



## Working time developments – 2009

Average collectively agreed weekly hours  
Collectively agreed weekly hours by sector  
Statutory maximum working week and day  
Actual weekly working hours  
Annual leave  
Annual working time  
Annexes

This report is available in electronic format only.

*In 2009, average collectively agreed weekly working time in the European Union stood at 38.7 hours. The figure was 0.8 hours lower in the pre-2004 EU15 and 0.9 hours higher in the new Member States. Agreed normal annual working time averages around 1,750 hours – just above 1,700 in the EU15 and a little over 1,800 in the new Member States. Of three sectors examined, agreed weekly hours are highest in retail, followed by chemicals and the civil service. Average collectively agreed paid annual leave entitlement stood at 24.5 days across the EU in 2009. This EIRO report also examines statutory working time and leave limits, and actual working hours.*

This annual report looks at a number of aspects of the duration of working time in the European Union and Norway in 2009, based mainly on contributions from the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) national centres. It considers:

- average weekly working hours as set by collective agreements, both economy-wide and for three specific sectors;
- statutory limits on weekly and daily working time;
- average actual weekly working hours;
- annual leave entitlement, as set by collective agreements and law;
- estimates of average collectively agreed annual working time.

The report provides a general overview of the present position and developments, but the figures provided should be treated with considerable caution, and the various notes and explanations borne in mind. Making international comparisons of the length of working time is problematic in several respects. Comparable data are not collected in all countries, while particular difficulties include the following:

- the existence of different ways of calculating working time, with annual, rather than weekly calculation increasingly common in some countries;
- the fact that working time reductions in some countries have been introduced through extra days off or cuts in annual hours, leaving the normal working week relatively unchanged;
- the increasing use of schemes whereby weekly hours may vary considerably, with an average being maintained over a reference period;
- the treatment of part-time workers;
- the differing roles of collective bargaining and legislation, with the latter having an impact on actual hours in some countries, but acting only as a maximum ‘safety net’ in others.

Figures for *normal* weekly working hours are also problematic when comparing working time between countries, as they do not take into account factors such as overtime, the length of annual and other forms of leave, or (topically at present) the use of short-time working.

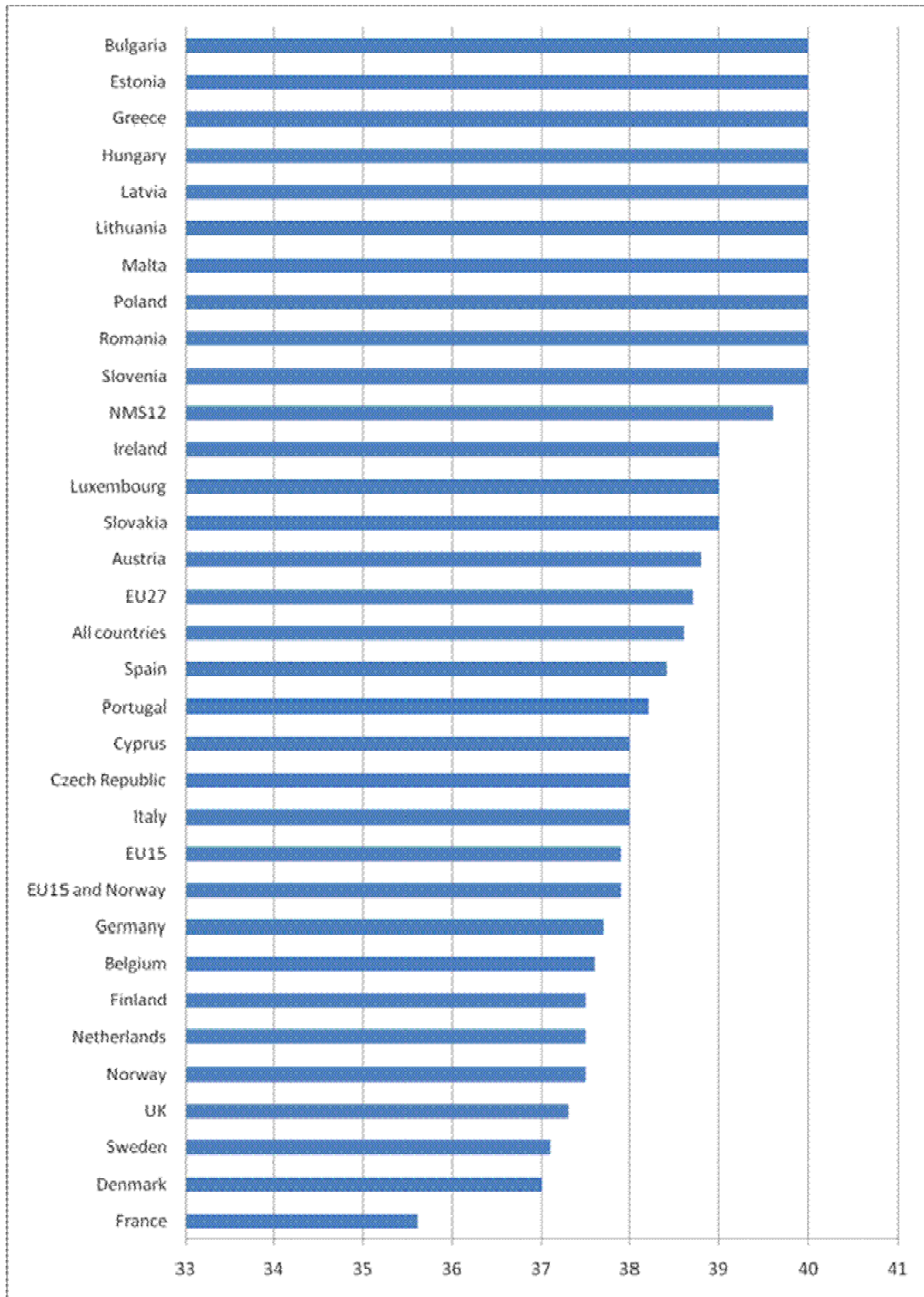
## **Average collectively agreed weekly hours**

Figure 1 below sets out the average normal weekly working hours in 2009 for full-time workers, as set by collective bargaining, across the whole economy for the 28 countries examined (in some cases, the figures are estimates, or refer to earlier years – see notes to Figure 1).

Collective bargaining plays an important role in determining the duration of working time in most of the countries, though to a lesser or sometimes negligible extent in some of the new Member States (NMS) that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. However, the nature and extent of this role differs widely between countries, with various bargaining levels (intersectoral, sectoral, company

etc.) playing different parts, and bargaining coverage varying considerably (generally being higher in the EU15 than in the NMS). Furthermore, the importance of bargaining differs greatly between sectors of the economy and groups of workers. The relationship between bargaining and legislative provisions on working time also varies between countries.

*Figure 1: Average collectively agreed normal weekly hours, 2009*



Note: Figure 1 should be read in conjunction with the notes in Annex 1.  
Source: EIRO.

In most countries, average agreed hours in 2009 were identical to those in 2008 ([TN0903039S](#)). However, there were appreciable rises in France (of 0.6 hours, apparently due to a 2008 law relaxing somewhat the country's statutory 35-hour week) and Slovakia (0.6 hours), and smaller increases in Germany (0.1 hours) and Spain (0.1 hours). There was a slight fall (of 0.1 hours) in Sweden.

Across the EU27, the overall average for agreed weekly hours rose very slightly from 38.6 in 2008 to 38.7 in 2009. The average in the EU15 stood at 37.9 hours in 2009 (the same as in 2008) while the average in the NMS rose very slightly from 39.5 hours in 2008 to 39.6 hours in 2009. The gap between the EU15 and the NMS thus widened a little to 1.7 hours, or 4.5%.

EIRO has been conducting annual updates on working time for 11 years. Data for the EU15 and Norway have been collected since 1999, over which period average agreed weekly hours have fallen from 38.6 to 37.9, or by around 1.8%. However, most of this reduction occurred before 2003. Since then, there has been virtually no change in the average for western Europe and general reductions in working hours have scarcely featured on the collective bargaining agenda in most countries. This was again the case in 2009, when agreed cuts in working hours (without loss of pay) were virtually absent.

EIRO has been collecting data for most of the NMS since 2003. Over that period, average agreed weekly hours in the NMS have declined by only 0.1 hours (around 0.3%), from 39.7 to 39.6. This reflects the fact that most of the NMS – Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovenia – have a 40-hour normal working week. Collective bargaining plays a relatively minor role in setting normal weekly hours in most of these countries, and collective agreements either do not deviate from the statutory norm of 40 hours or do not deal with the issue at all. Only in Cyprus, the Czech Republic and Slovakia is agreed working time below 40 hours per week.

Average agreed weekly hours in the EU27 plus Norway have remained unchanged at 38.6 hours since 2003.

