Research on Finnish Society
Vol. 3 (2010), pp. 43–52

ISSN 1796-8739

Employees' Satisfaction with the Balance Between Work and Leisure in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark - Time Use Perspective

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This study aims at investigating the level of satisfaction with the allocation of time between work and leisure, and possible explaining factors, among the employed in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Using the European Social Survey (ESS) Round 3 data from 2006, it is possible to make competent quantitative comparisons between the Nordic countries (excluding Island which did not participate in the ESS data collection). Multilevel modelling (GLM) was used for data analyses. Only those respondents to the ESS survey who were currently employed were included in the analysis. The results show that the Danish employees are the most satisfied and the Swedish employees the least satisfied with the division of time between work and other aspects of life. In all the four countries, work-related rather than family-related or other leisure-oriented factors predicted the level of satisfaction. Socio-economic and family-related factors predicted satisfaction at the country level, but did not account for common explanatory factors. However, it may be that those who are potentially the most dissatisfied due to difficulties in combining work and family are not at work at all, and thus not involved in the study. The observed differences between the countries are discussed in the present article. To conclude from the results of this study, poor work content reduces temporal commitment to work, and accordingly, time use as a central element of individual well-being should not be ignored.

Keywords: Time use; work-leisure balance; Nordic countries; comparative analysis

Introduction

The relationship between work and leisure has interested researchers from several disciplines throughout the industrialized era. Within economics, the focus has been on the labour supply and the trade-off between work and leisure of a rationally behaving consumer. The question of work-leisure relationship has intrigued the minds of sociologists (e.g. Parker, 1976; Wilson, 1980). In terms of well-being and especially that of families, the relationship between work and non-work time has been widely discussed: How is the non-paid work divided in families, and how can work and childcare be optimally combined in families with children? Implications of time allocation to individual well-being have also raised interest, and the concept of time-poverty has been launched to describe the scarcity of free time (e.g. Warren, 2003; Goodin et al., 2005; Eriksson et al., 2007).

In the beginning of industrialization, a working day ranged from 10 to 16 hours six days a week. There was neither much free time nor the resources to make the little free time enjoyable. After World War I many European countries introduced eight-hour workday as a response to labour unions' constant demands and violent confrontations. Today, in most European countries a 40-hour working week is a standard regulated by law. Occasionally there is public debate over diminishing the current 8-hour day to 6 hours. This is advocated as a partial solution to the unemployment problem through increased amount of jobs available.

There are employees who actually would like to work fewer hours. Nevertheless, it is increasingly common that employees work long hours. Standard working hours are no longer the norm (Bittman & Wajcman 2000), and for many, a forty-hour week over five working days is something that is written in the contract, but which for some of us never really holds. Working hours have also concentrated into fewer working households, and in Britain, for example, the average contribution of work per person of working age has risen since 1981 by approximately three hours per week. According to Green (2002), this represents a non-negligible increase in the pressure of work on these households' available time.

Both the longer and more unsociable hours and the more demanding work contribute to increasing work pressure (e.g. Green, 2006), which must have, at least, some implications for the well-being of an employee and for the satisfaction one gets from being at work. Not only there is less time left for other aspects of life, but an employee is also more stressed at work. The stress appears to affect female employees in particular, because it is not just the lengthy work-

This is a revised version of a paper presented at the 31st Conference of the International Association for Time Use Research, Lüneburg, Germany, 23-25 September 2009. I am grateful to those who commented on the earlier version of the manuscript.

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ing hours, but also the "second shift" at home that fall especially heavily on employed women (for the concept of "second shift", see Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Hochschild, 1997; Hochschild & Machung, 2003).

This article examines the satisfaction of employees in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark with the balance of time spent on paid work and on other aspects of life, and the factors explaining the differences in the level of satisfaction. Preferences for working time are an important aspect of labour market relations, especially in the period of transition to more flexible work arrangements and varied time schedules (Stier & Lewin-Epstein, 2003, 321). This is also the case in the Nordic countries, which are facing the same challenges of changing labour markets referred to above as the other industrialized countries.

The aim of this article is to provide an insight into the work-leisure balance in the Nordic countries, which are often assumed to produce similar outputs as regards to welfare policies. Although there are common features on the policy level, there are actually also differences concerning the working conditions and employment relations between the Nordic countries. For the researchers and policy-makers it is vital to have knowledge about the outcomes of national policies and the factors mediating the outcomes in those countries that are the most similar to their own countries since, when considering future policy changes, the implications can be predicted with the highest certainty. If other countries outside Scandinavia were included in the study, the elaboration of the possible differences in the satisfaction and the mediating factors would remain at a very general level, and the contribution to the Scandinavian welfare policy agenda would be minor.

