

Quality of Work: How does it matter in Europe?

A comparative analysis of four EU states

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Introduction

The concept of quality is increasingly associated with the fields of employment and work. Economic and societal evolutions have accentuated or brought to the fore, certain issues and challenges that make it a very topical subject. However, when we take a closer look, we observe that there is not a unique view regarding the scope and objectives of what is covered by "Quality of work". Whether at a European or national level it can cover different dimensions of a complex reality.

■ A first standpoint: “More and better quality employment”

The Lisbon summit in March 2000 put the emphasis on employment policy while drawing up the 2010 European Employment Strategy. The rationale was clearly to seek a driver for growth through “**More and better quality employment**” in the context of the European construction. The Member States agreed on the definition of the “Laeken indicators”, a set of common European statistical indicators grouped under several categories which refer to the context in which people work and to the state of the labour market. The categories are as follows (European Commission, 2008, Employment in Europe, 153ff.):

1. Intrinsic job quality covered indicators on the transition between non-employment and employment and, within employment – both by pay level and contract type, as well as job satisfaction
2. Lifelong learning and career development focused exclusively on participation in training irrespective of its intensity or quality. Besides the adoption-rate of computer technology at the workplace this category concentrates on the supply-side of skills
3. Gender equality reflects prevailing employment and wage gaps between female and male workers as well as gender segmentation in occupations and sectors
4. Health and safety at work refer exclusively to the rate of occupational accidents thus failing to cover other important issues, such as occupational illnesses, stress at work and work intensity
5. Flexibility and security should encompass the idea of “flexicurity” but only refers to the proportion of part-time and fixed-term employees
6. Inclusion and access to the labour market describe the overall socio-economic and labour market context, such as employment and unemployment rates
7. Work organization and work-life balance takes into account policies and practices aimed at helping employees reconcile work and family life more effectively. Higher autonomy, decentralization of decision making etc – i.e. hallmarks of high-performance work systems – are not taken into consideration
8. Social dialogue and worker involvement is deemed an important issue in defining the quality of work. However, owing to the various national models of employee representation, no consensus could be reached in selecting adequate indicators
9. Diversity and non-discrimination is a complementary category to that regarding gender and is based on employment rates of specific groups of the labour force – mainly those with relatively low labour market participation.
10. Overall economic performance and productivity refer to contextual macroeconomic circumstances

The Laeken-indicators have been criticized for several reasons, in particular because they predominantly represent issues concerning the quality of employment and the state of the labour market in general rather than reflecting job-related issues or because they exclude relevant indicators such as wages. However they do suggest that quality of work has to be dealt with in a multidimensional way.

■ A second standpoint: from “Job quality” to “Quality of working life”

Indeed, a strongly modified classification was suggested in 2008 that refers only to four dimensions: 1) socio-economic security, 2) training, 3) working conditions and 4) reconciliation of work and family life and gender balance. Concomitantly and progressively, Member States have enlarged their approach, realizing the necessity to focus not only on employment, but also on workers. Several major trends have affected job quality over the last decade: intensification and dematerialisation of work, the growing complexity of organisations and processes, the intensive use of Information Technology fostering information overload, the development not only of the service sector but also of service activities increasing the number of employees having to deal with increasingly demanding customers etc. These trends are equally shared by most European countries, as observed in the European Working Conditions Surveys carried out regularly since 1991 by the Dublin Foundation¹. The scope of the survey questionnaire has widened substantially since the first edition, adding new themes such as gender mainstreaming, work-life balance, work organisation and physical and psychological risk factors. This shift from “**job quality**” to the “**quality of working life**” is concomitant with the increasing emergence of cases of suffering in the workplace and burn-out. These symptoms probably already existed before the 2000s. They are however, more prevalent today, both in the reality of the workplace and in the media. Physical and psychological risks are no longer a taboo and the quality of working life has become a critical concern regarding the balance between economic and social performance.

■ A third standpoint: “Decent job”

The economic crisis has exacerbated the issue since 2008/2009 in all countries. Employees are or feel more insecure considering the increasingly strained labour market. For them, flexibility may become a synonym for unemployment, involuntary part-time jobs, agency work, and low-wage jobs and in all cases in the end, lower purchasing power. This also concerns those who have what is considered “a good job” and who experience intensification of work on a daily basis. From this perspective, what is important is not only the “quality of working life” but above all, having a “**decent job**”.

Given all these different and yet relevant dimensions of “Quality of work”, we propose to start by shedding light on the European framework before providing an overview of the context (Employment situation, Labour law and policies) in each of the four countries covered in this Panorama. This background information is necessary to understand each countries’ specific approach to “Quality of work” (chapter 1). A comparative summary of these approaches is then provided and a typology of company practice is proposed (chapter 2). 17 Company Cases are then presented to illustrate practice in line with the typology (chapter 3). We conclude by summarizing the key issues from both a national and more general perspective and propose some guidelines for companies wishing to develop their practices in this field.

¹ Also called Eurofound, is the European Union body that was set up in 1975 to contribute to the planning and establishment of better living and working conditions. It carries out a role of research and information in partnership with governments, employers, trade unions and the European Union institutions. As part of its research base, Eurofound maintains a number of monitoring tools, which of them is the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) carried out every five years since its launch in 1990



I. The context

I. The European framework

When presenting the “European” view of “Quality of work”, it is in reality hard to distinguish the concept from that of “Job quality”, given that European Union Institutions tend to employ the two terms indiscriminately. This “deliberate” confusion permits a broader, more complete approach than what is strictly speaking covered by the notion of “Quality of work”. It takes into account the interdependence between perceptions and expectations regarding work and the structure of the labour market. When a person's career prospects are limited by a segmented labour market, they may well consider themselves to be occupying a low quality job. The extent to which one is concerned about job security is a function of the relative fluidity or rigidity of the labour market in which one is situated etc. Hence the European Union takes a broad approach to the subject by encompassing various spheres of social legislation as outlined below.

■ Quality work does not discriminate and ensures equal opportunities

We often forget that the principle of equal pay for men and women was one of the cornerstones of the European Union, present in the Founding Treaty (Rome 1957). This principle, and the competence of taking regulatory measures on the subject, was the starting point of what later became European anti-discrimination law² which has had an impact on the legal systems and case laws of all the European countries. Non-discrimination is here the guarantee that everyone is given the same opportunities for career advancement and pay, a key component if any of Quality of Work. On the principle of equal pay between men and women alone, the Community has developed, together with the European Court of Justice, a particularly comprehensive body of legislation. This includes a broad view of discrimination (direct and indirect), applied to various different situations (recruitment, pay, promotion and training) and a wide range of grounds (race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation..., as well as the form of employment³ or certain rights⁴). It also recognizes the reversal of the burden of proof (at least for some forms of discrimination) and provides for the creation of national administrative bodies in charge of guaranteeing its respect.

Closely linked with the issue of gender equality, reconciling the private and professional spheres is addressed in one directive only, the parental leave directive⁵, born from European cross-industry negotiations. The current text provides for a minimum of four months of parental leave to care for children up to eight years old. It also grants the right to flexible working to take care of family obligations. However, improving work-life balance is one of the recurring goals of European employment policies aiming to improve female participation in the labour market. There is also a

² See for example Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

³ Part-time working (Directive 97/81), Fixed-term work (Directive 99/70), Temporary work (Directive 2008/104), Telework (EU social partners' framework agreement 16 July 2002).

⁴ Parental leave (Directive 2010/18), EU social partners' framework agreement on telework (2002).

⁵ Parental leave (Directive 2010/18)

European agreement on telework⁶ but its' goal is more to give teleworkers guarantees than to improve work-life balance.

■ Quality jobs do not kill or injure anyone

The health and safety of workers has been another major area of Community legislative initiatives, beneficial for all countries. Its cornerstone, the directive on the implementation of measures to encourage improvements in the health and safety of workers at work⁷, was adopted in 1989 and laid down prevention principles applicable across Europe: the assessment of risks, the consultation of workers and their representatives, and the elimination of risks and accident factors. Drawing from this framework directive, several special directives have been adopted, regulating special risks in the field of occupational illnesses or situations where industrial accidents are likely.

Under Community law, sexual and moral harassment, the only psychosocial risk covered by a binding EU regulation, is considered as a form of discrimination defined in the anti-discrimination directives. For this reason, victims benefit from the reversed burden of proof that applies in cases of discrimination. Harassment, stress and violence at work have been the subject of other initiatives, but not technically binding. Thus, the European social partners have taken action on these two topics. They innovated with European agreements on stress⁸, providing a joint definition and identifying stress factors. The Framework Agreement on Harassment and Violence at Work (2007) went even further: it adopted a zero tolerance policy, including incidents committed by customers or clients. It also defined a framework for businesses to identify, prevent and manage problems of harassment and violence at work. Because they are not binding, these European agreements have not had the expected impact but they are still major references.

■ With quality jobs, employees have a say and are the primary agents of their own professional development

Several directives provide that workers or their representatives have to be informed and consulted at key moments in the company's life (collective redundancies⁹, transfers of activities¹⁰) or "in real time"¹¹, at national or European level (European Works Council¹²). Indeed, the EU strongly believes in the value of involving employees in the company's life and views social partnership as one of the characteristics of its social model, along with quality jobs. While this element may be perceived as somewhat distant from the notion of the quality of work, the EU's theory is that involving employees and their representatives is a guarantee that the company considers the consequences its economic decisions may have on its staff : having a say when you are an employee is also evidence of the quality of work. More broadly speaking, within the framework of the EU's reflection on the anticipation of change, having the company's social partners involved in the early stages is one of the factors that help employees avoid finding themselves in dead-ends jobs. However, in this respect, it should be noted that the development of skills, a most crucial issue, is currently only the subject of wishful thinking, even though training is one of the criteria used to qualify the quality of work in Europe.

⁶ EU social partners' framework agreement on telework (2002)

⁷ The European Framework Directive on Safety and Health at Work (Directive 89/391)

⁸ European social partners' Framework agreement on work-related stress (2004)

⁹ Directive 98/59/EC of 20 July 1998 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to collective redundancies

¹⁰ Directive 2001/23 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the safeguarding of employees' rights in the event of transfers of undertakings, businesses or parts of undertakings or businesses.

¹¹ Directive 2002/14 establishing a general framework for informing and consulting employees in the European Community - Joint declaration of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on employee representation.

¹² Directive 2009/38 on the establishment of a European Works Council or a procedure in Community-scale undertakings and Community-scale groups of undertakings for the purposes of informing and consulting employees (Recast)

2. Italy

In a period in which having or preserving a job is considered a luxury and there is a general pessimistic climate, it's important to shift the focus from the view of labor only as a means of economic sustainment, and restore its value by investing in and supporting the dimensions of quality of work and employee well-being.

In the words of the 5th European Working Condition Survey, job quality and subjective well-being of workers are strictly related insofar as job quality is a measure of the extent to which the features of jobs meet people's multiple needs from their work and the satisfaction of these needs results in subjective feelings of well-being. These two elements can be considered critical aspects from a double perspective. From an individual point of view they enable the true and complete realization of the human being and contribute to the definition of his/her identity during adult life. On the other side they are also central dimensions in the analysis of the economic growth of a country.

By analyzing not only employment levels but also the structural profile of employment and unemployment of a country, we can evaluate the health of the labour market and the economic situation of a country. In Italy, according to the 3rd Isfol Quality of work survey, 67,8% of Italian employees are satisfied with their job but, when we look in greater detail, it appears that people who are totally satisfied are usually employed in contexts in which the type of welfare applied and specificities of the employment structures establish virtuous mechanisms that allow growth and development. On the contrary, workers not very satisfied represent certain categories of workers (age, gender, etc.) or are employed in contexts that reflect weaknesses of the labour market and of the welfare system (Bergamante and Gualtieri, 2012).

■ Changes and characteristics of the Italian labour context

The second wave of recession that from the second half of 2011 is affecting Italy and other European countries has caused a slowdown of labour demand while real wages have already experienced a wide contraction producing a striking drop in the purchasing power of Italians. The in work at risk of poverty rate, that is the percentage of employed persons with an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, that is 9,4% according to Eurostat, is among the highest in the European ranking.

The Labour Market Report 2011-2012 produced by the National Council of Economy and Labour reveals that structural changes in the production system, such as population aging, the feminization of the labour force, the shift toward the service sector and the increase in the number of foreign workers in certain jobs as well as the financial downturn, are modifying the characteristics of labour demand.

Job mismatch: There is a raise in the chance of mismatch between the characteristics of demand and labour supply. The increase of employees with a higher education is not offset by an adequate growth of highly specialized jobs. Consequently, the labour market is facing a high risk of impoverishment of the human capital due to the high incidence of workers who are sub-classified with respect to the levels of education achieved and the high rate of young people that decide to move abroad. Italy has in fact the highest incidence of job mismatch among school leavers in Europe (47%).

Gender equity: In recent decades the women's participation rate is increasing but remains generally low if compared with other European countries. In 2011, 51.5 % of women at working age were either occupied or actively looking for a job, while the average rate in the EU was 64.9 %. In Italy in fact, due to cultural and historical reasons for which women have family care responsibilities and also because of a lack in childcare services, they are less involved in the labour market (OECD, 2004; Leombruni & Villosio, 2006; UN, 2007)

Unemployment rate: According to Eurostat, the overall unemployment rate was 8,4 in 2011 and the value is sharply increasing in 2012 reaching 10.6 in the second quarter of 2012. Moreover, due to the financial crisis and the extensive use of precarious contracts, younger workers are disadvantaged

in the labour market and the unemployment rate for the 15-24 years range is much higher (29,1% - Istat).

Work-life balance: Part-time agreements in Italy are not so frequent and the part-time employment rate is in general quite low (17% - Eurostat) penalizing especially female employment. On the other hand, we see an increase in the amount of involuntary part time workers, those who work part-time because they have not found a full-time job. Before the crisis, these involuntary part-time workers represented 40% of the whole part-time workers, they now represent 53% of them (CNEL, 2012). Moreover, the average number of actual weekly hours of work reveals that Italian workers spend on average 36,3 hours at work (Eurostat) with negative consequences in terms of stress and work-life balance.

■ Policies

The Health & Safety at Work Legislative Decree 81 of 2008 and its subsequent modifications and integrations are applied to companies with more than 15 employees and regulate physical and mental risks associated with workplaces. It requires not only environmental analysis (in order to check the adequacy of illumination, temperature, humidity, ventilation, etc.), communication and training activities with workers about the risk associated with their working activities, but also includes, for the first time in Italy, a specific provision concerning work-related stress risk assessment.

In addition, a number of measures aim at protecting the labour market and employment even in conditions of financial downturns. The main instrument is based on a wage guarantee fund (Cassa Integrazione Guadagni, CIG), which is managed by the National Social Security Institute (INPS) and used mainly by medium and large enterprises (>15 employees) in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Within the system there are two different schemes: the ordinary wage supplement (Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Ordinaria, CIGO) and the extraordinary wage supplement (Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Straordinaria, CIGS).

Solidarity contracts (Contratti di Solidarietà, CS) are company-level agreements based on the principle of solidarity among all employees of a productive unit in an enterprise who reduce, all at the same extent, their working hours in order to avoid dismissals (defensive) or to allow the recruitment of new employees (offensive)¹³.