The most prominent working time issue in 2009 was undoubtedly the use of short-time work as a means of responding to falling demand during the recession and preventing redundancies, usually relying on state-subsidised schemes that compensate employees for part of their loss of earnings resulting from reduced working hours. Short-time work was used extensively in most countries, and was an issue for collective bargaining in many cases, sometimes at national intersectoral level (as in France and Poland) or sectoral level (for example, in the Swedish manufacturing industry, or a number of German industries, such as metalworking), but mainly at company level (as, for example, in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy and Sweden).

## **Collectively agreed weekly hours by sector**

Figures 2, 3 and 4 show average normal weekly working hours for full-time workers as set by collective bargaining in three sectors selected to represent manufacturing industry (chemicals), services (retail) and the public sector (the central civil service). While these more specific sectoral figures are probably more accurate than the overall average data given in the previous section, caution is again advised in their use, and the notes related to each figure should be taken into account: all the caveats noted above also apply to the sectoral statistics. In particular, it should be reiterated that the figures given for the NMS refer in many cases to the statutory norm – a 40-hour week – with collective agreements either not deviating from this norm or not dealing with the issue at all.

Comparing the three sectors, in 2009 the highest average collectively agreed normal weekly hours in the EU were found in retail, at 39.1 hours, followed by chemicals, at 38.8 hours, and the civil

service, at 38.4 hours. Retail was 0.4 hours above the whole-economy average for all sectors and chemicals 0.1 hours above the average, while the civil service was 0.3 hours below the average.

Looking solely at the EU15 and Norway, retail again had the longest average hours (38.5 hours), followed by chemicals (38.2) and the civil service (37.4). In the NMS, hours were also longest in retail (39.8 hours), but the civil service was in second place (39.6) and chemicals in third (39.4).

In the NMS, average agreed weekly hours are above the EU15/Norway average in all three sectors, though the weekly figures in a number of individual NMS are lower than those found in some of the EU15/Norway countries with longer hours. The difference between the average figures for the EU15 and Norway and the NMS is narrowest in chemicals (1.2 hours) and widest in the civil service (2.2 hours).

For the EU15 and Norway, the data series going back to 2000 allows a longer-term view of developments, although it should be noted that the data sources used for the EIRO figures have changed in some countries over the years. In 2009, average weekly hours had fallen over a 10-year period by 0.3 hours in the civil service (a drop of 0.8%) and 0.2 hours in chemicals (a drop of 0.5%) and risen by 0.2 hours (an increase of 0.5%) in retail. Data collection for the NMS started in most cases in 2004, since when the sectoral averages have risen slightly in chemicals and retail and fallen slightly in the civil service. However, the 2004 averages were for a smaller number of countries.

In some countries, average agreed weekly hours vary very little across the sectors examined or indeed, it appears, most of the economy. A uniform 40-hour working week (usually also the statutory normal week – see next section) applies in most of the NMS – in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovenia – and in Luxembourg. A similar uniformity applies, though at a lower figure, in Belgium (38 hours), Norway (37.5 hours), Denmark (37 hours) and France (35 hours). There is relatively little variation, with none of the three sectors examined differing by more than two hours, in Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. Wider differences exist in the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece and Italy.

## Chemicals

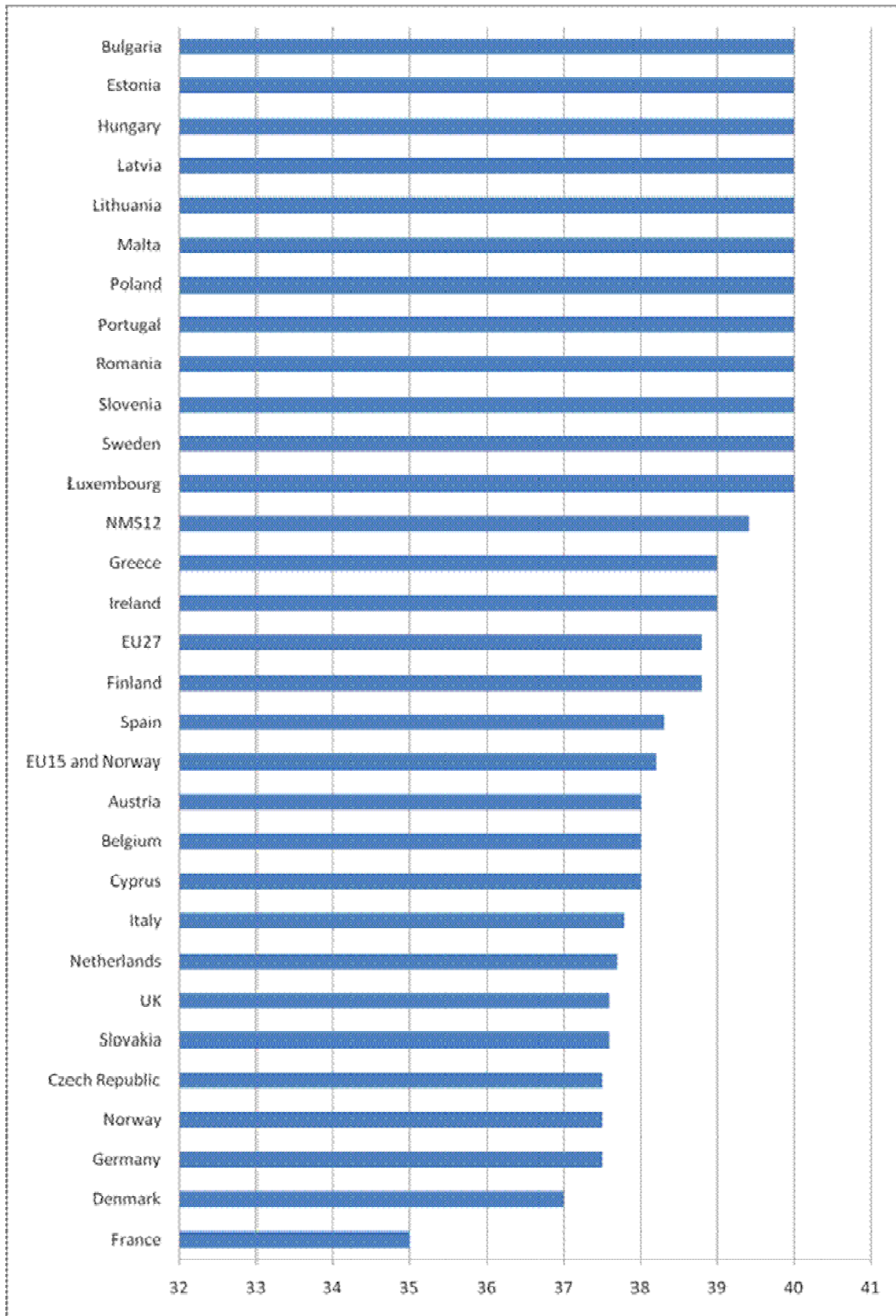
Figure 2 shows collectively agreed normal weekly hours in the chemicals industry based on relevant sectoral collective agreements (except where specified otherwise in the notes in Annex 2). The figure provides data for 2009, and there was virtually no change from the 2008 level in most countries, with the exception of a rise of 0.9 hours in Slovakia and a fall of 0.1 hours in the Czech Republic.

Across the EU27, the average agreed weekly working time in chemicals stood at 38.8 hours in 2009, 0.1 hours (0.3%) higher than the overall whole-economy average. In 2007, when EIRO last examined the chemicals sector, the average stood at 38.6 hours. However, the figures are not exactly comparable, as data were not available for all countries in 2007, and the data sources used have changed for several countries.

In the EU15 and Norway, average weekly hours in chemicals stood at 38.2 in 2009 – a fall of 0.2 hours (or around 0.5%) since 2000, the first year for which EIRO collected data on this sector. In 2009, the longest weekly hours in chemicals were found in Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden (40 hours) and the shortest in France (35 hours). Working hours in chemicals are markedly higher than the national whole-economy average in Sweden, Portugal and Finland and notably lower in Greece and Austria. Overall, the average agreed working week in chemicals, at 38.2 hours, is 0.3 hours (0.8%) above the whole-economy average.

In the NMS, average weekly hours in chemicals stood at 39.4 in 2009, 0.1 hours higher than in 2007 and 0.5 hours higher than in 2004 (the first year in which data was gathered for most NMS), though the 2007 and 2004 averages are for a smaller number of countries. The 2009 average for the NMS was 1.2 hours (3.1%) above the EU15/Norway average for chemicals and 0.2 hours (0.5%) below the whole-economy average for the NMS. Average weekly hours are at or below the average figure for the EU15/Norway in Cyprus, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, while they stand at 40 hours (ie 1.8 hours higher than the EU15/Norway average) in all the other NMS. In Slovakia and the Czech Republic, weekly hours in chemicals are below the whole-economy national average, while in the other countries they are the same as the whole-economy national average.

