

# Intrinsic nature of work in the EWCS

## **Dimension - Intrinsic nature of work**

Prepared by Greet Vermeylen and Maija Lyly-Yrjanainen  
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

## **Introduction**

### **Development of this dimension in the EES**

Intrinsic nature of work was one of the indicators which were taken on board on the European Employment Strategy from the start<sup>1</sup>. In the 2001 Communication from the Commission on 'Employment and Social Policies: A Framework for Investing in Quality', one of the ten dimension of quality of work and employment is called 'intrinsic job quality'. The key policy objectives and standards were described as follows: 'Jobs ought to be intrinsically satisfying, compatible with a person's skills and abilities, and provide appropriate levels of income'.

Peña Casas analysed the indicators which were developed for each of the dimensions<sup>2</sup>. He noted that for 'intrinsic job quality' the following indicators were considered in 2001<sup>3</sup>:

- transitions between employment and non employment and within employment by pay level (source: ECHP) (as key indicator)
- transitions between non-employment and employment and within employment by type of contract (source: ECHP) (as context indicator)
- satisfaction with type of work in present job (source: ECHP) (as context indicator).

He furthermore described some other indicators which could have been included under the heading of 'intrinsic job quality', such as proportion of low wage earners, working poor or income inequality share (S80/S20) (initial proposal from the Commission). However, no agreement could be reached in the Employment Committee on the inclusion of these indicators. Instead, an indicator on wage progression within work was proposed, based on the idea that good quality jobs imply also regular wage progressions.

It is quite interesting and innovative at the time that several of these indicators are looking at transitions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Peña Casas (2007), Quality of work and employment in EU policy arena: conceptual frameworks and monitoring indicators', paper for the RECWOWE network (strand 3, tensions between quality and quantity of jobs) described this at length at page 1 – 5. See <http://recwowe.vitamib.com/activities/action-03/international-seminar-1/ploneexfile.2007-05-25.7903122807>

<sup>2</sup> Peña Casas (2007), Quality of work and employment in EU policy arena: conceptual frameworks and monitoring indicators', p. 7

<sup>3</sup> Peña Casas (2007), Quality of work and employment in EU policy arena: conceptual frameworks and monitoring indicators', annex 1

While the initial stress was mostly on quality of work and employment, the results at min-term lead to a shift in focus, translated in the title of the high level expert report for the European Commission, chaired by Wim Kok in 2003, entitled ‘Jobs, jobs, jobs’. Nevertheless, the emphasis on good quality has never disappeared and re-entered during the German Presidency as ‘Gute Arbeit’ (‘good work’). The objective of ‘more and better jobs’ remains central in the revised European Employment Strategy, with a different set of guidelines<sup>4</sup>.

### **In search for indicators for intrinsic nature of work**

In the brief to the Taskforce prepared by the Steering Committee on the Measurement of Quality of Employment describes an example rather than an enumeration of possible indicators to measure this dimension of quality of employment. It refers to the fact that we might not toil in low pay, long hours, unsafe conditions if we knew that the work we do was of significant influence (e.g. military work). We could reword this as meaningful work. We could also link it with job motivation.

In a very recent publication from the Work Foundation on ‘Inwardness: the Rise of Meaningful Work’, Overell<sup>5</sup> defines meaningful work as a combination of three individual motives. Craft motives relate to pleasures of work for its own sake and a desire to do the job as well as he or she can. Compensation motives are self-interest concerns, but they go beyond pay including for example desires for power, authority, and recognition. Moral motives seek ethical standards for both the activity of work and the ends which work serves. Overell argues that even if high quality working conditions are essential for the work to be meaningful, good conditions can’t guarantee meaning or ensure fulfilment as these stem from the individual. This concept of meaningful work is culturally specific to advanced modern societies.

We tried to disentangle this idea and come up with some indicators to try and measure the idea of intrinsic nature of work, by taking as an example some indicators in the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), which could measure this dimension.

We based ourselves on the work motivation and satisfaction theories as described by Furnham (2005)<sup>6</sup>. The framework ‘job characteristics model of work motivation’ developed by Hackman and Oldham<sup>7</sup> (1980) (figure 1) seems to be an most appropriate one to feed into our reflection.

---

<sup>4</sup> The 2008 proposal for a Council Decision on the Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States can be found at

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/employment\\_strategy/pdf/epsco guidelines\\_080303\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_strategy/pdf/epsco guidelines_080303_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Overell (2008), Inwardness: the rise of meaningful work, Provocation series, vol. 4 nr 2, The Work Foundation, London

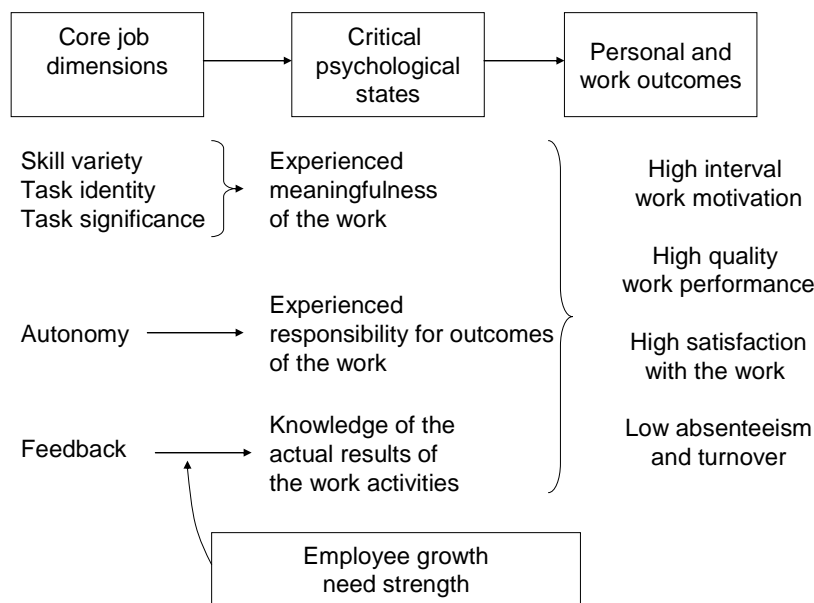
<sup>6</sup> Furnham (2005), The psychology of behaviour at work, chapter 6 work motivation and satisfaction, p. 277 – 353.

