over their work increased significantly in the early nineties but has slowed down since 1995. One-third of workers still report little or no control over their work.
- The nature of work is changing : it is increasingly client-driven and oriented towards information technology.
- Flexibility is widespread in all areas :
 - working time : "round the clock" work with fluctuating work schedules - extensive use of part-time work (17% of workers);
 - work organisation : multi-skilling and teamwork - empowerment;
 - labour market : increasing use of temporary workers.
- Nevertheless, traditional work organisation features remain (repetitive work and monotonous work are still prevalent).
- Flexibility is not always conducive to good working conditions.
- Gender segregation remains strong and detrimental to women.
- Temporary workers (employees with fixed-term contracts and temporary agency workers) continue to report more difficult work situations than permanent employees.

Health and work

Workers' perceptions of their health and safety being at risk because of their work has shown a slight improvement during the past ten years (as indicated in Figure 1).

However an increasing proportion of workers are reporting work-related health problems (see Figure 2). Musculo-skeletal disorders (backache and muscular pains, particularly in the neck and shoulders) are on the rise, as is overall fatigue (burn-out). Stress remains at the same level (28%). There are strong correlations between stress and musculo-skeletal disorders and features of work organisation such as repetitive work and pace of work (see Table 1).

Figure 1 : Workers reporting health and safety risks at work

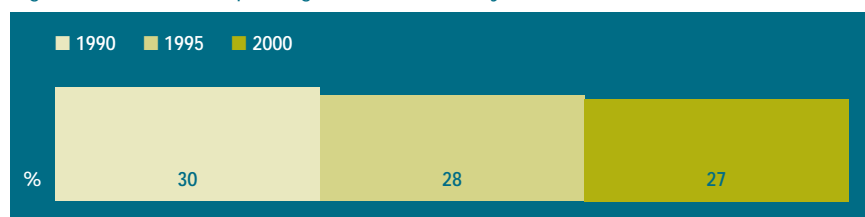


Figure 2 : Work-related health problems

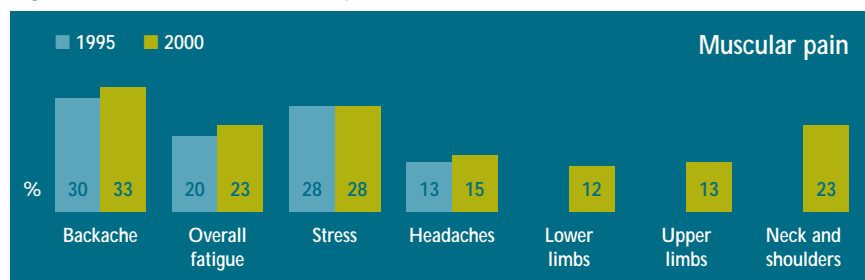
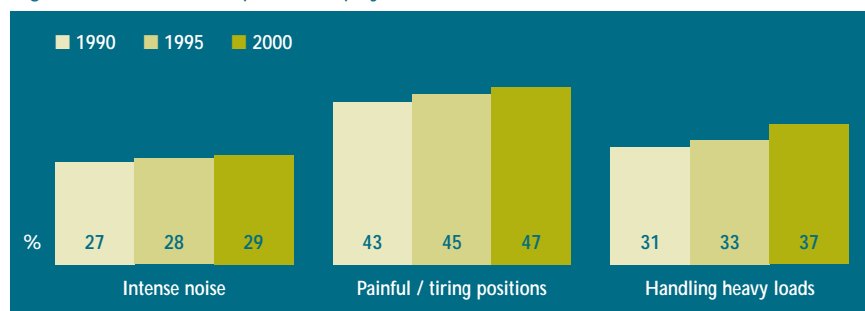


Figure 3 : Workers exposed to physical hazards



Exposure to physical hazards

Stressful physical environments (noise, polluted air, heat, cold, vibrations), carrying heavy loads and working in painful or tiring positions are just

as prevalent in 2000 as they were in 1990 and in 1995 (see Figure 3). The proportion of workers exposed remains high.

