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**Quality of Employment in France**

**Country Report for the Task Force on the Measurement  
of Quality of Employment**

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# REPORT I ON THE QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT IN FRANCE

## A) INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to test the relevance of the conceptual framework and indicators proposed by the Task Force in measuring the quality of work (cf. note ECE/CES/GE.12/2009/1, 2 september 2009 : "Introduction of the conceptual Framework for measuring the Quality of Employment" ), using them to describe the case of France. Within each dimension and sub-dimension described in the conceptual framework, we will review the possibility of measuring and interpreting each of the *proposed* indicators (as well as some of the other *possible* indicators identified by the Task Force). Following this review, it will be possible to judge the "quality" of these indicators, to determine whether or not they are suitable in taking account of the French situation regarding the quality of employment. The resulting suggestions will be presented in a second report, including any proposals for the improvement of the indicators, or (sub-) dimensions to which they relate.

This report should also help clarify the ongoing discussions at the ILO on measuring and monitoring decent work in accordance with Resolution IV adopted by the 18th International Conference of Labor Statisticians, held in Geneva in November-December 2008.

## B) ANALYTICAL SECTIONS

### 1. SAFETY AND ETHICS OF EMPLOYMENT

#### 1a) Safety at work

The rate of serious or fatal work accidents is monitored annually in France through the Caisse Nationale d'Assurance Maladie des Travailleurs Salariés (Cnam-TS) which covers about 19 million private non-farm employees out of a total of 23 million wage earners in France in 2008. After a period of decline, these rates do not seem to have fallen since the mid-2000s, remaining at a level slightly less than 4,000 per 100,000 employees for non-fatal occupational accidents with lost work time and around 3 per 100,000 for fatal occupational accidents (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

### Rate of fatal and non-fatal accidents and rate of occupational diseases, 1998-2008

*rate per 100 000 employees*

	1998	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
fatal accidents	4,7	4,3	3,9	3,7	3,6	2,7	3,0	3,4	3,0
non-fatal accidents	4480	4400	4300	4090	3950	3910	3940	3870	3740
occupational diseases	116	128	179	196	210	231	238	234	239

*field : 18,9 million of employees in 2008, essentially private non-farm sector*

*source : Cnam-TS*

This latter rate is lower in France than the average rate for the countries of the European Union of 27, and even for the EU-15. Moreover, it appears to have declined faster than elsewhere because it was 15% less than the EU average in 2000 and 42% less in 2005 (source: *Compendium des indicateurs de suivi de la stratégie européenne pour l'emploi* [Compendium of Indicators for Monitoring European Employment strategy] updated by Eurostat on 29/07/2009). On the other hand, for the rate of workplace accidents with lost work time which, it is true, is a little more difficult to use in making comparisons between countries – for example, transportation accidents in the course of business activities are counted in some countries like France, but not in others - France is at a higher level than the EU-27, let alone the EU-15. This indicator is also decreasing but not as rapidly as that of our neighbors.

Finally, the “share of employees working in hazardous conditions” is a national definition and is somewhat subjective because it comes from statements from employees in a survey of their working conditions done in 2005 (following surveys in 1984, 1991 and 1998). Anyone who answered “yes” to at least one of the following questions was considered “exposed to occupational risk”: “At your work place, do you have to:

- Breath fumes or dust?
- Come into contact with hazardous materials?
- Be exposed to infectious products?
- Risk being hurt or injured?
- Risk being in traffic accidents during work?”

It is notable that in 2005 nearly 70% of employees reported being exposed to at least one of these five risks in performing their jobs. Workers in precarious or unstable employment such as temporary workers or workers with permanent work contracts [CDI] but who are threatened with layoffs, were more deeply affected.

Linked to the growth of occupational hazards, the number of occupational diseases recognized by the Cnam-TS has increased sharply over the past 15 years because of greater awareness and recognition of the origins of various occupational pathologies, but also because of the intensification of work and the delayed effects of exposure to asbestos. In addition it should be emphasized that these occupational diseases are subject to significant and persistent underreporting. Thus the National Institute of Health Surveillance estimates that each year between 11,000 and 23,000 new cases of cancer are attributable to occupational exposure while only about 2,000 are officially acknowledged.

## 1b) Child labor and forced labor

France has no data on this sub-dimension. It is most likely that these forms of employment are not widespread and are extremely difficult to measure with traditional surveys on employment and working conditions which, we should note, do not affect people under 15 years. As for the 15-17 year age group, the issue of child labor refers to the previous dimension as it concerns identifying those 15-17 year olds who work in dangerous conditions.

## 1c) Fair treatment in employment

The new wording of paragraph 1c) of *Schedule 1* of the document describing the conceptual framework of the quality of work does not provide clear indicators attached to this sub-dimension but encourages countries to determine the largest possible number of indicators relating to other dimensions of job quality for the different categories of people who may be victims of discrimination.