<sup>7</sup> Hackman and Oldman (1980), Work Redesign, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA, taken over in Furnham (2005), The psychology of behaviour at work, the Individual in the Organisation, Psychology Press, Hove, East Sussex

The European Working Conditions Survey<sup>8</sup> contains several questions that are related to intrinsic nature of work. The survey addresses all the core job dimensions presented in the job characteristics model of work motivation (see figure 1).

To deepen the understanding of the results of the survey and with a view to increasing its quality, a qualitative post-test<sup>9</sup> was undertaken in five European countries; Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Portugal and the UK. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted per country on questions related to development in the job. The analysis gives information on how survey questions are interpreted in different cultural contexts. Some of the questions relating to intrinsic nature of work were investigated in these qualitative interviews. When this is the case, results from the post-test analysis are given when presenting the survey questions.

Figure 1 Job characteristics model of work motivation



Source: Hackman and Oldham (1980), taken from Furnham (2005), p. 313.

The model is used here as a guide in deciding what questions in the survey could be used to measure intrinsic nature of work. According to the model, skill variety, task identity and task significance contribute to experienced meaningfulness on the work. In addition

<sup>8</sup> Parent-Thirion, Fernández Macías, Hurley and Vermeylen (2006), Fourth European Working Conditions Survey, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, at <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2006/98/en/2/ef0698en.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Sutela (2007), Fourth European Working Conditions Survey: Qualitative post-test analysis, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, at <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2007/671/en/1/ef07671en.pdf>

to the indicators that give some insight on experienced meaningfulness of work, also questions measuring responsibility for outcomes of the work presented, as this is closely linked to satisfaction and perceived way of expressing yourself in the job (autonomy questions). We also included some questions around knowledge of the results of the work activities, in the form of feedback questions from boss. In addition, the survey has a general question of satisfaction with the work, which is presented in the model as a result of job dimensions and psychological states.

### **Testing of some indicators of the EWCS to measure this dimension**

The following indicators from the EWCS are presented here:

#### ***Experienced meaningfulness of the work***

- 1 Skill variety:
  - Learning new things and applying your new ideas:
    - learning new things
    - apply own ideas in work
  - Multiskilling
  - Monotonous work
  
- 2 Task identity:
  - opportunity to do what you do best
  - opportunity to learn and grow at work
  - skills match
  
- 3 Task significance:
  - feeling of work well done
  - feeling of doing useful work

#### ***Experienced responsibility for outcomes of the work***

- Autonomy:
  - choose or change order of tasks
  - choose or change methods of work
  - choose or change speed of work

#### ***Knowledge of the actual results of the work***

- Feedback:
  - discussion with boss about work performance
  - formal assessment of work performance
  - discussing work-related problems with boss

#### ***Outcomes***

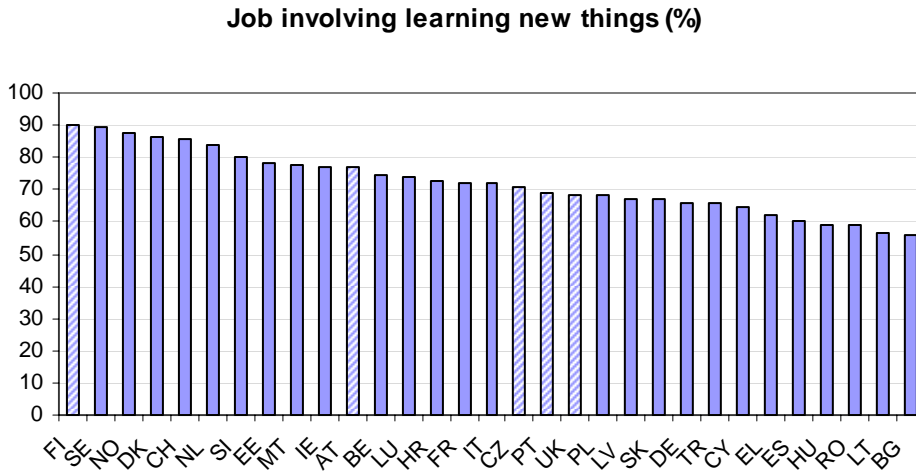
- Satisfaction with work
  - satisfaction with working conditions

The results from the EWCS can be used to see whether some of these indicators are meaningful in the context of the current discussion. However, results are presented by country and are not yet aggregated into groups such as gender, educational background, low and high qualified, occupations and/or (particular) sectors. We propose that this should be done in a next exercise in order to make a good selection of indicators.

However, some caution should be borne in this exercise: several of these questions are more subjective questions. For these questions

Skill variety: Learning new things, applying own ideas, multitasking and (non) monotonous work

Q23F Generally, does your main paid job involve, or not, learning new things?

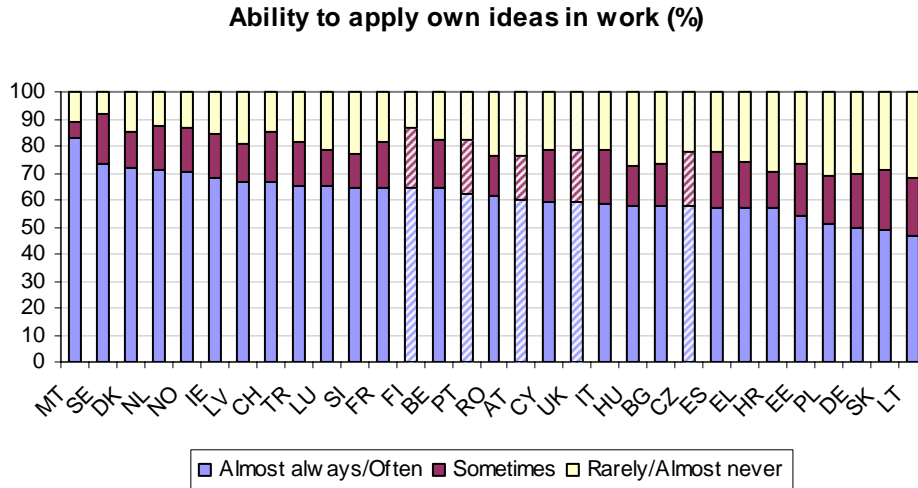


*Post-test results*

There are some differences in the interpretations of the question in the contents and status of learning depending both on the country and the kind of job the respondents are doing. Commonly, and especially in Finland and Czech Republic, learning new things is associated with changes in work, which require workers to acquire new skills. In Austria and Czech Republic the respondents often relate learning new things to formal training activities whereas learning new things can also be perceived as continuous and essential part of the job. This latter interpretation is common especially in Finland, Portugal and the UK, while in Czech Republic everyday work isn't seen in relation to learning new things to same extent. Sensibly, lower status job holders don't perceive to have similar learning opportunities than those with higher status jobs. However, in total this indicator works well.