For those businesses that do not have access to the CIG system, bilateral bodies (enti bilaterali) are a system aimed at maintaining jobs in small businesses and the craft sectors. They are managed jointly by the social partners and provide specific subsidies (integrated with unemployment benefit) to workers in the event of a reduction or suspension in their working hours, with the contribution of the Employment Fund managed by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (EMCO, 2009¹⁴).

With regard to lifelong learning, Fondi interprofessionali are the result of a collective agreement among social partners which was later translated into law. This agreement provided that a mandatory contribution (equal to 0.3% of salaries) to finance continuous training is paid by all enterprises to INPS or a specific sectoral fund. These funds are entirely managed by social partners and are created on a sectoral basis, even if companies can join any sectoral fund. Unlike the bilateral bodies which have a very unequal membership across Italy, the membership rates of sectoral funds are fairly high and they represent a successful experience in continuous training. There are around 10 sectoral funds in Italy today. The most important fund is Fondimpresa created by Confindustria (the organization of industrial employers) and the trade unions.

¹³ Coletto and Pedersini, 2009; Glassner and Keune, 2010

¹⁴ Employment Committee (EMCO), Employment Committee's contribution to the informal Employment Summit: Analysis carried out by the EMCO on short-time working arrangements, Doc. No. 10015/1/09 REVI ADD2, Brussels, EMCO, 2009.

■ Prospects: the new labour market and pension system reforms

In June 2012 the Italian Parliament approved a reform of the labour market designed to increasing productivity, economic growth and employment. The reform aims at creating a more flexible labour market and introduces an unemployment insurance system, which provides support also to those most concerned by the increased flexibility. It allows firms to cope with temporary adverse cyclical developments cutting hours worked instead of shedding labour, thus preserving valuable human capital. The reform is complemented by active labour market policies to help the young into their first job and assist those temporarily unemployed find another job rapidly.

Another important aspect of the new labour market reform is regarding gender equality that, in order to reduce the gender gap and improve the quality of work of women, introduces several measures:

- Norms to contrast the “blank resignation letter”¹⁵ practice that aim to protect all workers but especially women and working mothers.
- Introduction of compulsory paternity leave
- Specific initiatives for working mothers like vouchers for child care services.

The recent reform in the pension system, also known as the “Monti-Fornero reform” (12/2011), is one of the measures introduced by the Italian government in order to ensure the sustainability of the welfare system by obtaining short and medium term savings through increasing the average retirement age. In order to extend working life, the eligibility for old-age pension has been raised from 60 to 62 years for women and from 65 to 66 for men, with financial incentives to try to keep them working until 70. Moreover, the retirement age for women will be gradually increase up to 66 years starting from 2018 and, from 2021 onward, it will rise to 67 for both women and men. The minimum number of contribution years for old-age pension (calculated as a mix of age and the number of years of paid contributions), has increased from 40 to 42 years for men and from 40 to 41 years for women. The reform abolishes de facto early retirement, a practice that has been usually considered the short-term response to the need for corporate downsizing, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, but that is no longer compatible with an ageing society.

Both these reforms are transforming the Italian labour market by trying to improve its ability to react to adverse shocks and increase flexibility and security. At the same time these reforms are challenging companies and employers in sustaining well-being and quality of work for their employees for a longer period of time and in uncertain conditions.

3. The United Kingdom

Employee well-being has received considerable attention from UK policy makers in recent years and there is widespread recognition that improved physical and mental health at work can benefit the economy, as well as individual employers and their employees.

Job quality or quality of working life (QWL) has received less attention: a recent IES review¹⁶ observed that there is no national measure of QWL that could serve as a robust benchmark for employers or inform policy makers. However there have been significant policy developments with respect to employment rights equality which have implications for QWL. Also, work life balance is currently a ‘hot topic’ in the UK and many employers are gradually recognising the benefits of flexible working.

¹⁵ when a candidate is recruited, he or she may be asked to sign the employment contract together with a blank resignation letter which, being updated, can be enforced by the employer whenever he or she might decide

¹⁶ <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/network/members/library/452.pdf>

However, there tends to be lack of integration between literatures dealing with various elements of QWL and wellbeing. For example, relationships between employee perceptions such as job satisfaction and indicators of well-being such as mental health status are poorly specified.

■ UK labour market context

The current economic downturn has been accompanied by a changing employment profile of the UK workforce with potential implications for work quality and wellbeing. For example, the UK Office of National Statistics (ONS)¹⁷ reports significant movement from full-time to part-time working. Between 2008 and 2012 full-time employment fell by approximately 3 per cent of the total while part-time employment increased by around 6 per cent over the same period. This movement towards greater part-time working was matched by a sharp reduction in permanent employment and a rise of employment on temporary contracts.

The 2011 UK Labour Force Survey¹⁸ indicates that these increases in part-time and temporary working were accompanied by increases in the proportions of each which were involuntary - that is, required by employers rather than being the choice of the employees themselves. The TUC's 2007 survey also found that a large number of temporary agency workers were "reluctant temps" – just under half of this survey's sample of temporary workers were working as temporary workers because they could not find a permanent job (the incidence of temporary working is relatively high in the UK, by European comparison¹⁹).

The implications of these trends for well being and job quality are unclear (the ONS figures concentrate on the economic impact). In terms of general job satisfaction, the 2008 government survey found mixed evidence on satisfaction and well-being of agency workers, which suggests "a fairly complex picture with agency workers having both positive and negative experiences". A recent Home Office report²⁰ identified a number of features of part-time working associated with poor job quality limited opportunity for progression, less consultation and less challenging job content.

Over the past decade, social and demographic shifts have meant that organisational policies designed to balance employee family responsibilities and work commitments have become mainstream²¹. However Gingerbread²² (a charity for single parents) notes that 'family friendly' jobs remain scarce in the UK. A report, based on the 3,000 parents and callers contacting the Working Families in 2011, suggests that the message that flexible working is good for business 'isn't getting through' and employers are imposing changes to working patterns which aren't compatible with childcare and which will 'force parents out of work'.

■ UK public policy

Employers have a duty of care in relation to the health of their employees as defined in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. In 2004 the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) launched guidance concerning employers' responsibility to conduct a stress risk assessment to manage risks to psychological health²³. HSE's Management Standards²⁴ set out six areas employers should address in order to limit worker's exposure to stress.

- Demands: includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment
- Control: how much say the person has in the way they do their work
- Support: this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

¹⁷ http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_277262.pdf

¹⁸ <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/research/publications/workingpapers/paper-142.html>

¹⁹ Broughton A & Behling F, 'UK National Paper : Temporary Agency Work'

²⁰ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/equalities/research/part-time-work-evaluation?view=Binary>

²¹ <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/report.php?id=tewf11>

²² <http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/content/849/What-are-the-main-challenges>

²³ <http://www.stresschecktraining.com/stress-audits.html?id=10>

²⁴ http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/HealthAndSafetyAtWork/DG_10026604

- Relationships: this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- Role: whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles
- Change: how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

HSE's guidance goes into some detail regarding how each state should be achieved and is accompanied by a survey intended for use in organisations as a benchmarking tool. The standards were designed to help employers meet their legal obligations to assess workplace risks although research shows uptake has been limited, mainly because the Standards are voluntary and there are insufficient resources available to HSE to make enforcement in this area a realistic option.

In a separate 2005 initiative, the Government launched a cross-departmental government programme to improve the health and well-being of people of working age²⁵. This was followed by the appointment of Dame Carol Black as the first National Director of Health and Work. In this role, Dame Carol undertook a review of the health of working age people in the UK which was published in March 2008 as 'Working for a healthier tomorrow'.

This report makes an explicit link between promotion of well-being at work and increased motivation and engagement of employees (and that this in turn helps drive increases in productivity and profitability). It also highlights the importance of effective line management and of ensuring that workers feel valued. The report stops short of defining high quality work, but does conclude that employees are likely to have worse health if:

- their employment is insecure
- their work is monotonous and repetitive
- workers have little or no autonomy, control and task discretion
- there is an imbalance between effort and reward so that workers feel exploited or 'taken for granted'
- there are few supportive social networks
- there is an absence of procedural justice in the workplace i.e. workers cannot be confident that they will be fairly treated by their employer

Despite this acknowledgement of the quality of working life issues, the report's recommendations focused on absence management, ie methods of facilitating return to work following absence and implementation of new sickness certification for use by GPs. Subsequent policy interventions also focussed on those aspects. However a recent publication of the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE)²⁶ emphasises the core role of assessment and understanding of the way working environments pose risks for psychological wellbeing through lack of control and excessive demand. The report endorses frameworks such as HSE's Management Standards.

Recent legislation has been introduced to improve fairness and consolidate the rights of potentially disadvantaged groups. This includes:

- The Agency Workers Regulations 2010²⁷, which has gone some way to improving the employment conditions of temporary workers (this gave effect in UK law to the Temporary and Agency Workers Directive). However issues remain which potentially compromise quality of working life; for example temporary workers are more likely than permanent workers to be low paid, and are much less satisfied with their job security²⁸.

²⁵ <http://www.hse.gov.uk/hwwb/>

²⁶ National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) public health guidance 22; Promoting mental wellbeing through productive and healthy working conditions <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/PH22Guidance.pdf>

²⁷ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/employment-matters/strategies/awd>

²⁸ Trades Union Congress (2008) Hard Work, Hidden Lives. The full report of the Commission on Vulnerable Employment.

- The Employment Act introducing in April 2003 the right for parents of young and disabled children to apply to work flexibly²⁹. From April 2007 this right has been extended to cover carers of adults³⁰. Note that this constitutes a right to request flexible working not a right to flexible working per se.
- Additional Paternity Leave and Pay³¹, introduced in 2010 to enable eligible fathers to take up to 26 weeks' additional paternity leave. This new provision is intended to provide parents with more choice and flexibility in child care responsibilities and a more equitable sharing of leave entitlements.

■ Role of social partners

A range of non-governmental organisations and other social partners have explored and attempted to define the concept of quality working life and measures of worker engagement and job satisfaction commonly feature in nationally recognised surveys.

— Measures of quality of working life

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) conducts research, as part of its remit of influencing public and corporate policy. This includes a quarterly 'Employee Outlook' survey among UK employees to identify their opinions of and attitudes towards working life³². In the last year they have introduced an employee engagement index made up of responses to a number of questions known to be integral to understanding the level of engagement an employee feels toward their organisation.

Recent results indicated that most UK workers feel 'neutral' when it comes to their engagement at work (58 per cent of those surveyed). The survey found a significant link between employee engagement and respondents' well-being. Engaged employees were found to score much more highly against the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) subjective well-being questions in relation to life satisfaction, happiness and how worthwhile life is (although the ONS questions do not have an occupational focus).³³

The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) carries out an annual survey which explicitly addresses quality of working life, although its target group is managers rather than a general employee population. The CMI/ Simply health report 'The Quality of Working Life 2012'³⁴ compared responses from 1,000 managers to surveys in 2007 and 2012 and paints what it terms 'a bleak picture of the impact of the recession on UK workplaces'. Compared with 2007, managers today are reportedly: working longer hours due to larger workloads; increasingly suffering from ill health including stress and depression; and more likely to come to work despite being sick.

Other relevant measures include The Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS)³⁵, which examines employment relations in workplaces throughout Britain. Fieldwork for the WERS 6 is now underway and is scheduled to be completed by mid-2012. The focus of WERS is on employee relations and as such there is some relevance to the study of QWL perceptions and experiences. Areas investigated with employees include: communication, work organisation, change, skill development and utilisation, relations with supervisors/managers and satisfaction with this, trust and management approach to family responsibilities of employees.

²⁹ <http://www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1076>

³⁰ http://www.carersinformation.org.uk/carers_rights_and_legislation

³¹ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/employment-matters/strategies/paternity-leave>

³² [http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/5923%20Employee%20Outlook%20SR%20\(WEB\).pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/5923%20Employee%20Outlook%20SR%20(WEB).pdf)

³³ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/summary-of-proposed-domains-and-measures/summary-of-proposed-domains-and-measures-of-national-well-being.html?format=print>

³⁴ <http://www.managers.org.uk/workinglife2012>

³⁵ <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/employment-matters/research/wers>

Job satisfaction is currently included in the UK component of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP)³⁶, ie the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS). Notably, the Office for National Statistics has recently embarked on a study of how national well-being could be measured and there are plans to include job satisfaction as a domain, drawing from relevant ECHP data³⁷.

The Employer Skills Survey (ESS) maps skills shortages and workforce development activity across England and provides some information with a bearing on QWL – for example, exploring why some vacancies are hard to fill and gathering information on training provision, formalisation of work organisation, and performance assessment procedures. A report on the most recent ESS concludes that almost 1.5 million employees do not have the skills required to perform their job role³⁸. It also indicated that most recruitment issues lie with respect to lower skilled jobs, and raised the possibility that poor job quality may be at the root of this³⁹.

— Defining ‘good work’

Waddell & Burton’s 2006 report examining the relationship between work and wellbeing⁴⁰ is regarded as a seminal publication on this issue and supports the UK’s Department of Work and Pensions ‘work is good for you’ mantra. The report draws together an evidence base demonstrating that work is generally good for physical and mental health and well-being but acknowledges that ‘beneficial health effects depend on the nature and quality⁴¹ of work’. They also comment that ‘there is insufficient evidence to define the physical and psychosocial characteristics of jobs and workplaces that are ‘good’ for health.’

A number of stakeholders have attempted to promote ‘good’ or high quality work. For the two years to July 2011 the Good Work Commission⁴² explored the relevance of the concept of good work to business, to employees and to wider society in the current climate of change. The commissioners concluded that there is a business case for employers to invest in good work because it can be demonstrated to improve productivity, employee retention and customer satisfaction. The challenge for UK businesses, they argued, is to create more good work to meet the needs of an increasingly demanding and more highly educated workforce.

A TUC report⁴³ concludes that ‘good work’ goes further than simply ensuring that jobs do not make people ill, and is more about organising work in a way that promotes good physical and mental health. The report highlights factors that contribute to a better working environment: being in control of workload, good quality line managers, good health and safety standards, a friendly and flexible workplace culture, equality and fair treatment, development and training opportunities, sensible hours of work and manageable work intensity, job security and a healthy work-life balance culture. The report concludes by suggesting a national standard or index of ‘good work’ is developed.

A recent UKCES⁴⁴ report notes that workplace policy in the UK is ‘underdeveloped’ when compared to other European countries. They identify three urgent ongoing issues for policymakers to address, namely skills, autonomy and effort. They also urge the government, employers and unions in Britain to take good job design more seriously.

³⁶ <http://www.esds.ac.uk/longitudinal/access/bhps/L33196.asp>

³⁷ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/summary-of-proposed-domains-and-measures/summary-of-proposed-domains-and-measures-of-national-well-being.html?format=print>

³⁸ <http://www.ukces.org.uk/publications/employer-skills-survey-2011>

³⁹ <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/15034/1/evidence-report-46-uk-employer-skills-survey-2011-england-report.pdf>

⁴⁰ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/hwwb-is-work-good-for-you.pdf>

⁴¹ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/hwwb-is-work-good-for-you.pdf>

⁴² <http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Research/Workforce-Effectiveness/Good-Work/Good-Work-Commission>

⁴³ <http://www.tuc.org.uk/mediacentre/tuc-17643-f0.cfm>

⁴⁴ <http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/praxis-1-job-quality-in-britain.pdf>

4. Germany

Between 2001/2002 and 2005, a series of labour market reforms, called “Hartz reform package” and “Agenda 2010”, was initiated. These legal amendments and their announcement have noticeably transformed the labour market in Germany over the last decade (Burda/Hunt, 2011; Eichhorst, 2012; Rinne/Zimmermann, 2011). This applies to the composition and the size of the work force as well as to the robustness of the labour market concerning adverse demand shocks.