The data used in this study derive from the European Social Survey and its Round 3 from the year 2006. Because the satisfaction with the balance between work and other aspects of life is subject to study here, only those respondents to the ESS survey who were currently employed are included in the final data. Linear regression is used as the method of analysis. The article is structured as follows: Section II describes work-leisure relationship from time use perspective and the problematic nature of reconciling work with other aspects of life. Section III presents briefly the four countries included in the study. Section IV describes the data and the methods of analysis used. The results of the study are presented in Section V, and the conclusions along with the discussion in Section VI.

Work, family, and scarcity of time

We have different preferences as regards working hours. However, the time is same for all; we have 24 hours a day and if we work eight hours a day, it leaves the same 16 hours for all of us. In theory, any hour of the day and any day of the week could be used for working in accordance with demands or preferences. However, working 24/7 is not possible for obvious reasons. We need time off from work, firstly, because we need to satisfy our bodily needs (eating, sleeping and otherwise taking care of our body), and secondly, because we need to satisfy household necessities (cooking, cleaning, taking care of the children etc.) (Goodin et al., 2008, 4-5). Hence, we have obligations that bind our time on a daily basis. Thirdly, we need time just for ourselves. The time that remains after working hours, unpaid work at home, and self-care, is categorically free time, leisure. Parker (1976, 65) defines leisure as time free from obligations to self or to others – time in which to do as one chooses. It is when we can visit our friends, do sports, or engage us to other activities we find enjoyable.

Traditionally work is seen as something we need to do in order to fulfil the financial needs that we have. We have to spend at least a minimal amount of time securing the income that we need for living (Goodin et al., 2008, 5). Yet, it is not just the opportunity to make money that is forcing or inspiring us to work. Work is also essential for individual fulfilment and well-being. Furthermore, personal well-being is highly dependent on the content of one's job. Warr & Bryan (1987), among others, have attempted to describe the principal features of a good job and has come up with a "vitamin model", suggesting that certain characteristics of one's job act much in the same way as vitamins. They see that individual happiness is linearly related to valued social position, money, and physical security.

It is vital for the employees that they feel that they get recognized for the work they perform, they get decent monetary compensation, and they are not in constant fear of losing their jobs. These are not only relevant for individual job satisfaction but most likely also for how much time the employee is willing to allocate to work. From the economic viewpoint, working hours set limits to the earnings and income of an employee (Jacobs & Gerson, 2001, 40). When trying to achieve an optimal balance between work and other aspects of life, an employee has to weigh, on one side, the time preferences he/she has and, on the other side, the economic support he/she ought to provide for living. Jacobs and Gerson (2001, 40) claim that while too much time at work can undermine personal and family well-being, too little time can endanger the family's economic security and lower its standards of living. Thus, although one would like to work less, it may not be economically possible.

Whatever the reason is, possible dissatisfaction with the time balance between paid work and leisure stems either from willingness to work more, or from not having enough time for other aspects of life. In the first case, an employee is involuntarily working less than preferred, e.g. only part-time instead of a full-time job. Part-time work is quite common in the Nordic countries, with the exception of Finland. According to the OECD statistics, every fourth of all employed persons in Sweden, Norway and Denmark are working part-time. In Finland, the share of part-time workers is much smaller, only one out of seven (OECD, 2009). Taking up a part-time work may, of course, be voluntary and a matter of choice. However, some may be forced to accept part-time work, if there are no alternatives, and accordingly, they are also forced to gain a lower income than they prefer or need (Nätti, 2007, 532).

Jacobs and Gerson (2001) found that those who allocate

relatively few hours to work are more likely to want more hours of work, whereas those working long hours prefer a reduction in their workload. Thus, we could expect that working long hours would contribute negatively to the employees' satisfaction. However, the proper length of a working day from an employee's viewpoint is a highly subjective matter. For some, eight-hour working day may be too long, for some, the limit may be twelve hours. As most employees in the industrialized countries are employed full-time, their working week should amount to 40 hours on average. Yet, a part of the workforce is more or less voluntarily engaged in paid and especially unpaid overtime (Stier & Lewin-Epstein, 2003, 303), which means that their actual hours at work can be much more than 40 hours a week.

Despite the working time regulation, many employees are increasingly spending long hours at work and taking work home, and the average working time has increased (Blyton & Dastmalchian, 2006, 19). For some individuals, working long hours may be the only means to earn sufficiently to maintain an acceptable standard of living. For others, it may reflect either a particular attachment to work, or a pressure to conform to a long hours culture prevailing in the work community (Blyton & Dastmalchian, 2006, 20). On the other hand, there are people who just love to work. They work long hours even when other employees are enjoying their weekend off or well-earned summer vacation. They consider themselves as devoted workers who do not sacrifice themselves for the work, but rather enjoy it (Hochschild, 2001, 36).

