

OUR OWN TIME

European Work-Time Network Newsletter

June 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 **24th 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.

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Network Updates

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
- Annual members' meetings
- Membership coordination

You can find out more and join the Network [here](#).

Webinar recordings

You can watch the recordings of our previous webinars on our website [here](#).

These include:

- **March:** Ruby Alden Gibson presented how the PCS union in Scotland won a 35-hour week in the Scottish Government. Watch the recording [here](#).
- **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](#).

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, India, at: workingtimenetwork.europe@gmail.com.

Germany

Margareta Steinrücke, Attac! Germany

There is a big debate ongoing in Germany regarding the laziness of Generation Z. The Conservatives are demanding a longer working week, up to 42 hours instead of 40 or 35. The new Government formed of Conservatives and Social Democrats is planning the abolition of the maximum daily working time of 8 hours per day (exceptionally 10 hours) hours in favour of a maximum weekly working time of 48 hours.

The trade unions are strongly protesting against this, including the doctor's union Marburger Bund, arguing that working hours over 8 hours lead to a dramatic increase of accident and illness rates.

The chairwoman of the metal workers union IG Metall [announced](#) that the 4-day-week is not currently on IG Metall's agenda, although it is a good thing in itself.

Germany's total working volume is at a record level: 54,59 billion hours of the dependently employed in 2023 instead of 52,20 in 1991. The increase is due to the increased number of women working, however 47% of women work in relatively short part-time jobs with no living wage, career obstacles and programmed old-age poverty, the so-called "Teilzeitfalle" (part-time trap).

In Germany, 1.2 billion overtime hours were worked in 2024, of which 638 millions were unpaid.

The greatest potential for more work is among women who would like to work in shorter full-time jobs (25-32 hours) instead of part-time jobs that do not provide a living wage. To address this, the Federal Minister of Labor, Bärbel Bas, proposes encouraging more mothers to work full-time, including through more childcare and more family-friendly working hours.

Companies in various industries and service sectors are introducing the 4-day week or other forms of reduced working hours. For example: the automotive supplier company ZF Friedrichshafen is reducing from 35 to 31.5 hours weekly in order to secure jobs until 2028; the mineral water company Viva con Agua is reducing working hours from 40 to 32 with full wage-compensation according to the 100/80/100 principle; the University Hospital Mainz is introducing the 35-hour week in 2027; the mechanical engineering company

Siegfried Hofmann is introducing the 4-day week; the tractor manufacturer company John Deere offers its employees a one-year sabbatical.

The sociologist Simon Schaupp of the University Basel published "Stoffwechselfolitik. Arbeit, Natur und die Zukunft des Planeten" at Suhrkamp edition house, where he advocates for a transformation of the world of work that overcomes the logic of expansive exploitation and takes the autonomy of nature seriously, for whom the reduction of working hours plays an important role.

The Bremer Arbeitszeitinitiative and the KWA (KircheWirtschaftArbeitswelt of the Protestant Church) produced a new "ABC der Arbeitszeitverkürzung" (ABC of working time reduction). [Read it here.](#)

The AG ArbeitFairTeilen of ATTAC is planning a webinar series on the latest trend in reducing working hours "Die neue Aktualität der Arbeitszeitverkürzung. 28-Stundenwoche jetzt?!". This will begin on the 25th June at 18.00, with Stephan Krull (former member of the workers council of Volkswagen) talking on "Die 28-Stundenwoche bei VW 1994 und der Erhalt von 30.000 Arbeitsplätzen". [Find out more here.](#)

Netherlands

Yvette Becker, FNV

FNV promotes 32-hour workweek with 100% pay in the Netherlands

The Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV), the largest trade union in the Netherlands, has launched an information campaign promoting the 4-day workweek. Reports and more information (in Dutch) can be found [here](#).

The poll was sent out from 12th of February until the 12th of March 2025.

Results are published today.

FNV poll: Four-day working week has positive effect on health

A better work-life balance, higher productivity and less stress and burn-out risks. These are just some of the benefits that employees and employers see from the four-day working week. This is according to an FNV poll completed by 6,263 respondents, consisting of employees and employers from all sectors.

