

OUR OWN TIME

European Work-Time Network Newsletter

March 2026

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 **27th 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) and the Alex Ferry Foundation.

If you would like to subscribe to receive this email, please sign up [here](#).



**Autonomy
Institute**



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Network Updates



New email address! info@worktimenet.eu

The European Work-Time Network is moving away from using the Google Suite for ethical and environmental reasons. We have consequently set up a new email account with Proton.

You will receive emails from the Network going forward from info@worktimenet.eu, and you should use this email address if you wish to get in touch with us.

Save the Date and Call for Papers!

International Conference on Working Time Reduction and EWTN Annual Members' Event

International Conference on Working Time Reduction



CALL FOR PAPERS | Deadline 1st of May 2026

University of Porto, Portugal

24th and 25th of September 2026

Keynote Speakers

Prof. Juliet Schor, Boston College

Prof. Brendan Burchell, University of Cambridge

This conference brings together leading scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to present state-of-the-art evidence and engage with contemporary debates on working time reduction.

We invite contributions from a wide range of disciplines and methodological approaches, including, but not limited to, economics, sociology, human resource management, psychology, and anthropology.

If you wish to present research on work-time reduction at this conference, please submit an abstract of between 500 and 1,000 words, or a full paper, by **1 May 2026**

Submission Link:
<https://app.oxfordabstracts.com/stages/81061/submitter>



Scientific committee:

Pedro Gomes, Rita Fontinha, Sofia A. Cruz, Ana Isabel Couto, Joan Sanchis, Alex Arntsen

Contact:
wtrconferenceporto@gmail.com



University of Porto, Portugal 24-25 September 2026

The University of Porto is organising an International Conference on Working Time Reduction, bringing together leading scholars to present cutting-edge research and engage with contemporary debates on working time reduction.

The European Work-Time Network is organising the event in partnership with the University.

Call for Papers - submission deadline 1st May 2026

The conference welcomes contributions from a wide range of disciplines and methodological approaches, including (but not limited to): economics, sociology, human resource management, psychology, and anthropology.

Submit your abstract [here!](#)

European Work-Time Network Members' Event

The Network's annual members' event will take place on **25th September**, as part of the University of Porto conference. The event is open to all members of the Network, and is an opportunity to discuss the Network's activities, strategy and goals for the following year.

Register your interest to attend the members' event [here](#).

If you're not a member of the European Work-Time Network, join us [here!](#)

New working groups

At the Members' Event in November 2025, members decided to establish working groups to increase the European Work-Time Network's capacity and engage members. Four working groups were agreed:

1. Advocacy/European Parliament engagement
2. Online info/data catalogue
3. Conference 2026
4. Webinars

The working groups are open to the Network's members. Please find more information and indicate your interest to join one [here](#).

EWTN Monthly Webinars

The next webinar will take place on **Wednesday 29th April at 1pm CEST**, with a presentation on the **Impact on Wellbeing of a Shorter Working Week** from Catherine Negus at the Mental Health Foundation. Register for the event [here](#).



The Impact on Wellbeing of a Shorter Working Week
Evaluation of the Mental Health Foundation's 32-hour Week Pilot

SPEAKER:
Catherine Negus, Mental Health Foundation

DETAILS:
29th April 2026
13:00 (CEST)
Online
via Zoom

European Work-Time Network Webinars

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

These include:

- **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 role of a Jobs Guarantee in the Social-Ecological Transformation and its relationship to work-time reduction. You can watch the recording [here](#).
- **November:** Suryadepto Nag (University of Lausanne) discussed his research on work-time reduction's impact on the Global South. You can watch the recording [here](#).

Support the Network

The European Work-Time Network is a community built by and for people who care about working time reduction. To help sustain and strengthen our movement, we invite our members to consider making a small monthly or annual donation to the Network.

The Network runs on very modest resources. We currently have one paid coordinator (working 1 day per week), supported by a committed group of volunteers on our steering committee and Board. Our activities are funded through a combination of grants and donations from foundations and allied organisations. While this support has allowed the Network to grow, regular contributions from members would provide the stable foundation we need to continue and expand our work.

A regular monthly contribution would help secure the Network's future and enable us to strengthen our activities, including:

- Increasing paid coordinator time to support and develop the Network
- Maintaining and improving the website
- Creating a shared knowledge database of working time reduction resources
- Expanding the reach and quality of our webinars, conferences, and newsletter
- Deepening our work on the connections between working time and environmental, gender, disability, and racial justice

By contributing, you will not only help sustain a Network that supports your own work and interests - you will also strengthen a collective European effort to advance working time reduction and achieve fairer, healthier, and more sustainable working lives.

Please use the links below to make a regular donation via Stripe:

- [Monthly donation](#) - €4 per month
- [Annual donation](#) - €50 per year

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](#).

