

Yvonne Lott

## Working time flexibility and autonomy: Facilitating time adequacy?

A European perspective

### Abstract

This study examines the effect of working time flexibility and autonomy on time adequacy using the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) in 2010. Drawing on gender theory and welfare state theory, gender differences and the institutional contexts of the UK, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands are taken into account. The study reveals that time arrangements have gendered meanings. While working time flexibility and autonomy are positively related to time adequacy for women, men tend to experience overtime and work intensification in connection with working time autonomy. Furthermore, working time regimes also shape time arrangements. In the UK, employees have time adequacy primarily when they work fixed hours, while in the Netherlands, employees profit most from working time autonomy. Moreover, unlike in Germany and the UK, men and women in the Netherlands and Sweden benefit more equally from working time flexibility and autonomy.

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# 1 Introduction

The rise of female employment and the emergence of the adult worker model in European societies have drawn attention to the integration of work and life. Employees increasingly have to combine different life roles (Greenhaus et al., 2003), i.e. paid work, domestic work, care, further education or social commitments (Hildebrandt, 2006: 245) and require sufficient resources for this throughout their lives. The European Union has addressed this challenge with various policies and strategies. The flexicurity strategy primarily promotes permanent employment with flexible contracts and work arrangements (Lewis and Plomien, 2009). Other strategies explicitly aim at employees' work-life balance, such as a 2006 Commission consultation document which relates the extension of EU legislation on childcare leaves, services and working time to the amelioration of work-life balance (Lewis and Plomien, 2009: 439). The Europe 2020 strategy links work-life balance to gender equality by calling upon member states "to promote new forms of work-life balance and active ageing policies and to increase gender equality" (European Commission, 2010: 17).

Time is a crucial determining factor for combining work and life. Flexible and autonomous working time can enable employees to combine work with their responsibilities and activities outside work. Recent research has shown that flexible and autonomous working schedules have positive effects on work-life balance and negative effects on work-family conflict (Hill et al., 2001; Russell et al., 2009). Furthermore, flexible working time arrangements are found to lead to job satisfaction and improve mental health (Gregory and Milner, 2009: 3). However, since the flexibilization of working time is often market-driven (Hildebrandt, 2006), the benefits of flexible and autonomous working time arrangements have also been questioned in past research. Due to one-way flexibilization (Peper et al., 2005: 47), flexible working time risks resulting in overtime, work intensification (Gregory and Milner, 2009: 4) and stress, which leads to a negative work-life balance (White et al., 2003). One goal of this study is to contribute to the debate on the ambivalence of working time flexibility and autonomy by investigating employees' time adequacy with these arrangements. Time adequacy (also referred to as "time fit") is the fit between individuals' working time and their time needs outside work. Time adequacy is a crucial dimension in life-course fit, which, according to Moen (2010: 14), is the fit between the claims on individuals and their needs and goals on the one hand and available resources on the other.

The second goal of the study is to analyze gender differences in the effect of working time arrangements on time adequacy. Life courses are gendered (Moen, 2010) – a fact that is often ignored by policies such as the flexicurity strategy which does not account for gender and resulting inequalities (Lewis and Plomien, 2009). But because lives are gendered, work arrangements may have different meanings for men and women. Various studies indicate that men often profit less from working time autonomy and flexibility than women (Banyard, 2010; Burchell et al., 2007). This study therefore scrutinizes gender as a moderator for working time flexibility and autonomy and time adequacy.

Furthermore, welfare state policies may also shape the relation between working time arrangements and time fit. This is indicated by studies comparing the relation of working time and work-life balance in different countries using representative data (e.g. Anxo et al., 2013; Fagan

et al., 2012). Similar to Hofäcker and König (2012), the present study also analyzes the institutional context as a moderator for the relation between working time autonomy and work-life outcomes, but extends their study in three ways: by focusing on time adequacy, by accounting for working time arrangements other than autonomy and by using a different measure for time autonomy. Whereas Hofäcker and König (2012) measured autonomy with employees' potential to decide when to start and finish work (which, in my understanding, is more a description of flexible working time), I used the information whether work hours are entirely determined by employees. Moreover, I chose representatives of different working time regimes (Anxo et al., 2007; Figart and Mutari, 2000). These were Sweden as a universal working time regime, Germany and the Netherlands as traditional regimes and the UK as a liberal flexibilization regime. I conducted descriptive and multivariate analyses using the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) in 2010. The article is structured as follows: First, the theoretical explanations for gender and welfare state differences are outlined and hypotheses formulated. Following a description of the empirical strategy, the results are presented. The study concludes with a discussion of the results and their policy implications.

## 2 Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Gendered life courses and working time arrangements

In the workplace, the prevalent norm is that of the "ideal worker" (Gambles et al., 2006: 46). The ideal worker has no obligations or commitments outside of work and is fully dedicated to his or her work (Kelly et al., 2010: 283). "Non-ideal workers", i.e. those who need time for family, care activities or any social commitment (Gambles et al., 2006), have difficulties in advancing in the workplace hierarchy and working in certain occupations. The ideal worker norm is prevalent particularly in workplaces with flexible working conditions, where employees are expected to adapt their work to market demands.