If the working hours system is flexible, and the employee has the power to negotiate with the employer as regards optimal working time arrangements, it may not be that big of a problem for the employee to work long hours when required. Also, if the expected compensation for working ten to twelve hour days is sufficient, an employee may well be willing to work overtime and even unpaid (Pannenberg, 2005, 192), and would still be quite satisfied with the situation. Pannenberg (2005) reported on a positive relation between unpaid overtime and long-term real labour earnings. This was, however, applicable to male employees only.

The gender bias concerns not only time devoted to work, but also other temporal aspects of life. Although unpaid work at home, including childcare, is today more equally divided between the genders than before, we are still far from equal division of domestic work (Gershuny et al., 1994; Bianchi et al., 2000; Gershuny, 2000; Sayer et al., 2004). Fathers' more active involvement in household labour may be encouraged by family friendly policies, but at the same time, more flexibility is demanded from the employees, meaning longer working hours and working on shifts and during weekends. It is also difficult to change the deep rooted societal structures that are caused by the long history of male breadwinner model. Men are still expected to commit themselves to work without external responsibilities influencing their behaviour. They are willing to participate in childcare and housework, but at the end of the day, they are unwilling to make any family accommodations that would affect their job (Ranson, 2001, 22-3).

Especially in dual-earner families with small children and very little personal time, work-family issues may create conflicts. The "rush-hour" phenomenon (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000) is familiar for those with full-time work and caring responsibilities. Reconciling work and care can be challenging, when one is responsible for young children, or for elderly or disabled relatives (see Gerstel & Gallagher, 1993). The caretaker role, including caring work outside home, has traditionally fallen on the women in the families. Gerstel (2000) calls this care giving of next-of-kins and friends outside home the "third shift".

It is not said that in all families with small children or other dependent relatives, reconciliation of family and work would present a problem or that possible difficulties would affect the satisfaction with working hours. For some individuals, the workplace environment is essential for their personal mental and emotional well-being (Gill, 1999, 731), and work itself contributes as a vital counter-balance to home and child care. It is a social arena where they can fulfil their needs for interpersonal contacts and interaction, use their personal skills, and get feedback from the work done. It may well be assumed that if you are satisfied with your job, you would not express dissatisfaction towards the balance between time spent on work and on other aspects of life. Yet, if there are overwhelming obstacles concerning child care or personal time use outside work, satisfaction may be lower, even if one is satisfied with the job itself.

There are both pulling/pushing factors outside the work and at work that make some employees prefer to work more or less hours. If an employee is dissatisfied with the job itself, if the work causes stress, or if it feels nothing but unpleasant and coerced, the employee probably prefers to work fewer hours. On the other hand, an employee who perceives his/her job interesting, has good relations with the management, autonomy at work, and fairly good income, and who can use his/her abilities and skills at work and gets recognition for work well done, is most probably satisfied with the job and has for that part no reason to want to work fewer hours (Brook & Brook, 1989, 178; Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2000, 532).

Nordic welfare states – similarities and differences

In this article, satisfaction with the allocation of time between work and other aspects of life is reviewed in four Nordic countries: Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. All these countries represent the Scandinavian welfare model characterised by high participation of women in the labour force, high participation in the labour unions, and a welfare system that makes it relatively easy to combine work and family life.

One of the core ideas in the Scandinavian welfare model is gender equality. With publicly provided childcare, and with a comprehensive maternity and parental pay and leave system, the Scandinavian countries have enabled women to work full time, and made it easier to both women and men to balance work and family life. Fathers are encouraged to take parental leaves, and already since the 1970s, income com-

pensation during the family leaves has been available also for them (Lammi-Taskula, 2007, 46). In the Scandinavian welfare regime, the state is committed to promoting equality among all citizens. When compared to the Anglo-American countries, such as the United States, or to the conservative-corporatist countries like Germany, which have supported a traditional division of labour between the genders, the Nordic countries have been clearly more effective in eliminating gender inequalities.

For those with small children, parental leave schemes are one way to avoid work-family conflicts. However, wanting to share more time with children does not necessarily mean that the parents would prefer staying home instead of working outside home. For many parents, reducing the working hours by one or two hours per day could be enough. In other words, the question is not whether there are public policy schemes enabling parents to stay home with small children, but rather it is the issue of policies and working culture at the workplace, and also of larger societal changes concerning working times.