We have chosen to present here some key variables (average wages for all employees and rates of employment, temporary employment, underemployment and unemployment) concerning women, immigrants and people with disabilities compared to the national average for 2003 and 2008. Figure 2 below shows that for these sub-populations there are indeed differences that are most often to their disadvantage but this does not necessarily mean that these groups are victims of discrimination: to justify this claim, one should at least take into account the characteristics of persons concerned in relation to the entire active population.

**Figure 2**

### Characteristics of disadvantaged groups on the labour market, 2003 and 2008

	employment rate 15-64 years		unemployment rate		temporary employment rate		underemployment rate		average monthly wage (cur.€)	
	2003	2008	2003	2008	2003	2008	2003	2007	2003	2008
total	64,0	64,9	8,5	7,4	11,4	12,1	4,9	5,6	1 519	1 687
women	58,2	60,4	9,5	7,9	13,2	13,5	8,0	9,5	1 292	1 449
immigrants	55,5	58,6	15,9	13,1	13,3	15,1	6,9	8,9	1 345	1 511
descendants of imm.	nd	60,9	nd	9,7	nd	13,4	nd	6,1	nd	1 695
disabled people*	36	35	16	19	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd

source : Insee, French LFS

\* for disabled people, data are related to 2002 and 2007, years of ad hoc modules of French LFS

Regarding the gap between women and men, strong differences between the sexes have continued in spite of the increasing gender-mix of the labor market and women's higher level of professional skills. Although inequalities in the rates of employment, unemployment and labor force participation between women and men have decreased steadily over 30 years, they still exist or in some cases have even intensified at work. Women do not have the same professions, have different types of employment and do not follow the same careers as men. In addition, there are growing differences between women themselves. The most educated have access to situations where the differences between men

and women are diminishing, while many among the less skilled continue to pursue trades almost exclusively reserved for women, with low income and difficult working conditions.

Immigrants and foreigners are not synonymous: the first consists of foreigners who were born abroad and are now living in France. It therefore includes those people who have acquired French nationality since their arrival. Conversely, it excludes those who are French by birth but were born abroad and are now living in France as well as foreigners born in France. In 2008, 3.7 million immigrants of working age were living in metropolitan France or 9% of the population 15 to 64 years old. There are now more immigrant women than men: this reflects the cessation of labor-based immigration which, before 1974, attracted mostly men and the growth of family reunification which concerns more women. 35% of immigrants are from European countries, 31% from the Maghreb and 14% from another African country. Among immigrants aged 15 to 64 years, 59% were employed in 2008, 7 percentage points lower than among non-immigrants essentially because of the weak participation of immigrant women in the labour market. In 2008, the unemployment rate of immigrants was over 13% as compared to less than 7% for non-immigrants. This discrepancy is explained, but only in part, by differences in job structures and skills. It should be added that the issue of discrimination is often posed not only for immigrants but also for the children of immigrants who are considered here to be non-immigrants but who can be differentiated in the findings of the French Labor Force Survey.

Information on the employment of disabled workers is more fragmented than that of other disadvantaged groups in the labor market. In particular, it only comes from occasional surveys and therefore is available only in some years: the most recent comes from a 2007 ad hoc module of the European Labor Force Survey, while the preceding information comes from 2002. Of about 39 million people of working age in 2007, 1.8 million reported having an officially recognized handicap giving them the right to take advantage of the employers' obligation to hire disabled workers. Compared to the general population from 15 to 64 years of age, those with officially recognized disabilities are more masculine, much older and less educated. Their labor force participation rate is much lower than that of the whole (44% as compared to 71%) but the gap is reversed for those under 25 years (59% compared to 40%) because often these young people have been handicapped since childhood, with a shortened educational program which accelerates their entry into the labor market. In 2007, the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities was more than double that of all 15-64 years (19% compared to 8%). Compared to 2002, it has increased whereas it had declined slightly for the total population. Just over one third of persons with officially recognized disabilities were employed in 2007. For them, part-time work is more common than for the general working population: 28% compared to 17%.

## 2. INCOME AND BENEFITS FROM EMPLOYMENT

### 2a) Income from employment

The available indicator which is closest to the average weekly wage recommended by the Task Force is the net average annual salary of full-time employees of the private and semi-public sectors. In 2007 it was nearly 24,000 € (460 € per week) and had increased by 0.5% per year in constant euros between 2001 and 2007 (Figure 3). Around this average, the spread in wages between different occupational categories remains strong: managerial and professional occupations earn an average of 2.7 to 2.8 times more than a worker or employee. In addition, men's wages exceed women's wages by 23%: 25,700 € for the first compared to 20,800 € for the second.