*Q25J For each of the following statements, please select the response which best describes your work situation.*

*You are able to apply your own ideas in your work*

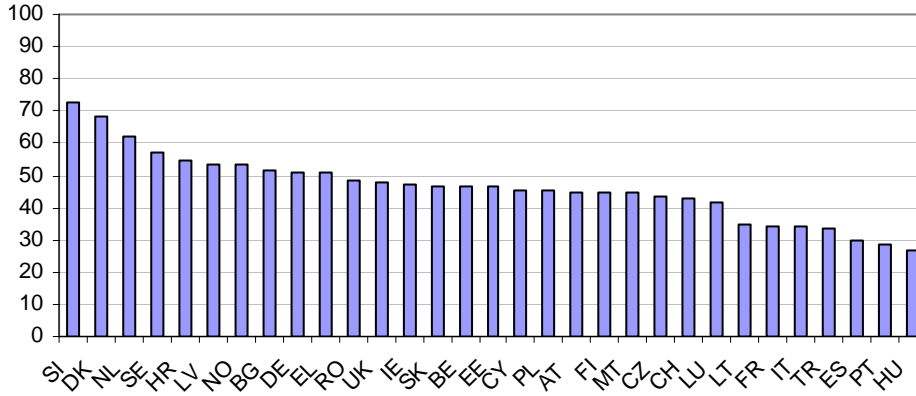


*Post-test results*

Workers in the UK and in Finland commonly interpret abilities to apply own ideas at work in relation to the skills, creativity and methods their jobs require as well as job autonomy. On the contrary, in Austria, applying own ideas isn't thought in relation with skills levels. The question may direct respondents to think about their work in larger context and then they might answer on the basis if the manager welcomes new ideas or if coming up with own ideas is encouraged by the organisation's policies. These interpretations are common especially in Czech Republic and in Portugal, but they are not rare in other countries either. This indicator works well.

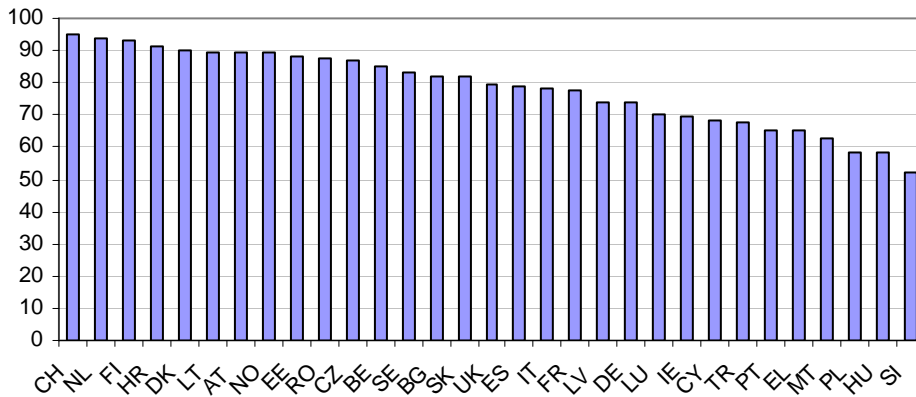
Q26A Does your job involve rotating tasks between yourself and colleagues?

Job involving rotating tasks (%)



Q26A.1 Do the tasks require different skills?

Rotated tasks requiring different skills (%)

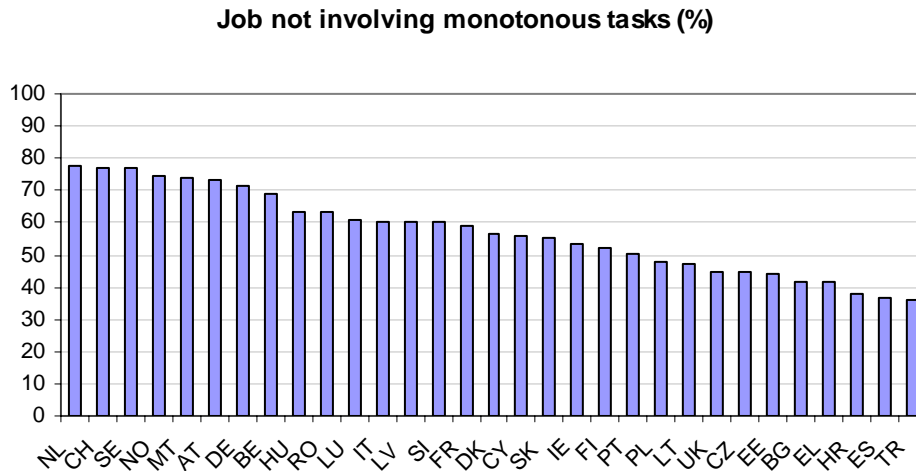






Q23 Generally, does your main paid job involve, or not...?

D – monotonous tasks



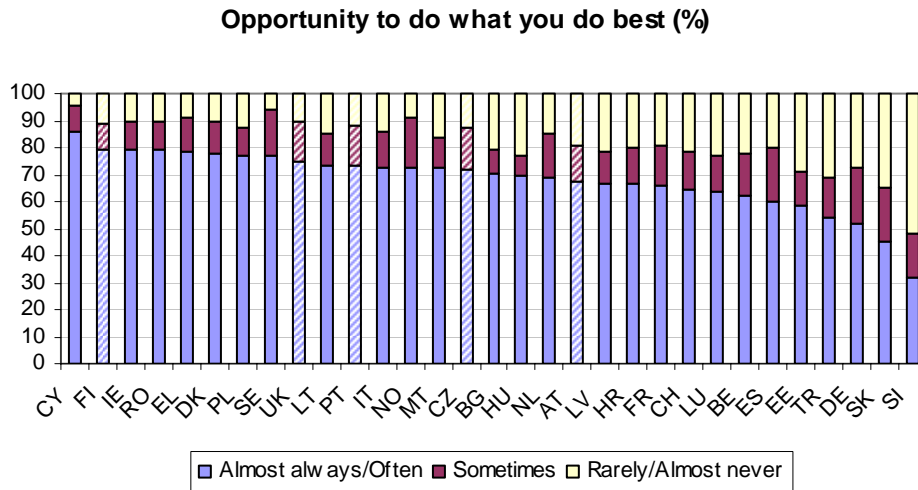
#### Post-test results

Monotonous work is commonly understood as repetitive, routine-based or mechanically performed work. In addition, in Austria, Finland and Czech Republic, also paper work and bureaucracy are thought in relation with the concept monotonous. Many respondents across countries think that their work is not monotonous because they are dealing with people even if the tasks might be considered as such. Some of the Czechs, Finns and British also have a more subjective perception of monotonous work the idea being that work which people are not interested in is monotonous and thus sometimes boring. Many of the respondents saying that their job involves monotonous tasks consider monotony as only a limited part of their work.