- Deregulation of temporary agency work: in 2003 the maximum duration of an assignment was finally abolished. In addition, the ban on synchronization and re-employment was suspended so that agencies now can repeatedly hire a worker only for the length of his assignment in a user company. In 2003, the prohibition on agency work in construction was abolished, too. However, minimum wages were recently introduced and some collective agreements have been concluded that stipulate equal treatment/equal pay of temporary agency workers if their assignment period to a user company exceeds specific thresholds.
- Introduction of single means-tested replacement scheme for long-term unemployed persons/ job seekers: In 2005, a general minimum income support scheme (unemployment benefit II) was introduced that laid stronger emphasis on reinforcing jobseekers’ willingness to take up even low paid jobs. In general, the means-tested replacement scheme applies to those who are unemployed for longer than 12 months (the threshold depends on age). However, the net replacement rates within the first year (unemployment benefit I) remained very high by international standards.
- New regulation for fringe jobs: Since 2003, part-time work involving monthly income of no greater than €400 has been exempt from most social security taxes.
- Deregulation of fixed-term contracts: The age threshold for the application of repeated fixed-term contracts without valid reason was lowered from 58 to 52 years for newly hired older unemployed. In addition, newly established firms were allowed to use fixed-term contracts for up to four years without a valid reason. However, dismissal protection of standard employment was hardly modified.
- Raise of the statutory retirement age: In 2007, the statutory retirement age was raised from 65 years to 67 years between 2012 and 2029. In future, only employees who have contributed to the statutory pension insurance for 45 years will be entitled to receive the full pension at 65 years of age. In addition, other legal amendments have abolished public support for the adoption of early retirement schemes. Thus, the incentive of companies and employees to make use of early retirement has been reduced.

Furthermore, from a macroeconomic point of view wage policies between 2000 and 2009 focused on employment security (Lesch, 2010). Unit labour costs remained stable and effective wages developed in line with collectively agreed wages. Thus, collective bargaining has been characterized by wage moderation over the last decade.

Legal amendments and wage moderation has resulted in a significant growth in total employment (up to an all time high: 39.3 million in 2000, 39.0 million in 2005, 41.1 million in 2011 (BA, 2012) and employment liable to social security contributions (27.8 million in 2000, 26.2 million in 2005, 28.4 million in 2011). Unemployment has considerably decreased (2000: 3.89 million, 2005: 4.86 million, 2011: 2.98 million). Furthermore, though the German economy was more severely affected by the recession in 2008/2009, unemployment barely rose (2008: 3.26 million, 2009: 3.41 million). Thus, Germany's labour market has shown a relatively high absorbing capacity.

Aside from working time accounts (internal flexibility) and short-time working (subsidized internal flexibility), it is said that the growth in atypical jobs – in particular fixed-term and temporary agency work – has increased the capacity of the German labour market to absorb adverse demand shocks (external flexibility). According to the latest figures based on the national labour force survey, the total number of employees working fixed-term rose by 11% between 2005 and 2011 (due to a change in the survey design, data before 2005 are not comparable) while the total number of employees with permanent contracts increased by 9.3%. Thus, the proportion of fixed-term employees remained more or less constant. Even if all modes of atypical work are taken into

consideration (i.e. part-time work, temporary agency work, fringe jobs, fixed-term employment), the total number of regular jobs (i.e. permanent and full-time employment except TAW⁴⁵) grew from 22.1 million to 23.7 million employees between 2005 and 2011. This is equivalent to an increase by 7.2%. The total number of atypical workers rose from 6.7 million to 7.9 million (+17.4%). TAW even soared up by roughly 38%. Nonetheless, aggregate data clearly shows that from a macroeconomic perspective atypical work has not substituted, but complemented regular work.

■ **Quality of work as a controversial public issue**

Nonetheless, the growth in atypical work has generated concerns about the quality of work in recent years. A popular argument stipulates that atypical work is equivalent to precarious work and rather low-quality jobs. It is used in particular by the unions which implemented a regular monitoring tool called “Gute Arbeit Index” (<http://www.dgb-index-gute-arbeit.de/>) in 2007. Since then, the monitoring has been run and published annually. In addition, the unions have launched several initiatives that publically criticize the growing prevalence of atypical work (particularly TAW and fixed-term employment). They also aim at mobilizing union members and works councils to combat its adoption by enforcing employers to conclude collective or works agreements that restrict the use of atypical work in a company.

Generally speaking, precarious work is usually accompanied by:

- Low wages
- Low job security
- Low job quality

— **Low wages**

Several studies show a substantial increase of the low-wage sector - i.e. the proportion of persons who earn less than two-third of the median wage between – between 1995 and 2007 (see for example Kalina/Weinkopf, 2012; Schäfer/Schmidt, 2011). Empirical evidence, however, also suggests that low-wage jobs have not replaced high-wage or “normal-wage” jobs but have been created additionally. Former unemployed or inactive persons whose skills had become obsolete during unemployment have successfully been reintegrated into work. Almost half of the low-wage employees are performing unskilled tasks.

Low wages are particularly prevalent among fringe workers. The total number of persons working exclusively in fringe jobs has, however, remained more or less constant since 2004 (official figures reveal a jump shortly after implementation of the new regulations in 2002/2003).

Earning wages less than two-third of the median-wage does not inevitably result in poverty. The risk of poverty is higher for unemployed persons than for those in employment or even low-wage employment (Schäfer/Schmidt, 2011). Only 16% of low-wage earners are at risk of poverty in comparison with 61% of unemployed persons. Not surprisingly, only 2.2% of those receiving “normal” or high wages are at risk of poverty. Nonetheless, assessing the likelihood of being at risk of poverty requires taking into account other income sources of the household.

— **Low job security:**

Fixed-term contracts result, by nature, in lower job security than permanent contracts. As stated above, the proportion of fixed-term contracts has been more or less constant over the last decade but according to figures based on the IAB-Establishment Panel nearly half of recently hired workers are fixed-term workers.

IAB figures also reveal that more than half of the expired working contracts are eventually converted into permanent contracts (IAB, 2012). The proportion of converted contracts is particularly high in manufacturing and relatively low in the public and non-profit sector (Bechmann et al., 2010). For

⁴⁵ Temporary Agency Work

example, in 2009 84% of the expired fixed-term contracts in the metal working and electrical industry were transformed into permanent contracts (Gesamtmetall, 2012).

— Low job quality

Reports on an increasing incidence of absence from work and a growing number of days of absence due to psychosocial risks (e.g. Meyer et al., 2012), a larger proportion of persons working at very high speed (EWCS, 2010) or having experienced an increased workload (DGB-Gute-Arbeit-Index-GmbH, 2012) may be interpreted as indicators of a deteriorating quality of work. However, the proportion of employees reporting that their health and safety might be at risk due to their work significantly decreased between 1991 and 2010 (EWCS, 2010). In addition, figures from the iga-health survey report (iga, 2011) and the EWCS (2010) show that jobs are not too demanding for the vast majority of employees. All in all, empirical evidence does not provide a coherent picture whether the quality of work has been declining or improving in recent years.

Furthermore, the choice of the appropriate indicators is a highly controversial issue. The level of well-being or job satisfaction is, however, regarded as an important yardstick of quality of work by many actors. Figures from both the EWCS (2010) and the SOEP indicate that job satisfaction is relatively high in Germany (EWCS: 88% of the respondents stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the working conditions in their main paid job; SOEP-wave 2010: 46% reported a high level of job satisfaction (categories 8, 9, 10) and 50% a medium level (categories 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). On the other way around, the proportion of workers exhibiting a low level of job satisfaction is rather small. Figures from SOEP show that well-being is significantly influenced by having a job or not having a job (Neumann/Schmidt, 2012). The average level of well-being (increasing scale from 0 to 10) of employed persons totalled 7.2 (6.9) in western (eastern) Germany compared to that of unemployed persons (5.7 in western and 5.5 in eastern Germany). In this respect, having any job is better than having no job (Grün et al. 2010; Layard, 2004). In addition, the employment status (= fixed-term contract) does not significantly correlate with the level of job satisfaction after controlling for personal and (other) job characteristics as well as expectations (Lesch/Schäfer/Schmidt, 2011).

■ Policies / initiatives

It is expected that the general elections which will be held in fall 2013 will spur the debate on the quality of work. In this respect, further initiatives to introduce either a national minimum wage or additional sector specific minimum wages may be launched by both unions and political parties. In the debate on equal treatment in temporary agency work the unions have added the issue of freelance work and contracts to produce a specific piece of work. They have strongly been criticising the adoption of freelance work and such contracts. Furthermore, the controversial debate on the extension of working life is expected to continue. In this respect, special emphasis may be laid upon the companies' engagement to promote HR-practices that improve the employability particularly of older workers. Triggered by initiatives at the European level and figures about the gender pay gap as well as about the proportion of female managers, quotas stipulating that a specific proportion of managerial positions or positions on supervisory boards has to be filled by women have controversially been debated. Finally, fringe jobs or the provisions governing fringe jobs have also been put on the political agenda.

The goal of fostering employees' well-being/job satisfaction by company policies has been pursued by all actors in a variety of areas and activities, too. One of the most prominent initiatives is the 'New Quality of Work Initiative' (INQA). It is a joint initiative by the federal government, the state governments, trade unions, employers' and business associations, social security organisations, foundations and individual companies. It has been running since 2002 and is financially supported by the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS).

While its initial goal was mainly to align employees' expectations of healthy and satisfying working conditions with the need for enterprises to be competitive in an internationally integrated economy, INQA currently promotes a corporate culture that particularly focuses on the skills and competences of the individual employee. In this respect, a life-course perspective has recently begun

to prevail. Thus INQA's contextual structure was slightly modified in May 2012. Four fields of action were defined:

- Human resource management and leadership
- Equal opportunities and diversity
- Health
- Knowledge and skills

INQA continues to promote projects and models of good practice – but has recently begun to assign them to these four fields of action. In addition, it still provides a platform for exchanging ideas and experiences. Finally, it disseminates the latest information on, and facilitates access to, commercial consulting and public funding programs.

To date, INQA has reached approximately 3,000 companies with a total of more than three million employees. In addition, more than 10 networks have been established. These link up either specific sectors, such as construction or small and medium-sized companies, specific topics, such as demography or work ability, or specific fields of operation, such as office, assembly line or care.

5. France

“Quality of work” may be understood differently according to personal situations. In this respect, the insider/outsider theory⁴⁶ sheds light on the different possible interpretations. “Insiders” refers to “incumbent employees whose privileged positions are protected by labour turnover costs”. As opposed to that, “Outsiders” enjoy no such protection: they are either unemployed or work in the informal, competitive sectors of the labour market. From an insider viewpoint, “quality of work” is thus likely to essentially encompass “quality of working life” criteria. Comparatively, an outsider will be more receptive to a “decent job”, in the sense of the ILO definition: a job that notably provides a fair income, social protection for families and social integration⁴⁷. In the context of the economic crisis, these two viewpoints have been prevalent in French current events, especially over the last 3 years with two different drivers: on the one hand the situation of the French labour market, and on the other hand the emergence of significant psychosocial (stress or harassment related) risks, especially in large or public companies.

■ The labour market

The French labour market has been characterized over the last decade by an increasing rate of unemployment. This issue has become the primary concern of French people and a crucial topic for the French Government during the “Grande Conférence Sociale”⁴⁸. France is currently confronted with a high unemployment rate, which reached 10% in September 2012 and an even higher rate of 22,5 % for young adults.

In parallel with this degradation, precarious employment such as temporary, assisted or agency contracts has increased from 6,8% in 2010 to 7,1% in march 2012 in companies with more than 10 employees⁴⁹, and represent 75% of current recruitments⁵⁰. Besides, the 2012 annual survey on agency work⁵¹, conducted by OME (Observatoire des Métiers et de l'Emploi) for Prisme⁵², has shown

⁴⁶ Lindbeck A, Snower D, July 2002: The Insider-Outsider Theory: A Survey”, Institute for the study of labour, Discussion paper No. 534, p.1. (online: <http://ftp.iza.org/dp534.pdf>)

⁴⁷ ILO, <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>, retrieved on 26/10/2012

⁴⁸ The Major Social Conference held in July 2012 by the new French government, initiating through 7 tri-partite roundtables a new social dialogue to deal with French social and employment challenges

⁴⁹ A. Rodier, N Vulser, 10July2012, Le Monde Eco & Entreprise

⁵⁰ Planet Labor, Novembre 5, 2012, n° 120648 – www.planetlabor.com

⁵¹ “Regards croisés sur l'intérim en France et en Europe” Observatoire des Métiers et de l'Emploi - May 2012 (http://www.cadresonline.com/conseils/fileadmin/user_upload/Image_a_moi/DP_Regards_Croisés_en_France_et_en_Europe_2012_15_052012.pdf)

a shift in agency workers motivation. Till 2011, agency work was usually seen as a gateway to a more stable job, in addition offering an opportunity for a more diverse professional experience. It is now clearly an alternative to unemployment.

Nevertheless, permanent work contracts (CDI) are still the standard in France: 85 % of job contracts according to Eurostat. However, an increasing proportion of these contracts concern part time jobs. Between 2008 and 2011 the proportion of part time workers in France has risen from 17,7% to 18,6. This increase in part time is alarming as, according to 2011 statistics carried out by the OECD, 28,4% of French part-time employees are involuntary part-timers⁵³. As a consequence and despite the SMIC (the French monthly minimum wage for a full-time job), another important reality is the significant and increasing proportion of low income workers (employees who earn a monthly salary below or equal to 2/3 of the monthly net median salary, i.e. 1055 Euros in 2011). Between 2007 and 2011, their proportion has increased from 14,9 % to 16,1 % ⁵⁴. More than 75% of these employees work part-time, generally on temporary or precarious work contracts. 75% of them are women and more than 50% are young adults or on the contrary elder employees.

As a first conclusion, the French situation contributes to make work an essential concern for a majority of French people, not only job-seekers but also the population of employees who feel that they do not work anymore in a company that can offer them a job for life.

A second conclusion is that the concept of decent work becomes more and more relevant in the context of the economic crisis, especially for young adults and vulnerable populations such as women or seniors.

■ Quality of working life: from facilitation to a work organisation perspective

The last SUMER survey, a representative survey on occupational risk exposure carried out in 2009/2010 by 2400 occupational doctors, revealed an interesting shift in occupational risks:⁵⁵ From 1994 to 2003, both work intensity and autonomy have increased while the exposure to physical constraints of work was declining. Then, from 2003 to 2010, work intensification and physical constraints became stable while employees' autonomy was decreasing.

Concomitantly to this latter period, the French Ministry of Labour decided to set up the first "Health at Work Plan" for 2005-2009⁵⁶, aiming at better working conditions and prevention of risks, through improved understanding of occupational risks, a better control and management of health at work, as well as fostering employer involvement. This contributed to the creation in 2007 of AFSSET, the "French Agency for Health and Safety in the Environment and in the Workplace". Around this time it was highlighted that psychosocial situations (stress, harassment) were becoming the primary cause of work-related pathologies⁵⁷. They were more frequent (or were more frequently subject to communication), and also were increasingly due to stress as opposed to harassment or violence which were previously the main causes.

