

## **Social values, working time and the future of society\*<sup>1</sup>**

Bogdan Voicu

*Research Institute for Quality of Life*

*Romanian Academy of Science, Bucharest*

[bogdan@iccv.ro](mailto:bogdan@iccv.ro)

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Several ongoing challenges seem to decisively change the traditional way of life of the humankind. Work is one of the domains that, in the near future, might become quite different from what we use to recognize as a standard for centuries. One of the most frequent fears that people describe when imagining the future is the one that the machines, highly productive, would fully replace most of the human employees, generating mass unemployment.

However, humankind has some regulatory mechanisms that may alleviate the respective danger. Describing how one of these mechanisms works in Europe is the main objective of this paper. I am addressing the changing of social values, which ensure on long and medium run a certain balance between the disruptive forces that may affect work. The argument answers to a general question related to the risk that technological progress will finally provoke mass unemployment. I reject such a risk due to the ongoing changes of the social representations about the salience of work in everyday life.

Two very interesting findings come to my mind when discussing about the role of work in the future society in Europe: the shrinking working time and the decreasing work salience. Both are apparently intriguing and allow learning about how the traditional work-arrangements started to definitively die. They go far beyond the end of history, and legitimate the idea of a new dynamic social equilibrium.

The very general context where these two processes occur, is given by a multi-chromatic Europe, a puzzle which combine societies which develop different levels of modernity. The North-South and the East-West axes oppose post-industrial societies and rather traditional countries or regions. Many of the latter ones remember the features that part of the continent had few-decades ago. Cross-country comparisons may help from this point of view to better understand not only the present state, but also the social dynamics of the studied processes.

There are few others current processes that may help in understanding the role of work in the future society. They are described through their main features, as depicted from existing literature, in the first section of the paper. Then, I approach the two intriguing changes that I have already mentioned – the decreasing working hour and importance of work. I use several regression models to test if the decreasing importance of work has any effect on the working hours. A short listing of the new forms of work follows, preceding the final discussion, about the future of the society, from the perspective of what will happen to work. The methodology consists in rather using arguments from the existing literature, as well as aggregated data (at societal level) to build a possible scenario for what might happen in Europe, in the next few decades.

### **Background processes and literature**

There are several ways to approach the current debate around the work and its relation to life.

One of them originates in *the study of values*. Value orientations towards work may be treated as part of the more general mix of value orientations (Schwartz, 1999; Inglehart, 1997; Haagenars et al., 2003; Elizur & Sagre, 1999; Ros et al., 1999; etc.). Both for individuals and societies, the structure of value patterns is consistent, and work is one of the life domain in which

the general orientation towards a certain set of values leaves its impact. Changes of values in all the other domains affect the changes of work values, the reciprocal being also true. The modernization and post modernization theories include some consensus on the dynamics of work-related values: first, the late modernity comes with a higher interest for intrinsic than for extrinsic motivations of work (Ester et al., 2006). Direct gratifications, such as the pleasure to work and the personal development tend to get higher relevance, while wage and job security decrease their importance as incentives in selecting a job. Second, individuals generally become more and more interested of self-enhancement and self-expressing, which generates a supplementary need for free time, which may be devoted to leisure activities.

An *observation coming from the economics* (noted by MacInnes, 2006: 239) led to a similar direction with regard to the time use. Becker (1965) pointed out long time ago that people with higher incomes put more value on time, since affluence is increasing what can be done with it. Material security offer individuals the opportunity to use their resources in various ways and since the duration of life is naturally limited, every single hour become more and more important. Reynolds & Aletraris (2006) and Stier & Lewin-Epstein (2003) make similar remarks: people with incomes, education, qualifications put more pressure for less working-hours.

The *work-life balance debate* (WLB) provides another entrance to the topic. WLB focuses mainly on the new models of family, which shifted from the male breadwinner-system to dual earners and single-parent families, within the context of demographic changes due to low fertility and population ageing (MacInnes, 2006; Leitner & Wroblewski; Roe & Ester, 1999; Hildebrandt, Littig, 2006). The argument is that the current tensions between work and life are due to the fact that busy, overworking parents can not deal with childcare and helping elderly dependent relatives, which number is always increasing due to the increasing age expectancy. However, the “life” is vaguely defined and includes domestic duties, such as childcare, elderly care, or housework, all together with leisure activities, personal development or social activities. Restraining its meaning to parenting may be misleading. Recent studies (MacInnes, 2006; Thompson & Bunderson, 2001) reconsider such a view, discussing rather about time allocation and the “work-nonwork conflict”. There are evidences that the employees without commitments are also stressing the need for more leisure time and less working hours, having more capacity to renounce to higher incomes or career development for an increase of the free time (MacInnes, 2005; 2006).