Over the past two or three decades there has been growing need for non-standard work, such as working in the evenings or nights, in shifts, or during the weekends. One underlying reason is the globalizing economy, which has made it necessary for international companies to run 24 hours a day in order to respond promptly to the clients' demands and to compete with companies operating in different time zones (Glorieux et al., 2008, 64). There is clearly a demand for more flexible work-time arrangements and for a higher flexibility among employees.

This is also true in the Nordic countries, where we can find the most flexible workforce in Europe. For example, according to the European Labour Force Survey, Finland and Sweden have the highest rates of shift work, approximately one quarter of all employees work in shifts. Denmark leads in respect of Sunday work, and Finland scores high in terms of evening and night work (Evans et al., 2001, 23-4). The higher the level of flexibility, the more likely employees perform some of their tasks at non-standard times, such as in the evenings or during the weekends (Dixon 2002 in Glorieux et al., 2008, 65).

According to the European Foundation, the average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in the Nordic countries varied from 37 in Denmark to 37.8 hours in Sweden in the year 2006 (for full-time workers). In Finland and Norway, the corresponding figure was 37.5, while the average for EU15 + Norway was 37.9 hours. When we look at the actual weekly working hours (of full-time workers; including paid and unpaid overtime work), they exceed the collectively agreed hours in each of the four countries. The actual working hours varied from 38.1 in Finland to 38.6 hours in Norway. The corresponding figure for Denmark and Sweden was 38.5, while the average for EU15 + Norway was 39.3 hours(Eurofound, 2006). All the four Nordic countries fall short of the average, but the figures indicate that some overtime is done, paid or non-paid.

Not only the working hours, but also the pressure experienced at work may influence the preferences employees have for working time. Gallie (2005) found that work pressure is strongly associated with job insecurity, suggesting that work pressure has increased in the Nordic countries along with the higher unemployment rates due to the economic recession in the 1990s.Gallie (2005, 373) found exceptionally high levels of work pressure in Finland and Sweden, while in Denmark the index for work pressure was clearly lower. Norway was not included in his study.

Another factor possibly affecting the satisfaction with the balance between time spent on paid work and on other aspects of life is the satisfaction with the compensation received for one's supply of work input. From an employee's point of view, it is different to work eight hours or more for an insufficient or a generous compensation. In 2006, the average gross annual earnings (in industry and services) were 48 307 euros in Denmark, 47 221 euros in Norway, 35 084 euros in Sweden, and 34 080 euros in Finland (Eurostat, 2009). There is quite a huge gap between the earnings in Denmark and Norway as compared to Sweden and Finland. Although Denmark and Norway are considered to be more expensive countries as regards to the living costs, the difference is still significant.

When considering the childcare policies, the total hours of work done on a yearly basis, and the wage level as the compensation for the work done in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, it is difficult to say whether there are significant differences between the four countries in the satisfaction with the time balance and in which of the countries satisfaction is the highest or the lowest. The Danes are often on the whole thought to be happier than their fellow citizens in other Nordic countries, and there is also empirical evidence to prove it. Eskildsen et al. (2004) found that Danish workers are more satisfied with their jobs when compared to workers in Finland, Sweden and Norway. Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza (2000) found the same in their comparative research including 21 countries mainly from Europe.

Possible reasons for the higher satisfaction among the Danish employees could be the high quality of work tasks and high level of organizational participation. These aspects of job quality were also found in Sweden, whereas this was somewhat less the case in Finland (Gallie, 2003, 76). As Gallie concludes, there is some distinctiveness of Scandinavian societies with respect to the nature of the work task and to participation, which would be expected, if their policies had been effective in improving empoloyees' everyday experiences of work.

Data and methods

European Social Survey European Social Survey is a biennial multi-country survey covering over 30 nations and funded by the European Science Foundation and academic funding bodies in each participating country. The central aim of the survey is to monitor and interpret changing public attitudes and values within Europe and to investigate how they interact with Europe's changing institutions. The data cover a wide range of social variables, including social and public trust, political interest and participation, governance and

efficacy, political and social values, social exclusion, well-being and health (Jowell, 2007). The data are archived at the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) and are accessible via the ESS data website at http://ess.nsd.uib.no.

Data for the ESS Round 3 were collected in the years 2006 and 2007 in 25 participating European countries. Similar to the preceding Rounds 1 and 2, data were collected by one-hour-long face-to-face interviews including questions on the topics listed above. The interviewees represented all persons aged 15 and over, and residing within private households, regardless of their nationality, citizenship, language, or legal status. The number of valid interviews is 1 896 for Finland, 1 927 for Sweden, 1 750 for Norway, and 1 505 for Denmark (Jowell, 2007).

