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Working time and work organisation

The role of production and labour markets in international comparison

This paper examines the link between working time and work organisation. It is shown, firstly, that the dynamic of change in working time is today generated in both product and labour market. While the ever quickening pace of economic activity is leading to the removal of all time restrictions on deployment schedules, workers themselves are seeking to strike a balance between the various areas of their life, which inevitably places restrictions on employee rosters. Secondly, it has become clear that only a small number of firms are introducing decentralised, post-Taylorist forms of work organisation. At the same time, however, a revival of Taylorism can also be detected, which is not based on standard working times as in the past but on the coordination of groups of employees with differing working times. Thirdly, it is shown, since the various forms of work organisation are becoming more differentiated, that a range of different strategies must be developed if a policy of work redistribution is to be successfully implemented. In post-Taylorist forms of work organisation with a high degree of self-organisation excessive long working times spread out. In Taylorist forms of work organisation with short working times the key issue is the willingness of employees to accept changes in their working time at short notice.

key words: labour market, product market, works organisation, working time, working time reduction

Frank Bauer

Problems of working time formation in hospitals

Gaining experience by evaluating a model project

This contribution focusses on experiences collected in the evaluation of a model project that counselled selected hospitals in realising the working time law by order of the federal state NRW. Apart from the structural difficulties of working time formation in hospitals due to their complex organisation, there are major problems in shaping the relationship between counsellor, client and field of counselling: How can the counsellor manage to realise his client's political aims in a field the latter does not control, especially when those aims do not totally match the interests of all employees in the hospitals? Which conclusions have to be drawn from this constellation, which might be called "counselling in a triangle" and is probably typical for publicly sponsored counselling projects? The text is a contribution to the discussion of those matters.

key words: counselling, hospital, working time formation

Ellen Hilf, Heike Jacobsen

Deregulation of shop opening hours and flexibilisation of employment in the retail trade

The key issue in the discussion about shop opening hours is, whether a legal regulation of the working hours within an industry can still be justified. As a contribution to balancing the debate the experiences with the new shop opening hours since 1996 are examined on the basis of representative surveys of businesses and employees in the retail trade. The effects on trade structure, employment and working (hours) conditions are described. It can be shown that the positive expectations of the deregulation of shop opening hours – growing turnover, growing employment – did not come up. Employment has been cut down, flexible working hours have increased. Against the background of the specific conditions in the retail sector expanded shop opening hours reinforce the previous paths of development with negative consequences for the trade structure, employment and quality of the retail business.

key words: deregulation, employment in the service sector, retail trade, shop opening hours, working hours

Hermann Groß, Eva Munz, Hartmut Seifert

Usage and structure of working time accounts

Working time accounts have recently become very common. At least 37 % of the dependently employed now make use of working time accounts. In at least 60 % of firms various forms of working time accounts have been introduced. Consequently, working time systems have been revolutionized; the previous model of standard working time has been replaced by variable forms of working time. Characteristic for the structure of working time accounts is a balance of deregulation and re-regulation. Since usage of this form of working time leads to an elimination of paid and above all unpaid overtime, working time accounts promotes employment. At the same time, such effects seem again to be compensated by increases in productivity which are also the result of using working time accounts. Finally, from the view of employees, working time accounts benefit equally the firm and the worker.

key words: deregulation, operating time, regulation, working time, working time accounts