**Task identity: Opportunities to do what one does best and to learn and grow, and skills and duties match**

*Q25H For each of the following statements, please select the response which best describes your work situation.*

*At work, you have the opportunity to do what you do best*



*Post-test results*

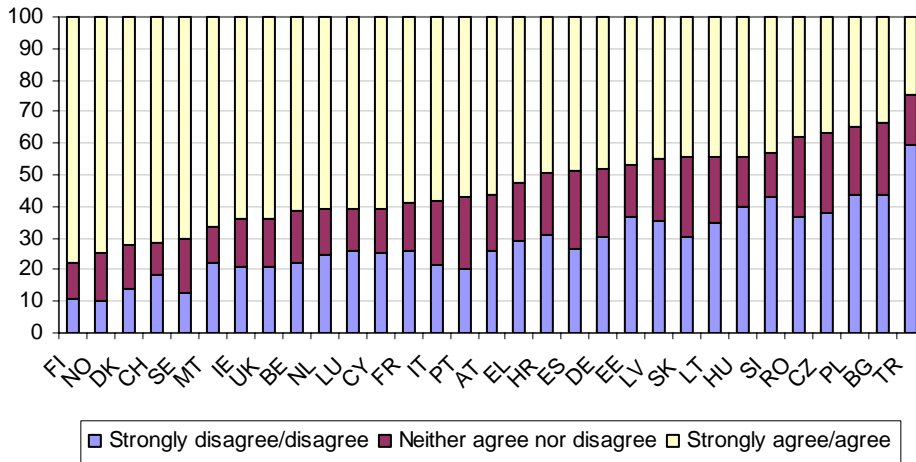
According to the post-test, responses to the question reveal general satisfaction with the opportunity to use one’s skills, competencies and special talents at work. Still there are two somewhat different ways of understanding the question; in Austria and Finland the respondents thought mainly if their work and their knowledge and skills correspond whereas in the three other countries the respondents thought whether they had the opportunity to employ their knowledge and skills to the best of their ability or if there were some obstacles preventing them from doing so.

Having opportunity to do what one does best was thought of with different reference points; applying formal education and acquired training and work experience, making use of personal characteristics and abilities or having opportunity to complete interesting and enjoyable tasks. Positive feedback was thought of as an indication of being ‘the right person for the job’. The question can be interpreted as referring to the respondents’ particular tasks in their job or occupational field or as referring to work life in general.

*Q37E How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements describing some aspects of your job?*

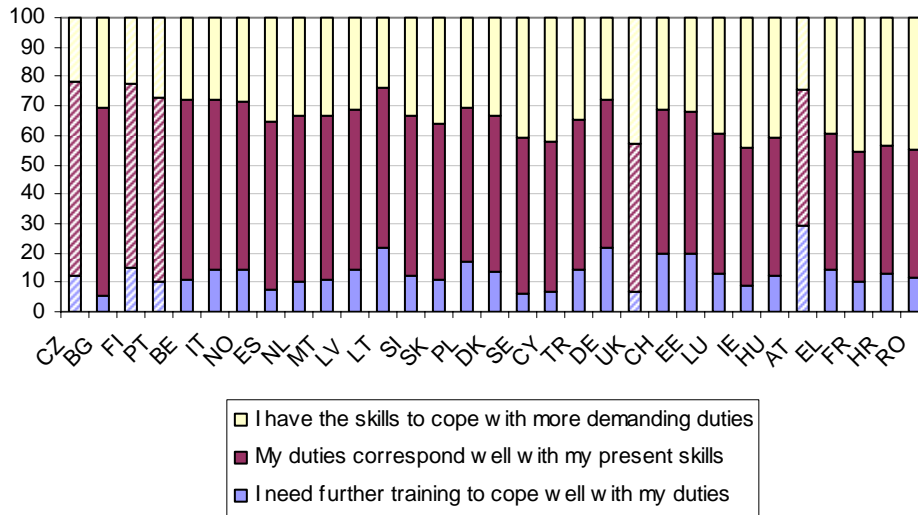
*At work, I have opportunities to learn and grow*

**Opportunities to learn and grow at work (%)**



*Q27 Which of the following alternatives would best describe your skills in your own work?*  
 1 – I need further training to cope well with my duties  
 2 – My duties correspond well with my present skills  
 3 – I have the skills to cope with more demanding duties

**Skills and duties match (%)**



N.B. Countries are sorted by alternative 2 (My duties correspond well with my present skills).