**Figure 3**

### Net average annual earnings of full-time employees

*constant euros*

	2001	2003	2005	2007
private and semi-public sect.	23 210	23 270	23 490	23 960
state employees	26 580	26 650	26 320	26 930

*sources : Insee, Dads for private and semi-public sector; Insee, pay files for state employees*

Other dispersion indicators: in 2007, 20% of full-time employees earned less than 14,580 € net per year, while at the other end of the scale, 20% earned more than 28,584 €. Meanwhile, the median annual wage comes to 19,128 € (Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

### Distribution of net annual earnings of full-time employees, 2007

*euros*

	total	men	women
D1	12 996	13 476	12 348
<b>D2</b>	14 580	15 156	13 776
D3	15 960	16 644	14 916
<b>D4</b>	17 436	18 204	16 152
<b>median</b>	19 128	19 980	17 604
<b>D6</b>	21 228	22 224	19 440
D7	24 048	25 380	21 876
<b>D8</b>	28 584	30 576	25 284
D9	37 956	41 376	31 944
D9/D1	2,9	3,1	2,6

*field : private and semi-public sector*

*source : Insee, Dads*

In regard to state employees, the average annual net earnings (nearly 27,000 € for 2007 in full-time employment equivalents) is slightly higher than in the private sector but this is primarily a structural effect of skills, unfavorable to the private sector which employs a larger share of white collar and blue collar workers than the state civil service

The share of employees who benefited from the increase in the minimum wage (SMIC) on 1 July 2007, the closest indicator of the number of employees paid the minimum wage, was 12.9% in all non-farm enterprises outside of temporary employment. This proportion has increased from 1998 to 2005, mainly because of strong increases in the minimum wage linked to the consequences of the laws on the 35 hour work week. On the other hand, it declined over the following two years in connection with the resumption of economic activity.

Finally, regarding the indicator of “low wages” proposed by the Task Force, that is to say, the proportion of employees paid less than 2/3 of the median hourly wage: this was 10.1% in 2005, which was 3.6 points lower than in 1995. This proportion is relatively low for Europe. At the same time, it was only 8.5% in Denmark, 21.7% in the United Kingdom, 22.7% in Germany and even 25% in the United States. But this relative advantage seems to be largely offset by the fact that the low-wage workers in France, who are often unskilled, have increasingly degraded working conditions reflecting a marked intensification of work and also increasingly insecure professional situations, particularly in terms of their work contracts which are not as well protected as suggested by aggregate indices of employment protection (see the book recently published by E. Caroli and J. Gautié (ed.) : “Bas salaires et qualité de l’emploi : l’exception française?”).

#### 2b) Non-wage pecuniary benefits

The French Labor Force Survey questions workers with regular employment of more than 3 months on the number of paid holidays (including seniority holidays, special leaves, “pontos” and days off called “work time reduction days” [RTT]) to which they are entitled each year on the one hand, and those they have actually taken the year before, on the other. It is thus possible to estimate each year the following two indicators proposed by the Task Force: the share of employees who took paid leave last year and the average number of days. We note that, apart from new entrants in their posts, nearly all employees in regular employment are entitled to a high number of holidays and this right is widely used. This legislation is relatively generous (since the early 1980s, workers in France have been entitled to 5 weeks of paid leave) and the fact that the reduction of working hours occurred a decade ago (“the 35 hours”) has frequently resulted not in a reduction of weekly hours but in a longer annual vacation. French employees have thus taken on average 6.5 weeks of paid holidays in 2008, without significant change since 2003.

The French Labor Force Survey also gives information on the share of employees who over the previous week took sick leave : it was 3.2% in 2008; and during the whole year 2008, they have taken on average a little more than 7 days of such leave.

### 3. WORKING HOURS AND BALANCING WORK AND NON-WORKING LIFE

#### 3a) Working hours

In 2007, the average annual hours of work of full-time employees (excluding teachers) in France was 1,680 hours compared to 1,650 hours four years earlier. It was much higher for full-time self-employed workers: 2,560 hours, because of longer workdays and a greater number of working days in the year (271 compared to 212 for wage earners). For a full-time employee, a usual workweek without any exceptional event, is an average of 39 hours and 24 minutes over five days while for a self-employed worker, it comes to almost 55 hours spread over 6 days. This is far from the 35 hour week, the legal length of the work week since 2002.

But these averages are difficult to interpret in terms of the quality of employment. Is it too long? Or too short? It is hardly possible to answer this question without introducing subjective elements referring to the wishes of those concerned. It is therefore necessary to supplement this information by dispersion indicators: 10% of full-time employees reported working hours greater than or equal to 48 hours per week, the statutory weekly maximum. But for those managers and professionals and intermediate professions, whose working time is counted in days instead of hours, this proportion reached 29%.

On the other hand 13.5% of employees say in 2008 they work less than 30 hours per week in their main job, but not everyone wants to work more than that: the proportion of those who would wish to work more is 30%. But it seems preferable to emphasize here the internationally recognized indicator of underemployment: the share of people in this situation is about 6% if we refer to all employees, and almost a third if we refer only to part-time employees.

#### 3b) Working time arrangements

In France, the proportion of the employed work force who usually work at night, that is to say between midnight and five o'clock in the morning, is relatively high, over 7% (Figure 5), but it affects many more blue collar workers, especially skilled blue collar workers than other social groups. Like other forms of atypical work hours, night work has grown over the last two decades: in 2005, 15% of wage earners, or 22% of men and 8% of women worked regularly or occasionally at night as compared to 18% and 6% respectively in 1991 (source: *enquête Conditions de travail* [Working Conditions Survey]). In the same vein, evening work, that is to say, between 8 PM and midnight, is regularly done by over 16% of the employed work force, encompassing almost all night workers. This indicator is also increasing.