According to Yvette Becker, FNV policy advisor on working hours, more and more employees as well as employers see the advantages of a four-day week. As many as 74% of respondents think a four-day week is feasible in their sector and job. They also agree that you gain time by organising work differently and smarter. Here, employers (70%) even see more opportunities than employees (65%).

Opportunities in all sectors

Becker: 'It is an illusion that a four-day working week would only be possible in sectors with traditional office jobs. We have examples from factories to healthcare where we see that a four-day week works. A four-day working week does not mean that a company can no longer be open five or seven days a week. Or that you can't work five six-hour days.'

The younger the more positive

89% of respondents are positive to very positive about the four-day working week. Among employees and employers aged 25 - 35, the figure is as high as 96%. Becker: 'In an

ageing society, that is really a factor for employers to consider. It makes work more attractive for every generation.'

Employers want to get started

Of the 107 employers who completed the poll, 89% are positive about the four-day week and 88% think the FNV and other unions should work with them to explore the possibilities of a four-day week.

Healthier working

The union expects that a four-day week could help reduce staff shortages and work healthier. Becker: 'I dare say it will lead to more hours of work, as people are less likely to drop out due to illness and more people will continue working until retirement.'

In practice

Developments internationally and in the Netherlands are rapid. In the Netherlands, both AFAS and Samhoud switched to a four-day working week this year. The Red Cross also wants to join forces with FNV and, together with ING, the union is going to look into the possibilities of a four-day working week at the bank. A study is being carried out at a sand-lime brick factory to see whether a 32-hour working week (including shift work) is possible.

Norway

Johan Petter Andresen, Beerenberg Corp AS

Kindergarten worker interview feature

There was a recent interview with a kindergarten worker participating in a pilot project that introduced a 6-hour day with full pay after 2 years – she was very positive about the experience. However, the current Labour Minister, Brenna, is against lowering working hours.

Read the interview [here](#) (in Norwegian).

Poland

Poland to launch shorter working week pilot programme

Poland's government has [announced](#) that it will launch a shorter working week pilot programme. Poles on average currently work some of the longest hours in Europe.

The programme will allow businesses, local authorities, foundations and trade unions to voluntarily test a shorter working week by either reducing working hours each day, extending the weekend to three days, or providing more annual leave days.

Regardless of the chosen method, participating organisations will have to maintain current salaries and staff numbers.

The ministry plans to present more details in June and launch recruitment for the pilot in the subsequent months. In the first year, 10 million zloty (€2.3 million) will be allocated toward implementing and executing the programme.

Portugal

Calls for 35-hour working week and 25 days holiday

The Livre party has [submitted](#) two bills that aim to amend the Labour Code to reduce working hours to 35 hours per week and increase the minimum vacation period to 25 working days.

Regional Government of the Azores considering four-day week

The Regional Government of the Azores, which took office on 4 March, [wants](#) to reduce political and appointment positions in public administration and implement a pilot for the four-day workweek.

Spain

Spanish bill to cut work week to 37.5 hours heads to parliament

The Spanish government has [approved](#) a bill which would reduce the workweek from 40 to 37.5 hours. The bill is going to parliament to be voted on. “Today, we are modernising the world of labour and helping people to be a little happier.” said labour minister and vice president Yolanda Diaz.

United Kingdom

James Reeves, 4-Day Week Foundation

Transport for London offers tube drivers a four-day working week

TfL has formally [tabled](#) an offer that would give London's tube drivers the opportunity to switch to a version of the four-day week. The policy would allow drivers to work their current 35-hour week over four days instead of five. This news follows TfL's agreement to examine the possibility of a four-day week to persuade Aslef, the drivers' union, to call off planned Tube strikes in November 2024. It also follows TfL's rejection of calls from RMT, the biggest Tube union, for a 32-hour working week for Underground staff. RMT has replied expressing concerns about the implied extension of the working day.

