Reviewing working time legislation in Finland: analysis from IT-intensive sectors

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Main trends affecting working life

- Technology; digitalisation, robotisation
- Changes in work: skills, qualifications, polarisation of jobs
- Towards service society 24/7; digital platforms
- Independence from the fixed work place and time
- New jobs in small companies, small work places
- Management practices need to adapt to new world of work
- More influence and participation of employees needed: a new balance of trust
Features of working life in IT-intensive sector

- Skills, knowledge, expertise, customer approach, entrepreneurial spirit, lean and innovative organisations. Appreciation of high quality work places; "flow, good vibes"!
- Key role of management: remove obstacles for success
- Culture of appreciating a quality team spirit while nurturing personal independence
- Balance between work and private life appreciated
- Observation: these features stem especially from soft-ware industry but are found all over in sectors where IT plays a key role
What the employers want: key findings

- More scope for local solutions in working time
- Simplify "book keeping" and recording rules of working time
- Well-being, balance of working life and private life is important
- Remove obstacles from weekend-work: restrictions, excessive costs
- Working-time banks, annualisation of working time (average working time), simplification or working time regulation
What the employees want: key findings

- Ensuring rest periods and time for mental and physical recovery remain the focus of working time protection
- Need for rules of the game for the distance work; distance work is popular, though
- Fragmentation of working time throughout a long day; “grey work” as a problem (unrecorded overtime)
- Problems linked to traveling (e.g. work done during a trip is not paid as a normal work)
- “Contactability” on leisure time: should there be time zone protected from phone calls and emails?
Guidelines for new approach in regulating working time

- Technology liberates from “the shackles of time and place” – new ways of working vs. new ways of organising work.
- Skills potential: working time regulation should give more autonomy to an individual in order to fully release the productivity potential.
- New ways of working together: nobody knows everything; a genuine, even virtual team work – distance work is the new normal!
- Measuring the work: hours are not an adequate instrument. The employee sets his/hers own working schedule. Results count. Ultimately the time frame is set by the customer.
Distance work, mobile work

- Distance work is breaking through at a speed. Seems to be the main rule in IT-sector.
- Based on the needs and possibilities of the job: what can be carried out outside the fixed work place is allowed to be done so.
- Originally for development, research, individual experts; now more and more customer service, monitoring, surveillance etc.
- Distance work is not recognized by the working time law (except home work, sales representatives and forest workers)
Pros and cons of distance work

Pros:
- Reduces commuting
- Facilitates synchronising working life and family life
- Increases productivity
- Improves the employability of people with disabilities
- Facilitates innovative work space planning and architecture

Cons:
- Lack of social contacts; challenges of measuring work load and results
Conclusions and suggestions for reforming working time regulation in Finland

- Towards a comprehensive, flexible and future-oriented working time regulation – no need for sectoral solutions
- IT sector and its best practices as a benchmark for other sectors; harbinger of the future world of work
- Needs of the IT sector to be taken into account when modernising the working time legislation
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- Widen the scope for local solutions as regards working time
  - Annualisation of working time and working time banks
  - Simplify the use of flexitime
  - Facilitate the use of weekend work, including Sunday work
  - Modernize the rules and restrictions of overtime: max. 48 hours/week on an annual basis, overtime included
  - Clarify rules for local agreements; reinforce consultation and participation of employees
Needs of the IT sector to be taken into account when modernising the working time legislation 2

- Recognize distance work in legislation
  - Specify criteria for distance work falling into scope of working time law
  - More scope for local agreements
  - Specify meaning and impact of “contactability” of the employee
  - Right to initiative for employees?

- Emphasize the significance of rest periods and recovery in the working time legislation

- Modernize the working time rules in collective agreements accordingly