**Figure 5**

#### **Share of employees who are working outside of usual working hours, 2003 and 2008**

	evening		night		Saturday		Sunday	
	2003	2008	2003	2008	2003	2008	2003	2008
regularly	15,2	16,3	6,7	7,1	30,6	30,4	13,2	13,6
occasionally	19,7	18,7	9,5	8,9	22,7	22,5	16,6	16,9
never	65,1	65,0	83,8	84,0	46,7	47,1	70,2	69,5
<i>total</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

source : Insee, French LFS



Saturday work, which concerns more than one out of two jobs, has remained stable for 15 years but regular Saturday work (30% in 2008) has increased at the expense of occasional Saturday work. Sunday work is growing, reaching 13.6% of employees in 2008 for those who regularly worked on Sundays and 16.9% who did only occasionally Sunday work. Weekend work is a strong feature of the work of employees of commerce and services.

To better grasp the concept of flexible work schedules, we chose to rely on the proportion of employees who report in the Labor Force Survey having flextime from one week to the next. This averaged 20.6% in 2008, but exceeded 35% in transport and was around 27% in services to individuals. In recent years, legislation has increased the number of individual or collective means to vary work hours from one week to another: loosening the constraints on the use of overtime, the possibility of postponing holidays or to renounce holidays in exchange for extra pay, flextime, annualized working hours with alternating periods of high and low hours...

### 3c) Balancing work and non-working life

The presence of young children is, in France, a major obstacle to the employment of women. So for women who are between 20 and 49 years, the participation rate of mothers with at least one child less than 3 years old in 2008 was 60.3% compared to 76.3% for all women the same age. But when the last child reaches the age of 3 to 5 years, i.e. just below the age of compulsory schooling, the rate goes back to almost 74%. By comparison, the rate for fathers is absolutely not affected: at about 92.5%, it even exceeded the rate of all men aged 20 to 49 years (89.6%). This shows that reconciling work and family is not really their problem. It also shows that it is a serious question for mothers of young children, probably because of an insufficient supply of child care services. Moreover, when working, half of these mothers of young children work only part time.

Regarding maternity, paternity or parental leave, data are much weaker.

## 4. SECURITY OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

### 4a) Security of employment

Temporary employment is defined here as all jobs (or job training programs comparable to regular employment) which are for a limited time period in either the private or public sector (assistants, temporary replacements, fixed-term contract workers...) The proportion of employees 25 or older in this employment category was 9.5% in 2008, higher for women than for men (Figure 6). Not all population groups are equally affected by temporary contracts: In addition to women, this concerns those with less education or who are less skilled, particularly the young, either because they are still in initial training and cannot or do not want a long-term commitment to an employer, or, because of their lack of experience, they are obliged to go through a series of short-term contracts or job training

programs before being considered fit to sign a permanent contract. The indicator presented here overstates job security. It is also interesting to distinguish between employees who report working under such contracts involuntarily from those who have agreed to them voluntarily or because of the absence of anything better.

**Figure 6**

**Share of employees in temporary employment by age, 2003-2008**

%						
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
15-24 years	46,8	47,8	49,6	49,8	50,8	49,0
25 years or older	8,9	9,0	9,5	9,6	9,6	9,5
- 25-49 years	10,0	10,1	10,7	10,9	10,9	10,6
- 50 years or older	5,5	5,3	5,6	5,8	5,8	6,4
total	12,9	12,9	13,6	13,7	13,8	13,5

source : Insee, French LFS

temporary employment = "interim" + fixed-term contracts in private or public sector + subsidised jobs (including apprenticeship)

Similarly, distribution of employees by job tenure is somewhat distorted towards those with greater tenure when limiting the study to those over 25 years. Nevertheless, the survey can be better understood by restricting its scope to persons who have acquired some tenure in employment. The data in Figure 7 show a bi-polarization of employees, between those with long tenure (more than 5 years) or those with very little tenure. This phenomenon deepens over time with the increasing average age of the workforce and the development of short-term forms of employment. But here again, to judge these developments, we must know the paths followed on the one hand by employees pursuing their careers in the same company and on the other hand by those on temporary contracts which may lead either to a steady job or to keeping them in recurrent unemployment.