Scotland's public sector pilot of a 32-hour week has concluded

As of March 2025, the Autonomy Institute and academic partners, including David Frayne, have successfully stewarded Scottish Government's public sector four-day week pilot to its conclusion. The results will be available publicly within Q1 2025, published in a report entitled 'Introducing a shorter working week in Scotland's public sector'. In addition to quantitative and qualitative pilot findings, the report also presents the results of surveys conducted with public sector organisations in Scotland that already have a contracted 35 hour working week.

UK's 3rd National 4 Day Week Pilot to launch in the Autumn

The UK's third [National 4 Day Week Pilot](#) is due to launch in September. Interested companies should contact info@4dayweek.co.uk to find out more.

Visit from the South Korean Government to discuss a 4.5-day week

The Government of Gyeonggi Province in South Korea visited the 4 Day Week Foundation and The Autonomy Institute to discuss their plans to move to a 4.5-day work week.



UK Cabinet Office shutting down engagement on the four-day week

A four-day week amendment to the Employment Rights Bill did not pass. Peter Dowd MP's motion received 25 signatures from fellow MPs.

The UK Cabinet Office is reportedly shutting down any engagement on the four-day week. The last direct quote in parliament was from Justin Madders MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business and Trade (31/03/25).

“While the government continues to monitor the impact of flexible working, it has made no assessment of the four-day week specifically. Additionally, the government has no plans to mandate a four-day week”

Unions reject compressed hours offer

[ASLEF](#) Tube Drivers campaign & [RMT](#) rejection of compressed hours offer.

30 new four-day week organisations accredited since January

Since January, The 4 Day Week Foundation has permanently accredited more than 30 new four-day week companies and organisations through our [Employer Accreditation Scheme](#). The organisations come from a range of different sectors including manufacturing, construction, engineering, housing, professional services, charity, consultancy and many others. This takes the total numbers of organisations accredited to 232, which includes over 6,000 workers.

Europe

Launch of the ETUC study on collectively agreed working time reduction

Commissioned and published by the ETUC, and authored by the Autonomy Institute, the research maps dozens of collective agreements across Europe to produce a first-of-its-kind toolkit for trade unions pushing for working time reform.

The report was launched at an event co-hosted with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Brussels. You can read the report in French and English [here](#).

EESC Opinion on working time published

The European Economic and Social Committee has published its Opinion on “Working time, the efficiency of the economy and the wellbeing of workers”. See the EESC Rapporteur, Maria del Carmen Barrera Chamorro - who is the President of Spanish Economic and Social Council, and Vice-President of the EESC Workers’ Group - present the findings [here](#) at a Network webinar. Read the Opinion [here](#).

Publication of study on working time reduction and flexible working time arrangements in Europe

The study of the Innovaworking initiative, looking at working time reduction and flexible working time arrangements in Europe, has been [published](#). There was a conference hosted in the European Parliament. See photos [here](#) and see the recording [here](#).

ETUI podcast on working time reduction published

The ETUI has released a podcast with Agnieszka Piasna entitled “Working time: rethinking the norm”. Watch it [here](#).

Beyond Europe

Mexico plans gradual reduction to 40-hour work week by 2030

Mexico's government will gradually [reduce](#) the standard work week to 40 hours, Labor and Social Security Minister Marath Bolanos said on Thursday, in a move expected to take full effect by January 2030.

Speaking at a Labor Day event, Bolanos said the ministry will hold a series of forums in cities across the country from June to July to help shape a proposal for the gradual transition.

Mexico currently has a 48-hour work week.

Research finds longer working hours may be restructuring our brains

New research out on Tuesday [found](#) that working longer hours isn't only bad for your health, but might be restructuring your brain. The research is based on 52-hour work weeks. Coverage in CNN is [here](#).

Tokyo and other local governments offer four-day week to public sector workers

The Japanese government has [launched](#) a series of emergency policies to address its low birthrate. One such initiative is the introduction of a four-day work week, first proposed in 2021.

In April, Tokyo implemented a four-day work week for metropolitan government employees. Additionally, it introduced a partial leave policy, allowing staff to take leave for part of the work day – for instance, working only in the morning and taking the afternoon off.

Other local governments have introduced systems that allow a four-day work week. Ibaraki Prefecture began in April 2024, followed by Chiba in June 2024.