The four Nordic countries that took part in the ESS data collection, namely Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, are reviewed for this study. Respondents aged from 18 to 64 years whose main activity in the preceding seven days period had been paid work are included in the study. The self-employed are excluded because they constitute only a small minority of all respondents. There are altogether 3 526 employees in the final data, of whom 825 are from Finland, 1 027 from Sweden, 944 from Norway and 730 from Denmark.

Dependent variable The outcome variable in this study is a subjective measure of satisfaction with the allocation of time between work and other aspects of life. The respondents were asked: "How satisfied are you with the balance between time you spend on your paid work and the time you spend on other aspects of your life?" For all the analyses in this study, the original 10-point scale variable is used, with '0' representing extreme dissatisfaction and '10' representing extreme satisfaction.

Independent variables There are numerous studies that have analysed the determinants of job satisfaction and working time preferences. Stier and Lewin-Epstein's (2003) findings underscore the importance of economic aspects in determining the preference for working hours. Those whose standard of living is better secured, that is, persons with higher education, as well as the older employees would prefer to work less. On the other hand, those with lower education would prefer to work more, and according to Clark (1997), they are in the average more satisfied with their jobs. In a earlier study, Clark (1996) found that there is strong positive relationship between self-reported health and job satisfaction.

Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000) found that having an interesting job and good relations with management play a significant role in job satisfaction. In Clark's (1997) study with extensive British data, the key finding was that gender predicts job satisfaction: women are more satisfied with their jobs. In addition, as regards reconciliation of work and family life, Moen & Dempster-McClain (1987) found that, irrespective of actual working hours, over one half of the parents with children living at home wished to work fewer hours per week in order to be able to spend more time with their spouse and children.

On the basis of the earlier empirical findings, a number of socio-demographic variables were included in the model at the individual level (i.e., gender, age, years of full-time education, self-rated health, living with a spouse or a partner, and having children under 3 years old). Dummy variables were used to indicate gender (1 = male), self-rated health (1 = good or very good health), living with a spouse or a partner (1 = living with a spouse or a partner), and having children under 3 years old (1 = having at least one child under 3 years old). Continuous variables were used for the respondent's age, and years of full-time education. Years of full-time education was standardised by calculating the individual deviations from the average years of full-time education.

Apart from the socio-demographic variables, work-related, continuous variables were included, covering working time (total hours worked per week including overtime) and subjective experiences of work. For the ESS survey, the respondents were asked, among other things, how satisfied they are with their jobs[1], how much the management allows an employee to decide on the organisation of daily work, and how much influence an employee has on the policy decision about activities of the organisation as a whole[2], how much of the time the respondent finds his/her work interesting or stressful[3], and whether the respondent is getting the recognition he/she deserves[4].

The economic aspects of the satisfaction are measured with two variables. Firstly, the model includes a variable reflecting the respondents' feelings about household income. A dummy variable was constructed from the original categorical variable with value '1' representing those living comfortably or coping with the present income. Personal or household income as such could have been used as variables as well, but e.g. in Clark's (1996) study, income had a relatively weak effect on overall job satisfaction, which may stem from the higher-paid employees doing harder jobs why they may not be necessarily more satisfied with their jobs than those with lower income. Secondly, the model includes a variable reflecting the respondents' subjective views about whether they personally are getting paid appropriately considering their efforts and achievements. A dummy variable was constructed from the original variable with value '1' representing those who agree that they get paid appropriately or are neutral to the question. It could be assumed that the subjective feeling of getting properly compensated for one's work input would have a higher effect on the satisfaction with the balance of time between work and leisure than the income in absolute terms.

While the interest is here on the similarities and differences within the four Nordic countries, three dummy vari-

[1] On a 10-point scale with '0' representing extreme dissatisfaction and '10' representing extreme satisfaction.

[2] Both variables were measured on a 10-point scale with '0' representing no influence and '10' representing complete control.

[3] Both variables were measured on a 6-point scale with '0' representing none of the time and '6' representing all the time.

[4] On a 6-point scale with '0' representing not at all and '6' representing a great deal.

ables were constructed from the country variable in the data. Dummy variables were constructed for Sweden, Norway and Finland, with Denmark being the reference group.