**Figure 7**

**Breakdown of the employees 25 years or older by job tenure**

%						
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
< 1 year	8,5	8,5	8,4	9,1	9,4	9,3
1-3 years	14,5	12,8	12,2	12,4	12,6	13,5
3-5 years	11,7	12,5	11,9	10,7	9,9	9,6
>= 5 years	65,2	66,2	67,4	67,8	68,1	67,6
- 5-10 years	15,9	16,6	18,0	19,8	20,4	20,5
- 10-20 years	23,0	23,6	23,4	22,8	23,4	23,3
- >= 20 years	26,3	26,0	26,0	25,2	24,2	23,8
total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

source : Insee, French LFS

The indicators proposed as *possible* by the Task Force include indicators on the transitions accomplished by workers which seem particularly interesting from the standpoint of the dynamics to consider when assessing the quality of employment, despite the fact that these indicators are generally not easily measured nor used to make comparisons between countries. Transitions between temporary jobs occupied in the year ( $n$ ) and other occupational situations in year ( $n + 1$ ) are described in Figure 8 : One out of two workers recruited through temporary employment agencies in year ( $n$ ) is still on this type of contract the following year but one in five has found a steady job, the others being shared between other forms of temporary employment (less than one in ten), unemployment (one in six) or inactivity. For other workers on fixed-term contracts (except subsidised jobs like apprenticeship), the probability of getting a stable job is lower (one in seven or eight) and of leaving the job market a little higher. The most common situation in both cases is to remain in a precarious kind of employment, as evidenced by the high rate of unemployment among people who had held a temporary job a year earlier (another indicator suggested by the Task Force) : 15.5% in 2008 for the ex-workers recruited through temporary employment agencies and 16% for the ex-other workers on fixed-term contracts.

**Figure 8**

**Transitions between temporary jobs in year ( $n$ ) and other occupational situations in year ( $n + 1$ )**

%

	permanent	"interim"	other temporary job	unemployment	inactivity	total
<b>with "interim" contract in :</b>						
2005	19,0	48,2	10,7	16,7	5,4	100,0
2006	20,4	49,4	8,8	16,2	5,2	100,0
2007	19,1	53,8	7,8	14,8	4,5	100,0
<b>with other temporary contract in :</b>						
2005	13,9	2,1	60,1	16,3	7,5	100,0
2006	12,6	2,8	62,0	14,6	8,0	100,0
2007	13,6	2,6	60,3	14,6	8,9	100,0

reading : on average, 19,1 % of people saying they worked with "interim" contract in 2007 hold a permanent job in 2008

source : Insee, French LFS

**4b) Social Protection**

The proportion of employees insured under the unemployment insurance program in France is of the order of 72% but most other employees benefit from a very high degree of job security because they are employees belonging to one of the three governmental Civil Services: state, territorial or hospital. Furthermore, developments in this indicator reflect mainly those in employment structures. It is therefore not relevant for assessing employees' protection vis-à-vis the risk of losing their jobs. In this vein, it would be preferable to use indicators such as the share of unemployed receiving benefits, either among all job seekers (currently about 50% in France, adding the system of unemployment insurance and the national solidarity scheme), or among those who lost their jobs, or by using the average rate of benefits to the unemployment compared to their former salary.

The share of GDP devoted to public spending on social security is increasing in France because of increased spending on health and retirement linked to an aging population. It rose from 21.9% in 1990 to 23.5% in 2000 and 25% in 2007 (10.9% for the health sector, 12.1% for retirement and 2% for family aid programs). The evolution of this indicator does not tell us much about the quality of employment. Even with this indicator it is difficult to judge the degree of social protection in France relative to that of its neighbors because this is based on the organization of different systems of protection.

Finally, the proportion of the workforce contributing to the retirement system is necessarily very high, since the only ones who do not contribute are those who work without being officially declared. Here again the indicator does not appear very relevant to measuring the quality of employment.

## 5. SOCIAL DIALOGUE

This is one of the most difficult dimensions to grasp because here we are really in the qualitative field and because we are attempting to compare the industrial relations systems which differ from one country to another. There are many sources, however: in France, we have the household survey and especially the company survey of "Workplace Industrial Relations and Collective Bargaining" [Relations professionnelles et négociations d'entreprise] (the REPONSE Survey, the French equivalent of the English survey WERS), and the collective bargaining annual reports established by the General Directorate of Labor of the Labor Ministry which covers both the negotiations and agreements. Exploiting this information, however, provides few quantitative indicators and must necessarily include a description of the regulatory or contractual context, and therefore of the system of actors and rules that structure their relations.

Two types of indicators have emerged:

- Indicators of participation or representation, such as the indicator proposed by the Task Force on the part of employees covered by collective wage bargaining contracts for an entire economic sector or wage agreements on the company level;

- Indicators on labor conflicts, such as the average number of days lost due to strikes or lock-outs, also proposed by the Task Force.

In the absence of more precise information, it was assumed that all collective bargaining agreements covering an economic sector include a wage scale and that, for companies or work places which have signed at least one company agreement for the year, it primarily concerns wages, respecting the annual obligation to negotiate in this area. The latest information available on comprehensive contractual coverage by sectorial contract or company agreement, for employees of the competitive non-agricultural sector covers the year 2004: it shows that their coverage has increased significantly

between 1997 and 2004 from 93.7% to 97.7% of employees involved (Figure 9). There are some remaining gaps in contractual coverage concerning activities with very few employees such as intermediary associations.