In 2000, as in previous surveys, men are more exposed than women workers to all of these issues except for painful and tiring positions, where the rates are identical.

Non-permanent workers (temporary agency workers and employees with fixed-term contracts) are more exposed to issues such as heavy loads and painful positions than permanent workers (see Figure 10).

Repetitive work

Repetitive work is still widespread. In 1995, 57% of workers were reporting repetitive movements (33% of them on a permanent basis). In 2000 the proportion remains identical (57%), with a slight decrease for those continuously affected (31%).

The question about repetitive tasks was changed in 2000 and trends are therefore difficult to assess. In 2000 32% of workers report carrying out repetitive tasks of less than 10 minutes and 22% of less than 1 minute.

Repetitive work correlates closely with musculo-skeletal disorders (see Table 1).

Table 1 : Health problems related to making repetitive movements

%	Backache	Muscular pains in neck and shoulders	Muscular pains in upper limbs	Muscular pains in lower limbs
Repetitive movements	48	37	24	21
No repetitive movements	19	11	4	5
Average	33	23	13	11

Intensity of work

Intensity of work has increased during the past decade, more sharply between 1990 and 1995 than between 1995 and 2000.

In 2000, more than half of the workers report working at high speed and to tight deadlines during at least one quarter of their working time (see Figure 4).

In addition, 21% of all workers stated that they did not have enough time to do their job.

The intensity of work is strongly correlated to health problems and accidents at work (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2 : Health problems related to working at very high speed

%	Backache	Stress	Muscular pains in neck and shoulders	Injuries
Working continuously at high speed	46	40	35	11
Never working at high speed	25	21	15	5

Table 3 : Health problems related to working to tight deadlines

%	Backache	Stress	Muscular pains in neck and shoulders	Injuries
Working continuously to tight deadlines	42	40	31	10
Never working to tight deadlines	27	20	17	5

Pace of work factors

Between 1995 and 2000 the pace of work has become increasingly induced by "market constraints" (external demands from clients, passengers, users, patients, etc.) and by the work done by colleagues. By contrast, "industrial constraints" (like production norms and automatic speed of a machine or moving of a product) or "bureaucratic constraints" (like direct control by superiors) have become less prevalent (see Figure 5).

Autonomy (job control)

Although between 1990 and 1995 the percentage of workers having control over their own pace of work had increased significantly (from 64% to 72% of all workers, including the self-employed, or from 59% to 68% for employees), it decreased very slightly between 1995 and 2000 to 71% (67% for employees) (Figure 6).

Figure 4 : Working at very high speed or to tight deadlines

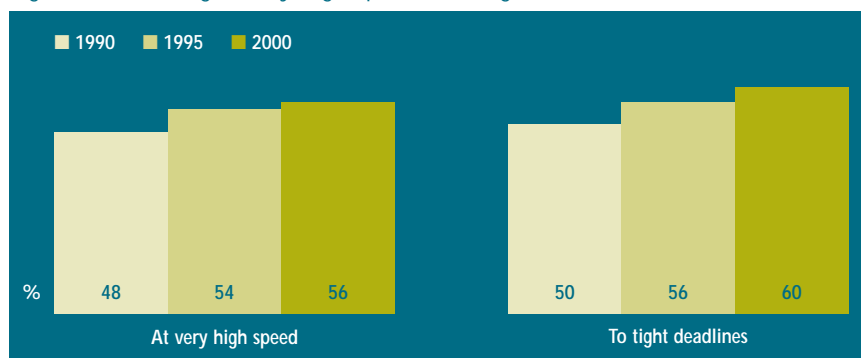
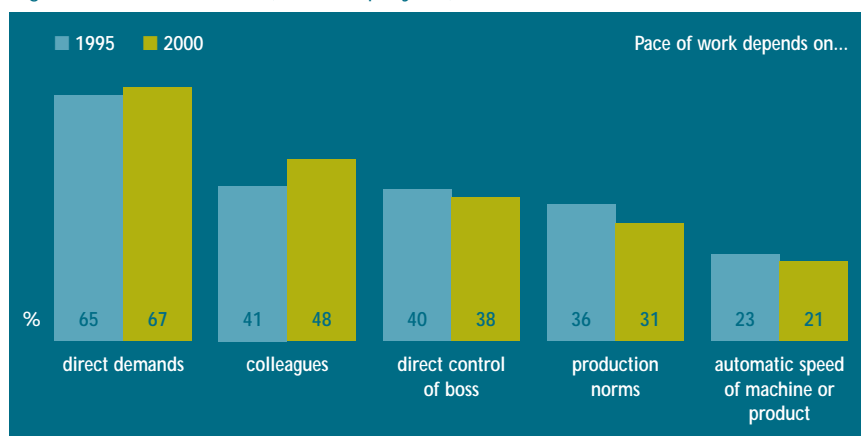