Since life courses are gendered (Moen, 2010), with women still assuming the main responsibilities of unpaid work and men investing most of their time in paid work, this norm applies less to women than men (Williams, 2013). The former experience more disadvantages than their male co-workers, e.g. with regard to career perspectives or income development. The ideal worker norm, therefore, reproduces traditional gender arrangements and gender inequality in the workplace.

The unequal allocation of paid and unpaid work can be ascribed to gender and related male and female gender identities (Lorber, 2003; West and Zimmerman, 2002). Because male gender identity is mainly work-oriented and implies the role as the main breadwinner, work flexibility and autonomy risk leading to overtime and intensification of work for men (Gregory and Milner, 2009: 8). As Williams (2013: 212) states, men's jobs often "consume their lives". For them, flexibility does not deliver work-life balance (Williams et al., 2013: 212). The female gender identity, in contrast, is less work-oriented and more care-oriented. For women, flexibility and autonomy provide the potential to combine work with other life roles.

Research indeed points to the “ambivalent connotation” (Peper et al., 2005: 5) of flexible work arrangements. Flexibility and autonomy increase employees’ motivation and engagement, but they also risk leading to longer work hours and higher work tension (Gallie et al., 2012), as shown for flexible and autonomous working time (Burchell, 2006). However, research also indicates that the risk of work pressure and overtime is much higher for men than for women. Gambles et al. (2006), for example, observed that the flexibilization of working conditions results in the traditionalization of gender arrangements, with women investing time mainly in family life and men primarily in paid work. This was also observed by Hofäcker and König (2012: 618) and Peper et al. (2005: 47) as well as Craig and Powell (2011) for employees with nonstandard hours. Burchell et al. (2007) found that men work longer hours than women and more often experience work-life conflict with unsocial hours (Burchell et al., 2007: 49). Also, men have a higher work-life conflict with flexible working time due to their stronger engagement in work (Banyard, 2010; Burchell et al., 2007; Hofäcker and König, 2012). Women, by contrast, not only often adapt their working time to their responsibilities outside the workplace, but may also experience less work intensification than men. Dutch women, for example, were found to be more successful at adapting the number of their working hours to coincide with their wishes – whether they had children or not (Peper et al., 2005: 9). Demerouti et al. (2012: 244) underline the efficiency enrichment and capital enrichment of multiple roles which provide not only a greater focus of time and management skills, but also psychosocial resources, such as the feeling of security. I therefore assume that working time flexibility and autonomy are positively related to women’s time adequacy, whereas men experience time squeeze with these arrangements (Hypothesis 1).

## 2.2 Welfare state policies and working time arrangements

Since the effectiveness of flexible work practices in companies depends on the institutional context (Gregory and Milner, 2009: 8), welfare state policies have to be taken into account for analyzing time adequacy. Especially family and labor market policies trigger or reduce work-life conflict. (Hofäcker and König, 2012: 619). Anxo et al. (2007) and Figart and Mutari (2000) assigned countries to specific working time regimes which either reflect the patterns of working hours of men and women and the gap between them (Anxo et al., 2007) or the degree of work hour flexibility and relative gender equity (Figart and Mutari, 2000). Both typologies are applied to describe the UK, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands.

The UK is characterized as a liberal flexibilization regime with low gender equity and high flexibility (Figart and Mutari, 2000). In the UK, flexibility is mainly market-driven and integral to the “neo-liberal market agenda” (Perrons et al., 2007: 135). While work intensity has increased throughout Europe in recent years, it “has been greater in the UK than in other European countries” (Sturges and Guest, 2004: 6), which has resulted in a long-hours working culture. Moreover, the UK applies a strong male breadwinner model (Anxo et al., 2013: 88). Equal opportunities policies mainly focus on “equal access of women and men to employment and careers” and the combination of work and family life is “left to market forces” (Den Dulk, 2001). As a result, public child care provision is poor (Gregory and Milner, 2009: 5). Fitting paid work to other life spheres is mainly considered a private matter to be achieved by employees who have sufficient resources, i.e. enough income to pay for private child care. Nevertheless, changes in equal opportunities policies have occurred in recent years. Since 2003, employees with caring responsi-

bilities have had the right to request flexible working. It is important to note, however, that employers can reject the request (Hegewisch, 2009). In addition, the right to request is a “soft” right, where an employee has no right to appeal an employer’s refusal at an employment tribunal (Hegewisch, 2009: 9). Because of the strong male breadwinner model, flexible and autonomous working time may lead to time inadequacy primarily for men (Hypothesis 2).