*Figure 2: Collectively agreed normal weekly hours in chemicals, 2009*





Note: Figure 2 should be read in conjunction with the notes in Annex 2.  
Source: EIRO.

## Retail

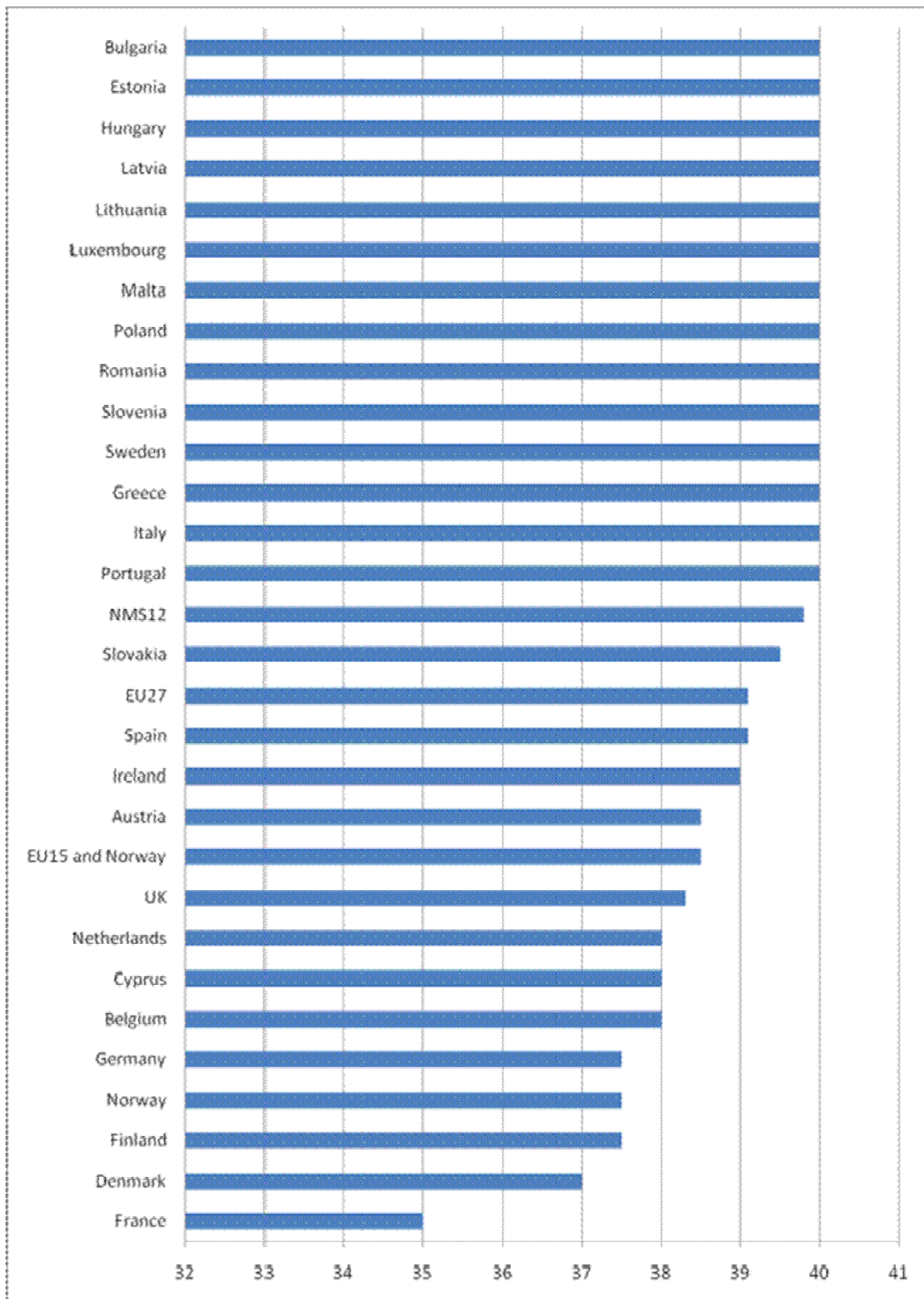
Figure 3 indicates collectively agreed normal weekly hours in 2009 in the retail sector, based on relevant sectoral collective agreements, except where specified otherwise in the notes under the table. No data are available for the Czech Republic. There was virtually no change from 2008 in all countries, except for small increases in Slovakia (0.2 hours per week) and Spain (2.4 hours per year).

In the EU as a whole, the average agreed weekly working time in retail was 39.1 hours in 2009, 0.4 hours (1%) higher than the overall whole-economy average. In 2007, when EIRO last examined retail, the average stood at 38.8 hours. However, the figures are not exactly comparable as data were available for fewer countries in 2007 and the information sources used have changed for several countries.

In the EU15 and Norway, average weekly hours in retail stood at 38.5 in 2009 – a rise of 0.2 hours (0.5%) since 2000, the first year for which EIRO collected data on this sector. In 2009, the longest weekly hours in retail were found in Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden (40 hours per week), and the shortest in France (35 hours). Working hours in retail are markedly higher than the national whole-economy average in Sweden, Italy and Portugal and lower only in Austria. Overall, the average agreed working week in retail, at 38.5 hours, is 0.6 hours (1.6%) above the whole-economy average.

In the NMS, average weekly hours in retail stood at 39.8 hours in 2009, 0.1 hours higher than in 2007 and 0.3 hours higher than in 2004 (the first year in which data was gathered for most NMS), though the 2007 and 2004 averages are drawn from a smaller number of countries. The 2009 retail average for the NMS was 1.3 hours (3.4%) above the EU15/Norway average for the sector and 0.2 hours (0.5%) above the whole-economy average for the NMS. Average weekly hours stand at 40 (that is, 1.5 hours higher than the EU15/Norway average) in all the NMS except Cyprus and Slovakia. In Cyprus, the figure is below the average figure for the EU15/Norway. In Slovakia, weekly hours in retail are above the whole-economy national average.

*Figure 3: Collectively agreed normal weekly hours in retail, 2009*



Notes: Figure 3 should be read in conjunction with the notes in Annex 3; regarding averages, 'EU27' is for 26 countries; 'NMS12' is for 11 countries.

Source: EIRO

## Civil service

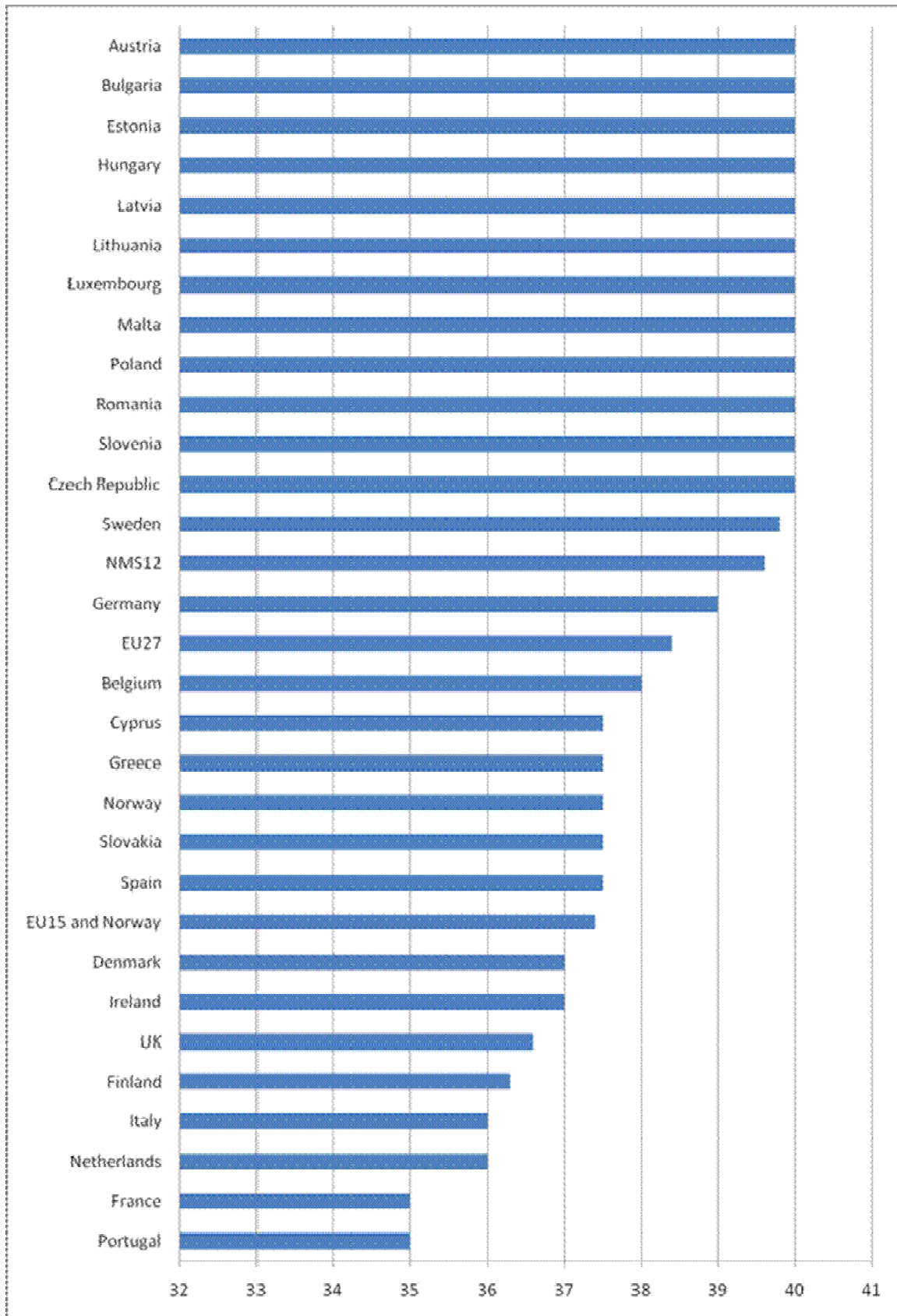
Figure 4 shows collectively agreed normal weekly hours in the civil service in 2009 based on the relevant sectoral collective agreements, except where specified otherwise in the notes in Annex 4. Legislation, rather than bargaining, plays an important part in setting weekly hours in the civil service in many countries (see notes in Annex 4). There was virtually no change from 2008 in all countries.