**Figure 9**

**Share of employees covered by collective agreement, status or set of company agreements by activity sector, 1997 and 2004**

%

activity sector	share of employees covered by collective agreement, status or set of comp. agreem.	
	1997	2004
agriculture and food industry	97,1	99,0
consumer goods industry	96,5	98,8
automobile industry	99,1	99,9
capital goods industry	97,9	99,3
intermediate goods industry	97,7	99,5
energy	93,8	99,1
construction	96,6	98,7
trade	94,3	98,4
transports	96,6	99,4
financial activities	94,5	98,7
real-estate activities	93,4	98,2
business services	91,6	97,4
individual services	82,3	92,5
education, health, social service	93,5	96,6
associative activities	73,6	87,2
<b>total</b>	<b>93,7</b>	<b>97,7*</b>

\* including 86,5 % covered by collective bargaining agreement covering an economic sector  
 field : employees of private non-farm sector  
 source : ministry of labour, ACEMO survey on collective agreements, dec. 1997 and dec. 2004

The quality of the measurement of the average number of days lost due to strikes or lock-outs in France deteriorated until 2005, the year when the Labor Department ceased producing these statistics based on reports made by labor inspectors, but used instead the annual ACEMO survey on "Negotiation and Employee Representation" [Négociation et représentation des salariés]. In fact the administrative source provided figures which were more and more undervalued, especially in connection with the increasing use of limited walkouts making the identification of work stoppages by the labor inspectors more difficult. Thus, for 2005 and in a field excluding large national enterprises, transportation and the three branches of the civil service, the administrative source only counted 216,700 days lost due to strikes while the survey of businesses counted 875,500. It is true that the first source only recorded localized conflicts while the latter also covered those of a generalized character but this is far from explaining the differences between them. This is mainly due to deficiencies in identification of strikes by labor inspectors. The survey data do not, however, call into question the overall decreasing trend of the indicator since at 800 or 900,000 days lost, this is still well below the volume recorded by the administration during the 1970s, especially if one considers that the administrative source also underestimated the number of strike days at that time. However, recent observations suggest a slight upturn in the number of strike days per 1,000 employees between 2006

and 2007 (Figure 10), an upturn mainly due to the transportation sector. Other indicators aid in assessing the evolution of conflicts. Thus the number of establishments over 20 employees who have experienced a conflict increased between 1996–1998 and 2002–2004 (dates of the 2 last “Workplace Industrial Relations and Collective Bargaining” surveys known as REPONSE) from 21% to 31%.

**Figure 10**

**Average number of days lost due to strikes for 1000 employees by activity sector, 2005-2007**

*days*

activity sector	2005	2006	2007
industry	217	174	132
construction	24	16	17
trade	39	12	17
transports	560	266	654
other services	130	111	93
<b>total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>128</b>

*field : companies with 10 employees or more of private non-farm sector*

*source : ministry of labour, ACEMO surveys on "negotiation and employee representation"*

It remains to consider how to interpret this indicator since the annual ACEMO survey mentioned shows a deepening relationship between the degree of collective bargaining, and therefore of social dialogue, and the presence of strikes: Of those companies responding to the survey that a strike had taken place there in 2007, eight out of ten also declared that they had held collective bargaining negotiations. This relationship, primarily the result of the size of the enterprise - large firms combining collective bargaining and collective disputes - shows that these two modes are not contradictory forms of social relations in a company: employees may stop working to demand the opening of negotiations, to influence the ongoing discussions between representatives of employees and the employer, or to challenge the decisions taken at the end of a negotiation.

## 6. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

The indicator concerning the proportion of workers employed in highly qualified trades implicitly refers to the ISCO classification [International Standard Classification of Occupations]. But as long as the 2006 revised definition of that classification, including introducing the concept of supervisor, is not applied in the Labor Force Survey, data for France should refer to a specific national classification, the Professions and Socio-professional Categories (PCS) and equate “highly-skilled jobs” with the group 3 of the PCS, including all “managerial, professional and higher intellectual occupations” (including self-

employed intellectual professions). The share of these occupations in total employment was 16.2% in 2008 (18.7% among men and 13.4% among women), up from the middle of the last century, as has been the case for all non-manual wage-earning professionals. From 2003 to 2008, the indicator rose 1.5 point (+1.1 for men, +2.1 for women).

The part of employees who received training over the last 12 months is not known regularly in France since the Employment Survey, like all Workforce Surveys in Europe, only focuses on the last 4 weeks. From 2003 to 2008, this proportion has changed little since it rose from 8.0% to 8.1% (7.5% for men and 8.7% for women) or relatively low levels in the European context. But the outlines of documented training programs are not necessarily the same from one member state to another. On the other hand, the indicator is necessarily higher in countries such as northern Europe which has well developed apprenticeship programs and combined work and job training schemes for the very young. In France, on the other hand, initial job training and employment are still largely disconnected.

Through a survey on continuous vocational training conducted in France in 2006, we have more precise data on the rate of access to continuous vocational training over the last 12 months, whether the goal of this education is professional or personal (Figure 11): this overall rate, which was then 28% for the self-employed and 44% for employees, mainly depends on the characteristics of the business they run or for which they work. Recent technological changes, the size of the company or the scope of its activities explain much of the propensity for professional training. The socio-economic group, linked to educational level, also determines the degree of use of professional training; training for workers is half as frequent as for managerial and professional employees and in addition the length of training programs for workers is much shorter.