Finally, unlike in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, where collective agreements at industry or enterprise level are the determining factors, work conditions are primarily determined through employment contracts at the firm level in the UK (Anxo et al., 2013: 85). As Brannen (2005: 118) points out, “without institutional or group mechanisms”, employees are “left to ‘cope’ alone”. In this case, working time flexibility and autonomy is rather employer-centered, where companies primarily implement flexible working time arrangements which facilitate employers’ needs (Chung and Tijdens, 2013: 1423). Chung and Tijdens (2013: 1430) in fact found the UK to have a higher degree of employer-centered working time flexibility than Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. British employees therefore may not only experience time inadequacy with flexible and autonomous working time, but they may also profit from fixed hours protecting them against employers’ arbitrariness (Hofäcker and König, 2012: 614). I therefore assume that British employees profit more from fixed time arrangements than Swedish, Dutch and German employees (Hypothesis 3). Because the Netherlands has a combination of high employee-centered working time flexibility and low employer-centered flexibility, unlike the UK, Sweden and Germany (Chung and Tijdens, 2013: 1430), employees there may benefit from working time autonomy and flexibility most (Hypothesis 4). Moreover, Swedish employees may also profit from flexible and autonomous working time (Hypothesis 5). Although Sweden has high employer-centered flexibility, employee-centered flexibility is also higher for Swedish than for British and German employees.

Sweden is the “prime example” (Chung and Tijdens, 2013: 1422) for the universal breadwinner regime with a high labor market participation for both men and women (Anxo et al., 2007) and social policies promoting universalism and gender equality. In Sweden, flexibility is understood to mean “individual autonomy” of all individuals (Bäck-Wiklund and Plantin, 2007: 171). This is fostered by family-friendly measures which explicitly aim at equal opportunities for men and women (Gregory and Milner, 2009: 5). Reversible time options across the life course and flexible parental leave systems support women’s and men’s careers (Anxo et al., 2013: 98). Swedish women and men are both “given substantial encouragement to do unpaid work” (Lewis and Plomien, 2009: 453). Gender equality is perceived as crucial for children’s well-being, because children’s economic security is assumed to be provided by both parents working (Den Dulk, 2001). State policies address fathers explicitly with “daddy months”. Even though the Swedish welfare state experienced an economic crisis in the 1990s and had to cut back on social spending, major attributes – universalism, equal opportunities orientation – are still intact (Lindbom, 2001). The evidence suggests that working time flexibility and autonomy have a positive effect on time adequacy for both men and women (Hypothesis 6).

According to Figart and Mutari (2000), Germany and the Netherlands are both representative of the traditional regime with low gender equity and high flexibilization through women working part-time (Chung and Tijdens, 2013: 1422). In Germany, the joint-taxation system, employment and wage policies, as well as the scarcity of public child care (Mayer, 2001), favor non-working mothers and the traditional division of labor between men and women. Moreover, in Germany,



only few employee-friendly workplace measures exist, but these measures are aimed at women (Hofäcker and König, 2012: 619). In 2007, however, parental leave legislation was reformed, with the introduction of paternal leave and daddy months (BMFSFJ, 2011). In addition, state policy aims at increasing child care. These changes in family policy may lead to greater gender equality, the effect of which will be seen in years to come. Because of the long tradition of the male breadwinner model and policies still supporting this model, I assume that, similarly to the UK, primarily men experience time squeeze with flexible and autonomous working time (Hypothesis 7).

Although the Netherlands also encourages female part-time employment, it differs from Germany in several crucial respects. Not only did the Netherlands implement the individual taxation system (OECD 2005); it also exhibits a greater share of men working part-time. The Netherlands has the highest female part-time employment rate as well as the highest share of men working in part-time positions compared to all other OECD countries (OECD, 2013). Whereas Dutch women work part-time around three times more often than Dutch men, German women have part-time positions four times more often than their male counterparts. The full-time working norm which may reinforce overinvestment in work may therefore be more relaxed for both women and men in the Netherlands compared to Germany. In addition, because of the combination of high employee-centered flexibility and low employer-centered flexibility, Dutch men may benefit more from working time flexibility and autonomy than German men (Hypothesis 8).

## 3 Empirical strategy

### 3.1 Data

The 5<sup>th</sup> European Working Conditions Survey in 2010 was used for the analysis. The survey covers 27 EU member states, Norway and three candidate countries (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Croatia and Turkey), as well as Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro (Eurofound, 2010: 3). The survey is representative of the population in each country. The respondents are persons aged 15 or older (16 and over in Spain, the UK and Norway), are residents of one of the countries and were in employment<sup>1</sup> during the observation period (Eurofound, 2010: 11). The data contains some 43,800 observations in total with 2,100 observations for Germany, 1,017 for the Netherlands, 1,000 for Sweden and 1,500 for the UK. For the general models, all countries were included in the sample. Since the study focused on employees' control over working time, self-employed individuals were excluded. The sample was also restricted to employees aged 18 to 67 and contains 32,851 individuals in total. The sample restricted to the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden includes 4,602 observations.

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1 "A person was considered as being in employment if he or she did any work for pay or profit during the reference week for at least one hour. The reference week was the week that preceded the beginning of the interview" (Eurofound, 2010: 11).

## 3.2 Variables

The dependent variable is time adequacy. Time adequacy was operationalized with the survey question "In general, do your working hours fit in with your family or social commitments outside work very well, well, not very well or not at all well?" The indicator measures employees' assessment of the fit of their working time arrangements not only with family, but with other social commitments.