In 2008, the National Inter-professional Agreement on stress at work (ANI of July 2, 2008), transposition of the European Framework Agreement on Work-Related Stress dated 8 October 2004, used the definition provided by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work: "people experience stress when they perceive that there is an imbalance between the demands made of them and the resources they have available to cope with those demands". The agreement focuses on

⁵² Le Prisme : association gathering more than 600 companies representing more than 90% of the turnover in the interim sector

⁵³ OECD database, <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryId=9584#> (retrieved on 24/10/2012)

⁵⁴ "Les bas Salaires en France entre 1995 et 2011", October 2012, n° 068, Dares Analysis

⁵⁵ DARES, march 2012, L'évolution des risques professionnels dans le secteur privé entre 1994 et 2010 : premiers résultats de l'enquête SUMER, Dossier Analyse n°23

⁵⁶ Plan de Santé au Travail 2005-2009 (<http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/espaces.770/travail.771/dossiers.156/sante-et-securite-au-travail.301/plans-de-sante-au-travail-pst.548/plan-de-sante-au-travail-2005-2009.1628/>)

⁵⁷ Source: AFSSET, quoted by Henry Lachmann, Christian Larose and Muriel Penicaud in their Report "Bien être et efficacité au travail" - February 2010

general principles such as the employers' responsibility. In parallel, the labour law enforced a strict obligation for French employers to ensure physical as well as mental security. A consequence is that quality of working life has adopted a stronger legal consistency (based on soft-law). The related case-law includes many judgements notifying sanctions against employers, or making them stop potentially "anxiety-provoking" projects such as the implementation of a new organisation or a new performance appraisal process. Hence the way a company is organized has been clearly recognised as a potential source of stress and moral harassment⁵⁸. Consequently, employers are faced with increasing constraints in terms of:

- internal consultation (notably of the CHSCT, the French compulsory employee representative body in charge of workplace Health, Hygiene, Security and Working Conditions)
- and documentation (notably through the compulsory "Unique risk assessment document", which is supposed to provide an analysis of the risks in view of implementation of remedial actions)

The increasing emphasis on psychosocial risks in the workplace became particularly patent in 2009-2010 after the occurrence of a tragic wave of suicides in different companies that was widely covered by the media. Consequently, the Health at Work Plan for 2010-2014⁵⁹ has integrated a new and prevalent dimension: stress-related risks and more generally suffering in the workplace. Henry Lachmann (Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Schneider Electric), Christian Larose (President of the work-employability section of the French Economic and Social Council and Union leader of the CGT) and Muriel Penicaud (HR Director of Danone Group) were commissioned to draft a report on "Well-being and efficiency at work". 10 recommendations emerged from this report: Board involvement, the cornerstone role of Managers and the importance of developing them, the role of social partners, the necessity to measure, the importance of creating opportunities for employees to have their say, for discussion on work and taking care to develop team spirit, the necessity to anticipate human impacts of change, to consider the broader work environment and to provide support to employees having difficulties. Concomitantly, an emergency plan was implemented by the Minister of Labour that imposed to companies with more than 1000 employees the obligation to initiate negotiation on psychosocial issues before February 2010, or at least, to carry out an audit of the situation and draft an action plan.

■ The French public policy perspectives

After the recent presidential elections in Mai 2012, the new French government intends to make progress on these different issues. To achieve this goal, the "Grande Conférence Sociale" on 9th and 10th July 2012 brought together the government and representatives of employers' organisations and unions at seven round-table discussions on employment, training, wages, equality at work and quality of working life, revitalizing industry, pensions and social welfare, and the modernisation of public services. The result of these discussions was the definition of a 'road map' including the two "quality of work" topics covered i.e. decent work and quality of working life.

— Decent work

Negotiations following from the "Grande Conférence Sociale" led in January 2013 to an Interprofessional National Agreement with Trade Unions that should result in a new law in March. The four areas covered are as follows:

- Fighting against employment insecurity notably by reinforcing the permanent contract as the main form of recruitment (through increased taxation on fixed-term contracts) and regulating involuntary part-time contracts (a minimum of working hours per week, planning of working hours...)
- Ensuring a better anticipation of evolutions in employment and required competencies, notably by providing a compulsory and centralised information toward social partners and giving them a

⁵⁸ ANI of July 2, 2008, March 26, 2010, SNECMA judgement March 5, 2008

⁵⁹ Plan de Santé au Travail 2010-2014 (<http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/espaces.770/travail.771/dossiers.156/sante-et-securite-au-travail.301/plans-de-sante-au-travail-pst.548/plan-de-sante-au-travail-2010-2014.1629/>)

representative role in the governance of large companies, as well as fostering a better connection with training policies

- Maintaining employment despite adverse economic conditions, providing a company agreement is signed for a period up to 2 years, allowing a reduction of pay or working hours in exchange for the company commitment not to lay off during the period
- Improving procedures for collective redundancies: making the process simpler and more transparent in order to encourage companies to hire when the economic environment is favourable

The final outcome is not expected to radically reform the labour market but bring some answers to the issue of conciliating flexibility for companies and security for employees, notably by formalizing the idea of company level collective bargaining agreements aimed at developing the company's competitiveness.

■ Quality of working life

As the topic includes a specific focus on gender equality, the target is to achieve an Inter-professional National Agreement on the 8th March 2013, symbolic date of the International Women's Day. Several meetings have been set up yet and the French social partners have suggested 8 types of indicators⁶⁰ to prepare the negotiation. The intermediary project⁶¹, issued from the October 30th meeting, suggests a common definition of quality of working life: "a collective and individual feeling of well-being at work that encompasses a good atmosphere, company culture, interest of the work itself, working conditions, involvement and empowerment, equality and equity, room for error, recognition for work done". As such, the definition underlines the prominence of work organisation as a leverage to reconcile working and life conditions with collective performance. The project also takes up the different indicators suggested by the French Social Partners:

- Quality of commitment at all levels of the company,
- Quality of shared information on the company,
- Quality of labour and social relations,
- Quality of job content (job autonomy, variety of tasks, range of responsibilities, development of skills, possibilities for employees to express their opinions, meaningful tasks),
- Quality of the work environment (safety at work and a user-friendly workplace)
- Quality of work organisation (good leadership, company support in finding solutions to problems, role and support of line management, progress orientation, anticipation of workload to maximise work efficiency, becoming 'learning organisations', impacts of the introduction of new information and communication technologies, in particular the boundaries between work and personal time with the use of remote access to emails and the provision of work mobile phones, anticipation of the impact of changes and restructuring on employment and quality of working life)
- Opportunities for personal development
- Opportunities for work-life balance (the integration of parenthood into career and life planning, increased attention to the compatibility of professional and private life, working hours and work rhythm, access to transport and services)

Negotiations are still underway. They are not expected to bring a new law but to make the existing legislation more operational.

⁶⁰ Social partners agree on definition for quality of working life, August 2012, European working conditions Observatory

⁶¹ "Amélioration de la qualité de vie au travail et de l'égalité professionnelle" (projet du 30 octobre 2012) Document AEF n°6931 Publié le 30/10/2012



2. A typology of company practice

1. Different rationales, different approaches

The country back-grounds show diverse contexts that may explain different challenges and approaches to the “Quality of Work” issue. The common denominator is the bleak economy that orientates National policies and General public concerns toward saving or developing employment while Employers focus on gaining more flexibility and competitive advantage. As an example, a German representative company survey based on the IW-PersonalPanel shows that particularly large German companies rely on – besides working time flexibilisation – the expiration of fixed-term contracts and the dismissal of temporary agency workers as an instrument to overcome a shortfall of orders⁶². At the same time, companies adopt measures by which the likelihood is raised that employees can be retained and their motivation can be maintained. The survey results suggest that companies cultivate a management style that simultaneously aims to flexibilise and stabilize employment relations as well as work processes. Thus, flexibility and stability policies are rather complements than substitutes.

Then for the companies, the challenge is to minimize their cost notably by optimizing their staff. In practical terms, it means retaining key employees, maximizing staff engagement and motivation, minimizing new recruitment (and probably increasing work intensification). Employers have to consider their employees’ expectations in order to succeed in this difficult challenge, made more complex due to the economic recession and a rather low morale of the general public.

Differences in employees’ expectations are company specific but also depend on how they assess their personal situation and professional prospects in their own environment. Consequently, their “job satisfaction” assessment is also linked to the perception they may have regarding external elements such as their national labour market dynamism, their more or less protective legal context and to their cultural references.

In the case of **Italy**, the structure of the economy is characterized by small and medium companies. About 95% of the companies in the manufacturing and service sector in fact, have less than ten employees, and only 20% of the Italian workers are employed in companies with more than 250 employees (Istat, 2008). This situation does not allow the widespread introduction of internal welfare agreements, work-life balance and workplace facilities as well as investment in training. Nevertheless, companies naturally try to compensate for what is not provided by the Italian Social System.

In **the UK**, the global recession has provided more opportunities for flexible working: interestingly a trend to emerge from the recession is a shift towards flexible working in order to minimise redundancy⁶³. This has coincided with a wider cultural shift in the UK in attitudes towards work life balance and quality of work.

Different survey results show two main tendencies in **Germany**. First, a European Survey on Work-Life Balance reveals that increasing job satisfaction is one of the main motives prompting companies to implement or continue work-life balance initiatives⁶⁴. In addition, roughly 38% of workplaces in

⁶² Flüter-Hoffmann/Stettes, 2011

⁶³ <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/family-friendly-task-force-report.pdf>

⁶⁴ Seyda/Stettes, 2011; BMFSFJ, 2010

Germany can be characterized as exhibiting a particularly family-friendly corporate culture. A company can be classified as particularly family-friendly if the management ensures that work and family life can be reconciled as a matter of course, offers employees with family care commitments, the same development and promotion opportunities as staff without such commitments, and involves the employees or their representatives in communication and decision-making on work-life balance policies. Working time arrangements and flexible modes of work organization are the policies most commonly adopted to improve work-life balance. Part-time work, flexible daily and weekly working hours, and individually agreed working hours are the most important forms. Second, according to a recent analysis of the IW-PersonalPanel, a representative company survey dealing with HRM-issues, the proportion of companies having implemented at least one program to improve or incorporate the health status of their employees totals 68% in 2012. Nearly six in ten companies provide a health-orientated work environment. More than three in ten companies adopt a rehabilitation program for employees returning to work. According to a survey by the Initiative for Health and Work (iga) covering establishments with between 50 and 499 employees in 2009, 79% of the respondents stated that dealing with health issues beyond legislative requirements is an employer's responsibility⁶⁵. More than one third of the responding companies adopted a health management system. In nearly 90% of the establishments the adoption of a systematic approach to health management is driven by CSR-considerations. Slightly less than half of the sample reported that they did so in order to combat absenteeism. Only one in ten establishments aimed at improving the work atmosphere.

Lastly, people in **France** are notable for having very high expectations regarding the intrinsic interest of work and the possibility of self-fulfilment through work⁶⁶ (while 40% of the Danish and British declare work to be very important, they are 50% in Germany and 80% in France). For French people, one's professional situation is an important component of social status. As an illustration, when they meet for the first time, it is likely that the question 'what do you do for a living?' will be asked very quickly in the conversation.

Furthermore, the French protective and generous social and socioeconomic model has probably a strong impact too. This model still covers a large proportion of employees. Public servants and employees with a permanent job contract especially in companies with a headcount of more than 250 benefit from a highly secure job environment, often with peripheral social advantages (complementary health care, facilities such as financial help for childcare, holidays, access to libraries, canteen, discount purchasing prices...). For outsiders, the barrier to entry is high. Insiders are perfectly conscious of this and thus remain loyal to their employers, whatever the level of satisfaction they have with their work. The currently strained market labour amplifies this tendency. Paradoxically, some people find this "Gilded cage" situation extremely stressful as they consider they have no choice but to stay in their job, however dissatisfying the job itself may be.

However, this kind of company profile is not the only one. A recent ANACT⁶⁷ survey administered to a thousand employees indicated that 86% of them consider their working conditions to be rather good. These positive answers are more frequent in small organisations (less than 10 employees). Reasons for dissatisfaction are Social dialogue (Employer-Employee relations), the content of the work itself and how it is organized (coherent with the previous analysis), followed by career prospects, physical environment and work-life balance. These results converge with the specific "French sensitivity to stress" pointed out in the recent "trends in job quality in Europe"⁶⁸. This survey, based on the recent Eurofound Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) conducted in 2010 with 44 000 respondents in 27 countries, analyses the lack of "Social Support" (management and colleagues' support) as a main cause.

⁶⁵ Bechmann et al., 2011

⁶⁶ D. Meda, L. Davoine, Feb 2008, « Place et sens du travail en Europe : une singularité française ? », Centre d'Etudes de l'Emploi n° 96

⁶⁷ Anact - CSA, September 2012, « La place accordée à l'expression des salariés sur le travail et les conditions de travail dans l'entreprise »

⁶⁸ Eurofound 2012, Trends in job quality in Europe, Publication Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

A summary of the different company background is proposed below:

	Italy	UK	Germany	France
Unemployment	· A very high rate (>10%)	· A high rate (<10%)	· A low rate (>5.5%) ... but offset by a higher proportion of precarious jobs	· A very high rate (>10%)
Labour law context	· No minimum wage	· Minimum wage \cong 1200 Euros /month	· No minimum wage	· Minimum wage \cong 1400 Euros /month · A very protective permanent contract for employees
Labour market dynamic	· A rigid labour market	· A fluid labour market	· A dual labour market (permanent contract opposed to precarious jobs)	· A rigid labour market (the legal complexity and cost of layoffs make employers think twice about hiring)
Social perks & benefits for workers (*)	· Limited : only 20% of workers in large or medium size companies (> 250 employees)	· Generous : 52% of workers in large or medium size companies (> 250 employees)	· Generous : > 32% of workers in large or medium size companies (> 250 employees)	· Generous : > 50% of workers in large or medium size companies (> 250 employees)
Employees' expectations (**)	· Purchasing power · A family friendly employer	· Work - life balance · Equal opportunities for all	· Family-friendly employer · Gender equality	· A thriving work environment · Work- life balance · Gender Equality

(*): A complementary company health insurance, low-price access to leisure activities or to holidays resorts, a cafeteria or daily meal tickets, gift vouchers, are more frequent in large companies. A higher percentage of employees working in such companies prejudices that they are more likely to benefit for these facilities

(**): these employees' expectations are the main trends noted for each country. They are unavoidably simplistic but may help a better understanding of the national contexts

This diversity of contexts is reflected in the company practices observed in the different countries. However, the way employers consider how to increase job satisfaction is also company specific. Each employer's approach to the subject has to reflect not only their national background, but also their specific challenges and their employees' expectations. The options are many, not to say limitless.

Rather than presenting a string of company cases with no effort at classification, we thought it would be more helpful for readers if we attempted to group these cases into a small number of categories based on certain dominant characteristics. To do so, we propose the following two-level typology which allows us to analyse each company case in relation to two factors - on the one hand, the types of levers implemented, on the other hand the dominant strategy adopted.