Figure 5 : Pace of work (% of employees)



The percentage of workers with personal control over their methods of work also increased, from 60% (56% of employees) in 1990 to 70% (67% of employees) in 1995 and was at exactly the same level in 2000.

The percentage of workers able to choose the order of their tasks remains identical in 1995 and 2000 at 64% (60% of employees).

Looked at in terms of occupations, between 1995 and 2000 a marked deterioration can be seen for plant and machine operators and service workers and, with regard to sectors, for transport and communication workers.

The possibility people have to decide when to take a break or holidays slightly decreases between 1995 (63% and 57%) and 2000 (61% and 56%).

44% of workers have an influence on their working hours; the self-employed (at 84%) have much greater control than employees (36%) and males (47%) more so than females (41%). Employees on

Figure 6 : Autonomy



Figure 7 : Training

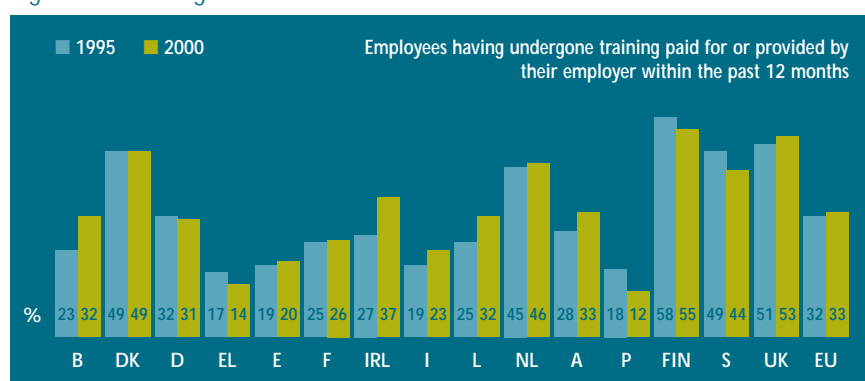


Figure 8 : Job content

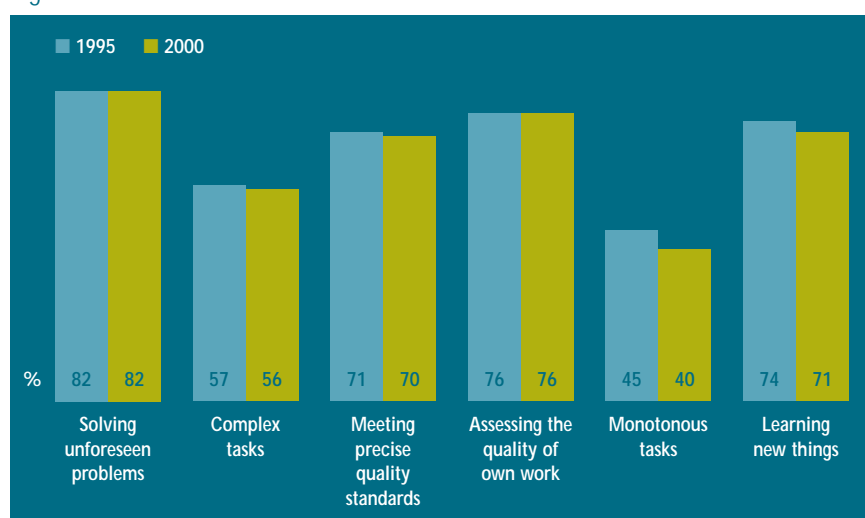


Figure 9 : Employees having been less than one year in the company (%)



permanent contracts (38%) have more control than those on fixed-term contracts (29%) and temporary agency contracts (23%). Control is improving with professional skills.

Nature of work

The proportion of people working (at least occasionally) with computers has increased slightly, from 39% in 1995 to 41% in 2000. This growth is higher for the self-employed, but they still do not use computers as much as employees (33% versus 43%).

Teleworking is no longer exceptional in 2000. Teleworking on a full-time or nearly full-time basis is carried out by just over 1% of the total population and concentrated in jobs in the higher-qualified professional categories and in the financial intermediation and real estate sectors.

Skills, training and support

33 % of employees received training provided by their employer between March 1999 and March 2000 compared to 32 % in 1995. Temporary agency workers are catching up with permanent workers.

8% of workers regard the demands of the job as too high for their skills (7% in 1995) and the same proportion as too low (11% in 1995), while 89% declare they can get assistance from colleagues (the same as in 1995).