**Figure 11**

**Share of employed who received job training within the last 12 months by individual characteristics**

%

individual characteristics	employees	self-employed
<u>socio-economic group</u>		
farmers	///	21
tradesmen, shopkeepers, heads of busin.	///	21
managers and higher intellectual profess.	60	59
associate professionals	58	46
services, sales and admin. employees	38	///
workers	28	///
<u>level of diploma</u>		
> "bac + 2"	64	53
"bac + 2"	61	43
"baccalauréat" or equivalent	51	28
"CAP, BEP"	36	20
"BEPC, brevet"	37	13
nothing or "certificat d'études"	24	13
<b>total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>28</b>

*field : employed people 18-65 years who finished their education for one year or more  
source : Insee, complement to French LFS on continuous vocational training, 2006*

The proportion of “over-qualified” (or “under-qualified”) employees, that is to say that have a higher (or lower) level of training than that normally required for the position, is very difficult to measure because it involves the establishment of an accepted grid of correlations between occupations and the qualifications needed for practicing the given occupations. But there are almost as many grids as authors of statistical analysis of “skill mismatch”. Moreover, as has been said previously, it is not possible to cross the two classifications ISCO and ISCED [International Standard Classification of Education] in order to judge France’s level in the European community as long as the Labor Force Survey does not have an appropriate method of analysis comparable to the ISCO as revised in 2006.

Finally, Figure 12 shows, for information, the distribution of the employed population 25 to 64 years old by educational level. France has progressed in recent decades based on this criterion and now stands at a relatively high level compared to the European average.



**Figure 12**

**Breakdown of employed 25 years or more by level of education (ISCED), 1982, 1992, 2002 and 2008**

%

level of education	1982	1992	2002	2008
low (0-2)	54,9	40,3	29,2	24,0
medium inf. (3)	32,4	41	43,9	44,3
medium sup. (4)	5,8	8,7	12,6	14,4
high (5-6)	6,8	10	14,4	17,3
total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

source : Insee, French LFS

**7. WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS AND INTRINSIC NATURE OF WORK**

7a) Workplace Relationships

The indicators suggested by the Task Force are all subjective indicators related to assessments that employees make of their work or employment. These work characteristics are often referred to as “psychosocial factors” to indicate that they involve the subjectivity of workers, their mental and psychological functioning. But, unless we are able to have European surveys such as those conducted by the Dublin Foundation and discussed by F. Pintaldi in his validation study, we can not present here the results from national surveys with specific questions whose wording differs from one country to another at the expense of international comparability.

Concerning those employees who believe they have a good (or very good) relationship with their coworkers, in France we have three questions in a 2003 survey on the medical surveillance of risks, called “SUMER”, conducted in enterprises by volunteer occupational doctors. According to this survey, 86.0% of employees surveyed agreed (or strongly agreed) “that their colleagues showed interest in them,” 81.5% saying they “were friendly” and 85.8% saying they “helped them carry out their tasks”.

Similarly, for those employees who believe they have a good (or very good) relationship with their supervisor, the same survey reveals that 79.5% of employees agreed to say “their supervisor paid attention to what they said” and 76.2% saying that “their supervisor helped them accomplish their tasks.”

Finally, those employees saying they had been harassed at their workplace can be seen in the SUMER 2003 survey through a series of questions leading to the conclusion that one employee in six considers himself to be the subject of hostile behavior at work, claiming to be a victim of a lack of recognition at work (9%), of disdain and contempt (7%), or of personally humiliating attacks (2%). These difficult situations, to which unskilled workers are most vulnerable, may be a risk factor for their mental health.

### 7b) Intrinsic nature of work

The general remarks made above concerning the previous sub-dimension also apply here.

The part of all employees who believe they can apply their own ideas in their work can be judged from the following four questions taken from the SUMER 2003 survey:

“Do you strongly disagree / disagree / agree / strongly agree that:

- In your work you need to be creative? (*agree or strongly agree : 71.4%*)
- In your work you can often make decisions for yourself? (*agree or strongly agree : 82.5%*)
- In your work, you have very little freedom to decide how you do your job? (*disagree or strongly disagree : 75.7%*)
- You have the possibility to influence the course of your work? ”(*agree or strongly agree : 76.3%*)

Similarly, the part of all employees who feel satisfied in their work can be estimated in the same survey by the percentage of employees who agree that “overall, they are satisfied with their work” (87.3% in 2003).

## **REPORT II : FEEDBACK TO THE TASK FORCE ON THE MEASUREMENT OF QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT - SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT INDICATORS**

It will not be returned here on the list of various dimensions or sub-dimensions of the Quality of Employment finally retained by the Task Force, since debate seems now clear-cut. But the possibility that the question may appear again during the 14-15-16 October seminar should not be thrust aside. We thus propose, in this report, to account for the lesson learnt from the achievement of the report on the Quality of Employment in France concerning the indicators of each dimension proposed by the Task Force in its conceptual framework. For each dimension, we will precise the indicators for which obtained information is not available or doesn't really clarify the question of the Quality of Employment; we will also endeavour to make suggestions to improve the situation.