2. A proposed two-level typology of company practice

■ The first level: the type of levers implemented

This first level concerns the different types of levers used and should allow us to cover a broad spectrum of practices. For this purpose, the classification relies on the “Trends in job quality” survey previously quoted. One of this survey’s objectives was to identify the factors correlated with well-being and health at work through a statistical analysis.

The result was the classification of factors into four categories (or fields) which can be considered both representative and comprehensive of the nature of levers being used:

- “Earnings” (level of income)
- “Prospects” (career path within or outside the company, converging with job security issues)
- “Working-time”
- “Intrinsic job quality”

Practices can however also be classified in relation to the dominant purpose (desired outcome, in response to employees’ expectations from the more fundamental to more peripheral ones) of the company’s approach:

- A “Facilitating” approach, focusing on work-life balance (for example through flexible time or support of parenting) or workplace facilities
- A “Working conditions” approach, focusing on providing a healthy, safe as well as an ergonomic work environment, in addition to satisfying work hours and schedules.
- A “Job satisfaction” approach, focused on organisational, managerial and HR practises that may have positive or negative impacts on job satisfaction
- A “Decent work” approach, addressing the issue of decent wages, decent work hours and schedule, social security and a predictable not to say a secured career path. This approach converges with a “quality of employment” focus, referring to precarious employment contracts such as temporary work, involuntary part-time work, agency work and indefinite student internship

Fields Objectives	Earnings	Working time	Intrinsic job quality	Prospects
Facilitation	· Financial aid for buying school books, · Discount card for shopping	· Workplace facilities (childcare, services...)	· A counselling and legal advice Unit · Health service (fitness, nutrition advice, ...)	· Visible mobility
Working conditions	· Health Program · Social Insurance	· Working time flexibility · Teleworking	· Ergonomic workstation · Pleasant and secure workplace environment · Health & safety program	· Fostered mobility · Learning organisation principles (Job rotation)
Job satisfaction	· Equality in wages	· Working hours adequacy (satisfying workload)	· Job autonomy · Variety of tasks · Range of responsibilities · Meaningful tasks	· Successful career path · Equality in career opportunities · Training
Decent job	· A minimum number of hours for involuntary part-time job · Global level of wages · Flexibility (wage reduction in exchange for job security)	· Anticipation of workload · Fractioned and glide working hours for involuntary part-time job	· Absence of harassment and violence at the workplace · Inclusion	· Secured career path

■ The second level: Company strategies

Beyond this classification of practices which is in itself quite useful, we observe that Company approaches to the subject tend to cut across certain of these categories. Hence, we propose the following four dominant strategic approaches that seem to encompass the different cases observed:

The four categories may be defined as following:

Fields	Earnings	Working time	Intrinsic job quality	Prospects
Objectives				
Facilitation				
Working conditions				
Job satisfaction				
Decent job				

The “Quality of Life” approach: the companies adopting this approach favour practices that facilitate the private life of their employees such as access to private services on the job or a contribution to family expenditures (from peripherals such as preferential discounts with partner shops, subsidizing children’s education, or access to a specific health insurance).

The “Health and safety” approach: the companies adopting this strategy may choose from or cover several approaches such as, investing in ergonomic workstations or a satisfying workplace environment, or trying to “educate” their employees through diverse health programs. In this category, companies adopt direct actions through ergonomists and experts.

The “Managerial” approach: this approach is favoured by companies that have analysed and identified that their employees’ concerns regarding quality of work need to be supported by managerial practices. The focus is mainly on work intensity, work complexity, level autonomy and changing job requirements but may include other issues such as safety and health.

The “Quality of employment” approach: this strategy concerns companies that have to deal with a lot of part-time or precarious contracts or have to resort to internal flexibility in order to save employment

Of course, as with any effort at classification, our typology has its limits. The above four categories may overlap and a company may well fall under several of them.

However our intention is simply to facilitate the reading and understanding of the diverse company cases described in the following chapter by presenting each one in light of the “dominant strategy” which characterizes it.



3. Illustrations of practice: Company cases

The company cases presented below have been classified according to the information provided (not necessarily exhaustive), and with the reserve previously mentioned concerning the limits of any typology. The positioning of each company in a category can of course be debated and we hope that readers from those companies will feel comfortable with our choice.

1. The "Quality of life" approach

Five out of 17 companies can be considered to have a dominant "Quality of life" approach. Most of them are Italian companies: Edison, Elica, Ferrero, Sandvik. One is from the United Kingdom, - Centrica.

■ Edison (Italy)

The company has adopted a multi-dimensional approach to ensure attention to a diversity of individual and family needs: family and child care, health care and well-being, time-saving facilities and discount prices for personal purchases. In 2009, Edison's policy was supported by their involvement in a network of large companies also interested in the well-being of their employees: the IEP Companies and People network. In 2012, Edison's efforts in favour of the promotion of well-being and quality of work and life contributed, among other things to the company being identified by the American magazine Fortune, as the first of the "Most Admired Companies" in Italy.

Edison is one of the most important Italian operators in the supply, production and sales of electric power and hydrocarbons (natural gas and crude oil). Founded in 1884, the company is the oldest European energy company and is now part of the EDF Group (Electricité de France). With about 3,200 people employed in ten major countries, the company is present directly or through its subsidiaries in Europe and Africa.

Edison's mission is to supply customers with energy and high-quality services, using the most efficient technologies but also paying attention to the respect of the environment and safety. The aim is not only to create value for its shareholders and ensure a long-term growth for the company, but also to contribute to the well-being and professional development of its employees and partners and to transfer innovation to the local community contributing in this way to its economic and social development. In order to improve on one hand, employee motivation, engagement and satisfaction at work, to attract and retain the best available human resources and to reduce turnover and absenteeism and on the other hand to strengthen the Corporate social responsibility, to enhance the company's employer brand and external image, the company launched in 2008 the program "Edison per te" (Edison for you).

The fundamental aim of the program is in fact improving the quality of life of the employees and also their job satisfaction, motivation, sense of belonging and team building. In order to identify which were the most important needs of its organizational population the company has organized several focus groups and submitted a survey to a representative sample of employees. At the end of this preliminary phase four areas of action were identified: family and child care, health care and well-being, time-saving facilities and purchases. More specifically, the welfare scheme applied in Edison includes:



<p>FAMILY & CHILD CARE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial support for school books of employees' children - Summer camps in Italy and abroad for employees' children - Pediatric and pedagogical online counselling - Information on facilities and services for families; online courses for kids; finding and booking babysitting - 25 hours of babysitting entirely paid by the company (Milan and Rome offices only) - Information on issues related to the management of elderly family members and on local private or public services - Scholarships for studying abroad for employees' children
<p>HEALTH & WELL-BEING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preventive medical check-up and prevention campaigns - Online help and support on health and wellbeing - Agreements with wellness centres, gyms and swimming pools and internal workshops on wellness and wellbeing (Milan, Rome and Bologna offices only)
<p>TIME SAVING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal and tax online counselling - Concierge services (bills payment, management of bureaucratic practices, etc.) (Milan, office only) - Ticketing service for events, shows, trips, etc (Milan, office only)
<p>PURCHASES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreements for discount public transport pass (Milan, office only) - Agreements for travel at discount prices - Agreements with several shops and business activities through the "Exte Card" - Temporary shops - Welfare network with other companies – called "companies and people" - offering discount to each other's employees on their products and services

In addition to statutory requirements, the company offers also pension and health care schemas and supplementary injury insurance. Edison allows also flexible working time and within the "Edison per te" program has improved the working conditions of its employees by renovating work spaces like offices and common spaces and also facilities like toilets and the canteen. The company has also given its employees the opportunity to benefit from a discount price on electricity and gas supply since 2009 (immediately after the Company entered into the residential market).

An important contributor to the success of the welfare plan was the internal communication campaign based on a structured mix (email, newsletter, posters, Intranet, blog, etc.) aimed at sharing information and also continuing and reinforcing the brand and the services awareness. The strong commitment and involvement of the management has been another success factor so far. In the Edison welfare experience the network dimension is also very important. In 2009, a group of large companies interested in the well-being of their employees founded the IEP Companies and People network. The aim is to promote and disseminate the use of organizational welfare as a strategic tool for businesses and also as a way for improving the quality of life in society in general. The network is a way to promote organizational well-being, bring together companies and institutions and transfer knowledge. Coordination and support are provided by a technical partner (Eudaimon SpA). The network activities are based on a forum, that constitutes an area where members can discuss and cooperate on activities, services, research, etc.; a working group with local government and institutions on issues useful for companies involved in the promotion of wellbeing; a platform where associated companies offer discounts to each other's employees on their products and services.

■ Sandvik (Italy):

This company has focused its HR policy on a plant-wide welfare agreement that encompasses work-life balance issues, equal opportunities for all, safety training and economic incentives. With the agreement, the company balances the demand for flexibility (overtime) with a number of work-life balance tools and economic incentives. The results reached with the agreement are the consequences of a positive and

constructive relationship with trade unions and social actors that the company wishes to continue and encourage in the future.

Sandvik is a Swedish engineering group with world-leading positions within three main areas:

- Tools for metal cutting in cemented carbide and high-speed steel as well as components in cemented carbide and other hard materials.
- Equipment and tools for the mining and construction industries.
- Products in advanced stainless materials, titanium, special alloys, metallic and ceramic resistance materials and process systems.

The company has worldwide business activities that are conducted in more than 130 countries with about 50.000 employees. The company is also present in Italy with about 761 employees.

In August 2012 the management of Sandvik Italy signed an internal agreement for the plant of Rovereto (Trentino) that introduces policies aiming at improving work-life balance, economic incentives and bonus, flexibility, industrial relations, environment and safety at work.

In terms of **work-life balance**, in case of medical check-up of the employee or of his/her children or parents the company will pay for the employee's absence. The company has also established a paid parental leave of three days at the birth of a child (including for female employees in addition to the maternity leave). Moreover, if the new father is not married, he can nevertheless benefit from eight days of marriage leave paid by the company as stipulated by the national collective bargaining. In this way the company takes a significant step towards acknowledging new forms of family. In addition, two years ago the company introduced the Equal opportunities statement and joined a psychological program promoted by ManagerItalia (an association of managers) for supporting new mothers and fathers.

With regard to **economic incentives** the agreement increases the monthly amount of the fixed bonus (Premio aziendale) while the variable bonus (Premio di risultato) is based on sales, productivity and quality up to a nominal value of € 1900 in 2014. The night shift premium has also been increased by 55% from 10 pm to 6 am and a loyalty bonus for employees who have spent 25 and 30 years working in the plant has been introduced.

Moreover, the company emphasizes the dimensions of environment and safety in the workplace thanks to training programs especially targeted at new employees.

■ Elica (Italy) ⁶⁹

The company has always invested a lot in its employees and considers them as a strategic asset for its growth. Indeed, in order to manage the transformation from a family run business to a corporate one in 2006, the company has considered that the three most important pillars of the change management process were: the internationalization of the company, the increase in the level of innovation and the development of a new brand meaningful not only for external customers but also for people working in the company. Thus, Elica has invested in internal marketing activities aimed at fostering the identification of the employees with the new organizational identity and increasing their wellbeing. If the dominant approach of Elica is "Quality of life", the company has also invested in "Health & Safety" by opening a fitness centre and offering access to medical check-up services.

Founded in 1970 by Ermanno Casoli in Fabriano, the Elica Group is the lead company of an industrial group that is world leader in the cooker hood market and it is also a European leader in the design, manufacture and sale of motors for central heating boilers for domestic use. Thanks to the attention to design, innovation and people care, the company has transformed the traditional image of the kitchen cooker hood to a design object.

The company has about 2800 employees, of which about 1350 in the headquarters in Fabriano, and is present in 6 countries (Italy, Poland, Mexico, Germany, India and China) with 9 plants. In Italy women represent 35% of the workforce and 10% of the management. Ninety nine per cent of the employees have a permanent contract and part-time is used by 4% of the

⁶⁹ Source : Lazazzara & Quacquarelli, 2011; Mazzucchelli, 2011

workforce (mainly women). The demographic composition is structured in this way: 10% under 30 years old, 46% between 30 and 44 years and 36% is over 45 years old.

After the premature passing of the founder in 1978, his son Francesco joined the Group and the company gradually started a developmental phase thanks to a growth strategy based on acquisitions and partnerships aimed at extending its presence in the global market and its activities in complementary sectors. The year 2006 represents a key step in the development of the group. Until then the company had been run as a family business but, when Elica was listed on the STAR segment of the Italian Stock Exchange, the company started a transition toward a highly structured corporate entity.

In order to meet the three goals of the change management process the Elica company welfare plan includes:

- Family leave: foreign workers are granted leave for a maximum of 30 days in order to visit their family in their native countries.
- Parental leave: paid time off work for fathers at the birth of a child.
- Maternity leave and childcare: in addition to statutory requirements mothers can take additional unpaid or paid days off from work and, according to company needs, can decide to change their working time.
- Baby bonus: employees have a cash gift for the birth of their first child.
- Wedding Bonus: employees receive a wedding gift if they get married.
- Alcoholism and drug addiction: unpaid medical leave for employees who need treatment for substance abuse.
- Advances of Severance Pay: in case of major expenses.
- Employees can enjoy a discount price on purchasing products of the Elica Group.

Moreover, in order to develop engagement and commitment, increase the sense of belonging and reinforce the link with the local environment the company has developed the Elica Life plan that provides a number of initiatives for employees and their families. On the one hand, Elica Giovani (Elica Youth) is a program oriented to promoting education for employees' children providing incentives for the purchase of school books or, with the program "I'm", offering English study tours. In this way, by fostering training and internationalization of young people, the company is also investing in its future workforce. On the other hand, Elica Card is a discount card that employees and their relatives can use in partner shops and business activities in the local area.

In terms of flexibility the company allows flexible working arrangements for its employees on daily basis, and also job sharing or remote working according to the requests of the employees for meeting their family needs. Moreover, in order to improve working conditions and physical and mental well-being, the headquarters was recently renovated. Moreover, the company has signed an agreement with a Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health for preventive medical check-ups for employees (project "XY") and in 2010 opened a fitness centre.

In partnership with the Ermanno Casoli Foundation, which aim is promoting contemporary art, architecture and design, and in order to develop innovation and creativity, the company has also realized a unique training model based on art and called "E-straordinario". The program involves a series of workshops focused on the link between art and industrial design where contemporary artists or performers become trainers. During these training sessions the artistic and innovation process are the lever for reinforcing team building and sharing values and metaphors associated to the Elica brand. People in fact, are directly involved in the creation of an art work that will be shown in the headquarters or in the plants.

In 2009 the company signed an integrative agreement with trade unions that concerns not only aspects related to industrial relations, communication systems, working time, working conditions, quality, environment, safety and the compensation strategy, but that explicitly involves the company welfare plan designed for improving the engagement, innovation, creativity, job satisfaction and well-being of its employees. Since then, and thanks to continuous

investment on human resources, each year the company receives a number of awards and recognitions.

■ Ferrero (Italy)

In the main countries where the company is located, in addition to what is established by law and national collective bargaining agreements, supplementary company agreements are signed in order to establish better employment conditions. This is possible also thanks to a positive approach in the field of industrial relations (with employees, union, union federations, etc.) aimed at constructive dialogue leading to satisfactory agreements. Company agreements are mainly concerned with regulating the work organization (e.g. hours of work, shifts, etc.), production bonuses and “company welfare”, as well as to improve the work-life balance for the benefit of employees. In Italy, the “Quality of life” approach is completed with a pro-active policy focused on health and occupational safety. The company is usually in the first positions in the ranking of best companies to work for in Italy and globally too

Ferrero is an Italian manufacturer of chocolate and other confectionery products with a strong and large presence in Europe and in other non-European countries both in terms of number of employees and business activities.