Across the EU, the average agreed weekly working time in the civil service was 38.4 hours in 2009, 0.3 hours (0.8%) lower than the overall whole-economy average. In 2007, when EIRO last examined the civil service, the average stood at 38.3 hours, although the sources used have changed for several countries.

In the EU15 and Norway, average weekly hours in the civil service stood at 37.4 in 2009 – a fall of 0.3 hours (0.8%) since 2000, the first year for which EIRO collected data on this sector. In 2009, the longest weekly hours in the civil service were found in Austria and Luxembourg (40 hours per week), and the shortest in France and Portugal (35 hours per week). Working hours in the civil service are markedly higher than the national whole-economy average in Sweden, Germany, Austria and Luxembourg, and notably lower in Portugal, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Finland. Overall, the average agreed working week in the civil service, at 37.4 hours, is 0.5 hours (1.3%) below the whole-economy average.

In the NMS, average weekly hours in the civil service stood at 39.6 hours in 2009, the same as in 2007 and 0.2 hours higher than in 2004, the first year in which data was gathered for most NMS, although the 2004 average is for a smaller number of countries. The 2009 civil service average for the NMS was 2.2 hours (5.9%) above the EU15/Norway average for the sector, and the same as the whole-economy average for the NMS. Average weekly hours stand at 40 (that is, 2.6 hours higher than the EU15/Norway average) in all the NMS except Cyprus and Slovakia, where hours are around the average figure for the EU15 and Norway. In Cyprus and Slovakia, weekly hours in the civil service are below the whole-economy national average, while in the other countries they are the same as the whole-economy average.

*Figure 4: Collectively agreed normal weekly hours in the civil service, 2009*



Note: Figure 4 should be read in conjunction with the notes in Annex 4.

Source: EIRO

## Statutory maximum working week and day

Collective bargaining on the length of working time in the EU Member States and Norway occurs within the framework of statutory rules on maximum working hours. These must, as a minimum, respect the provisions of the EU Directive on certain aspects of the organisation of working time ([2003/88/EC](#)), which include a 48-hour maximum working week (on average, over a reference period not exceeding four months), a minimum daily rest period of 11 hours and a daily hours limit of eight hours for night workers.

**Table 1: Statutory maximum working week, 2009**

Country	Hours
Cyprus	48
Czech Republic	48
Denmark	48
France	48
Germany*	48
Greece	48
Hungary	48
Ireland	48
Italy	48
Lithuania	48
Luxembourg	48
Malta	48
Netherlands	48
Norway	48
Poland	48
Romania	48
Slovakia	48
Slovenia	48
UK	48
Austria	40
Bulgaria	40
Estonia	40
Finland	40

Country	Hours
Latvia	40
Portugal	40
Spain	40
Sweden	40
Belgium	38

*\* No explicit weekly maximum in Germany: the 48-hour figure represents an average based on daily maximum rules.*

*Source: EIRO*

As indicated in Table 1, the countries fall into two groups – those that set their maximum weekly hours at the 48 hours specified in the EU Working Time Directive, and those that operate a rather lower limit of 40 hours (or 38 in Belgium). There was little change in this regard between 2008 and 2009.

In the first, larger group of 19 countries, the statutory 48-hour maximum is in excess of average collectively agreed weekly working hours (see Figure 1), and of average actual weekly hours (see Figure 5) and appears to operate essentially as a safety net. It should be noted that the 48-hour figure often includes overtime, explicitly so in cases such as Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Lithuania and Slovenia. As permitted by the Working Time Directive, a number of countries allow for individual workers (generally or only in specified sectors) to ‘opt out’ of the 48-hour weekly maximum (examples include Malta and the UK).

In the second group of nine countries, the statutory maximum is much closer to average agreed or actual or usual weekly hours and is identical to agreed hours in some cases, indicating a more active role for the law in governing working time. However, overtime may not be included in this figure, and the ‘maximum’ may function in practice as a statutory normal working week. Such statutory normal weeks also exist (at a lower level than the maximum working week) in some countries with a 48-hour maximum, such as the Czech Republic, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway and Poland.

The statutory maximum figures given in Table 1 may be exceeded in many countries where working time flexibility schemes allow weekly hours to be varied around an average over a reference period, as permitted by the EU Directive. Weekly maximum working time under such hours-averaging schemes may themselves be subject to a ceiling, such as 60 hours. To take one example, in the Netherlands, weekly working time – including overtime – may not exceed 48 hours on average over a 16-week reference period, or 55 hours per week on average over a four-week reference period, unless otherwise agreed by employer and trade union or works council, subject to an absolute weekly limit of 60 hours.

The complexity of most countries’ rules relating to overtime, variable working time etc. means that genuine comparisons cannot be made between the maximum hours set out in Table 1, and that there may not be great differences between the groups of countries with maximum weeks of 40 and 48 hours.

All the countries examined also have a form of statutory maximum working day, as set out in Table 2. In Cyprus, Ireland, Italy and the UK, there is no explicit maximum working day except for night workers, but in most circumstances a 13-hour maximum can be inferred from the application of the Working Time Directive’s minimum 11-hour daily rest period. Maximum daily hours vary more across Europe than weekly maxima, with six countries stipulating 13 hours, one

country 12.5 hours, three countries 12 hours, four countries 10 hours, four countries nine hours and 10 countries eight hours. As with weekly limits, whether or not overtime is included differs between countries, and daily hours may often be higher in the context of working time flexibility schemes. For example, in Bulgaria, the working day may be extended from eight to 10 hours, but only for a total of 60 working days a year and for not more than 20 consecutive working days. In the Czech Republic, daily hours may be extended from nine to 12 hours under working time flexibility schemes, within a defined reference period. In Germany, a working day may be extended to 10 hours as long as an eight-hour average is maintained over a 24-week or six-month reference period. In Spain, daily working time may be as high as 12 hours, by agreement, as long as the nine-hour average is maintained over a defined reference period.

**Table 2: Statutory maximum working day, 2009**

Country	Hours
Cyprus	13
Denmark	13
Ireland	13
Italy	13
Sweden	13
UK	13
Malta	12.5
Greece	12
Hungary	12
Netherlands	12
France	10
Luxembourg	10
Romania	10
Slovenia	10
Czech Republic	9
Norway	9
Slovakia	9
Spain	9
Austria	8
Belgium	8
Bulgaria	8
Estonia	8
Finland	8
Germany	8