The explanatory variable is working time arrangements. In the survey, respondents were asked "How are your working time arrangements set?". The items are 1 = set by the company with no possibility of changes, 2 = choosing between fixed working schedules set by the company, 3 = adapting own working hours within certain limits (e.g. flexitime) and 4 = hours entirely determined by employee. The third category was used for measuring working time flexibility and the fourth category for measuring working time autonomy. Since the focus is on these two indicators, the first and second categories were combined into the category 'fixed'. In the multivariate regression models, it was used as the reference category.

It is expected that the relation between working time arrangements and time fit is shaped through gender. Sex (0=male and 1=female) is therefore not only used as a control variable in Model 1, but is also interacted with working time arrangements in Models 2 and 3 (Table 3). Furthermore, dummy variables for the four countries are interacted with working time arrangements in Model 4.

The effect of working time arrangements on time fit may be interrelated with the number of working hours. Since the focus of the study is not only on overtime, but also on work intensification and the feeling of time squeeze, a continuous variable controls for working hours. The latter was excluded from Model 3, however, in order to ascertain the effect of working time arrangements interrelated with working hours. Furthermore, working to deadlines could increase employees' stress and thus contribute to a bad time fit. My analysis therefore controlled for whether employees work to tight deadlines.

Time adequacy may further depend on the employee's position within the company. Employees in higher positions in particular have flexible working hours (Williams et al., 2013: 212). The analysis controlled for whether employees are managers or professionals. In addition, employees' educational level (1 = primary education, 2 = secondary education and 3 = tertiary education) and the information as to whether they work in supervisor positions were taken into account.<sup>2</sup> For time adequacy, it may also be crucial whether employees have an open-ended contract, which provides greater security. Job insecurity is associated with longer working hours (White et al., 2003). A dummy variable therefore was used to control for open-ended employment contracts. Finally, as flexible working arrangements are more common in the public than in the private sector (Russell et al., 2009), a control was included for working in the public sector.

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2 The individual monthly net income was not used in the regression models because of the very high number of missing values. An additional information provided was on the employees' income groups. In order to avoid a sample bias and the use of an inexact measure, income was only tentatively introduced in previous models. The main effects in these models are comparable to those in the final models presented here.

Because time fit depends to a great extent on employees' family involvement, the analysis further controlled for single households and the number of children (0 = no children, 1 = one child, 2 = two children and 3 = three and more children). If they are cohabiting, employees' fit may depend on whether they are the main breadwinners. This is especially important for the gender dimension, because men fulfill this role more often than women. A dummy variable was used measuring being the main breadwinner. Table 1 shows all variables which were used in the analysis.

**Table 1: Variables (N=32,851)**

Variable	Percent/ Median	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Time adequacy	82%		0	1
Working time arrangements	1	0.53	1	3
Deadline	4	2.07	1	7
Working hours	40	10.76	1	105
Open-ended contract	77%		0	1
Supervisor position	15%		0	1
Manager/Professional	38%		0	1
Sector	1	0.71	1	5
Women	51%		0	1
Age (in years)	41	11.49	18	67
Education	2	0.54	1	3
Breadwinner	63%		0	1
Single	12%		0	1
Number of children	1	1.00	0	3
UK	4%		0	1
Germany	5%		0	1
Sweden	2%		0	1
Czech Republic	2%		0	1

Note: Data source: EWCS 2010

### 3.3 Method

In the multivariate analyses, binary logistic regression models were estimated for the dependent variable coded with 0 = time squeeze and 1 = time adequacy. Binary logistic models are favored over generalized ordered logit models, since results of both models are similar and interpretation of the binary logistic regression model is less complex.

For the overall sample, random-intercept models were estimated to take account of the intra-group correlation of observations (Twisk, 2006: 9).<sup>3</sup> In the random-intercept model, the intercept is a random variable which varies across groups (Hox, 2010: 12). The model therefore controls for the variation of average values of the dependent variable – time adequacy – across countries. Furthermore, random-intercept models take into account the sample size of each group (Kenny et al., 2006: 86) which differs widely between countries in the data. The “30/30 rule” proposed by Kreft (1996) is met for an accurate estimation of parameters and their standard errors (Hox, 2010: 235). The sample contains 34 groups with a minimum of 236 observations and a maximum of 1.540 observations per group. The 30/30 rule is sufficient for this study, since the focus of interest is on the fixed parameters, i.e. the explanatory variables. Combined effects for work-

3 According to the likelihood-ratio test, random-coefficient models with random slopes for working time arrangements have to be rejected in favor of random-intercept models (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal, 2008: 159)

ing arrangements and sex were introduced for the purpose of analyzing gender differences. In order to estimate differences between the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, a restricted sample was used. Combined effects for these countries and working time arrangements were introduced in a binary logistic regression model with robust standard errors.<sup>4</sup> The UK is used as the reference category.