The group employs approximately 22.400 people around the world. About 43,6 per cent of employees are women and the company is committed to gradually increasing this percentage over the long term. Due to the peculiar nature of its products, which are mainly chocolate-based and therefore strongly influenced by seasonal trends in market demand, approximately 70% of production is concentrated in 7 to 8 months of the year (the winter period) and the company relies on seasonal labour, even if about 79 per cent of the employees are permanent. For the same reason, there is also a widespread use of vertical part-time at the Italian facilities for 8 months out of the year that allows balancing the company's seasonal needs with employees' individual needs.

The Group develops defined contribution retirement benefit plans for all employees of its subsidiaries and considers the protection of health and the mental and physical well-being of its employees to be an absolute priority. For this reason, on the occasion of the renewal of company agreements in Italy, Ferrero instituted a Work Safety Committee, which scheduled an “occupational safety week” and created a competition open to participation by all employees for the purpose of developing solutions aimed at improving safety conditions in the workplace. In July 2001, Ferrero signed a Company Complementary Agreement applied in the Italian facilities of the Group. The agreement is a continuation of a 2006 agreement and will be valid until 2014. The two main areas covered relate to work-life balance and a company welfare program.

With regard to the work-life balance area, measures are mainly oriented to workers who are parents and workers with medical treatment and assistance needs. In particular, they include:

- Providing part-time work to workers who are mothers and fathers until their child is 3 years of age
- Providing part-time work to workers with serious health problems or who need to care for ill family members
- Exemption from night shifts for workers who are mothers beyond the terms of the law
- The granting of two half days of paid leave for accompanying children on medical visits

Measures included in the company welfare program are:

- The provision of free medical and pediatric treatment service for children of employees up to 14 years of age
- The company grants one day of parental leave for fathers at the birth of a child
- The creation of summer camps and training programs at one of the Group's European facilities for children of employees who were selected on the basis of merit.
- The granting of a death indemnity amounting to 3 years of gross pay paid to the legitimate heirs of deceased workers in permanent employment,

- The granting of education subsidies for children of employees enrolled in universities as a contribution towards their first year university fees (up to the maximum of 800€)
- Initiation of a series of agreements with companies that provide utilities and consumer goods and services (e.g. energy, telephone, banks) for the purpose of obtaining discounted rates for employees.
- Workers with health problems may request the second anticipation of severance pay

Moreover, the company instituted a company nursery in Alba in 2009 that can accommodate eighty children, aged three months to three years, with discounted terms for employees.

In order to continue the projects already initiated, the company intends to promote a number of areas by 2015 like: fostering a “Culture of Diversity” especially with regard to intercultural topics and the management of elderly workers; supporting the occupational placement of workers with different abilities; enhancing existing youth employment programs; developing a Group welfare policy and expanding voluntary initiatives in occupational health and safety.

■ Centrica (UK)

Centrica have adopted a ‘smart working’ approach conciliating savings on overheads while improving employee flexibility, autonomy, freedom and discretion, thus making a potential impact on some of the principle constructs of job quality for their employees⁷⁰.

Centrica is an international integrated energy organization, headquartered in the UK; its brands include British Gas, British Gas Business, Dyno, Centrica Energy, Centrica Storage and Direct Energy. Centrica employs approximately 29,000 people in the UK and 4,000 overseas.

Project ‘Martini’ (later renamed Work:Wise)⁷¹ was established to identify and implement new working practices to take advantage of new and upgraded working facilities, which included state-of-the-art office facilities and investment in IT. The business case for flexible working was built on the idea of significant commercial property savings and promoting Centrica as an employer of choice. The naming of the project was designed to reflect a shift to ‘anytime, anyplace, anywhere’ working. In addition, the project’s strapline was that ‘work is something you do, not somewhere you go’.

The project delivered tools and support to enable employees to work effectively and efficiently wherever they happen to be. Flexible working policies were promulgated across the business to drive aligned behaviour; these included policies to support greater flexibility with regard to working hours and location.

For many, this included the flexibility to work from all offices, their home or remotely, thus reducing the reliance on a permanent desk. It also included greater flexibility with regard to working hours, removing traditional start, finish and break times.

Within the company, the project was seen as a great success in terms of improved engagement and supporting employees in managing work–life balance.

2. The Health & Safety approach

All of the companies in this category come from Germany: OKE Group, Pilkington, SAP and Sick. While all four have a dominant “Health & Safety” approach, some of them combine it with “Quality of Life” actions and a “Managerial approach” notably favouring internal mobility and employability.

⁷⁰ <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/report.php?id=452>

⁷¹ <http://www.cjpd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/64A02358-8993-4185-BEEB-9812A9175383/0/smartworking.pdf>

■ OKE Group (Germany)⁷²

OKE have adopted a pro-active health management policy, completed by specific levers to favour career development and thus to enlarge professional prospects for their employees. If the major still remains health management, the latter practice falls under the managerial category.

OKE is a manufacturer of synthetic products used by companies in the automotive sector and the furniture industry with around 1,000 employees, more than 400 of whom work at the main location in Hörstel (North-Rhine Westphalia). Highly motivated employees and a family-friendly corporate culture are considered to be crucial for the economic success of OKE. At the moment, the average age is 37.

A comprehensive HR-program has been adopted to develop and exploit the competences as well as to improve the health status of the employees:

- A company-owned fitness centre allows employees to maintain and improve their physical fitness. Effective instruction and supervision is ensured by professional staff
- Employees can make use of health checks and preventive measures supplied by external partners
- OKE organizes sports events for OKE staff that take place during leisure time
- Healthy food is provided by OKE's canteen. In addition, seminars can be attended that aim at the preparation of healthy meals at home
- OKE runs a company-owned crèche with a capacity of 30 children that can also be used in case of an occasional need
- A training centre allows the employees to update and increase their skills. In addition, advice concerning individual career development is provided

OKE reports that not only have lateness and absence from work diminished but also the commitment and the motivation of the employees have increased.

■ Pilkington (Germany)⁷³

Pilkington's health and safety approach focuses on ergonomic workstations to avoid musculoskeletal troubles. However, the fact that line managers and supervisors are involved qualifies it also as a managerial approach.

Pilkington Deutschland is a manufacturer of glass products with about 1,500 employees in Germany. It belongs to the NSG Group. Despite automation efforts many jobs in the production lines are still physically demanding. According to Pilkington, many employees report musculoskeletal health problems. Thus, a health promotion and prevention program was launched and tested at a site in Bavaria. It was eventually expanded to other locations in Germany.

The health promotion and prevention program was based on a health check of all employees. The program still consists of three components:

- an ergonomic analysis of the various workstations
- a workshop that informs about the functioning of musculoskeletal systems and the exposure to physically demanding task and their consequences
- a special working break when employees practice specific exercises by which the musculoskeletal system is stabilized

Line managers and supervisors receive specific training that qualifies them to instruct the exercises during the breaks. The health management is completed by regular employee surveys including feedbacks and proposals.

⁷² INQA

⁷³ INQA

Pilkington reports that absence from work has decreased. This applies also to complaints concerning problems arising from exposure to physically demanding positions.

■ Sick (Germany)⁷⁴

Sick has adopted a tailor-made HR-development concept oriented towards the various stages of the employees 'professional and private life course'. Their HR policy addresses the concern of longer working life for senior employees, by aiming at maintaining competencies and engagement among this population. In this respect, certain programs at Sick also address issues characterizing the 'Quality of Life' approach as well as the managerial approach. In recent years, SICK has regularly been named one of the "Best Companies to Work for in Germany" by the Great Place to Work Institute.

SICK is a manufacturer of sensors and sensor solutions for industrial application with a total of 5,800 employees, nearly 2,800 of whom work in Germany. The average age is 40 and SICK expects that in few years the group of employees aged 50 and above will represent the majority of staff. Thus, SICK developed a generation-overarching HR-development concept that is orientated towards the various stages of the employees' professional and private life course.

- Life-long learning is supported by the company-owned education and training centre (SICK-academy). A total of 80 internal and external trainers allow the provision of around 500 seminars and workshops annually. Once a year, the HR-department and line managers discuss personnel trends and requirements in a joint seminar and fix the content of training programs and workshops. In regularly held annual talks supervisors and employees agree on individual training measures (e.g. arising from career tracks issues). Mixed age working teams facilitate inter-generational knowledge transfer.
- Besides flexible daily working time, part-time, partial-retirement and job sharing, SICK has implemented a long-term working-time account. Employees can accumulate extra hours or convert monetary salary components into a working time deposit in order to fund a sabbatical or a flexible transition into retirement.
- To improve work-life balance, the company donated a larger amount to the municipality to allow the provision of childcare facilities, children can visit the company-owned canteen, can make use of homework assistance and specific training courses ranging from handling a computer to application training for older children. In addition, special family-orientated events and activities during leisure time are organized by the company.
- A preventive systematic approach to health management and safety at work is implemented. Sport-orientated activities complement information campaigns about health and nutrition issues, training course to strengthen the musculoskeletal system. In addition, shift-work is to be remodelled with regard to health issues of the affected workers.

According to SICK, staff surveys and feedback reports show a high acceptance of the various measures. In addition, employees are said to be open to learning and change.

■ SAP (Germany)⁷⁵

The focus on health is completed by a managerial approach that aims at encouraging career development, with strong principle of fairness in the background (notably gender and age equality), innovation and participative contribution favoured by a flat hierarchy. The selected programs in this company case could also be classified in the managerial approach category even if it does not appear to be the dominant approach.

SAP is one of the world's leading software companies with 55,000 employees in more than 120 countries. Employees' tasks are deemed complex and demanding so that well-being issues are considered crucial for performing the job adequately. Thus, besides flexible working time and

⁷⁴ Source: INQA, SICK, Great Place to Work Institute

⁷⁵ INQA, SAP, Great Place to Work Institute

work organization arrangements SAP supports its employees in various dimensions of a systematic approach to health management (“prevention replaces rehabilitation”):

- In the realm of work-life-balance both employees and managers can attend workshops that aim to raise awareness regarding work-life balance and stress issues.
- SAP offers a wide variety of sport and fitness activities and provides or makes available corresponding facilities. However, employees have to bear part of the costs themselves.
- Employees can check their health status and inform about health issues, such as the impact of private life style on health, online (“wellnesscheckpoint@SAP”). In addition, they can obtain an individualized report. This online-support complements the regular health check available for SAP’s employees.
- Two medical centres provide medical advice and assistance. In addition, they offer various health prevention measures, such as skin screenings, eye examinations and ultrasonic screenings, and are responsible for rehabilitation practices.

The various measures are highly accepted and frequently used by staff members. In particular, the wellnesscheckpoint@SAP is deemed very useful by many employees. Thus, SAP reports a high level of job satisfaction and a low quota of workers who are absent from work due to sickness. SAP concludes that informing the employees about health issues is as crucial as bundling the various activities into a coherent approach. In 2011, SAP was awarded the Corporate Health Award for exemplary global employee health management from BMAS.

SAP is also strongly engaged in fostering equal career opportunities for both male and female employees. Workshops provide instruments and hints for individual career development. In addition, a mentoring and supervision network for female employees has been established. Furthermore, regular staff surveys check the status of equal opportunities activities. They reveal that nearly 100% of employees feel treated fairly/decently. Flat hierarchies combined with the decentralization of authority and corporate culture fostering participation and innovation are deemed crucial for successfully providing equal opportunities.

In 2009, SAP was named one of the "Best Companies to Work for in Germany" by the Great Place to Work Institute for the fifth year running – ranking second in the category "Large Enterprises with More Than 5,000 Employees," with special awards for "Diversity" and "Development of Older Employees".

3. The Managerial approach

Six companies fall into this category, four out of the six being French: Pepsico France, Orange, IFPEN and Spie batignolles. Among these four examples, IFPEN and Spie batignolles illustrate the broadening of their approach from an initial “health and safety” focus to a more managerial “approach”. The other examples are from the UK (the Royal free Hospital) and from Germany (Hilti Group).

■ PepsiCo (France)⁷⁶

PepsiCo promotes the family spirit” and combines a “Health & safety” with a “managerial” approach. PepsiCo France ranked number 1 in the 2012 « Great Place to Work » survey.

For PepsiCo managing director, Armando Amselem, there is a direct correlation between well-being at work, employee engagement and motivation and the company performance (actually, PepsiCo France is a top performing subsidiary within the Group).

All of the 520 employees are encouraged to practice a sport at the workplace: fitness classes, sports events or competitions, access to sport facilities... employees in good condition are supposed to be less stressed and more productive. Equally important, these activities create

⁷⁶<http://www.lefigaro.fr/vie-bureau/2012/03/09/09008-20120309ARTFIG00724-qualite-de-vie-au-travail-pepsi-promeut-l-esprit-de-famille.php/>

opportunities for building strong and sincere social relationship between employees and their managers. This contributes to create a sort of family atmosphere that encourages mutual engagement and solidarity in the daily work.

Another notable initiative is the “no e-mails day” that is organized once a year for the time being. However, considering its success, it is likely to be implemented several times a year. This day encourages conviviality, human connections and building relationships.

To develop engagement and motivation, PepsiCo works on «Giving Meaning to performance». Since 2009, the company has created a training program in order to raise awareness on sustainable development. Three modules adapted to three levels of expertise are proposed to all the employees. Lastly, developing competencies and career perspectives is a key HR issue, through access to training or periodical interviews. The company aims at making their employees recognized and supported in their career path.

■ Hilti Deutschland – Hilti Group⁷⁷

Hilti Deutschland clearly consider their managers as crucial to achieve their ambitions: developing team work and capability for change, encouraging development and career prospects. This choice underlies a Quality of working life policy supported by leadership. In 2012, Hilti was named one of the "Best Companies to Work for in Germany" by the Great Place to Work Institute.

Hilti is one of the world leading manufacturers of equipment for the construction sector with about 2,000 employees in Germany. Hilti Deutschland pursues a comprehensive HR-management approach that aims at the consequent advancement and qualification of the individual employee through leadership. In addition, its HR-concept is based on a corporate culture that emphasises the significance of team work across the whole company.

In this respect, Hilti has put special emphasis on two areas: employee-orientated leadership and “our cultural journey”:

- Team managers are committed to the career advancement and qualification of every employee of his or her team. That means that team managers are expected to reserve a specific proportion of their working time for leadership. Employees are to be encouraged to rotate between different jobs or tasks.
- Once a year, employees attend a series of seminars and workshops where corporate values (team-work, effort for the company, integrity, and courage to change) and goals are communicated and their consequences for every team are discussed. This so-called “our cultural journey” is a several day event.
- A weekly survey allows employee to report their current mood and perceptions and is complemented by a comprehensive annual survey.

According to Hilti, 86% of staff members are proud to work for Hilti. In addition, due to the individualised employee development approach, 80% of managerial positions can be filled with internal candidates

■ France Telecom Orange (France)⁷⁸

The example of France Telecom Orange exemplifies the case of a company completely convinced that the quality of working life is a key lever for developing economic performance. Their corporate strategic plan integrates this conviction by favouring a managerial approach to improve work organisation, well-being and work-life balance. Progress is regularly evaluated to guide line managers while Senior Executive commitment is encouraged through an incentive system.