Country	Hours
Latvia	8
Lithuania	8
Poland	8
Portugal	8

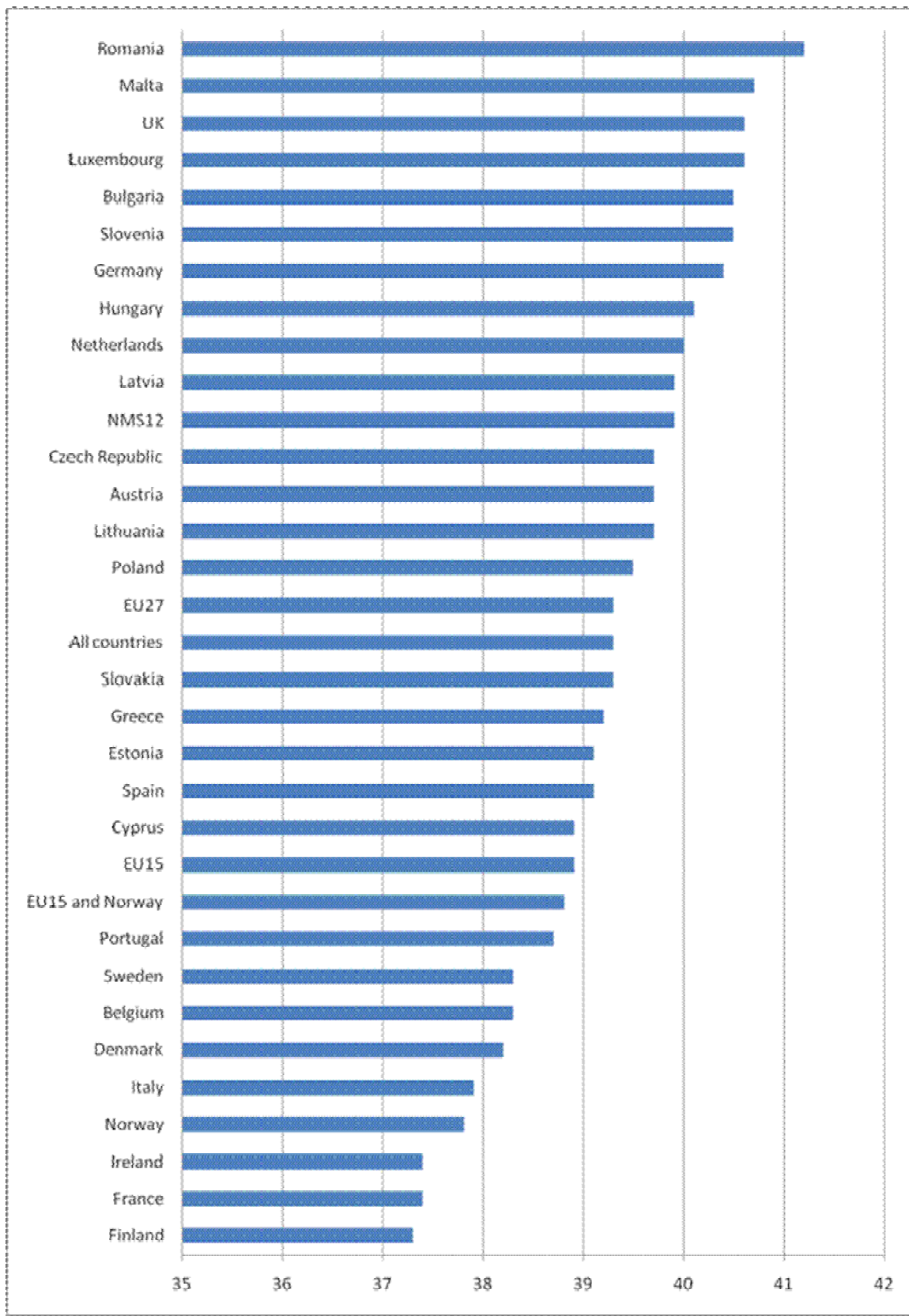
Source: EIRO

## Actual weekly working hours

The data presented above relate to collectively agreed *normal* weekly hours. To obtain a more accurate picture of how many hours workers really work in a given week, we must turn to statistics on *actual* weekly hours worked, typically measured in labour force surveys, which include factors such as overtime and absence. In Figure 5 below we give [harmonised Eurostat figures](#) for the ‘average number of actual weekly hours of work in main job’ of full-time employees, based on its labour force survey for the fourth quarter of 2009. These hours include all hours, including extra hours, whether paid or not.

*Figure 5: Average number of actual weekly hours of work in main job, full-time employees, fourth quarter 2009*





Source: Eurostat, with averages calculated by EIRO.

In the EU, the highest levels of actual weekly hours worked by full-time employees in their main jobs in 2009 were found in Romania, Malta, Luxembourg and the UK, and the lowest in Finland, Ireland, France and Italy. The range between the lowest (Finland) and the highest (Romania) was 3.9 hours (10.5%). Ten of the 12 NMS had actual hours at or above the EU27 average of 39.3 hours, compared with only five of the EU15. Of the NMS, only Estonia and Cyprus had below-average actual hours. In the EU15, the longest actual full-time hours were worked in Luxembourg, the UK and Germany, and the shortest in Finland, Ireland and France.

Actual weekly hours worked by full-time employees were higher than the average normal collectively agreed working week in 20 of the 28 countries. The average actual working week exceeded the agreed normal week by less than an hour in Hungary, Norway, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Portugal, Slovenia, Belgium, Malta, Spain, Austria and Cyprus. Actual hours exceeded agreed hours by between one and two hours in Denmark, Romania, Sweden, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic and France; between two and three hours in the Netherlands and Germany; and by 3.3 hours in the UK. In the eight countries where the average normal collectively agreed working week exceeded actual weekly hours, the difference was less than an hour in Italy, Latvia, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Greece and Estonia, and was greater than an hour only in Ireland (1.6 hours).

In the EU27, average actual weekly hours stood at 39.3 in 2009, compared with the average collectively agreed weekly working time of 38.7 hours. The respective figures for the EU15 were 38.8 and 37.9 (a slightly wider gap) and for the NMS 39.9 and 39.6 (a narrower gap).

Comparing the Eurostat figures for the fourth quarter of 2009 with those for the fourth quarter of 2008 reveals a general fall in the actual weekly hours worked by full-time employees. Averages across each of the EU27, EU15 and NMS groups of countries all fell by 0.3 hours. Average actual hours fell in 21 of the 28 countries, most steeply in Ireland and Austria. This downward tendency meant that the average gap between agreed and actual hours narrowed between 2008 and 2009. A possible explanation may be the widespread use of short-time working in many countries in 2009 in response to the economic downturn.

In 2009, actual weekly hours worked by male full-time employees in their main jobs exceeded those of their female counterparts in all countries considered, according to the Eurostat data, by an average of 2.1 hours across the EU27 (the differential is wider in the EU15 than in the NMS). Men's actual weekly hours exceeded women's by three hours or more in Ireland, the UK and Italy, and by less than an hour in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Romania and Lithuania.

## **Annual leave**

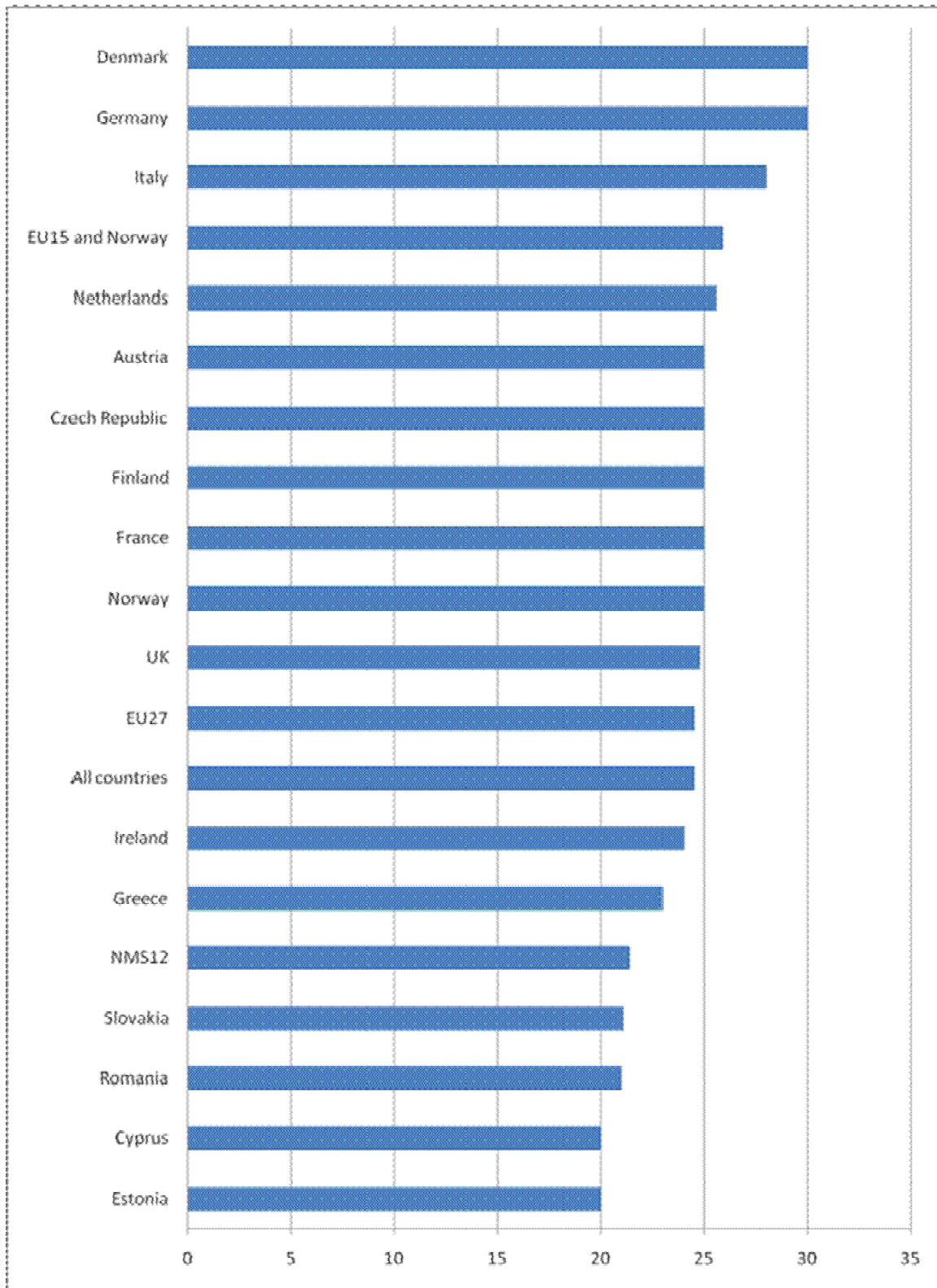
An important factor in the overall duration of working time is the amount of paid annual leave to which workers are entitled. Figure 6 shows the average number of days of collectively agreed annual leave for 16 countries where some information is available. The figures are harmonised on the basis of a five-day working week and generally apply to 2009.

