

Working time, gender and work-life balance

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Drawing on both the quantitative and qualitative research findings of the WORKS project, this report analyses the impact of global restructuring processes on the organisation of working time and also examines its contribution to the creation of work-life balance. With a special focus on gender relations, it illustrates how men and women are dealing with changing temporal demands in different sectors and occupations.

In relation to working time, the results highlight a tendency towards destandardisation and increasing differentiation of temporal models: with an increase in atypical hours, flexi-time, and shortened as well as lengthened working hours.

Besides this differentiation, the most important impact of restructuring seems to be a growing intensification of work - not necessarily as a prolongation of working time but as a speeding up of pace and workloads.

In terms of work-life balance, intensified work profiles increase demands on the combination of work and family, a field which remains strongly gendered. Here, occupational contexts are crucial for assessing change processes. A high autonomy in working time offers some women in high-skilled occupations the option of developing emancipated strategies. Women working in lower skilled occupations follow traditional gender rules and depend much more on temporal frameworks laid down by the employers.

In both fields, country differences underline the importance of institutional support in times of globalisation.

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