### 1. Safety and ethics of employment

In a general way, this dimension seems correctly assessed on the basis of indicators proposed by the Task Force. It is appropriate however to put forward three important reservations about this overall appreciation.

First, sub-dimension 1b on "Child labour and forced labour" cannot be applied to the case of France and its European partners, since a very strict regulation aiming at guaranteeing (except on very particular exceptions) the education of the children until 16 years age severely represses any form of forced labour of children as well as adults. The phenomenon being consequently very marginal, it is practically impossible to provide a serious statistical measurement of it.

Second reserve, opposed to the preceding remark : on sub-dimension 1c, "Fair treatment in employment", the directives given by the Task Force are too broad and may foster countries to present a multitude of indicators, which could not moreover be easily compared from a country to another as they refer to different choices. From our point of view, it would be preferable to propose a limited number of key-indicators, like unemployment rate, hourly average earnings of employees, rate of precarious employment, rate of under-employment, and some criteria (sex, age, nationality or ethnic origin, qualification level, disabled workers), allowing us to point out the subpopulations likely to be disadvantaged on the labour market.

Eventually, the definition of the indicators referring in both sub-dimensions 1a and 1b to "hazardous" conditions of work, should be clarified to support the comparability of the informations provided by each country. Moreover, the border between this sub-dimension 1a and dimension 7 concerning the employees victims of various pressures on the workplace, pressures being able to have consequences on their psychic health should also be properly marked out (cf. suicides recently observed in France of "France Telecom" employees).

## 2. Income and benefits from employment

Indicators on “Income from employment” (2a) don't call for any particular remark, except the fact that the rate of “low pay” is an indicator of relative and non of absolute poverty, and is therefore more difficult to interpret on international grounds.

Concerning the “non-wage pecuniary benefits”, indicators of paid annual leaves or sick leaves should be supplemented with indicators on the rights to such leaves so as to measure the gap between both. The possibilities to extend these indicators to other topics like access to social services for the employees of the firm should also be explored.

## 3. Working hours and balancing work and non-working life

On the indicators relative to this dimension we have formulated the general criticism that it is often impossible to appreciate the good or the bad Quality of Employment when seeing through the only prism of such indicators. Thus, how to appreciate in absolute the quality of an employment corresponding to 1650 hours annual working time? And the same as for the fact of working part-time or full-time, in flexible hours or regular schedules, from Monday to Friday or from Friday to Sunday? It seems necessary to introduce here on a compulsory basis if these situations are willingly embraced or agreed under constraint.

With regard to the sub-dimension 3c, “Balancing work and non-working life”, we have to indicate the lack of data in France referring to the use of maternity/paternity/family/leave benefits. In addition, it would also be advisable to take into account in the indicators relative to this under-dimension the question of the care of the elderly which importance will be growing in the years to come. Eventually, it would also be interesting here to pay attention to the balance between working time and “social times” different from the times devoted to the family.

## 4. Security of employment and social protection

For this dimension, the main problem is that the indicators proposed to measure the Quality of Employment considered from the point of view of “Social protection” it is supposed to guarantee (4b) don't have any direct link with the subject, except the indicators related to unemployment insurance which it would thus be necessary to deepen.

Regarding the “Security of employment” (4a), not including young people of less than 25 years in the indicators appears very regrettable to us. On the other hand, it would be very useful to develop here a dynamic approach based on indicators of transition, in order to measure the risks for some workers to remain a long time in “bad jobs”, be it in terms of precariousness, remunerations, under-employment or work conditions. That also takes us back to the question of access to employment.

## 5. Social dialogue

On this dimension, the indicators seem well grasped even if their comparability between country remains unconfirmed and even if their interpretation is not always perfectly clear (cf. indicator of

average number of days not worked due to strikes and lockouts). At last, the question of the union membership of the workers is not really surveyed by the proposed indicators .

#### 6. Skills development and life-long learning

The indicators chosen to shed light on this dimension particularly raise the question of the nomenclatures used , be it the international standard classification of occupations (ISCO), currently being revised, or the international standard classification of education (ISCED).

The relevance of the retained indicators and their ability to be compared depend both on the quality of their coding in the Employment surveys. On the other hand, we have to acknowledge that the indicator on the share of employees having received job training within the last 12 months is affected by the fact that the reference period is difficult to harmonize and that the outlines of the concerned training are not delimited well enough.

#### 7. Workplace relationships and intrinsic nature of work

Here the difficulty lies in the understanding of this dimension which relies on subjective indicators corresponding to appreciations given by employees on their work. This affects both "Workplace relationships" (7a) and "Intrinsic nature of work" (7b). Therefore absolute results can hardly be interpreted and it is almost excluded to carry out comparisons in time and space from specific questions whose formulation differs from one place to the other and from a period to the other.