Various studies show that most of the active people in Western Europe and North America, but also in the Central and Eastern Europe are *overworked* (Reynolds & Aletraris, 2006; Schor, 1991; Golden, 2006; Stier & Lewin-Epstein, 2003; Reynolds, 2003; van Echtelt, 2007; Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Saraceno et al, 2005). Most of the employee use to claim that they work more hours than they prefer. The hour mismatch determines negative effects both for the employees, but also for the employer, jeopardizing the cohesion, loyalty, and efficiency of the workforce, decreasing self-esteem, increasing stress, producing higher risks of work-family conflicts (Reynolds & Aletraris, 2006).

This different three different perspectives on work and life constitute the background for two ongoing transformations that I consider relevant for deep changes in the next decades: the continuing shrinking working hours, and the decline of the perceived importance of work. I briefly describe both of them in the next sections.

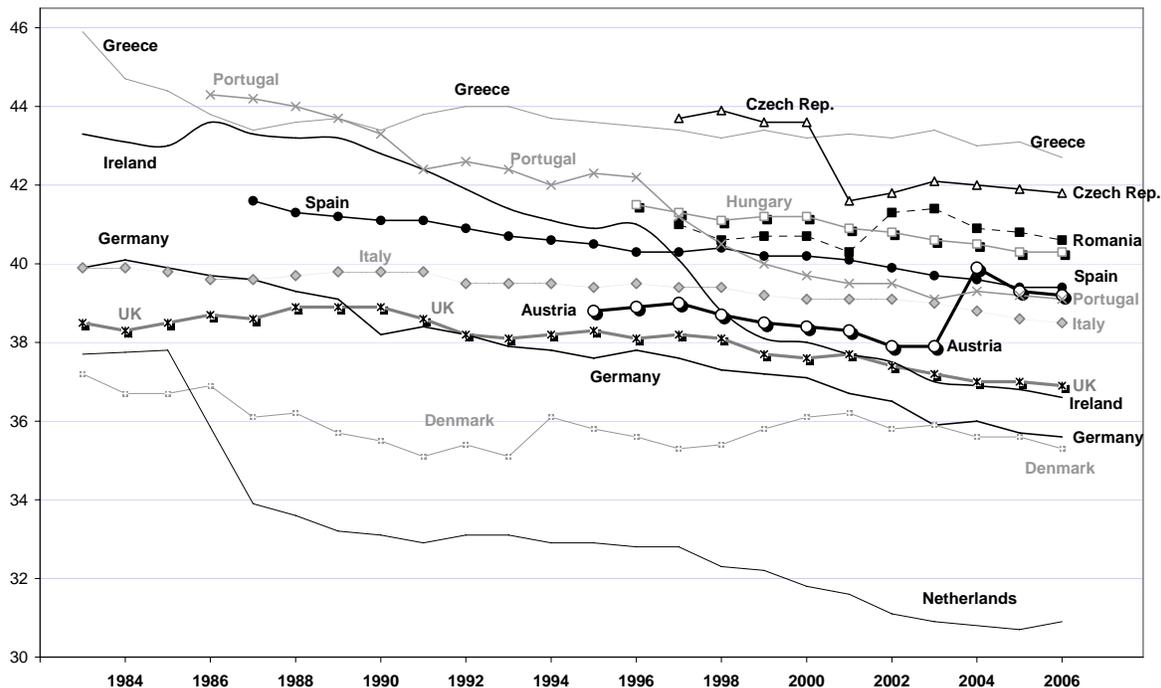
**Ongoing transformations: The shrinking working time**

The first process is related with the time that the average active citizen uses for working. A forty hours working week would occupy about a quarter of the total time that a person has. This is definitively more than any other activity, except for sleeping. From here one may easily depict the humongous importance of the working time.

During the last hundred years, there was a continuous shrinking of the working time. First, the labour unions gained the right to a reduced eight hours working day. Than, the six-days working week (i.e. 48 hours of working per week) reduced to only some five-day program. Bonuses of free time, extra-payments or extra-holidays for supplementary hours added, accompanying the more flexible hours and the wide-spreading of the part time employment. The latter ones happened rather in the Western part of Europe, while the East experienced a different pattern, as I will detail later in this paper.

The context that allowed the above-described process is shaped by technological development, mass access to higher education, and a correspondent increase of productivity. This enabled the companies to produce more with lower and lower costs of time.

**Figure 1. Dynamics of the average weekly working hours (main job), in selected European countries, 1983-2006**



Source: Eurostat, online data base, lfsa\_euw table: „Average number of usual weekly hours of work in main job, by sex, professional status, full-time/part-time and economic activity (hours)”, extracted on 25 of July 2007.

The shrinking of the working time was not the same and at the same pace all over Europe (see Figure 1). Except Austria, all countries experienced the process, but the North transformed faster than the more traditional South. In the same time, Eastern Europe, marked by the communist

rule, also changed slower. Here, the technological gap and the economic difficulties has not allowed the shrinking of the working time at the same level as in the better developed societies. The differences are obvious (see The working hours decrease might be gendered. If analysing the dynamics of the indicators for men, one may notice that the decrease is smaller. This may be due to the transformation of certain jobs from the informal economy to the formal one, and to renouncing to moonlighting. However, it is likely that part of the current shrinkage of the working time is due to the increasing presence of women on the labour market, in jobs which are less time-consuming.