Since comparison of the effect size of logit coefficients (odds) between models is problematic – odds are confounded with the residual variation (Allison, 1999: 186) – the interpretation of coefficients focuses on the direction and significance of effects. In contrast to the effect size, the direction of coefficients can always be compared between groups (Mood, 2010: 72). In order to facilitate the interpretation of combined effects, probabilities are predicted based on averaged marginal effects for the combined effects. Unlike logit coefficients, averaged marginal effects are only marginally affected by unobserved heterogeneity and can thus be compared across models (Mood, 2010: 78). In order to ascertain whether coefficients of interactions significantly differ from those of the direct effects, the Wald test is used based on the averaged marginal effects.

**Table 2: Working time arrangements and time adequacy**

Working time arrangement (WTA) in %	Overall		Men		Women	
	Squeeze	Adequacy	Squeeze	Adequacy	Squeeze	Adequacy
Fixed	19.98	80.02	22.02	77.98	17.56	82.44
Flexible	11.09	88.91	13.56	86.44	8.56	91.44
Autonomous	18.07	81.93	23.66	76.34	9.62	90.38
Pearson's Chi2	***		***		***	

Note: Row percentages for time adequacy and time squeeze weighted with supra-national weight for all EWCS countries; chi2-test based on non-weighted results

\*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01

Data source: EWCS 2010

## 4 Results

Most employees – 82 percent – report time adequacy (Table 1). Nevertheless, time adequacy differs according to working time arrangements. Around 20 percent of employees have time inadequacy when working schedules are fixed. A good fit is most often reported in connection with flexible working time. Surprisingly, time adequacy is as bad with working time autonomy as with fixed schedules. 18 percent of employees with working time autonomy report time inadequacy. However, this only applies to male employees. A quarter of male employees – around 23 percent – experience time squeeze when their working hours are autonomous. For women, in contrast, working time autonomy is related to time adequacy as often as flexible working hours are.

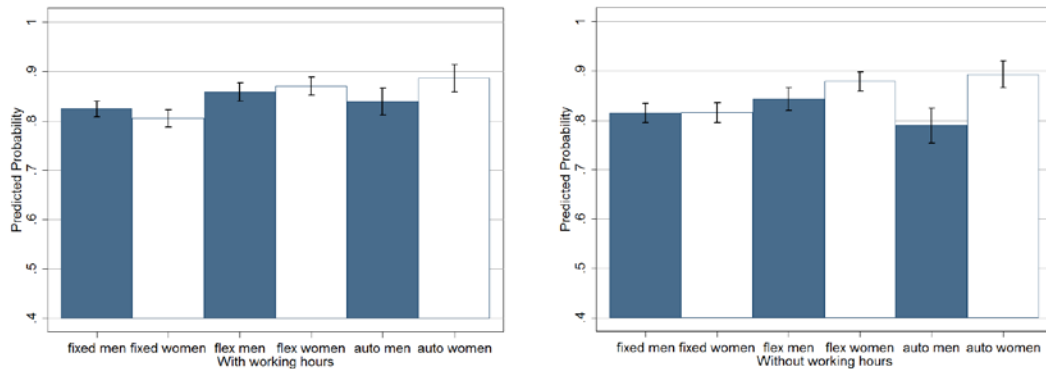
While women have time fit with working time flexibility and autonomy, flexible and, especially, autonomous arrangements are less related to time adequacy for men. This raises the question

4 Due to lack of space, only the results for the logistic regression model with working hours as a control variable are presented. It should be noted, however, that these results do not differ greatly from the regression results without controlling for working hours.

of whether this gender difference still exists when taking into account the various factors and the variation in time adequacy between countries. Table 2 shows results for the regression models. In Model 1 without the combined effect, working time flexibility and autonomy have highly significant and positive effects on time fit. The chance for employees to have time adequacy is higher with these arrangements than with fixed schedules. This study therefore supports previous findings indicating the positive effects of working time flexibility and autonomy on employees' outcomes.

Model 2, however, reveals gender differences. The combined effect between gender and working time arrangements is highly significant and, as shown by the Wald test, significantly different to the direct effects. Figure 1 shows that the probability for time adequacy with flexible and, especially, with autonomous working time is higher for women than for men (figure on left). The probability for time adequacy with working time autonomy is almost 90 percent for women and around 84 percent for men. But while women profit more from working time flexibility and autonomy, they are likely to have disadvantages with fixed schedules. The probability for time adequacy is slightly higher for men than for women when working time is fixed. Women seem to use the potential of working time flexibility and autonomy for their needs and duties outside the workplace more than men. Since they assume the main responsibilities outside the workplace, women are, however, more likely than men to experience time squeeze in connection with fixed schedules.