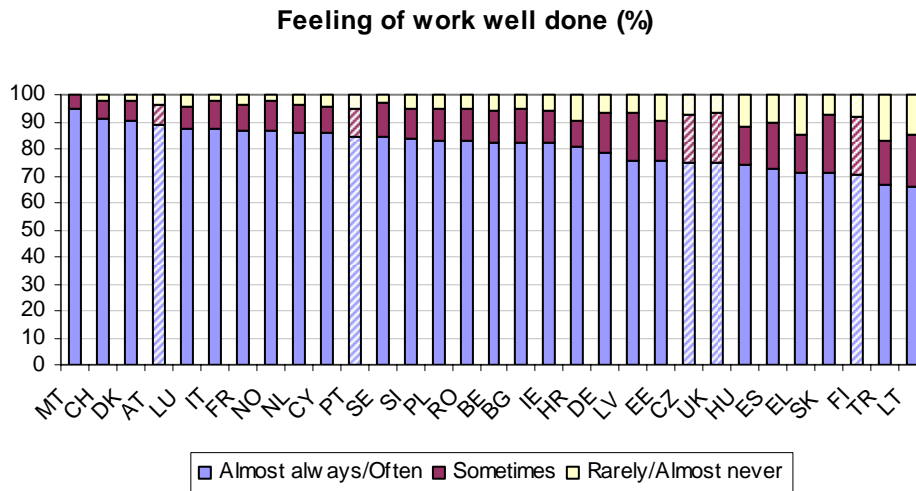
*Post-test results*

This question is criticized based on the post-test interviews. The problem with the question is that the response alternatives are not mutually exclusive. ‘My duties correspond well with my present skills’ is often chosen as ‘least wrong’ or ‘averaged out’ alternative. As contemporary working life requires often constant updating of skills, the alternative ‘I need further training to cope well with my duties’ might indicate worker’s openness to development rather than under qualification. In the same line, some respondents thought choosing the alternative ‘I have the skills to cope with more demanding duties’ as being arrogant. In addition to the response alternatives, also the question itself proved to be ambiguous. Skills could be thought of referring for example to formal qualifications or level of work experience.

## Task significance: Feelings of work well done and of doing useful work

*Q25I For each of the following statements, please select the response which best describes your work situation.*

*Your job gives you the feeling of work well done*

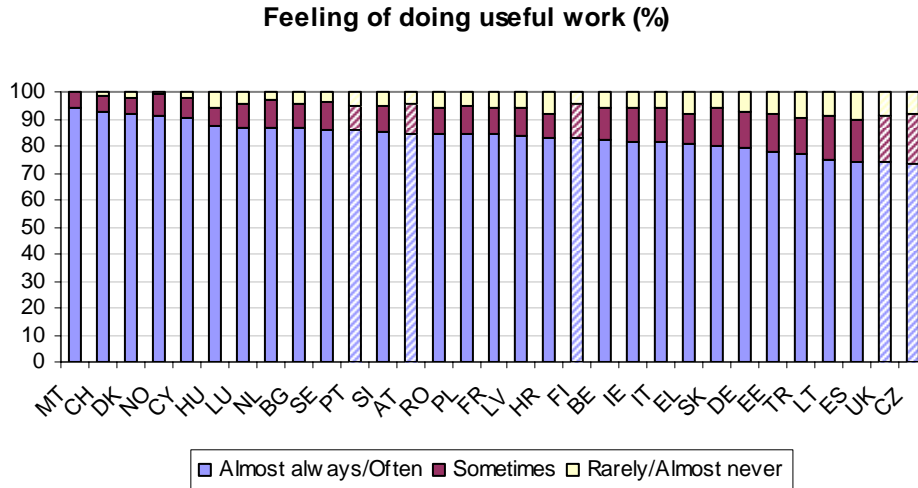


### *Post-test results*

The question is commonly interpreted as having a sense of performing work to the best of ability and achieving the goals. Usually the feeling comes with positive formal or informal feedback or at some cases when results are visible or job is inherently rewarding. Only cultural difference in interpreting the question concerns Czech Republic; whereas in other countries the question mainly relates to tasks well done, in Czech respondents have a more comprehensive view including satisfaction with social relations at work, helping colleagues and promoting own ideas. Main obstacle for not having a feeling of work well done is the lack of time available to complete the job as well as one would like to.

*Q25K For each of the following statements, please select the response which best describes your work situation.*

*You have the feeling of doing useful work*



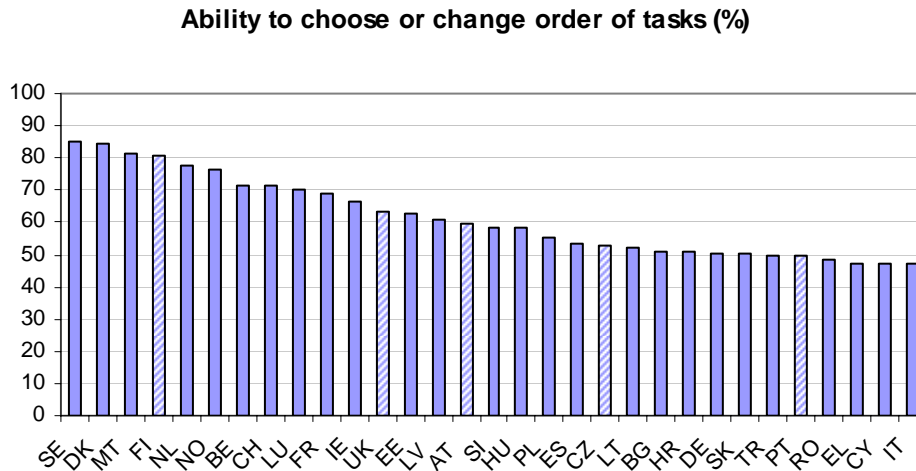
*Post-test results*

The respondents find it easy to answer to the question, but the interpretations of the question vary according to whom the respondents' work is useful for. There also seem to be cultural differences in this respect. The Czechs consider mostly if their work is useful either for society and customers or the company. On the other end, majority of the Finns and also Portuguese think of finding a purpose for getting up in the morning from doing useful work. Some respondents consider that their choice of occupation itself contributes to the feeling of doing useful work. In the UK some respondents have somewhat original interpretation of the question; they think of useful work in very practical ways as for example in relation to income.

Autonomy: Abilities to choose or change order of tasks, methods of work and speed or rate of work