Collectively agreed annual leave is an area where data can be difficult or impossible to find. As a result, some of the figures provided are estimates and no information can be given for 12 countries. This may be because the matter does not appear to have been researched or is not dealt with by collective agreements, or because the collectively agreed rules on leave entitlement are too complex to enable even a rough estimate to be produced. To take the example of Belgium, where sectoral agreements may provide for a general addition of up to five days to the statutory minimum annual paid leave of 20 days: such agreements may also provide for additional days of leave after a certain period of service – one extra day after 10 years' service, for instance; further additional days of leave may also be given as compensation for workers with a normal weekly working time above the sectoral norm. Slovenia is another country where seniority and other

criteria add to the minimum entitlement of 20 days in ways that make an average impossible to estimate.

The average entitlement across the countries of the EU27 for which data are available is 24.5 days. The average for 11 countries from the EU15 and Norway stands at 25.9 days. Agreed annual leave entitlement in the EU15 varies from 30 days in Denmark and Germany to 23 days in Greece. Among the NMS, figures are available only for Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Romania and Slovakia, where the average is 21.4 days. Among these countries, agreed leave is highest – 25 days – in the Czech Republic. In most other NMS (apart from Slovenia – see above), annual leave is probably at the statutory level (see below), as it is in Cyprus and Estonia (but see notes in Annex 5).

*Figure 6: Average collectively agreed paid annual leave (in days), 2009*



Notes: Figure 6 should be read in conjunction with the notes in Annex 5.  
Notes on averages: 'all countries' is for 16 countries; 'EU27' is for 15

countries; 'EU15 and Norway' is for 11 countries; 'NMS12' is for five countries.

Source: EIRO

All 28 countries have a statutory minimum period of paid annual leave, as set out in Table 3. In the table, the leave is expressed in days and harmonised on the basis of a five-day working week, and the statistics given are the basic entitlement, since entitlement increases with length of service in some countries. The majority of countries, 18 out of 28, have a 20-day minimum entitlement as laid down in the EU Working Time Directive. This group includes all the NMS except Malta. Five countries have a 25-day minimum – Austria, Denmark, France, Luxembourg and Sweden – while the entitlement is 24 days in Malta, 22 in Portugal and Spain, and 21 in Norway. The UK increased its statutory entitlement from 20 to 28 days over 2007–2009. However, this includes eight public holidays, and the increase was designed to end some employers' practice of counting those days as part of workers' statutory entitlement. As a result, actual UK statutory annual leave entitlement might perhaps more properly be considered to be 20 days.

Average collectively agreed annual leave exceeds the statutory minimum by four days or more in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Norway and the UK (if statutory entitlement in the UK is taken as 20 days), suggesting that the law acts essentially as a safety net in these countries. Average collectively agreed annual leave and the statutory minimum are similar or the same in Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Romania and Slovakia – and also probably in most other NMS – indicating a more active role for the law.

**Table 3: Statutory minimum paid annual leave (in days), 2009**

UK	28.0
Austria	25.0
Denmark	25.0
France	25.0
Luxembourg	25.0
Sweden	25.0
Malta	24.0
Portugal	22.0
Spain	22.0
Norway	21.0
Belgium	20.0
Bulgaria	20.0
Cyprus	20.0
Czech Republic	20.0
Estonia	20.0
Finland	20.0
Germany	20.0
Greece	20.0

UK	28.0
Hungary	20.0
Ireland	20.0
Italy	20.0
Latvia	20.0
Lithuania	20.0
Netherlands	20.0
Poland	20.0
Romania	20.0
Slovakia	20.0
Slovenia	20.0
All countries	21.5
EU27	21.5
EU15 and Norway	22.4
NMS12 (2004–2007)	20.3

*Note: Table 3 should be read in conjunction with the notes in Annex 6.*

*Source: EIRO*

## Annual working time

Collectively agreed annual working time figures are available from national sources for a few countries, and are listed in Table 4. These may provide a more accurate measure of the duration of working time as they take into account factors such as leave, holidays and flexibility arrangements.

**Table 4: Average collectively agreed annual working hours, 2008–2009**

Country	2008	2009
Finland	1,732	1,716
France	1,607	1,607
Germany	1,656	1,658
Ireland	1,801	1,801
Italy	1,646	nd
Romania	1,840	1,824
Spain	1,750	1,752

*Note: The figures in Table 4 should be read in conjunction with the notes in Annex 7.*

*Source: EIRO*

In order to arrive at a crude annual estimate for collectively agreed annual normal working time in all countries for 2009, the figures are taken for the average collectively agreed normal weekly hours (see Figure 1) and assumed a five-day working week throughout the 52 weeks of the year.

From this total annual figure, the average collectively annual paid leave is subtracted (see Figure 6) or, where no data are available on this point, the minimum statutory annual leave (see Table 3). It should be noted that in several countries, notably Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden, while average agreed leave may be impossible to calculate owing to the complexity of the rules or a lack of current data, it is undoubtedly higher than the statutory minimum. Use of the statutory minimum leave in calculating collectively agreed annual normal working time thus makes the total figure rather higher than is in fact the case, rendering the estimates for these countries particularly crude.

The number of annual public holidays is also subtracted, excluding those falling on Sundays. Where there are varying numbers of regional public holidays (as in Germany), an attempt has been made to give a mid-range figure. It should also be noted that additional holidays may be observed locally or on the basis of collective agreements or custom, while the number of public holidays may vary from year to year especially in countries that do not award a substitute holiday when a public holiday falls at the weekend. These variations are the main source of year-on-year changes in annual hours in many countries.

The resulting annual figures do not, of course, take into account factors such as overtime working, other forms of time off and leave, or short-time working. They are only very rough estimates, but they allow some broad observations to be made – see Table 5.

In the EU27, average collectively agreed annual normal working time in 2009 stood at 1,750.3 hours. In the EU15, the figure was 1,703.2 hours, compared with 1,808.5 in the NMS. Workers in the NMS thus work, on average, 105.3 hours a year (around 6.2%) longer than their counterparts in the EU15 – the equivalent of over two and a half working weeks a year more. However, there are countries among the NMS (the Czech Republic and Cyprus) where annual working time is around the average for the EU15, while that in Greece, Ireland and Luxembourg is above the NMS average. Overall, the EU's longest hours are found in Hungary, Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, while the shortest are in France, Denmark, Sweden, Germany and Italy. Average annual hours in Hungary are 261 hours higher (nearly 17% more) than those in France – the equivalent of around 6.5 working weeks in Hungary.

Looking at the ranking of the 28 countries in terms of the length of their agreed working hours, the countries with the longest and shortest weekly hours are generally also those with the longest and shortest annual hours. However, the annual perspective results in rather different rankings for some countries than that provided by the figures for weekly hours. Some countries, such as the Czech Republic, Italy, Malta and Sweden, have a lower position in the 'league table' – in other words, their hours are shorter – for normal annual hours than that for normal weekly hours because of the effects of relatively long annual leave and/or a relatively high number of public holidays. Conversely, hours are longer in some countries, placing them higher in the table for normal annual hours than that for normal weekly hours because of the effects of a relatively low number of public holidays and/or relatively low annual leave. Countries in this category include the UK, the Netherlands and Belgium; however, the annual leave figures used for Belgium are for minimum statutory leave due to an absence of data on agreed leave.