Even though these results confirm the descriptive findings, the latter point to a greater gender difference mainly regarding working time autonomy. In order to account for this difference in results, the number of working hours was excluded in Model 3. The predicted probabilities indeed show that time fit differs for men and women to an even greater extent when working hours are not taken into account (figure on right). But it is worth noting that time fit is primarily affected for men, for whom the probability of time adequacy with autonomy is less than 80 percent. It should also be noted that men's working time autonomy does not significantly differ from fixed schedules in general. They profit as much from autonomous as from fixed arrangements. Thus, with working time autonomy, men experience work intensification, as indicated by Models 1 and 2, as well as overtime, as shown by Model 3. This confirms Hypothesis 1. In line with Williams (2013), paid work risks consuming men's lives – especially when they have control over their working time.

**Figure 1: Predicted probabilities for time adequacy for men and women**

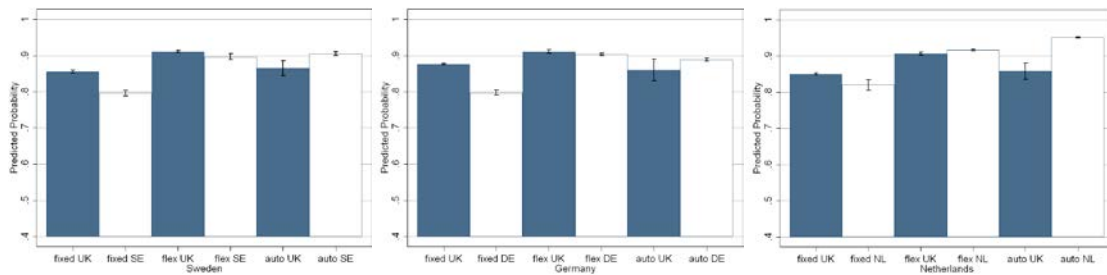
Note: Predicted probabilities for combined effect of working time arrangements and gender;

Data source: EWCS 2010

The third goal of the study was to investigate the effect of working time arrangements on time adequacy in the UK, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. All combined effects are significant and, according to the Wald test, significantly different from the direct effect (Table 2). Figure 2 provides the predicted probabilities for the combined effects. The UK was used as the reference category. While there are only minor differences between the countries for flexible working time, differences exist for working time autonomy. Employees in the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany are more likely than British employees to have time adequacy with working time autonomy than with fixed hours, but the gap is smaller in Germany and marginal effects for Germany are not significantly different to those for the UK. Mainly Dutch employees and, to a lesser extent, Swedish employees profit from working time autonomy. The probability for time adequacy is the highest, at around 95 percent, for working time autonomy in the Netherlands. Hypothesis 4 and 5 are confirmed for working time autonomy. In countries with a higher degree of employee-centered flexibility, working time autonomy provides time adequacy. The combination of higher employee-centered flexibility and lower employer-centered flexibility is especially advantageous for employees.

However, while working time autonomy has the worst effect in the UK, fixed schedules are more likely to be related to time adequacy for British employees than for Dutch, German and Swedish employees (Figure 2). The probability for time adequacy is slightly lower in the Netherlands and much lower in Germany and Sweden, where the probability of time fit is around 80 percent. Employees in the UK are better off with fixed time schedules and worst off with working time autonomy. Hypothesis 3 is confirmed. In the long-hours working culture of the liberalized labor market with employer-centered flexibility, fixed schedules are an anchor for employees and protect them against employers' arbitrariness.

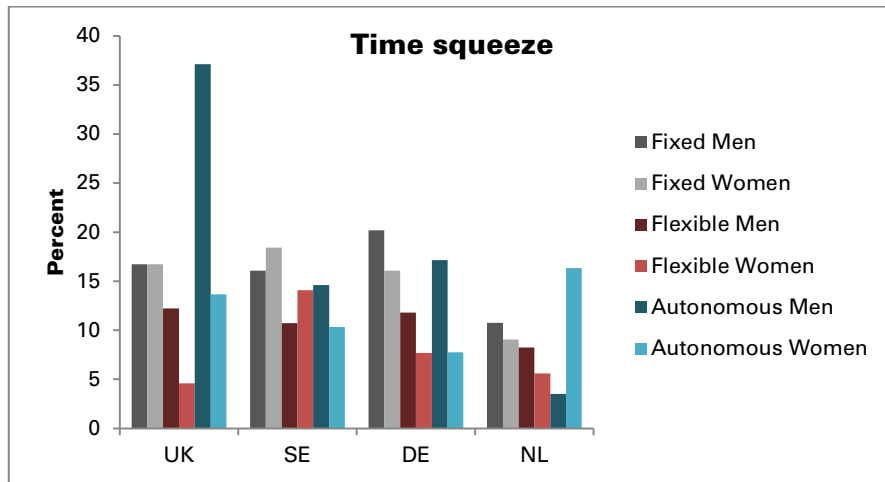
**Figure 2: Predicted probabilities for adequacy for the UK, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands**



Note: Predicted probabilities for combined effect of working time arrangements and country;  
Data source: EWCS 2010