*NB The graphs include employees only.*

*Q24A Are you able, or not, to choose or change your order of tasks?*

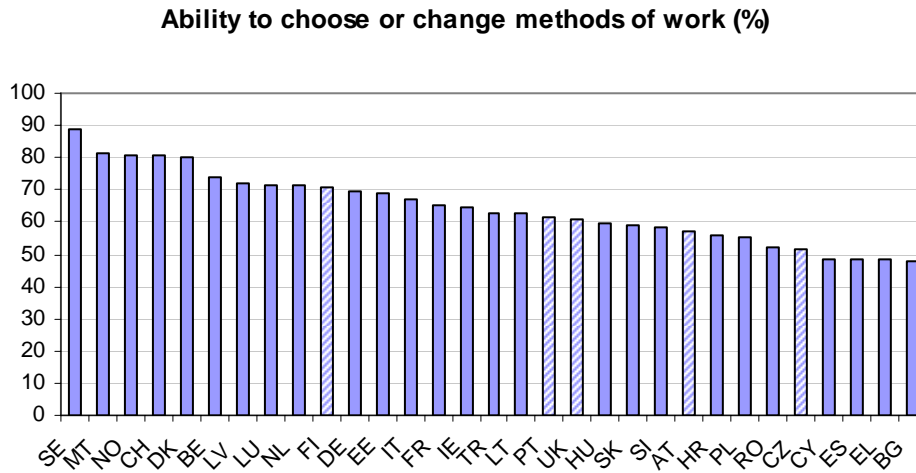


*Pot-test results*

Autonomy is an important indicator when measuring working conditions. We included a number of indicators re job autonomy. Asking about the ability to choose or change the order of tasks is commonly understood as possibility to prioritize certain tasks over another. The scope of autonomy can vary from very small-scale decisions to strategic ones. Autonomy over order of tasks is closely related to the type of job the person is doing. Greater autonomy is experienced by senior personnel and lack of autonomy by production line or other manual as well as transportation workers. Those who work with people have also constraints in choosing the order of tasks as customers' needs have to be taken into account. Interestingly, there is variation in the answering of those who have low levels of autonomy, some give an affirmative and some a negative response.



Q24B Are you able, or not, to choose or change your methods of work?

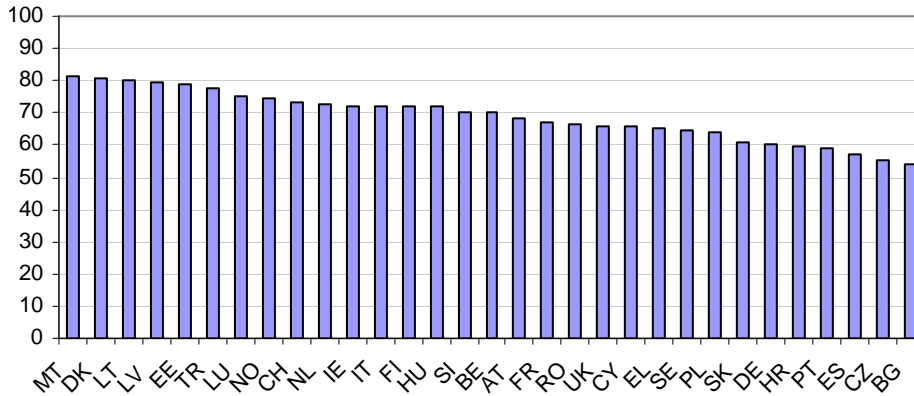


### Post-test results

This is the second question of the job autonomy questions in the EWCS. Asking about autonomy with regard to the choice or possibility to change methods of work is mostly understood as ways to undertake the work. Reasonably, those holding lower skilled occupations experience fewer abilities to choose or change methods of work compare to those in higher skilled occupations. In addition to those doing relatively repetitive work where methods are often dependent on technological or automated production process, also some white-collar workers report lack of autonomy what comes to their methods of work. Especially Finnish respondents report that standardised procedures or company rules restrict their autonomy. In UK interviewees with different backgrounds relate autonomy over working methods to being recognised as ‘experts’ in their work. As was the case with the question about ability to choose or change order of task, also in this question the answers of those having a low level of autonomy vary with some answering ‘yes’ and others ‘no’ to the survey question.

Q24C Are you able, or not, to choose or change your speed or rate of work?

Ability to choose or change speed or rate of work (%)



### Post-test results

This is the third question on job autonomy in the EWCS. Interpretation of the question is quite evident to the respondents the meaning being 'how quickly you choose to do the job' within given timeframes for example by management or clients. Still, even if the meaning of the question is easy to grasp, answering might be difficult as work situations vary and autonomy is often considered to be partial or relative.

Many times choosing or changing speed or rate of work is possible in short term but not in the long run. In the UK there is an interesting difference between higher skilled and lower skilled workers. Those in higher skilled occupations could control their speed or rate of work by working more hours whereas those in lower skilled occupations tend to interpret abilities to choose or change their speed or rate of work in relation to their contractual working hours.

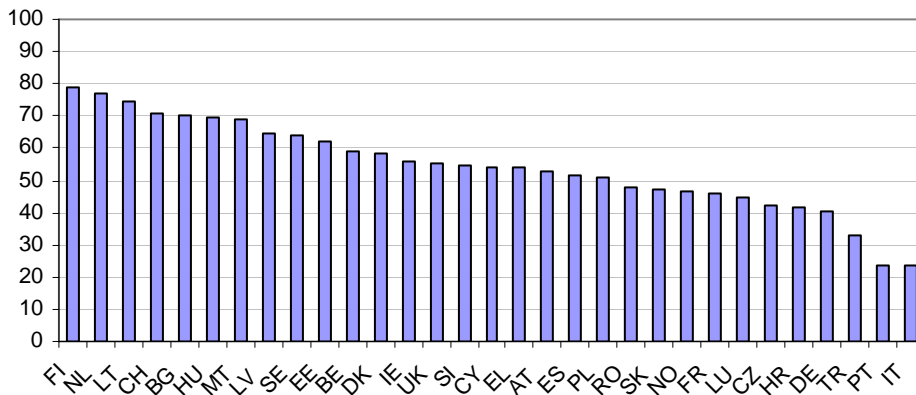
Feedback: Discussion about work-performance, formal assessment of work performance and discussing work-related problems with boss

*NB The graphs include employees only.*

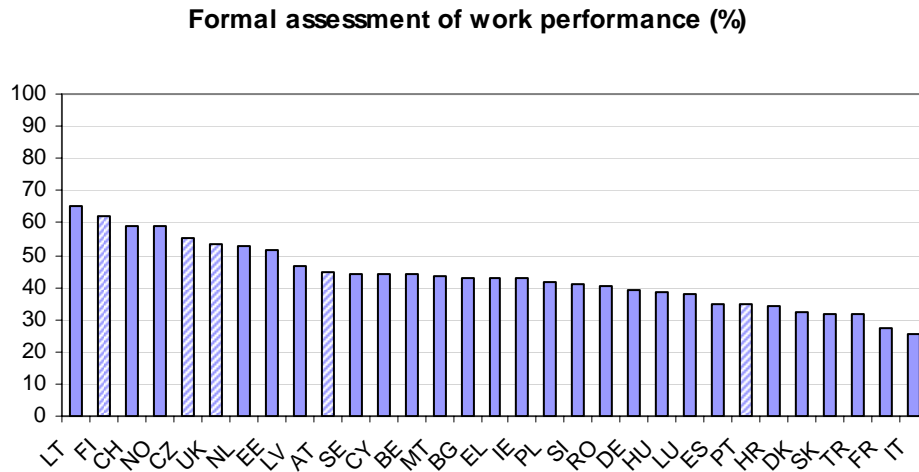
*Q30 Over the past 12 month, have you, or not... ?*