The number of public holidays (excluding those falling on Sundays) varied in 2009 from 14 in Cyprus and Spain to six in the Netherlands. The average figure for the EU27 was 10.5 public holidays, with the NMS having slightly more on average (10.7) than the EU15 (10.3).

The combined total of agreed annual leave and public holidays varied in the EU from 40.5 days in Germany to 28 days in Hungary – a difference of around 45% or two and a half working weeks. Other notably high-leave countries include Denmark, Italy and Austria, while other notably low-leave countries include Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. The average figure for the EU27 was 33.7 days – 35.3 days in the EU15 and 31.6 days in the NMS.

**Table 5: Average collectively agreed normal annual working time, 2009**

Country	A. Weekly hours	B. Gross annual hours (Ax52)	C. Annual leave (days)	D. Public holidays (days)	E. All leave (C+D) expressed in hours	F. Annual hours (B-E)
Hungary	40.0	2,080.0	20.0*	8.0	224.0	1,856.0
Bulgaria	40.0	2,080.0	20.0*	9.0	232.0	1,848.0
Estonia	40.0	2,080.0	20.0	10.0	240.0	1,840.0
Lithuania	40.0	2,080.0	20.0*	10.0	240.0	1,840.0
Poland	40.0	2,080.0	20.0*	10.0	240.0	1,840.0
Romania	40.0	2,080.0	21.0	9.0	240.0	1,840.0
Latvia	40.0	2,080.0	20.0*	11.0	248.0	1,832.0
Slovenia	40.0	2,080.0	20.0*	11.0	248.0	1,832.0
Greece	40.0	2,080.0	23.0	10.0	264.0	1,816.0
Malta	40.0	2,080.0	24.0*	12.0	288.0	1,792.0
Ireland	39.0	2,028.0	24.0	9.0	257.4	1,770.6
Slovakia	39.0	2,028.0	21.1	13.0	266.0	1,762.0
Luxembourg	39.0	2,028.0	25.0*	10.0	273.0	1,755.0
Austria	38.8	2,017.6	25.0	12.0	287.1	1,730.5
Belgium	37.6	1,955.2	20.0*	10.0	225.6	1,729.6
Spain	38.4	1,996.9	22.0*	14.0	276.5	1,720.4
Portugal	38.2	1,986.4	22.0*	13.0	267.4	1,719.0
Cyprus	38.0	1,976.0	20.0	14.0	258.4	1,717.6
Netherlands	37.5	1,950.0	25.6	6.0	237.0	1,713.0
Czech Republic	38.0	1,976.0	25.0	11.0	273.6	1,702.4
Norway	37.5	1,950.0	25.0	9.0	255.0	1,695.0
UK	37.3	1,939.6	24.8	8.0	244.7	1,694.9



Country	A. Weekly hours	B. Gross annual hours (Ax52)	C. Annual leave (days)	D. Public holidays (days)	E. All leave (C+D) expressed in hours	F. Annual hours (B-E)
Finland	37.5	1,950.0	25.0	10.0	262.5	1,687.5
Italy	38.0	1,976.0	28.0	11.0	296.4	1,679.6
Germany	37.7	1,960.4	30.0	10.5	305.4	1,655.0
Sweden	37.1	1,929.2	25.0*	11.0	267.1	1,662.1
Denmark	37.0	1,924.0	30.0	10.0	296.0	1,628.0
France	35.6	1,851.2	25.0	11.0	256.3	1,594.9
All countries	38.6	2,007.9	23.2	10.4	259.6	1,748.3
EU27	38.7	2,010.1	23.2	10.5	260.2	1,750.3
EU15	37.9	1,970.2	25.0	10.3	267.0	1,703.2
EU15 and Norway	37.9	1,971.5	25.0	10.4	267.8	1,703.7
NMS12	39.6	2,058.3	20.9	10.7	249.8	1,808.5

Note: \* Statutory annual leave figure

Source: EIRO

## Annexes

### Annex 1

The data in Figure 1 should be read in conjunction with the following notes:

- **Austria:** figure is an estimate based on most important collective agreements which generally provide for a 38.5- to 39-hour week.
- **Belgium:** figure is an estimate calculated by the [Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue](#) (SPF Emploi, Travail et Concertation sociale/FOD Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg) on the basis of sectoral collective agreements in the private sector. This excludes the effects of company agreements and does not apply to many managerial staff.
- **Bulgaria:** figure refers to the statutory normal working week; collective agreements are not thought to set lower hours.
- **Cyprus:** figure from Cyprus Labour Institute (Ινστιτούτο Εργασίας Κύπρου, [INEK/PEO](#)).
- **Czech Republic:** figure, from the [Working Conditions Information System](#) (Informační systém o pracovních podmínkách, ISPP) and the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů, [ČMKOS](#)), refers to hours set by company-level collective agreements – the more prevalent bargaining level; according to ČMKOS, about 47% of higher-level collective agreements signed by its affiliates in 2009 set normal weekly hours at 37.5.

- **Denmark:** figure refers to almost all collective agreements.
- **Estonia:** as set by law; there are very few cases of collective agreements reducing normal hours below the statutory figure.
- **Finland:** figure is an estimate, based on typical provisions of sectoral agreements.
- **France:** figure is provisional, from the [Ministry of Labour](#)'s Directorate for Research, Studies, and Statistics (Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques, DARES) and refers to average collective weekly working time, as at December.
- **Germany:** figure from the [Institute for Economics and Social Science](#) (Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut, WSI) collective agreement archive.
- **Greece:** figure refers to most collective agreements.
- **Hungary:** collective agreements usually reiterate the statutory working week of 40 hours; although the Labour Code allows collective agreements to stipulate a shorter period, in practice deviations from the statutory hours are relatively rare.
- **Ireland:** figure refers to most collective agreements.
- **Italy:** figure represents the mid-range of agreements, which provide for 36–40 hours per week.
- **Latvia:** as set by law.
- **Lithuania:** as set by law.
- **Luxembourg:** figure is an estimate, dating from 2005, but no major changes have been reported since then.
- **Malta:** while no statistical data exist, most collective agreements specify a normal weekly working time of 40 hours.
- **Netherlands:** figure from [Labour Inspectorate](#)'s review of collective agreements.
- **Norway:** figure represents 'normal working hours' for employees covered by collective agreements; employees working shifts or at nights work fewer weekly hours.
- **Poland:** as set by law.
- **Portugal:** figure, from the [Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity](#)'s General Directorate for Studies, Statistics and Planning (Direcção-Geral de Estudos, Estatística e Planeamento, DGEEP) employment survey, is for 2006 and refers to 'normal average working time' (no more recent data are available).
- **Romania:** as set by the tripartite national collective agreement, which provides a minimum basic framework for employment conditions, and by sectoral agreements.
- **Slovakia:** data from Information System on Working Conditions (Informačný systém o pracovných podmienkach, ISPP), Trexima Bratislava; figure refers to workers in single-shift systems – in 2009, the equivalent figure for workers in two-shift systems was 37.8 hours, in three-shift systems 37.2 hours and in continuous shifts 37.2 hours;.
- **Slovenia:** collective agreements do not deviate from the statutory 40-hour normal working week.
- **Spain:** figure based on [Ministry of Labour and Immigration](#) (Ministerio de Trabajo e Inmigración, MTIN) labour statistics on average agreed annual hours (1,752.06 in 2009), on the assumption of a six-day week and 274 working days a year.

- **Sweden:** figure from Statistics Sweden ([Statistiska Centralbyrån, SCB](#)).
- **UK:** figure from [Incomes Data Services \(IDS\)](#) 'Hours and holidays', September 2009, based on a study of around 363 organisational and industry agreements.

## Annex 2

The data in Figure 2 should be read in conjunction with the following notes:

- **Belgium:** figure refers to sectoral agreements, which are amended by company-level accords about the duration of working time, annualised hours, shiftwork, night work etc. Agreements in large companies tend to provide for lower normal weekly working time, as low as 33.5 hours in some cases.
- **Bulgaria:** as set by law.
- **Cyprus:** figure from INEK/PEO.
- **Czech Republic:** figure, from ISPP, refers to hours set by company-level collective agreements, the more prevalent bargaining level, and signed by Trade Union ECHO (Odborový svaz ECHO, OS ECHO); the figure for higher-level collective agreements was also 37.5.
- **Estonia:** as set by law; there are very few cases of collective agreements reducing normal hours below the statutory figure.
- **Finland:** figure is mid-point of a range from 37.5 to 40 hours.
- **Germany:** figure, from the WSI collective agreement archive, applies to western Germany; the figure for eastern Germany was 40 hours.
- **Greece:** figure is mid-point of a range from 38 to 40 hours set by enterprise-level collective agreements.
- **Hungary:** hours are lower in hazardous jobs.
- **Ireland:** hours set by company-level agreements.
- **Latvia:** as set by law.
- **Lithuania:** as set by law.
- **Luxembourg:** figure is an estimate from the Luxembourg Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (Onafhänge Gewerkschafts-Bond Lëtzebuerg, [OGB-L](#)).
- **Malta:** figure, from the chemicals and energy section of the General Workers' Union ([GWU](#)), applies to those working regular hours; figure is 37.5 hours for shiftworkers.
- **Netherlands:** figure, from General Employers' Association Netherlands (Algemene Werkgevers' Vereniging Nederland, [AWVN](#)), applies to employees working regular hours; shift workers have different weekly working time; for example, 36 hours for those in four-shift systems and 33.6 hours for those in five-shift systems.
- **Norway:** night and shiftworkers (common in chemicals) work fewer hours; for example, 33.6 hours for those in continuous three-shift work and 36.5 hours for those in two-shift work on weekdays.
- **Poland:** as set by law.