In February 2012, France Telecom Orange was, along with 39 other employers, awarded "Top Employer" by the CRF Institute.

⁷⁷ Source: INQA, Hilti Deutschland

⁷⁸ Source : France Telecom Orange

Among the factors contributing to this award was the importance given to "Social performance" in the company strategic plan "Conquests 2015" as well as its decision to base 1/3 of Senior Executive bonuses on a new indicator regarding social performance. It is the improvement of this indicator, rather than its absolute value, that is taken into account. The composite indicator is composed as follows:

- 50% is composed of HR indicators such as the rate of turnover within 3 years of recruitment, the rate of short-term absenteeism (< 5 consecutive days) etc.
- 50% is composed of the results of an employee survey carried out in all companies of the Group internationally, covering topics such as the quality of working life, recognition and rewards as well as managerial relationships.

With these measures, France Telecom Orange affirms its conviction that economic performance depends on social performance. To mark this turning point, the company established a New Social Contract in 2010, where it commits itself to develop measures to enhance:

- The quality of working life: physical conditions, services that facilitate every day work, flexibility in working hours so as to reconcile with personal constraints, and the possibility for tele-working. A specific agreement regarding work-life balance was signed in 2010.
- The quality of life through work i.e. improving the content, interest and nature of the work itself, primarily through a focus on the organization of work. This approach has been developed through an extensive dialogue within the company and with the help of recognized experts and researchers in this field. France Telecom Orange encourages employee and manager's initiatives as they are best placed to propose solutions that are smart, realistic and effective at the same time. These solutions are very well received since they are by construction consistent with the values, professional identity and representations of a "job well done" of the employees involved.

This commitment has resulted in an agreement on the organization of work that proposes guiding principles for developing well-being at work:

- the importance of focusing on the content and the meaning of work by identifying gaps between work as it has been prescribed (for example by a process), real work (as it plays out in reality) and work as it is perceived by employees, thus allowing employees to identify clearly with their job
- ensuring a level of autonomy that allows everyone to make their contribution to the team effort, while recognizing individual contributions
- a management style focused on supporting individuals, facilitating team work and learning, rather than control

The implementation is facilitated by an agreement on the methods of experimenting new work organizations and by training managers who are encouraged to exploit whatever leeway the organization allows them in order to adapt ways of working to the specific context of their team.

■ IFPEN (France)⁷⁹

Due to the nature of its activities, IFPEN could boast an already strong culture in physical and industrial risk management. The prevention of psychosocial risks followed on from this approach (use of the Karazek questionnaire during medical visits for example) and is currently based on a HR and HSE co-management approach. In addition the good quality of employer-employee relations, the consensus on issues relating to quality of work, the willingness to be a socially responsible company beyond legal obligations, and a managerial culture of empowerment have facilitated the implementation of a "Quality of work" company policy with a managerial approach.

⁷⁹ Source : IFPEN

IFPEN (IFP – Energies Nouvelles) is a public organization specialized in Research, Innovation and training in the fields of energy, transportation and environment. With an international scope, its core activity is technological innovation, from research through to industrial production.

Mid 2008, IFPEN's Executive Committee decided to put in place a pro-active policy regarding "well-being at work". Though the initial focus was psychosocial risks, the company's goals go further: an individual as well as a collective approach for all, the willingness to anticipate potential critical situations of stress or suffering at work, to develop collective performance and to ensure coherence between the corporate culture, the company image and its CSR positioning.

IFPEN's approach relies on several key success factors:

- A steering committee that comprises the two executive vice-presidents, the HR Executive and the CHSCT (Security committees) presidents of each site
- A monitoring committee including CHSCT members and their president, representatives from the Health at work Department, Communication, HR, Legal & Social Affairs, as well as four Managers. This committee helped develop the policy and actions and ensures the respect of the founding principles in the case of an evolution.
- Occupational risks committees within each division that monitor on a quarterly basis the psychosocial risk indicators and log preventive actions that will be later reported in the legal "Document Unique"
- The involvement of Management, as cornerstones of the system. Moreover, the managerial context is favourable, as the development of managerial competencies was initiated in 2005 through training or coaching, best practice exchange groups, support of HR etc.
- A company specific approach based on multidisciplinary contributions of staff and that approaches the issue of psychosocial risks by analyzing real work situations
- Customized training for 150 key players: ExCom members, Managers, the HR team, members of the CHSCT, health correspondents and employee representatives
- The development of psychosocial awareness among all the employees through a stage play followed by a debate with company representatives

As a result, psychosocial risks and stress at work are not a taboo topic and are seen in a constructive way and in a collective approach within the company. The role of managers is clearly identified.

The main achievements are both at the individual and collective levels:

- An alert management process, gives all employees the possibility to report a potentially "difficult situation". In all cases, the Manager concerned is involved and makes the decision to resolve the situation by him/herself, or to ask for the help of the ad'hoc Committee (including the CHSCT, the occupational doctor, a HR representative) according to the complexity of the situation
- A prevention process is conducted by Managers with their teams, through analysis workshops focusing on motivation as well as stress factors. The first workshops were run in 2011 and led to different operational actions (from a change in a too noisy open-plan office, to a specific training to help security correspondents to adopt a more diplomatic posture when interacting with other employees). Most Managers clearly identify the added value of such a dialogue with their team: the approach is now one of their managerial practices.

The results are encouraging:

- Psychosocial risks are not a HR affair: the whole company is involved.
- A quality audit validated the approach and the whole system
- After a significant number of "difficult cases" during the first year, only a dozen are reported per year, and 80% of them are resolved. Difficult situations are handled earlier than in the past

- After 2 years of practice, the situations emerging from the workshops seem to not reappear the following year
- Lastly, the system provides bottom-up information that has led to some company level decisions: for example, the creation of an “ad’hoc” change management team to accompany every project, the development of a corporate culture of positive recognition, a reflection on the use of ICT...

The challenge for the company in the future is to increase prevention and anticipation.

■ Spie batignolles (France)⁸⁰

Due to the nature of their activity, Spie batignolles have a long history of strong awareness on “health and safety” concerns. Before 2012, their case should have been classified in the “Health and safety” category. However, they have recently put significant emphasis on the role managers have to play in relation to these challenges.

Spie batignolles is a private and independent Group, belonging to its executives and employees after an LMBO realised in 2003 and the opening-up of its capital to the whole staff. The Group is a global player in construction and Public Works, with about 8,000 employees mainly located in France.

In this sector where occupational accidents are a real risk, the Group has been a pathfinder since the 2000’s when it adopted a “zero accident” policy. To support this policy, the position of Quality-Security-Environment Manager (QSE) was created. The QSE Managers’ contribute to centralizing, federating and sharing resources as well as coordinating the actions of Experts within the Business Units. This has led to the set-up of an Occupational Health & Safety network, the deployment of a training session encouraging the evolution of behaviours and finally the implementation of what is called the “Spie batignolles minutes”. These are periodic discussions between the Manager and his/her team regarding Health & Safety. In addition, the “zero accident objective” has become a motto.

Spie batignolles innovated by organising their first “Health Conference” in 2006. This event brought together a hundred people including representatives of the ExCom, of HR, QSE managers and occupational doctors. The conference addressed the challenge of extended working life, and the need to anticipate solutions to avoid an associated loss of work capability (prevention of musculoskeletal troubles, workstation adaptation, retraining programs...). The second “Health Conference” took place in 2008. The Health plan, established in coordination with the occupational doctors, was at the heart of the discussion which was structured around the following five topics:

- Musculoskeletal troubles
- Chemical risks
- Keeping older workers in employment till the age of retirement
- Stress at work
- Ecological and safe driving (4000 light vehicles within the company)

Each subsidiary chooses its priorities among these five topics. Their concerns are mainly focused on the first three, which represent significant challenges for the Group and are supported by specific internal experts. The overall result is positive: from 2000 to 2012, the number of occupational accidents has been divided by two.

A shift was made in 2012, following the Health Seminar which brought together the ExCom, the subsidiary Managing Directors, the occupational doctors, as well as representatives from HR and QSE. “Quality of working life” was identified as a potential medium for federating and supporting all of the Health & Safety issues, and the company wants to get all the managers (line managers and Business Units managers) involved in this company goal.

⁸⁰ Source : Spie batignolles

Thus, the third "Health Conference" run in January 2013 became the "Quality of working life" conference, with a broader audience of about 400 people. This one day-event was sponsored by the ExCom and organised around workshops and "best practices booths" hosted by the subsidiaries. Issues covered by the former Health Plan are still topical. They are completed by a focus on the quality of relationships at work (active listening, motivating, federating teams, fostering dialogue and discussion...). The success of this initiative will require highly operational actions in order to convince Managers to adapt their practices to these principles, notably by showing them how this social approach can help them to develop economic performance

■ The Royal Free Hospital NHS Trust (UK) ⁸¹

This case exemplifies the cases of companies that have implemented the HSE's management standards (there would appear to be a strong public over private sector bias in uptake) and have reported a range of benefits which help them to manage the risk stress poses to employee wellbeing.

The Royal Free is an acute Trust and teaching hospital, employing around 4,600 people, with approximately 900 beds and 700,000 patients a year from all over the world.

The Trust was at a pioneer in the implementation of the Management Standards which were introduced:

- To establish best practice and
- To implement an evidence-based framework for organisational level activities of their Occupational Health Psychology Service.

The Hospital reviewed organisational data quarterly to identify 'hot spots' which needed stress risk assessment interventions. Training on the Management Standards approach and the topic of work related stress was then provided to managers in these areas. Stress risk assessment questionnaires, based on the HSE Indicator Tool questions, were then completed by all members of staff using the Psychology Service.

As a result:

- A mediation service was set up to tackle the conflict, often the underlying factor in work stress.
- Training for managers on stress management was put in place. This explained the links between well-being and effectiveness, and helped managers think more systemically about organisational problems and the handling of difficult conversations with staff

The promotion of the link between well-being and risk outcomes also proved to be an important step because risk management is a high priority for NHS trusts.

The development of a Consultancy Service for managers, which assisted them to formulate a problem with regard to stress and evaluate a range of different solutions, helped to skill up managers and reduces referrals.

Increased employee commitment and increased well-being was reported. Individuals 'feel valued after using the Psychology Service and feel as if the organization is working on their behalf.

⁸¹ http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/casestudies/royal_freehospital.htm

4. The Quality of employment approach

Only two company cases fall into this category: one is from the UK while the other is from Germany.

■ KPMG (UK)

The KPMG example demonstrates that employees want the opportunity for more flexible working and its acceptability to both men and women. It also demonstrates the potential for improved work-life balance to emerge as a positive by-product of a corporate response to a bleak economic outlook. At the extreme, it could also have been interpreted as a “Quality of life” case.

KPMG UK is a leading provider of professional services with three main lines of business: audit, tax, and advisory services. As part of KPMG Europe LLP they are part of the largest integrated accounting firm in Europe.

January 2009 saw the launch of ‘Flexible Futures⁸²’ a strategy which aimed to position the company for the economic downturn whilst retaining an engaged workforce. All of their 11,000 partners and staff in the UK were asked to volunteer to change their terms and conditions of employment for a temporary period of 18 months. The new terms allowed them to ask staff to volunteer to:

- reduce their working week by one day, unpaid, or
- take between 4 and 12 weeks leave at 30% pay

Staff could volunteer for either or both of these.

The maximum salary loss in any calendar year was capped at 20%, and full benefits continued to be provided. Other safe guards such as notice periods were built in.

Following the launch, employees had three weeks to decide whether to volunteer for the scheme. KPMG emphasised the importance of clear communication to all staff during that time to reinforce for example that the company would continue to recognise the commitment to the organisation of those choosing to work flexibly and that their career development would continue.

By the end of the period, 85% of the workforce had signed up for one or both of the options offered. The second option was the most popular as employees could fit the time release in blocks to fit around school summer holidays or childcare. For some employees the cut in annual salary amounted to only 10 per cent, the average was 15 per cent.

There was also been an increase in sign-up to other flexible working options including annualised days and glide time (8am to 4pm or 10am to 6pm).

The changes provided the firm with a significant contingency against any further deterioration in the market, enabling them to retain talented staff and be ready for the upturn when it eventually occurs.

■ Manpower (Germany)⁸³

The Geza Program focuses on the health and safety of temporary and agency workers, working for the customer companies of Manpower. The program ensures that these workers benefit from the same advantages in terms of health management than permanent workers. As such, it is relevant to classify this company case in the “quality of employment” dominant approach, even if it could have also been classified in the “Health & Safety” category.

⁸² <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pdflibrary/472.pdf>

⁸³ INQA, Manpower

Manpower is an agency for temporary work with 1,200 service managers and annually 25,000 newly hired temporary workers in Germany. While a systematic approach to health management of core staff is more or less widespread it is rather exceptional for temporary workers. Since the 1990s Manpower's health management is based upon four pillars:

- preventive checkups and assignment-specific instructions
- a voluntary expanded health check
- the provision of a software to customer companies that can register and monitor occupational accidents
- an individual health card and the provision of a medical service centre where employees can ask for information and advice

Nonetheless, since 2001/2002 the incidence of occupational accidents and the volume of absence from work due to sickness was no longer decreasing and the likelihood of being involved in occupational accidents of temporary workers performing low- or unskilled task was significantly higher than that of skilled workers. Hence Manpower launched its health project "GEZA" (Gesunde Zeitarbeit = healthy temporary agency work) in 2008. The project has been supported by a health insurance agency, a training and education centre and the public agency for safety and health at work BAuA.

GEZA consists of:

- a training program including an online learning module through which service managers are qualified to conduct a constructive discussion with temporary workers about health & safety issues at work. The specific situation at the customer company, e.g. its health management, work organization, leadership principles or – if known – the observable behaviour of supervisors is incorporated into the discussion.
- an agreement between Manpower and its customer companies that stipulates a close cooperation in health & safety issues at work and facilitates the information flow to Manpower's service managers who conduct the discussions with the temporary workers to be assigned (so-called Hattersheimer Erklärung)
- a bonus program of the health insurance agency of which temporary agency workers can benefit
- Manpower reported that the project resulted in a considerable decrease in the total number of accidents at works per 1,000 employees (from 41 in 2008 to 31.5 in 2010). In addition, health status and motivation of temporary agency workers could be maintained, customer relations could be strengthened.

In 2012, Manpower was awarded the "top employer Germany certificate", which is issued by the CRF Institute. Criteria for receiving the award were monetary benefits, non-monetary benefits and work-life balance, training and qualification, career development and corporate culture.

Conclusions

Conclusions are first drawn at the level of each country with a view to highlighting the coherence between the company cases and their mother country background. We then, draw some general conclusions and propose a structured approach to addressing the subject of "Quality of Work".

■ Italy

The increase in the unemployment rate that has been characterizing the Italian labour market in recent years, accompanied by the generally critical economic situation, has shifted the attention to cost-saving and restructuring rather than well-being and quality of work. Restructuring measures, often involve downsizing or rightsizing policies and, consequently, policies and initiatives that rely on financial resources run the risk of being marginalized or simply stopped during periods of cutbacks (Zeffane and Mayo, 1994; Cunningham, 2000). Therefore, in the current economic situation investments in well-being and quality of work are largely abandoned, and it seems that the topic is not of primary concern to Italian employers or the government at this time.