*A – Had a frank discussion with your boss about your work performance?*

**Discussion with boss about work performance (%)**



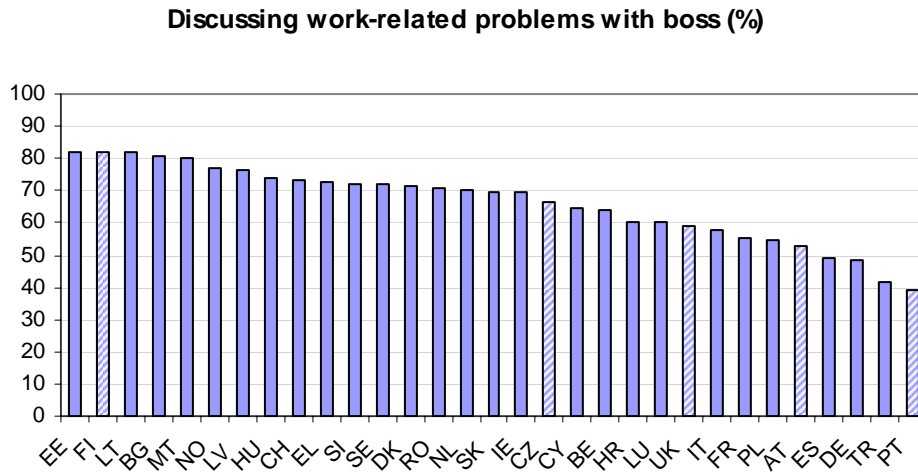
*Q30 Over the past 12 month, have you, or not... ?  
 C – Been subject to regular formal assessment of your work performance?*



*Post-test results*

The question evokes varying interpretations in the post test countries. In Finland and the UK the question is understood as requiring if the person has had personal appraisal and development discussions. These practices are very common in Finland and quite common also in the UK. Blue-collar workers have this type of assessment rarely, and in the UK lower skilled/status job occupants interpreted formal assessment as management observation or monitoring of their work performance. On the other hand, in Austria, Czech Republic and Portugal, the meaning of the question was vague. Many respondents didn't clearly distinguish 'regular formal assessment' from routine controls and informal feedback.

*Q30 Over the past 12 month, have you, or not... ?  
D – Discussed work-related problems with your boss?*

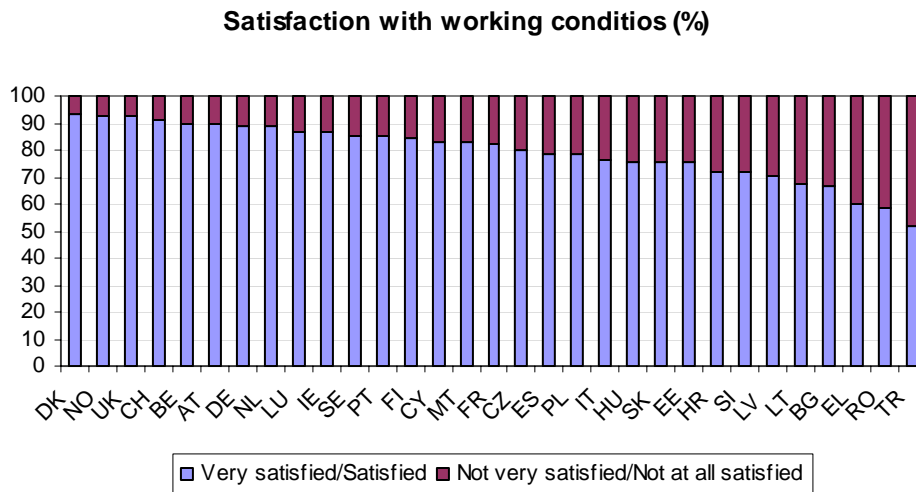


*Post-test results*

The question is interpreted in various ways. Discussing can be thought to include general everyday communication with superiors or institutionalized discussions such as formal meetings. Also the interpretations of ‘problems’ are many ranging from job/professional and organisational problems to staff-related issues. The frequency of discussions might either tell about whether there are problems or if communication channels are open.

## Satisfaction with work

*Q36 On the whole, are you very satisfied, satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with working conditions in your main paid job?*



Job satisfaction indicators can be used for two reasons: the satisfiers and dissatisfiers are used to measure very different things. Herzberg two factor theory<sup>10</sup> can serve as guidance: they found that satisfaction and dissatisfaction depend on different sets of conditions. According to this theory, people have two different sets of needs. Dissatisfiers depend on hygiene factors: physical and psychological conditions in which people work (from security, to relationship with colleagues and superiors, to salary and other working conditions). They all belong to the context/environment people work. Satisfiers are motivation factors. Herzberg identified the following factors as motivator factors: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement. According to Herzberg, the factors that lead to job satisfaction are those that satisfy someone's need for self-actualisation or self-fulfillment in their work. Positive motivator factors result in job satisfaction. Where the validity of this theory has been put into question by many researchers<sup>11</sup>, however, one idea from this theory has been taken over since by many researchers, namely the concept of job enrichment.

<sup>10</sup> Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959), *The motivation to work*, Wiley, New York

<sup>11</sup> Furnham (2005), *The psychology of behaviour at work*, Psychology Press, Hove, East Sussex

**Other international surveys which might be useful to consider as sources for inspiration , the example of the ISSP module on Work Organisation**

Other possible questions which could be analysed to measure the dimensions described above, as well as data for some of the countries could be found in the ISSP modules on Work Organisation<sup>12</sup>

Some questions from this module might be very useful to fill in (some, albeit not all) the indicators to fill in the framework as described above.