- **Portugal:** figure relates to collective agreements signed by the Portuguese Association of Chemicals Companies (Associação Portuguesa das Empresas Químicas, [APEQ](#)) and the Federation of Service Workers' and Technicians' Unions (Federação dos Sindicatos dos Trabalhadores de Serviços, [FETESE](#)).
- **Slovakia:** figure, from ISPP, refers to workers in single-shift systems.
- **Slovenia:** collective agreements do not deviate from the statutory 40-hour normal working week.
- **Spain:** figure is calculated from MTIN collective bargaining statistics on average agreed annual hours – 1,749.15 in 2009, on the assumption of a six-day week and 274 working days a year.
- **Sweden:** figure, from the [Industrial and Chemical Employers' Association](#) (Industri- och kemigruppen), refers to blue- and white-collar workers working in day shifts; corresponding figure for two-shift work is 38 hours and for three-shift work 35.14 hours.
- **UK:** figure, from IDS (see note to Figure 1), refers to 'oil, chemicals and pharmaceuticals'.

### Annex 3

The data in Figure 3 should be read in conjunction with the following notes:

- **Belgium:** figure is an estimate based on the provisions of various subsectoral agreements.
- **Cyprus:** the weekly hours of shop workers are governed by law.
- **Estonia:** as set by law; there are very few cases of collective agreements reducing normal hours below the statutory figure.
- **Germany:** figure, from the WSI collective agreement archive, applies to western Germany; the figure for eastern Germany was 38.1 hours.
- **Ireland:** hours set by company-level agreements.
- **Latvia:** as set by law.
- **Lithuania:** as set by law.
- **Luxembourg:** figure from OGB-L; while a 40-hour week is generally the case, some companies may have an agreed week of 39.5 hours.
- **Malta:** figure from the hospitality and food section of the GWU; much of the retail sector is not covered by collective agreements.
- **Netherlands:** figure from [Employers' Organisation for Small and Medium Sized Companies](#) (MKB-Nederland).
- **Poland:** as set by law.
- **Portugal:** figure relates to collective agreements signed by the Commerce and Services Union (Sindicato dos trabalhadores do Comércio, Escritórios e Serviços de Portugal, [CESP](#)) with the Portuguese Association of Distribution Companies (Associação Portuguesa de Empresas de Distribuição, [APED](#)) and with the Federation of Commerce and Services Associations (União de Associações do Comércio e Serviços, [UACS](#)).
- **Slovakia:** figure, from ISPP, refers to commerce and tourism, and to workers in single-shift systems.

- **Slovenia:** collective agreements do not deviate from the statutory 40-hour normal working week.
- **Spain:** figure is calculated from MTIN collective bargaining statistics on average agreed annual hours (1,785 in 2009), on the assumption of a six-day week and 274 working days a year.
- **Sweden:** figure from the Swedish Trade Federation ([Svensk handel](#))
- **UK:** figure from IDS (see note to Figure 1).

## Annex 4

The data in Figure 4 should be read in conjunction with the following notes:

- **Austria:** figure refers to usual working time for civil servants, fixed by law.
- **Belgium:** figure refers to general statutory working time in the public sector.
- **Bulgaria:** as set by law.
- **Cyprus:** data from Pancyprrian Union of Public Servants (Παγκύπρια Συντεχνία Δημοσίων Υπαλλήλων, [PASYDY](#)).
- **Czech Republic:** as set by law.
- **Estonia:** as set by law.
- **Germany:** figure, from the WSI collective agreement archive, applies to western Germany; figure for eastern Germany is 40 hours.
- **Latvia:** as set by law.
- **Lithuania:** as set by law.
- **Luxembourg:** as set by law.
- **Malta:** figure from the government and public entities section of the GWU.
- **Netherlands:** as set by law.
- **Poland:** as stipulated by law.
- **Portugal:** as set by law; exceptions apply in some sectors and categories.
- **Romania:** as set by law.
- **Slovenia:** collective agreements do not deviate from the statutory 40-hour normal working week.
- **Spain:** as set by civil service statute.
- **Sweden:** figure from the Swedish Agency for Government Employers ([Arbetsgivarverket](#)).
- **UK:** figure, from IDS (see note to Figure 1), refers to ‘public services’.

## Annex 5

The data in Figure 6 should be read in conjunction with the following notes:

- **Austria:** as set by law, expressed as 30 working days, including Saturdays.

- **Czech Republic:** figure, from ISPP and ČMKOS, refers to leave (expressed as five weeks) set by 58.8% of higher-level collective agreements signed by ČMKOS affiliates and 75.6% of enterprise-level collective agreements in 2009.
- **Cyprus:** data from Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance; 25 days for those working a six-day a week.
- **Denmark:** made up of five weeks annual leave, plus five days to be taken at employees' own choice or paid instead.
- **Estonia:** as set by law, expressed as 28 calendar days; according to the Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions (Eesti Ametiühingute Keskliit, [EAKL](#)) and the Estonian Employees' Unions' Confederation (Teenistujate Ametiliitude Keskorganisatsioon, [TALO](#)), some collective agreements provide for annual paid leave of three to five days above the statutory level, but there are no data on the number of such agreements.
- **France:** as set by law, expressed as 30 working days, including Saturdays; increases with service.
- **Germany:** data from the WSI collective agreement archive.
- **Greece:** mid-range of entitlements which vary from 20 to 25 days, depending on service.
- **Italy:** figure calculated as four weeks' leave, plus the mid-range of between five and 10 days awarded as a form of working time reduction.
- **Netherlands:** figure is an estimate.
- **Romania:** figure is the minimum laid down in the national collective agreement; increases with service.
- **Slovakia:** figure is an estimate, based on the fact that – according to ISPP – 22.7% of sectoral collective agreements signed for 2009 provided for one week's leave above the statutory minimum.
- **UK:** figure from IDS 'Hours and holidays', September 2009.

## Annex 6

The data in Table 3 should be read in conjunction with the following notes:

- **Austria:** expressed as 30 working days, including Saturdays, and increases by five days after 25 years' service.
- **Belgium:** figure refers to private sector; minimum statutory entitlement in public sector is 24 days.
- **Bulgaria:** higher statutory entitlements apply to groups such as young and disabled people, and workers in hazardous work or working irregular hours.
- **Cyprus:** 25 days for those working a six-day week.
- **Czech Republic:** expressed as four weeks.
- **Estonia:** expressed as 28 calendar days.
- **Finland:** entitlement is two days' leave (including Saturdays) per calendar month worked in first year of employment relationship, and 2.5 days per month thereafter.
- **France:** expressed as 30 working days or five weeks.

- **Germany:** expressed as 24 work days (ie Monday to Saturday).
- **Greece:** 24 working days for those working a six-day week, entitlement increases after one year's service.
- **Italy:** expressed as four weeks.
- **Latvia:** expressed as four calendar weeks.
- **Lithuania:** expressed as 28 calendar days; certain groups, such as lone parents and people with disabilities, have an entitlement of 35 calendar days.
- **Malta:** expressed as four working weeks and four working days.
- **Poland:** entitlement rises from 20 days to 26 days after 10 years of employment.
- **Slovakia:** expressed as four weeks.
- **Slovenia:** expressed as four weeks; older workers, workers with disabilities and those taking care of disabled children are entitled to at least three additional days, and workers under the age of 18 to seven additional working days; leave entitlement increases for parents by one day a year for each child under the age of 15.
- **Spain:** expressed as 30 calendar days.
- **UK:** since April 2009 statutory entitlement includes eight public holidays.

## Annex 7

The data in Table 4 should be read in conjunction with the following notes:

- **France:** figure from INSEE.
- **Germany:** figures from the WSI collective agreement archive.
- **Italy:** data from Bank of Italy (Banca d'Italia).
- **Romania:** figures exclude overtime and are estimates based on provisions of national and sectoral agreements.
- **Spain:** figures from MTIN labour statistics.

Mark Carley, IRRU/SPIRE Associates