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# **Work restructuring in the Knowledge Society: changes on the individual work level**

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Patrocinadores  
Globais



**Conferência**

**O Futuro do Trabalho na Sociedade do Conhecimento**

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***Work restructuring in the Knowledge Society:  
changes on the individual work level***

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## Agenda

1. **Work organisation and restructuring in the knowledge society (WORKS)**
2. **General trends of future work in Europe and its effects on the individual work place level**
3. **Specific aspects of the individual work place:**
  - **Qualification & skills**
  - **Working time pattern & work life balance**
  - **Health and safety**
  - **Gender**
4. **Brave new working world? Some considerations**

# 1. Work Organisation and restructuring in the knowledge society

- **WORKS** (Work Organisation and Restructuring in the Knowledge-based Society)
  - 18 partners from 13 European countries
  - Sixth framework programme, Integrated project, Priority 7
  - May 2005 – May 2009 (August 2009)
  - Coordination: Higher Institute of Labour (HIVA), Leuven, Belgium
- **The aim is to understand work organisation and restructuring in the knowledge-based society**
- **Business functions investigated:**  
Production, Research & Development, Customer Services, Logistics, IT-services
  - **Sectors investigated:**  
Food, clothing industry, IT, services of general interest (post railway), public sector administration

## 2. General trends of future work in Europe and its effects on the individual work place level

→ Great variety of developments within European countries and within sectors and branches → **sectoral similarities** between European countries

1) **Highly skilled occupations** (increase of production cycles, stronger market orientation):

**IT professionals:** broadening their skills, new demands, new opportunities with regard to career paths and jobs, establishing a 'male' dominant working culture

**Designers:** shift towards (more) technical skills, heavy acceleration processes, worsening of job conditions, reduction of number of jobs, highly 'gendered' working culture

## 2. General trends of future work in Europe and its effects on the individual work place level

### 2) Low skilled occupations (relocation of manufacturing processes):

**Production workers:** demand for (mostly temporal) flexibility, increasing subjective feeling of insecurity and powerlessness; food sector: ongoing process of mechanisation leads to differentiation of working activities: trends towards more repetitive work (women, ethnic minorities), more technology-based work

### 3) Skilled and semi-skilled occupations (privatization, off-shoring, outsourcing):

**Customer Service in public:** strong orientation towards service activities with high degree of temporal flexibility, two trends: down-skilling of 'front office workers' to more standardised and lower skilled work; up-valuation of front-office activities involving technical, administrative and communicational skills

### 3. Specific aspects of the individual work place: Qualification & skills

***“Here the tasks becomes increasingly automatised and taylorised, so that what ‘once [was] a trade has now been transformed into a number of loosely coupled tasks to be performed by trained hands and bodies undermining the historical occupational identity”...(Production, Denmark)***



### 3. Specific aspects of the individual work place: Qualification & skills (Ramioul & De Vroom 2009)

#### a) Skill effects of value chain restructuring

##### ➤ Highly dependent on the position in the chain

##### ➤ Deskilling trends

- Restructuring is preceded by codification & standardisation
- Fragmentation of knowledge along the chain
- Formalisation related to work over distance and M&A
- General trend of standardisation

##### ➤ Upskilling trends

- Lowskilled work disappears: new task composition for the remaining workforce
- Shift of core business in restructuring companies
- Access to new knowledge and learning opportunities in the chain

#### b) Mostly: new skills are needed at the higher end of the chain

- Related to organisational and technological changes accompanying the restructuring
- Growing importance of non-professional skills, not necessarily strengthening these
- “Skill-intensification” related to required combination and integration of (conflicting) competences and speeding-up of business
- Upskilling not necessarily beneficial for Quality of Work

### 3. Specific aspects of the individual work place: working time pattern & work life balance (Krings et al. 2009)



***“ Flexibility and overtime provides Hungarian employees competitive advantage: work councils do not allow working at weekends in Austria or in Germany. There are no limitations in Hungary, and employees do not mind working on weekends, that increases their efficiency and helps them obtaining certain jobs.”***  
(IT services, Hungary).

### **3. Specific aspects of the individual work place: working time pattern & work life balance (Krings et al. 2009)**

#### **Trends:**

- Sector-specific character and country-specific culture of working time flexibility**
- Increasing demands towards flexibility: working time is implicitly and explicitly affected by global restructuring**
- Shortening of innovation cycles; acceleration of business processes (i.e. clothing sector, food sector)**
- Increase of customer and market orientation leads to different forms of temporal flexibilities (public sector, production, IT)**
- Internationalisation of work leads to atypical forms of working time pattern (IT, food)**

### 3. Specific aspects of the individual work place: health & safety

***“ The pressure is of course much more than it was before. (...) We have to work with quick dates, and it is always a lot of pressure in our back. You can’t relax in this department. Everything is very fast and if we have a problem we have to solve it very quickly. I never relax” .... (Designer, Portugal)***



### 3. Specific aspects of the individual work place: health & safety (Di Nunzio et. al. 2009)

#### outcome: psycho-social environment

- **Demands in work:**
  - intensification of work in all occupations, i.e individualisation of responsibility
- **Influence over work:**
  - increase of standardisation and formalisation in nearly all occupations.  
Standardisation makes it difficult to negotiate influence over work, and improve the surveillance on the working process and on the workers
- **Recognition and reward:**
  - trends toward more individually based recognition, where the individual becomes an expert, payment according to performance.
- **Predictability:**
  - there is a clear trend towards more uncertainty
- **Meaning:**
  - standardisation and the decrease of workers influence delimit involvement satisfaction, and the acquisition of a professional identity

### 3. Specific aspects of the individual work place: gender

***“Especially in the middle sized companies with a high technical specialization the male presence is very high respectively the proportion of women in the branch extremely low. As a consequence a male working culture with fulltime jobs and a high orientation on the job demands can be observed” ...  
(Software development, Germany)***



### **3. Specific aspects of the individual work place: gender**

#### **Overall Results:**

- **Women still hold primary responsibility for the household (qualitative differences between countries)**
- **High persistency of the traditional gender-related working time regimes in low qualified and skilled occupations**
- **Dynamic in high skilled occupations which causes a broad range of individual time arrangements on female side (IT, design)**
- **High persistency remains in the continuing male attitude towards work and the lack of involvement as caregiver**
- **Tension on the side of women: fulfilling the roles of an ideal worker on the one hand and an available care-giver on the other hand**
- **Structural and normative constraints continue for women to balance their demands on the labour market**

## 4. Brave new working world? Some considerations

- 1) Global restructuring affects skill requirements (up-skilling and down-skilling processes, broadening of skills), occupational profiles, career patterns, job opportunities, temporal organisation, reconciliation of work and family needs
  - **differentiation, flexibilisation and mechanisation of occupational profiles have an impact on new forms of division of labour within occupational groups**
  
- 2) Major trends affect the division of labour between men and women (dynamic and constancy), less skilled and unskilled workers, ethnic minorities in Europe (Bulgaria, UK, Denmark)
  - **'New' forms of division of labour can be considered along traditional developments as well as along heterogeneous processes of new forms of work**

## 4. Brave new working world? Some considerations

3) **‘Hidden’ changes at the workplace level refer to the individual ‘fit’ with new demands and requirements (flexibility and mobility, worsening of working conditions, individual arrangements of work and life, existential dependency from labour, increase of insecurity)**

➤ **‘Hidden’ changes of global restructuring are situated locally, where the manifold effects have been**

- (a) evaluated by the individuals and**
- (b) embedded into the individual and**
- (c) occupational context**