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: info@worktimenet.eu

Europe

100-year anniversary of the 5-day week - time for change

To mark the 100-year anniversary of the five-day working week on 1 May 2026, the 4 Day Week Foundation has **launched a bold public campaign** to educate the public on the genesis of the 5-day week and how organised workers played a role in winning it, and to demonstrate why the move to a four-day, 32 hour working week today is necessary, achievable, and long overdue.

Henry Ford, **fearing the power of organised workers** and their drive for shorter working hours over the preceding decades, pre-empted union demands and offered workers a 5-day 40-hour week in 1926. 100 years later, productivity has sky-rocketed thanks to advances in technology, yet for most of us the working week remains about the same.

In 2026, just as in 1926, a shorter working week is **not just achievable but a benefit** to workers and employers alike - all that's needed is the pressure to bring it about.

To **get involved with the day**, contact Joe Ryle from the Foundation at joe@4dayweek.co.uk. Follow the Foundation on social media to keep updated: Twitter - @4Day_Week / Instagram - 4dayweekfoundation / LinkedIn - 4 Day Week Foundation / Bluesky - @4dayweek.bsky.social / TikTok - @4dayweekfoundation.

On 27th May, the **European Work-Time Network's webinar** will host the 4-Day Week Foundation and the Autonomy Institute to discuss the history of the 5-day week, where we are today and campaigns for the 4-day week. [Sign up here.](#)



EPSU Reducing Working Time case studies

EPSU has [launched](#) a series of case studies to explore how trade unions across Europe are addressing working time reduction. These monthly publications provide insights into how public service unions have approached the issue and the steps they have taken to negotiate a shorter working week or other initiatives to reduce working hours.

In 2024, six articles were published covering recent developments in [Austria](#), [Iceland](#) and the [Nordic](#) countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), [Spain and Portugal](#), followed by [UK and Ireland](#), and finally on [Poland, Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary](#). In 2025 a case study on [France and Belgium](#) was published.

The first case study of 2026 focuses on [Germany and Greece](#) - two cases where movement on working time is moving backwards, not forwards.

EU Observer: A burnt-out Europe: Is a four-day working week within reach?

Europe debates shorter workweeks as Poland pilots a four-day model without pay cuts, following mixed experiences and perspectives from the UK, France, Spain, Lithuania and Greece, balancing productivity, wellbeing and competitiveness concerns.

Read more [here](#).

Austria

Eva Scherz, GPA union

GPA Union Launches Work-Time Reduction Labour Podcast

The GPA union has produced a three-part podcast about our 35-hour campaign: [The value of an hour](#). Listen [here](#).

The three-part podcast series by the GPA union tells the true story of a labour dispute in the social economy - and how change becomes possible when people stand up for it together.

Experience what happens behind the scenes when the GPA and Gewerkschaft vida trade unions meet with employers - and how a demand became a movement!

The podcast is in German.

Germany

Margareta Steinrücke, Attac! Germany

“Lifestyle-Teilzeit” Debate

In Germany there is a huge debate ongoing on so-called “Lifestyle-Teilzeit” (part-time work for lifestyle reasons). The conservatives in the government launched a campaign accusing Germans of working too little, being lazy and working part-time by lifestyle reasons, i.e. selfish reasons.

This provoked outraged reactions of workers who, in view of 1,2 billion hours of overtime (3/5 of which are unpaid), vast amounts of shift work, night and weekend work and often involuntary part-time work, simply feel disregarded.

Especially women who in a greater number work involuntarily part-time or have no other option because they still bear the brunt of the care work.

The German TradeUnions Confederation DGB is arguing against these baseless accusations, and with the motto “Erst unsere Jobs, dann Eure Profite” (“Our jobs first, then your profits”) for May 1st, also focuses on the issue of working hours in its actions.

The Working group “ArbeitFairTeilen” of attac-Germany has [published](#) a statement against it:

Plans to change the working time law

The German government plans to change the working time law and to finish the daily maximum working hours of 8 hours by a weekly maximum working hours of 48 hours. This would allow working days of 12.45 hours.

Against this plan the trade unions, scientists, doctors and social movements are protesting with the argument that such long working hours will increase work related sickness and injuries and the error rate and make it even more difficult to reconcile care work and employment.

German 4-Day Week Pilot: 2 Years On

On 10th of March, the German study on the 4-day-week was revisited two years later under the motto "Weniger arbeiten, mehr leisten?" ("Work less, achieve more?").

Two years on, the results are still very positive: improved health, better work-life balance, less stress, more motivation and the majority of the enterprises participating in the pilot 2024 will continue with the shorter working hours (not everybody in the form of a 4-day-week, but all with significantly fewer hours with full compensation of wage).

“Bright New Working Hours” Event - 15th April 2026

The event "Bright New Working Hours?" ("Schöne neue Arbeitszeiten?") will take place at the Stephansstift in Hanover on 15th April.

The current discussions surrounding working hours are marked by opposing poles: employees' desire for shorter working hours to improve their quality of life and allow more time for essential care work, and the pressing economic needs for longer working hours, increased employment, and securing skilled workers.