Method Linear regression was chosen as the method of analysis because the dependent factor could be treated as continuous[5], and because the coefficients are easy to interpret. In this article, linear regression is used to statistically assess the impact of socio-economic, family-related, and work-related factors on the satisfaction with the balance between time spent on work and other aspects of life. All variables are entered into the equation as a group, no removal or stepwise entries based on eligibility were applied. The model (Table 3) includes 18 independent variables of which 8 gained statistical significance. The model fits the observed data fairly well, considering that the data are based on national surveys. Of the overall satisfaction, one third (R^2=.31) is explained by the independent variables. The linear regression analysis was performed using PASW Statistics 18.0 for Windows.

Results

The Nordic countries constitute a group differing from other European countries, especially when measured by various welfare indicators, and they are considered to represent one unified welfare state model known as the Scandinavian welfare model. However, when we look at the mean values for the satisfaction with the balance between time spent on work and on other aspects of life in 23 European countries included in the ESS (Table 1), we cannot find the traditional division of countries between different welfare models (see Esping-Andersen, 1990). Denmark and Finland perform well, Norway also quite well with slightly lower satisfaction level, and Sweden moderately, with the average slightly above the mean over all the 23 countries. The following analysis aims to find out what explains the differences between the four Nordic countries and causes the small "crack" in the Scandinavian welfare model.

Even if the four Nordic countries are not the "winning team" in the comparison, all the four countries are above the average level of satisfaction among the 23 European countries included in the ESS. Right after Cyprus, the Danish employees with the average score of 6.72 seem to be most satisfied with the time balance, and also Finland stands well with the average score of 6.40. Norwegian employees are somewhat less satisfied, with the average score being 6.24. In Sweden the average level of satisfaction is somewhat lower, 5.83. Although all the employees in these countries are more satisfied than dissatisfied with the time balance, there are differences that call for an explanation. For example, the numeric difference between Sweden and Denmark is almost 1 on the scale from 0 to 10.

We can consider it to be a positive result that not only in the Nordic countries, but in all 23 countries involved the share of employees that are satisfied with the time balance is greater than the share of the dissatisfied. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of employee well-being, the average values could be higher. The results indicate that the lives of the employed are affected by such topical phenomena as time poverty, rush hour of the life, and 24-hour society with increasing demands in the working life.

Table 1
Country specific means and the total mean for the satisfaction with balance between time at work and on other aspects of life.

Country	*Mean*	*N*	*Std. Deviation*
Cyprus	6,99	24	1,737
Denmark	*6,72*	*211*	*2,117*
Austria	6,59	327	2,329
Finland	*6,40*	*187*	*2,147*
Switzerland	6,39	266	2,234
Netherlands	6,34	585	1,943
Belgium	6,33	354	2,145
Norway	*6,24*	*201*	*2,072*
France	6,22	2456	2,311
Ireland	6,16	115	2,180
Slovenia	6,01	61	2,316
United Kingdom	5,89	2224	2,356
Spain	5,89	1555	2,096
Portugal	5,88	343	1,730
Estonia	5,84	54	2,360
Sweden	*5,83*	*397*	*2,292*
Hungary	5,78	331	2,718
Total	**5,69**	**20709**	**2,392**
Germany	5,59	2643	2,282
Slovakia	5,46	187	2,104
Ukraine	5,45	1381	2,419
Russian Federation	5,21	5417	2,589
Poland	5,20	1155	2,204
Bulgaria	5,17	237	2,473

Source: ESS 2006-2007

Linear regression analysis is used to reveal the real explanatory power of the factors introduced above in Section "Data and methods". Table 2 presents the frequencies or the means for the independent factors in total and per country. It seems that, although there are differences between the four countries, they are not that significant. What perhaps raises a question is that Finland stands out from the other countries in respect to subjective health, and to economic aspect of work. It seems that in Finland there are more employees

[5] In this study, measure of satisfaction with time balance is treated as a continuous variable. Thus, it is assumed that respondents, when answering the question, think of the response scale in numerical terms, considering distances as equal. In ESS, survey question is raised in numerical format, and has relatively large number of categories, eleven. This is different from standard happiness questions, which often have three to five verbal labels. These variables undoubtedly necessitate different techniques, for example ordered logit or probit models.

Table 2
Frequencies and means for the independent factors included in the linear regression model.