Unfortunately, the number of observations for working time autonomy and time fit in the four countries is not sufficient for estimating gender differences in a multivariate analysis. Even though the weighted descriptive results only allow for tentative conclusions, they point to the expected country-based differences. It should be noted, however, that especially the number of observations for women with working time autonomy is rather small. In the UK and Germany, working time flexibility and autonomy is more often related to time squeeze for men than for women (Figure 3). In Germany, more than 17 percent of male employees, but only 6 percent of female employees, report time inadequacy. In the UK, the gender difference is the highest regarding working time autonomy in particular. As many as 37 percent of male employees report time squeeze with working time autonomy in the UK. In Sweden, gender differences are smaller compared to the UK and Germany. Only 14 percent of Swedish men and 10 percent of Swedish women experience time squeeze with working time autonomy. Swedish men therefore seem to make use of their time potential. Swedish men report time squeeze with flexible working time even less often than their female counterparts. In the Netherlands, gender differences regarding time squeeze are the smallest. The descriptive findings indicate that Dutch men experience less time squeeze with working time flexibility and autonomy. Only 3 percent of men with working time autonomy and 8 percent with working time flexibility report time squeeze. The results for Dutch women's working time autonomy should be disregarded due to the very small number of observations in this category. Hypotheses 2, 6, 7 and 8 are confirmed. In Sweden, employee-centered flexibility and gender equality policies seem to lead to more equal outcomes for employees, whereas in Germany and the UK, where there is less employee-centered flexibility, gender inequality is greater. Interestingly, even though the Netherlands is assigned to the same traditional working time regime as Germany, outcomes are very different for Dutch employees compared to German employees. The high prevalence of employee-centered flexibility combined with very low employer-centered flexibility and a more relaxed full-time working norm seem to contribute to a more equal time fit for men and women in the Netherlands.

**Figure 3: Time squeeze and working time arrangements for men and women in the UK, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands**



Note: Percentages weighted with supra-national weight; Data source: EWCS 2010



**Table 3: Random-intercept models (1 to 3) and logit model (4) for time adequacy**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
<b>Time arrangements</b>				
Fixed	ref	ref	ref	ref
Flexible	0.398*** (0.05)	0.275*** (0.07)	0.205*** (0.07)	0.285*** (0.04)
Autonomous	0.328*** (0.08)	0.113 (0.10)	-0.158* (0.09)	-0.470*** (0.15)
<b>Female</b>	-0.091*** (0.03)	-0.139*** (0.04)	0.003 (0.04)	-0.126 (0.16)
Female*flexible		0.253*** (0.10)	0.301*** (0.09)	
Female*autonomous		0.575*** (0.17)	0.763*** (0.16)	
<b>Sweden</b>				-0.446*** (0.04)
Sweden*flexible				0.286*** (0.04)
Sweden*autonomous				0.875*** (0.06)
<b>Germany</b>				-0.620*** (0.02)
Germany*flexible				0.520*** (0.04)
Germany*autonomous				0.908*** (0.10)
<b>Netherlands</b>				-0.237*** (0.05)
Netherlands*flexible				0.364*** (0.04)
Netherlands*autonomous				1.471*** (0.03)
<b>Working hours</b>	-0.053*** (0.00)	-0.052*** (0.00)		-0.052*** (0.01)
<b>Deadline</b>	0.146*** (0.01)	0.147*** (0.01)	0.166*** (0.01)	0.153*** (0.01)
<b>Open-ended contract</b>	0.148*** (0.04)	0.149*** (0.04)	0.092** (0.04)	0.324* (0.19)
<b>Supervisor</b>	0.043 (0.04)	0.048 (0.04)	-0.079* (0.04)	0.063 (0.09)
<b>Professional/Manager</b>	0.281*** (0.04)	0.288*** (0.04)	0.304*** (0.04)	0.227** (0.10)
<b>Public sector</b>	0.124*** (0.04)	0.122*** (0.04)	0.236*** (0.04)	0.026 (0.04)
<b>Age</b>	0.009*** (0.00)	0.009*** (0.00)	0.010*** (0.00)	0.013** (0.01)
<b>Education</b>				
Primary	ref	ref	ref	ref
Secondary	0.001 (0.07)	0.003 (0.07)	0.031 (0.07)	-0.592*** (0.14)
Tertiary	0.052 (0.08)	0.055 (0.08)	0.101 (0.08)	-0.760*** (0.16)
<b>Breadwinner</b>	-0.086** (0.04)	-0.086** (0.04)	-0.165*** (0.04)	-0.139 (0.09)
<b>Single</b>	0.107* (0.06)	0.107* (0.06)	0.131** (0.05)	0.313*** (0.06)
<b>Number of children</b>				
No children	ref	ref	ref	ref
One child	-0.261*** (0.04)	-0.260*** (0.04)	-0.243*** (0.04)	-0.138 (0.09)
Two children	-0.349*** (0.04)	-0.348*** (0.04)	-0.337*** (0.04)	-0.225 (0.18)
Three or more children	-0.458*** (0.06)	-0.456*** (0.06)	-0.438*** (0.06)	-0.353*** (0.13)

(Table 3 continued)