Job content

Overall, the indicators remain stable over time with regard to the tasks workers have to perform (solving problems, quality control) or their complexity. Monotonous work is decreasing although this is not balanced as one would expect by the development of learning opportunities.

Working time

Duration of work

Working hours are characterized by a high proportion of workers with short working hours (16% of workers work fewer than 30 hours per week) but also a high proportion of workers who have very long working hours (20% of all workers

and 14% of employees work more than 45 hours per week).

Part-time work : 18% of respondents report working part-time, but this covers different concepts according to countries. Part-time work remains a female phenomenon (32% of females, 6% of males) and is more prevalent in some countries (such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom). 23% of part-timers would prefer to work more.

Table 4 : Working time

% employees working	1995	2000
< 30 hours per week	15	17
≥ 45 hours per week	16	14
Part-time (spontaneous)	-	18
of whom would like to work :		
more	-	23
less	-	9

Commuting

Trends in commuting should be closely monitored, especially in the light of part-time developments. Average daily commuting time is 38 minutes, but wide disparities can be observed both between people (18% of respondents report daily commuting times of more than 60 minutes) and between countries (the longest commuting times are in the Netherlands).

“Round the clock” work

The trends observed in 1995 remain and are characterized by the extent of shiftwork (reported by 20% of workers), night work (19%) and weekend work (Saturday work: 52%; Sunday work: 27%). Slight declines can be observed in all these time patterns, mainly for self-employed workers, but also to some extent for employed workers (see Table 5).

Table 5 : “Round the clock” work (% of employees working at least 25% of their time)

Type	1990	1995	2000
Night work	17	19	18
Shiftwork	-	-	22
Saturday work	-	48	47
Sunday	-	25	24

Flexible time patterns

Not only are working hours spread over all days of the week and all hours of the day, changing time schedules are also a factor : 24% of workers