	All countries (4)	*Finland*	*Sweden*	*Norway*	*Denmark*
Age (mean)	43.0	41.6	43.1	42.3	44.5
Years of full-time education (mean)	14.1	14.3	13.7	14.5	14.3
Subjective health (% of those having fair, bad or very bad health)	15.8	19.1	14.9	13.8	16.6
Marital status (% of those living together with a husband/wife/partner)	74.8	72.2	74.9	74.5	77.4
Children (% of those having children under 3 years old living in the same household)	11.1	9.3	12.1	10.7	11.2
Feeling about household's income (% of those having it difficult or very difficult to live with present income)	5.4	7.6	5.0	6.1	3.6
Total hours normally worked per week overtime included (mean)	39.3	39.8	39.6	39.1	38.4
Satisfaction with the job (mean, scale 0...10)	7.5	7.6	7.3	7.4	7.7
Allowed to decide how daily work is organised (mean, scale 0...10)	7.5	7.4	7.5	7.4	7.8
Allowed to influence policy decision in the organisation (mean, scale 0...10)	4.8	4.6	4.5	5.5	4.9
Is job interesting (mean, scale 0...6)	4.5	4.4	4.6	4.4	4.6
Is job stressfull (mean, scale 0...6)	3.7	4.0	3.9	3.4	3.3
Getting recognition from the work (mean, scale 0...6)	4.3	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.5
Getting paid appropriately (% of those disagreeing)	37.2	43.5	36.3	33.8	36.5

Source: ESS 2006-2007

with poor subjective health and financial problems than in the other three countries. On the other hand, Denmark stands out more positively: working hours are fewer and work itself is less stressful than in the other three countries, and the employees also have a wider discretion regarding their tasks.

As shown by the results of the linear regression analysis (Table 3), work-related factors explain much of the variance in the satisfaction with the time balance. Total hours worked per week and satisfaction with the job explain much of the variance between the employees, and as independent variables, the experience of stress and motivation in one's work (interesting job, getting recognition for the work done) also gain statistical significance. The more an employee works, the less satisfied he/she is. And, the more satisfied an employee is with the job, the higher the level of satisfaction is. An interesting job increases satisfaction and a stressful job decreases it. Getting the deserved recognition influences positively the level of satisfaction.

Country also explains some of the variance in the satisfaction among employees. When compared to Denmark with the highest average score for satisfaction, only Sweden stands out statistically significantly. Between the Danish, Norwegian and Finnish employees, the differences in the satisfaction are not significant. Thus, there is something particular in Sweden that makes the employees significantly less satisfied with how time is divided between work and other aspects of life. This variance can not be explained with the variables included in the model, and in order to reveal the factors that explain the lower satisfaction in Sweden, other individual-level or country-level factors should be included into the analyses.

Other statistically significant factors in the model are education in years and subjective health. The relationship between education and satisfaction is negative, indicating that the less educated are more satisfied with the time balance. This may reflect the almost universal phenomenon that those with higher education have ever more sovereignty concerning their working times, and thus they may work longer days and even take work home. After working ten to twelve hours and knowing that there is still some work that must be done at home, dissatisfaction with the time balance is understandably higher than among those working simply the contracted hours.

Subjective health explains also statistically significantly some of the variance in the satisfaction among the employees in the Nordic countries. This is not surprising, given that poor health in terms of chronic illnesses often diminishes the ability to work and even a part-time job may be a challenge. The relationship between subjective health and satisfaction is positive, indicating that better health predicts higher satisfac-

tion. Those with poorer health are thus less satisfied, which according to Clark (1996, 198) could reflect that workers in poor health have a tendency to report low levels of satisfaction with all aspects of life.

Slightly surprisingly, economic factors (feeling about the household's income, getting paid appropriately) do not gain statistical significance in the model. It seems to be more important to the employees that their jobs do not cause stress, and that they are getting the recognition they feel they deserve, than the monetary compensation for the work. Also somewhat surprisingly, having small children or living with a spouse or partner do not explain satisfaction with the time balance. This may reflect the strict legislation in the Nordic countries concerning working hours: Not having time for the family is not the primary issue in terms of working time preferences. When the employees work 40 hours per week on an average, it is the quality of the working hours that in the end defines how satisfied employees are with the balance between time spent on work and on other aspects of life.

As the independent variables included in the model explain only one third of the variation in the satisfaction with time balance, there must exist other factors that explain why Sweden stands out with a lower level of satisfaction. Although the ESS data include many relevant factors related to work and well-being, there are limitations that leave some questions unanswered. As Clark (1996) put it, "surveys provide a representative picture of the patterns prevailing in particular countries, but necessarily rely on relatively simple indicators of complex phenomena."

Also, it would be interesting to include country-level factors in the analysis.Stier & Lewin-Epstein (2003, 321-2) found that preferences for working hours were affected by both individual-level and country-level characteristics. From a comparative perspective, the effects of macro-level attributes would be interesting because they ultimately reveal the societal context within which individuals make their employment choices.

Table 3
Results of the linear regression analysis for the satisfcation with balance between time at work and on other aspects if life. Beta-coefficients and significance levels reported.