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
<b>Constant</b>	2.615*** (0.14)	2.625*** (0.14)	0.381*** (0.12)	3.310*** (0.52)
<b>N (individuals)</b>	32,851	32,851	32,851	4,602
<b>N (groups)</b>	34	34	34	
<b>Random-effects parameters</b>				
Std (cons) Estimate	0.325 (0.04)	0.325 (0.04)	0.383 (0.04)	
<b>Log likelihood</b>	14251.648	14242.732	14754.613	14269.442
<b>LR Test vs. Logistic regression</b>	***	***	***	

Note: Models 1 to 3 random-intercept logistic regression models; 30 integration points; Model 4 logit model with robust standard errors; Log-coefficients and standard deviation in parentheses; dependent variable time fit (0=bad, 1=good); Results not weighted;

\*p<0.10, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01

Data source: EWCS 2010

## 5 Conclusion

The goal of this study was to analyze the effect of working time flexibility and autonomy on employees' time adequacy. It could be shown that both working time arrangements are positively related to time adequacy. However, the study also revealed that working time arrangements have various meanings and that these are shaped by gender and working time regimes. As Adam (1995) points out, a multitude of times exist. Time is "embedded in social interactions, structures, practices and knowledge" (Adam, 1995: 6). Working time autonomy may facilitate the combination of work and life, but may also lead to work intensification and overtime. Fixed schedules may constrain employees' lives or may protect them against employers' arbitrariness. In countries with high employer-centered flexibility, working time autonomy means time squeeze for employees, whereas fixed schedules protect them against employers' unpredictable claims, as was shown for the UK. In countries with a higher degree of employee-centered flexibility, like the Netherlands and Sweden, employees benefit from autonomous working time. Especially the combination of high employee-centered flexibility and low employer-centered flexibility supports time adequacy, as was shown for Dutch employees. Moreover, working time autonomy means time adequacy for women, but overtime and work intensification for men. This finding supports the claim that life courses are gendered and that individuals' abilities to make use of the potential of work arrangements are shaped and limited by the gendered social structure (Risman, 2004). The unequal allocation of unpaid work, male and female gender identities and cultural patterns in the workplace and in society are crucial to the effect of work arrangements on work outcomes. Also, men's and women's benefits from working arrangements are influenced by the degrees of employee-centered and employer-centered flexibility, as well as by welfare state policies reflecting prevailing gender ideologies in societies (Cooke, 2011: 2). The present study indicated that women's and men's time adequacy is rather unequal in countries with low employee-centered flexibility, such as the UK and Germany. Policies supporting the universal breadwinner model and high employee-centered flexibility like those in Sweden,

by contrast, seem to contribute to more equal outcomes for men and women. Moreover, the combination of high employee-centered flexibility and low employer-centered flexibility, together with a more relaxed full-time working norm, contribute to employees' time adequacy, as was shown for the Netherlands. Finally, this study revealed differences existing between countries assigned to the same working time regime (in this case Germany and the Netherlands). Accounting for intra-regime differences is therefore crucial for analyzing gender inequality.

A limitation of this study is the restricted number of observations, particularly for working time autonomy. Gender differences in a cross-country comparison could only be scrutinized by means of descriptive analysis, which allowed no more than tentative conclusions. Furthermore, sectoral factors may also play a part in the implementation of working time arrangements. However, they were not observed in the EWCS. European surveys with more detailed information, especially longitudinal surveys which allow for causal inference, would provide a remedy here. The issue of employees' self-selection into certain jobs with working time flexibility and autonomy is beyond the scope of this study. Finally, the implementation of working time arrangements and work organization may also constitute an obstacle to the use of working time flexibility and autonomy by men. These factors could not be analyzed using the available data. Qualitative cross-country studies would provide insights and open up the black box of what exactly happens in the workplace.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study points to the ambivalent connotation of working time autonomy. Employees with autonomous working time may have little sense of being externally controlled (Brannen, 2005: 116), when, in fact, they are not autonomous at all to decide when and in what place to work. As Brannen (2005: 126) points out, feeling autonomous does not necessarily correspond to acting autonomously. This is the case mainly for male employees and employees in the UK. It should be noted, however, that even though women are more successful than men in adapting their working time to time needs outside the workplace, they may experience time squeeze in a different way. Since they often prioritize family needs and care activities, for them, time squeeze may mean insufficient time for leisure or self-care. Furthermore, women still experience major disadvantages in their career perspectives, incomes and allocation of unpaid work. The fact that flexible working conditions lead to a traditional allocation of paid work reinforces these inequalities. It leaves men with less time for family life and women with fewer financial resources and more unpaid work.

State policies and company regulations have to enable all employees to use the potential of flexible and autonomous working conditions. For this, social partners play a crucial role. The present study indicated that in countries with strong collective bargaining, such as the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany, employees do not need fixed working time to be protected against flexibility. Social partners are the determining factors for working conditions and employees' benefits with time flexibility and autonomy. Unions and work councils have to ensure that the work organization enables employees to actually make use of working time flexibility and autonomy for their own purposes. But even more important is the creation of a work culture where men are encouraged to invest time in family and needs outside the workplace. Not only men, but also women would profit from regulations explicitly addressing male employees.

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