Furthermore, the structure of the Italian economy, with a majority of small and medium companies, hinders widespread investments in company welfare agreements, work-life balance, workplace facilities and training.

The four Italian case studies described in the previous chapter are all examples of actions undertaken by large companies that have understood the importance of meeting individual needs in order to improve job satisfaction, motivation and sense of belonging, as well as better managing work-life balance. The focus in all four cases is work-life balance, especially with regard to family. Due to the cultural characteristics of Italy that values the concept of family, but also insufficient state systems, we can argue that these companies have tried to plug the gap of a welfare system that is not very supportive of family needs. In order to do so, companies have established networks with other companies as well as with local partners (both local government and local business activities) in order to reinforce the outcome and produce a general well-being in the local community.

■ United Kingdom

A range of policy bodies and social partners in the UK are concerned with defining 'good work' and monitoring the quality of working life, although this is arguably not necessarily a topic of central concern to UK employers or the government at this time. As regards government policy, it is somewhat inevitable that keeping unemployment to a minimum occupies centre stage in a recession. However the UKCES⁸⁴ have commented that the government 'should now be trying to support the positive trends in job quality and to halt and reverse the deleterious trends' and have highlighted job security as a priority. The trend towards more precarious forms of employment in the UK and the rise of 'underemployment' presents a challenge in this respect.

Regarding more general aspects of wellbeing the current coalition government appear to be moving towards non-legislative interventions to improve management of health issues of work. The Public Health Responsibility Deal⁸⁵ published in March 2011, represents a way for organisations to commit themselves to public health improvement. This includes core commitments such as 'we will actively support our workforce to lead healthier lives' and there are a range of pledges for specific health

⁸⁴ <http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/praxis-1-job-quality-in-britain.pdf>

⁸⁵ <http://responsibilitydeal.dh.gov.uk/>

areas. In a recent Deal campaign, employers have been urged to offer flexible working to support mental health needs⁸⁶.

Among employers there is arguably better awareness of aspects of working life that have a bearing on wellbeing at work (or, more precisely, environmental factors with the potential to compromise this) than job quality. This arises in part from their responsibilities under the Health and Safety Act. Also, it should be noted that most employers are concerned with controlling physical risks in the work environment where there is a real threat of enforcement than psychosocial risks to wellbeing where there is not.

The case studies illustrate actions some larger employers have taken independently. These would all appear to represent a step in the right direction towards improved job quality. Employers have shown increased interest in the quality of working life in recent years, in recognition that this has implications for worker satisfaction, motivation and commitment and, ultimately, their effectiveness, quality of output and productivity⁸⁷. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has also been a driver for improvements in working practise with many larger organisations prepared to go beyond minimum legal requirements to become an “employer of choice”⁸⁸.

While the extent of take up of HSE’s Standards nationally is unclear, the CBI reports that policies on dealing with stress, if not ubiquitous, are far more widespread: In their latest absence and workplace health survey, almost nine out of ten organisations taking part in the survey operated a formal or informal stress management policy for their employees⁸⁹. Also a recent report from Acas noted that while some employers prefer ‘resilience building’ to explore mental health issues at work, many of the interventions to develop this have their foundations in stress management and wellbeing models⁹⁰.

However there is still significant debate regarding the relationship between employer interventions to improve working practises and quality of working life from the employee perspective. Also the interplay between subjective aspects of working life such as employee engagement and more objective outcomes such as health status remains poorly understood.

■ Germany

The related topics of quality of work and well-being at work/job satisfaction rank relatively high both on the political and the employer's agenda. While the focus of the public debate has mainly been on the decent jobs issues, such as precarious work in particular, companies strive to increase well-being or job satisfaction by aligning the organizational goals with the individual interests of the employees in other fields. From a company perspective, adequate earnings are mainly considered as a factor that is only a precondition for performing tasks and jobs well than an issue which is particularly emphasized when quality of work should be increased. This is in line with personnel economic research that stipulates that wages are only considered as a “hygiene-factor”.

Survey results suggest that German companies strive to balance the company’s need for flexibility with the employees’ preferences for stability. Furthermore, demographic change may put more weight on the latter as companies aspire to be attractive and, thus, to recruit and retain a motivated skilled workforce. Thus, flexibility and stability policies are rather complements than substitutes. In this respect, evidence on the micro-level confirms the evidence on the macro-level.

The case studies exemplify the wide variety of policies and approaches by which companies aim to increase well-being or job satisfaction at work. In this respect, they don’t represent a typical German focus but they reveal that every component of the analysis framework may be covered depending on the specific conditions that prevail at every firm. Furthermore, the policies and programs described in

⁸⁶ <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/06/mentalhealthpledge/>

⁸⁷ <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/network/members/library/452.pdf>

⁸⁸ http://www.theworkfoundation.com/assets/docs/good_work_final3.pdf

⁸⁹ CBI (2011), Healthy returns? Absence and workplace health survey.

⁹⁰ http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/7/k/The_future_of_health_and_wellbeing_in_the_workplace.pdf

the case studies don't represent the complete range of HR-policies of the listed companies by which employees' well-being, job satisfaction or commitment may be favourably affected.

■ France

According to the EWCS survey "Trends in job quality in Europe"⁹¹, French employees are largely dissatisfied in relation to their work. The Institut Montaigne survey conducted by Etienne Wasmer frames the hypothesis that the French feel more stressed and unsatisfied at work despite undeniable advantages⁹², due to a deficit of dialogue between the different actors within the company, a deficit of voluntary mobility and stressful management practices. This analyse converges with the "Gilded cage effect" already pointed out notably in relation to public and large companies, as well as with the higher sensitivity to work dissatisfaction that seems to prevail in the French culture. Above all, it is coherent with the fact that most French companies are likely to choose a managerial approach to develop the quality of working life of their employees, as illustrated by the French company cases.

More generally, if the trigger for some companies was psychosocial risks and/or the legal obligation to negotiate and reach an agreement, their final goal goes beyond such concerns. The managerial approach remains prevalent as it allows a broad approach tied in to achieving other company objectives. For example, achieving both social and economic performance (example of France Telecom Orange) is deemed more plausible with a managerial approach than with only facilitation measures. And the implementation of a safety policy is much more likely to succeed if it is supported by managers rather than only experts (example of Spie batignolles). Whatever the final goals, the managerial approach to Quality of Work seems to be a preferable lever for French companies.

■ General conclusion

Unemployment and precarious jobs concerns are prevalent and may occlude the issue of "Quality of working life" in government policies or in its representation and expression among stakeholders'. However, in reality this is a topical issue for companies in a bleak environment where the general public's morale is low. More than ever, employers need to maintain their employees 'engagement', a key factor to stay competitive, to retain talents and to ensure enough flexibility to face adverse economic conditions.

As a matter of fact, the company cases show that quality of work is a consideration for companies in each country. Of course, to what extent it is a primary concern for them depends on their priorities, constraints and perspectives. Then the choice for the more relevant levers derives from a good analysis of the employees' needs and expectations both in the company context and the national background, balanced with the company goals and means. What is the target? What can be offered that could make a difference for the employees compared to what they already have, to what other companies offer? How could it serve or not the company goals now and in the future? What implementations are realistic or not?

The national background is an important element to consider for answering these structuring questions. An Italian or a German employee will be more sensitive to a family-friendly approach; an English one will appreciate more flexibility to achieve work-life balance while the French will have strong expectations regarding work organisation and managerial practices. This study highlights the fact that preferences from one country to another are not only explained by the cultural dimension but also by other environmental characteristics such as the legal context or the labour market. Nonetheless, the company context remains crucial: in the same country, corporate culture, managerial or economic situations may lead to very different choices.

It is because KPMG UK had to face a slump in turn over and wanted to keep their competencies that they implemented their "flexible futures" plan instead of laying off. They wanted to avoid losing key resources that would be difficult to recruit in a context of market recovery, as well as a loss in motivation of those staying in the company. It is unlikely that their first intention was to give more

⁹¹ Eurofound 2012, Trends in job quality in Europe, Publication Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

⁹² Wasmer, E, (April 2012) « Insatisfaction au travail, sortir de l'exception française », Institut Montaigne

time flexibility to their employees. When SICK (Germany) conceived their quality of working life policy, they wanted to anticipate the ageing of their employees, which was a crucial dimension to take into account in their strategy. For this company, it was obvious that subsidizing some personal expenditure would have pleased their employees but would not have served the company strategy or constraints. On the contrary, these latter measures were selected by the employees of EDISON, consulted through focus groups by the company, who mainly wanted to develop loyalty, the sense of belonging and job satisfaction. EDISON's strategy was to match the benefits to employee expectations, not to target another specific goal. As a last example, the IFPEN strategy was to accompany their change of status and activity (previously exclusively focused on oil energy and now on new energies) in order to succeed in their future challenges. The change management constraints have contributed to encourage the company to reinforce actions already initiated and to integrate them in a more pro-active company policy.

Then, what can we learn from this and from the other company cases?

First, we can discern a four-step approach to defining and implementing a “quality of working life policy” with some key questions aimed at guiding your choices:

— **First step: employee expectations**

- According to the national environment, what are my employees likely to be most sensitive to?
- According to the profile of the company, what may be their expectations?
- Are my employees a homogenous group or are there diverse expectations of different employee groups?

— **Second step: the company needs**

- What are the company challenges and strategy?
- To what extent can a “quality of working life policy” serve this strategy?
- What are the connections with current HR policies and practices?

— **Third step: the company strategic approach**

The answer obviously derives from the findings of the two first steps and may be inspired from the strategic approaches typology suggested in this report.

— **Fourth step: the choice of relevant levers**

The classification of possible levers provided in Chapter 2 may be useful to identify the levers which are relevant to the chosen strategic approach. The condition for success is not only to ensure coherence with the choices made by the company in terms of desired outcomes and strategy, but also to be differentiating enough to bring real added value.

Of course, this method does not prejudice any preferable solution. Each company is unique and will deal with the issue differently, with a wide range of possible scenarios as illustrated by the large variety of the company cases.

Secondly, at the risk of provoking, none of the companies observed in this survey have decided to invest in a “Quality of work” policy only for CSR⁹³ purposes or in order to comply with trends. Their questions were more about “to what extent such a policy could bring answers to the company challenges and strategic goals, and on which conditions? For most of them, the challenge was to maximize job satisfaction in order to ensure retention, attractiveness and productivity through motivation and engagement. As such, quality of working life is seen as a means to reconcile well-being at work with the necessary performance expected, a critical challenge in the current unfavourable economic environment. For other, “quality of work” is seen as a strategic HR policy in order to deal with specific challenges (ageing for Sick, “zero accident” ambition for Spie batignolles, retaining competencies in a recession context for KPMG, managing changes for IFPEN...).

⁹³ Corporate Social Responsibility

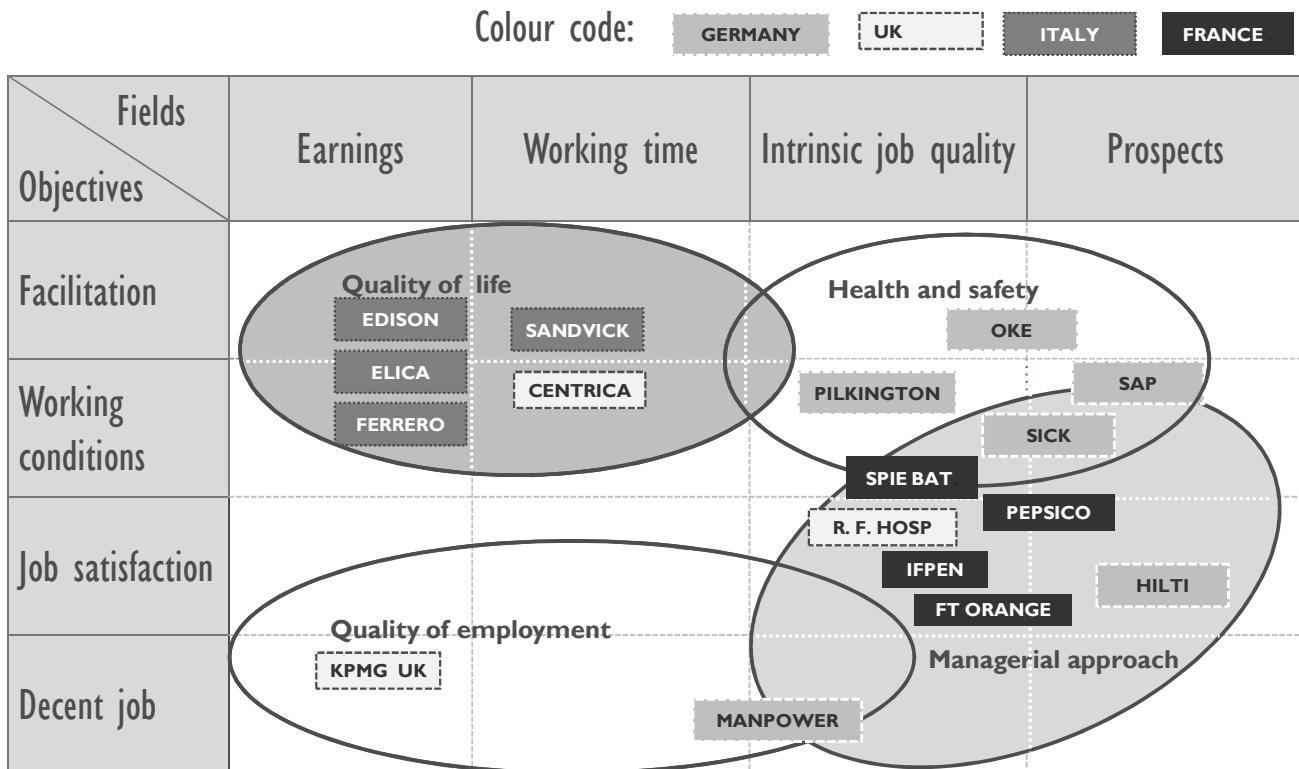
This viewpoint is a strong argument which demonstrates that “quality of work” is not only a “HR affair” but a crucial component of the company strategy. As such, the different standpoints developed in the introduction that would suggest that there is not one but at least three different topics, - quality of job, quality of working life and decent job, converge toward one conclusion: “Quality of work” is part of the company strategy, explicitly (such as France Telecom Orange) or not. In all cases, it provides a real opportunity for HR to innovate and demonstrate their contribution to corporate performance.

Lastly, we would like to draw our readers’ attention to a possibly sensitive point. Most of the cases illustrate the increasing role given to line managers: developing “quality of work” is becoming a crucial managerial competency and a strong expectation, for which they are not particularly prepared and that contributes to overload them with an already wide range of missions. What is more, managers may not have the means and leeway to cope with this new challenge. Companies should not forget that “Quality of work” is addressed to all the employees in the company, including line and intermediary managers! As a consequence, they should pay attention to engaging with their managers, a particularly exposed population while implementing a quality of work policy using a managerial approach.

Appendix: a mapping of the company cases

As already mentioned in chapter 3, the company cases have been classified according to the information provided (not necessarily exhaustive), and with the limits previously mentioned concerning the bias of any typology.

Taking into account these constraints, the mapping aims at presenting a graphical representation of the company cases.



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