*Q4*

*For each of the following how important do you personally think it is in a job (answers: very important, important, neither important nor unimportant, not important, not important at all, cannot choose)*

*e... a job that allows someone to work independently*

*f... a job that allows someone to help other people*

*g... a job that is useful to society*

*q 14*

*For each of these statements about your (main) job, how much do you agree or disagree that it applies to your job (answers: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, stongly agree, cannot choose)*

*e. I work independently*

*f. In my job I can help other people*

*g. My job is useful to society*

*h. My job gives me a chance to improve my skills*

---

<sup>12</sup> International Social Survey Programme: not a particular survey, but a network that brings together national surveys in different countries, using comparable methodologies and a set of core questions. The module on Work organisation was conducted in 1989, 1997 and 2005. The countries covered are Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Finland, Flanders (Dutch speaking part of Belgium), France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, USA. The advantage is that this represents a sample of countries of different parts of the world, even though some big parts of the world are not covered (e.g. Africa).

*Q 22*

*How satisfied are you in your (main) job?*

*Completely satisfied*

*Very satisfied*

*Fairly satisfied*

*Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied*

*Fairly dissatisfied*

*Very dissatisfied*

*Completely dissatisfied*

*Can't choose*



## **Proposal for a set of indicators to be used for the QoE framework**

### *Objective versus subjective questions*

The analysis of these indicators should be deepened in order to get a richer picture of the indicators. Some caution has to be borne in mind: there is a mixture of subjective and objective job characteristics measured through this dimension. Unlike other indicators in the quality of employment framework<sup>13</sup>, some of the indicators to measure intrinsic nature of work can only be measured with subjective questions ('feeling'<sup>14</sup>). These questions might relate to either your personal opinion of the job, sector, as well as your own state towards the job. Some of the results of these indicators might therefore be disputed by some actors in the field.

For most of the sub-dimensions, we tried to include (also) more objective questions (e.g. on job autonomy, feedback, skill variety).

### *Indicators to be retained for this dimension*

In order to measure this dimension, it is useful to have a multifaceted battery of questions.

However, this might not be feasible for the exercise, whereby for each dimension a limited set of questions would be taken over in the Quality of Employment Framework.

### **1) one general indicator : job satisfaction (outcome of work motivation)**

As in the first reflections on the indicators for the European Employment Strategy in 2001, there was a context indicator on job satisfaction. This could be one which could be retained in the framework. This indicator can be found in most working conditions surveys, as well as in the ISSP and ECHP. Albeit this is a subjective indicator, it is one which is usually accepted in international environments. However, as already indicated in the revision of the EWCS results above, this indicator is one which is quite controversial in the literature. Furthermore, it generally results in quite high proportions of the workforce being satisfied when asking a more general satisfaction question, be it with working conditions, with the work etc. It would be better to split this indicator up into more questions to measure this issue.

### **2) More objective indicators to measure meaningfulness of the work and experienced responsibility for the outcomes of the work**

- indicator on skill variety

A possible indicator to retain to measure experienced meaningfulness of the work is one on skill variety, e.g. **multitasking (job enrichment)**. One slight problem with an indicator on skills/learning is that there is a separate dimension in the framework looking specifically at learning.

---

<sup>13</sup> Eg the number of hours worked: this can hardly be disputed: you can discuss about how to measure these hours but once you agree upon the way to calculate it, it is an objective question.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. 'Do you have the feeling of doing useful work?' is such subjective question.

This indicator is probably most interesting for those who do not have job enrichment, ie those with very **monotonous** jobs, which is often a sign of bad quality of work.

One of the advantages to these indicators is that they are relatively objective indicators which are available in quite a lot of surveys measuring working conditions and could be inserted in a Labour Force Survey.

- indicator on task significance

Another possible indicator to retain to measure (another aspect of) experienced meaningfulness of the work is one of task significance, e.g. **work well done or doing useful work**. This is probably the kind of indicator which could be directly to what the example in the brief for this dimension was trying to hint at.

These is a more subjective indicators. The problem is that these indicators might not be accepted in policy circles as they are measuring more subjective feelings towards work. Some working conditions surveys (e.g the 4<sup>th</sup> EWCS) as well as the ISSP have questions which measure this subdimension.

However, these are interesting indicators to be retained for the reflection.

- indicator on experienced responsibility for the work

An important indicator to measure experienced responsibility for the work is the one on **job autonomy**. In our example we approach it through three dimensions. We looked at it for employees only here.

This indicator (a com objective) is one of the indicators which are available in quite a lot of surveys measuring working conditions and could be inserted in a Labour Force Survey.

- inclusion of indicators on knowledge of the actual results of the work

We propose at this stage not to include indicators on feedback questions, as they are not well developed in international surveys. More work should be undertaken in order to make the reliability of the questions.

## **Conclusion**

The concept of intrinsic nature of the work is a very complex one. We tried to translate it into a work motivation indicator, which in itself is composed of different aspects.

It would be interesting to include some indicators on intrinsic nature of work in the framework on Quality of Employment. These indicators reflect some of the more 'positive aspects' of work and can contribute to the reflection on quality of employment.

Indeed, it would be useful to see quality of jobs is not only about money and decent working conditions, even though they are essential elements, but that also other aspects, related to work motivation (being satisfied with your work, being able to do express yourself through your work, having job autonomy, having the feeling of doing something useful, getting some feedback on your work etc) would be included in this dimension.

However, since it is a multifaceted concept, based on a combination of subjective and objective indicators, it might prove difficult to get political acceptance on the indicators.

A warning should be expressed in the discussion on an international set of indicators, including this one. One of the other caveats with these indicators, and especially with the more subjective ones, is that there might be cultural difference worldwide which might be reflected in how people in different countries answer to these questions. This is a very important element to be taken on board when discussing the final set of indicators especially for this dimension (do we measure differences in quality of employment (and intrinsic nature of work) rather than individual cultural differences in how people approach work).

Intrinsic meaningfulness of work, as defined in the paper by motivation theories which are embedded in Western culture, is mostly an individualistic construct. Motivation for working is found from the content of the job: skill variety, task identity and task significance; autonomy, and feedback, which contribute to individual psychological states. This viewpoint might not be comprehensive when very different cultures are studied. Hofstede reminds that in addition to what motivates people, even theories are bound by national cultures<sup>15</sup>. This is important to keep in mind when designing cross-cultural indicators.

The proposed set of indicators, mostly comprised of the more 'objective' questions or a combination of more subjective and objective questions, could therefore be a proxy to measure this dimension. The information is currently not available in the international labour force surveys or other international surveys. A proposal should be made to include some aspect in future waves.

---

<sup>15</sup> Hofstede (2001), *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions, and organizations cross-nationally*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, USA. Hofstede (p. 373, 385) classifies countries according to five dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and long-term versus short-term orientation.