Figure 10 : Status and working conditions - physical hazards

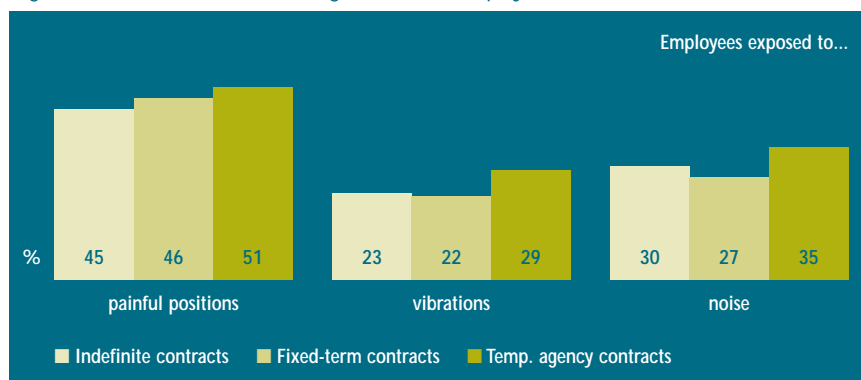
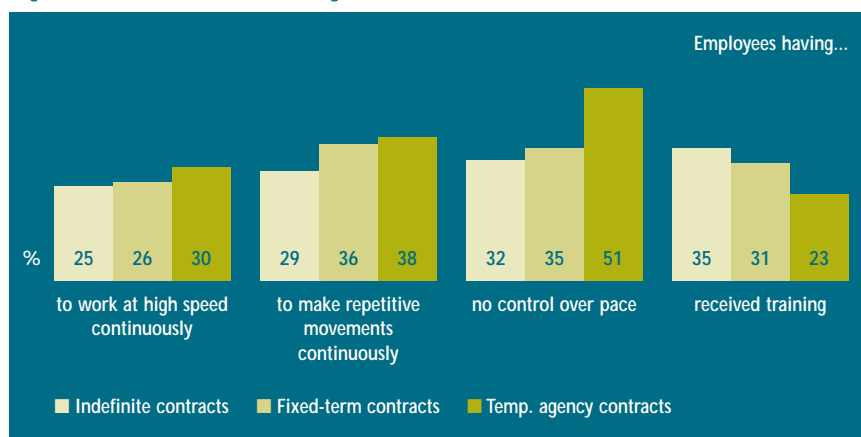


Figure 11 : Status and working conditions



report fluctuating weekly work schedules and 41% report fluctuating daily work schedules.

For 19% of workers, working time flexibility does not fit with family and social commitments.

Gender segregation

■ Gender segregation remains strong. It is not only that men and women do not have the same jobs (there are more males in managerial and

Figure 12 : Violence and harassment at work



professional jobs), but within the same job categories men are generally in the more senior positions.

- Gender segregation is also clear when considering income levels in the same job categories (a consequence of the above-mentioned segregation) and control of working time (Table 6).
- Finally, the double workload remains a strong feature of female work as shown in Table 7.

Table 6 : Income levels classified by gender (%)

Income level	Women	Men	Total
Low income	26	9	16
Low-medium income	24	19	21
Medium-high income	17	22	20
High-income	10	22	17
Refuse to answer	23	29	26

Table 7 : Who does what at home (% of respondents doing it for 1 hour or more every day)

At home, who...	Women	Men
takes care of the children and their education ?	41	24
does the cooking ?	64	13
does the housework ?	63	12

Temporary workers

It emerged clearly in the 1995 Survey that temporary work (employees on fixed-term contracts and temporary agency workers) was linked to poor working conditions. The same applies in 2000 (see Figures 10 and 11). Temporary work remains a strong employment feature (10% of employees are on fixed term contracts and 2% are on temporary agency contracts) and only half the employees occupying new jobs are on indefinite contracts (see Figure 9).

Violence and harassment at work

Violence and harassment in the workplace, as reported in earlier surveys, remain major issues (see Figure 12). Disparities between countries are important (from 4% to 15% on the issue of intimidation) and probably reflect different sensitivities and the fact that these issues are (or are not) a matter of public debate. One may assume therefore that in some countries there is under-reporting of these issues.

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Tools for Assessment Tools for Action

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