	β
Sweden	-.10**
Norway	-.05
Finland	.02
Men	.05
Age	.04
Years of education	-.07*
Subjective health good or very good	.06*
Living together with husband/wife/partner	-.05
Having children under 3 years old living in the same household	.00
Feeling about household's income	-.01
Total work hours per week	-.28***
How satisfied with the job	.30***
Allowed to decide how daily work is organised	-00
Allowed to influence policy decisions about activities of organisation	-.01
Find job interesting, how much of the time	.07*
Find job stressful, how much of the time	-.16***
Feel you get the recognition you deserve for what you do	.10**
Get paid appropriately, considering efforts and achievements	.04
R^2	.31

** p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001*

Conclusions and discussion

The aim of this article was to find out how satisfied employees in the Nordic countries are with the balance between time spent on paid work and on other aspects of life, and whether there are differences between the countries under study (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark) in the level of satisfaction, and if so, what may explain possible differences. The question of work-life balance is central in today's society in which the temporal boundaries instituted by the industrial society are being questioned (Glorieux et al., 2008, 65). Increasing number of employees no longer work in factories with strict working hours. On the contrary, albeit there are laws regulating working times, more and more people are expected to work in non-regular hours, to work overtime, and to take work home.

Another central question is the increased pressure in the work life (e.g. Green, 2002; Gallie, 2005; Green, 2006). Even if working hours do not exceed that of the normal 40-hour working week, work itself may have become more demanding and stressful. And, after a hard first shift at work the second shift is waiting at home, especially for women (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Hochschild, 1997; Hochschild & Machung, 2003). Having 24 hours a day may seem a lot, but when we divide it to paid and unpaid work and try to have some time of our own, we too often find that we run out of time. Nevertheless, according to the European Social Survey, employees in the Nordic countries are quite satisfied with how their time is divided between work and leisure. Danish employees are the most satisfied in this respect, followed by Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish employees. The differences in the satisfaction between the four countries are not large, yet they exist and need to be explained.

In order to reveal the factors that could explain the differences in the levels of satisfaction between employees in different Nordic countries, a linear regression analysis was performed. The results show that work-related factors gain statistical significance in explaining the differences. Working hours per week, satisfaction with the job, and satisfaction with the time balance seem to go hand in hand. Also, if one finds his/her job very stressful and not very enjoyable,

dissatisfaction with the time balance is greater. Getting the recognition they feel they deserve from colleagues and superiors is another important aspect for employees.

In line with previous findings about the negative relationship between the education and working time preferences (Stier & Lewin-Epstein, 2003), those with higher education are less satisfied than those with less education. Moreover, quite expectedly, those with better health are more satisfied with the time balance. Perhaps little surprisingly, the economic aspect was not emphasized to the same extent. Although the share of those employees, who feel that they are not getting paid appropriately, is over one third in all the four countries, it does not explain the possible dissatisfaction with the time balance. In addition, when the employees were assessing their satisfaction (or dissatisfaction), having family or small children was not relevant. It indicates that in the Nordic countries it is, if not easy, at least, fairly simple to combine work and family life.

In reality, we are not always able to choose in which country we work. Yet, if choosing to work abroad, it would be quite easy to do so within the Nordic countries due to their similar working cultures and familiar language. One attractive option would be Denmark where employees are the most satisfied with the time balance between work and other aspects of life. The high level of satisfaction is partly due to the facts that the Danish employees are the most satisfied with their jobs, the weekly working hours are the lowest, the work causes less stress, and the employees get more often recognition from the work well done than in other three countries. In addition, in Denmark the earnings are the highest, and the employees are the most satisfied with the pay.

It cannot be concluded that the situation would be much worse in Finland, Sweden or Norway in comparison with Denmark, although in Sweden the satisfaction with the time balance differs statistically significantly from Denmark. However, the average level of satisfaction in Sweden is higher than the average within the 23 countries included in the European Social Survey, and additionally, satisfaction exceeds dissatisfaction. From the cross-sectional data used in the analysis, however, it is possible to conclude that the Nordic countries, Denmark and Finland in particular, are performing relatively well among the European countries, but in order to get a more detailed picture of how satisfaction with the time balance has developed in these countries, we would need comparisons over time.

It would also be beneficial to include country-level factors into the analyses and to investigate their impact on work-related phenomena, as well as on the relationship between individual-level characteristics and labour market behaviour (see Stier & Lewin-Epstein, 2003)(see Stier & Lewin-Epstein, 2003). Even if the study reported in this article has certain limitations, it offers an insight into the aspects of the balance between work and other aspects of life from the time use perspective. At the end of the day, it is essential for personal well-being to be able to manage time without getting too stressed about it.

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