With its conference "Bright New Working Hours?", the Protestant Association Church-Economy-Workplace (KWA) aims to contribute to giving voice to arguments that address both economic realities and the wishes of employees. To this end, KWA and the Bremen Working Time Initiative recently published an online guide to reducing working hours.

The event will focus on "reducing working hours" as well as the "amendment to the Working Time Act"—connected to questions of positioning and strategy.

Further information and registration [here](#).

This event will be held in German.

Iceland

Guðmundur D. Haraldsson, Alda

Reducing working time in playschools

The new pay schedule for playschools covered in the last newsletter issue has been agreed to by the city council. The previously announced schedule has been amended, with the most significant change being that parents whose children stay 36 hours or less per week will not have to pay any fees, and payable fees are now linked with higher parental income than before. These adjustments have been made in light of criticism to the original pay schedule planned according to the council.

The new pay schedule is still contested by some unions, who claim that many councils have not sought to address challenges in running playschools by increasing staffing – challenges that are partially due to reduced hours in the public sector – but rather to punish working parents, especially lower income workers with inflexible working time. Playschools should ease inequality, not increase it. The plans, the critics add, are at odds with how progressive Nordic countries run their playschools.

Other unions have lauded the new pay schedule, though they note that the plans may not be broad enough. Their argument is that the plans aim to reduce hours of stay, which should be the main goal in order to ease workload of playschool staff. With the updated pay schedule, they fear less the impact on parents than continuing with the status quo which would see continued high workload on staff, they say.

According to the city, many parents, in response to the changes, have already asked for reduced stay on Fridays for their children.

The new pay schedule will take effect in April.

Lithuania

Poll: Two-thirds of residents support a four-day work week

Two-thirds - 67% - of Lithuanian residents [would like to see](#) a four-day work week introduced in the country, and most of them - 63% - would work shorter hours while receiving the same salary, according to a representative survey commissioned by LRT and published on Tuesday.

"We're moving in the right direction. The idea of having more time off work to devote to family, friends, personal development, etc., is appealing to many people," Audrius Gelžinis, chairman of the Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation, told LRT.

Minister of Labour and Social Welfare Inga Ruginienė said in an interview with BNS last November that she was in favour of a four-day working week, but intended to consult social partners on the matter.

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.

FNV's 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.).

There is also a collection of videos and info-explainers on the four-day week on FNV's Youtube [playlist](#).

Portugal

Pedro Gomes, University of Birkbeck

Azores Regional Government pilot started

The four-day week 6-month pilot in the Azores Regional Government started in January 2026. Coordinated by Dr. Rita Fontinha (Henley Business School) and Prof. Pedro Gomes (Birkbeck, University of London), the pilot is testing a reduction from 35 to 32 hours, in several departments with a total of 400 workers.

Pioneer pharmacy's trial a success

A pioneer pharmacy finished a four-day week one-year trial (with 32 hours) and made it permanent.

Learn more [here](#) (the video is in Portuguese)

Spain

New strategy from the Time Use Initiative

The Time Use Initiative (TUI) [kicked off](#) 2026 with meetings of its Regional and International Expert Councils on 22 and 27 January, where the 2026-2027 strategy was approved.

The new period focuses on the creation of a time use data observatory, which will analyse the results of the new European time use surveys with the aim of promoting evidence-based time policies that guarantee everyone's right to time.

The councils, made up of more than 60 experts from various fields and countries, will continue to advise the TUI on the development of these time policies at local, national and international level.

United Kingdom

James Reeves, the 4 Day Week Foundation

Communications union campaign for a shorter working week

On March 9th the CWU [launched](#) a week long social media campaign to bring attention to their campaign for a Shorter Working Week in the Telecoms & Finance Sectors.

100 year anniversary of the 5-day week

The 4 Day Week Foundation is convening an international set of activations around the upcoming 100 year anniversary of the weekend. [Get in touch](#) to find out more (and see more details under the 'Europe' section).

London underground workers campaign for “genuine” 4 day week

Tube workers [campaign](#) for a genuine 4 day week, and ongoing discussions around strike action over the existing compressed hours offer continues.

Beyond Europe

Countries introducing a four-day week to make oil and gas supplies last longer due to Iran war

The strait of Hormuz is a critical shipping route for most of south Asia's oil and gas. It has been blockaded by Iran for over two weeks in retaliation for the US and Israeli strikes.

As a consequence, countries across south Asia are facing crippling shortages of fuel and LPG gas. [Sri Lanka](#), [the Philippines](#) and [Pakistan](#) have both introduced four-day working weeks to preserve their supplies of oil and gas.

Some [outlets](#) are treating this cynically as a 'win' for the fight for working time reduction. The suffering and violence in the Middle East and the economic upheaval in the countries affected by these energy shortages must be remembered and forefronted in this context, well ahead of any ramifications in the Global North.