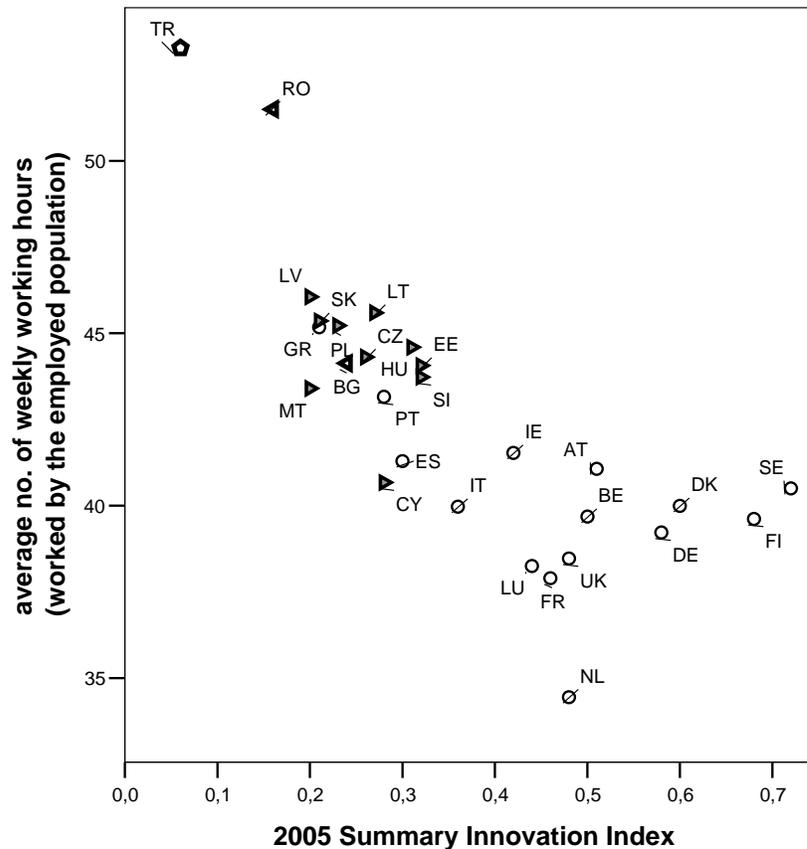
Figure 2). While the Western citizens discuss about part time and flexible office hours, many of the inhabitants from the ex-communist countries try to overcome the lower incomes by opting for having second jobs (Chavdarova, 1994; Rose, 1994). This adds to the older technology, which requires more working time for fulfilling the same tasks, and to the higher share of the employment in the farming sector.

The working hours decrease might be gendered. If analysing the dynamics of the indicators for men, one may notice that the decrease is smaller<sup>2</sup>. This may be due to the transformation of certain jobs from the informal economy to the formal one, and to renouncing to moonlighting. However, it is likely that part of the current shrinkage of the working time is due to the increasing presence of women on the labour market, in jobs which are less time-consuming.

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<sup>2</sup> The data invoked here, but not shown, come from the Eurostat online data base, and include only the main job.

**Figure 2. The relation between the technological development and the time spent at work (main and second job)**



Notes: The Summary Innovation Index, computed by the European Innovation Scoreboard<sup>3</sup>, is a good indicator for the level of technologic development of the European societies. The working hours are computed using EQLS 2003, and include the time spent both in main and in the second job<sup>4</sup>.

One should also note the support of the decision makers for reducing the working hours, with the explicit aim to reconcile work and family life, and to increase fertility. Shrinkage of the working time is also a top priority of the European employees<sup>5</sup>, as the Establishment Survey on Working Time 2004-2005 shows (Riedman et al., 2006: 49-50).

Additionally, other shrinkage of working occurs. In the private environment of home, housework becomes less and less demanding. Laundry machines, tremble dryers, vacuum cleaners, dish-washing machines, less dust due to better urban planning, better appliances, which do not require supervision, and which do not broke so often, constantly decreased over the past few decades the time that people spend for domestic works. The same differences between East and West provide the picture of a changing world: the higher the technological development index, the less time the people from the respective country spend in average for housework (Voicu et al., 2006; 2007). Those who spend more time working, also have a higher load of housework, and declare more frequently to experience work-life conflicts (Voicu, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> See Hollander and Arundel (2006).

<sup>4</sup> The European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) 2003 data set.

<sup>5</sup> Actually this refers only to the employees from the companies with more than 10 employees, the only ones which were part of the sample of the mentioned survey. However, probably the rest of the European active population is similar in this regard.

### Ongoing transformations: Changing work ethos

No matter when and where, work used to be one of the main values that societies emphasised. The need to fulfil basic needs was, still is, and probably will always be related to working. Working means producing things, gaining money, securing food, housing, comfort, quality of life etc. In the early age of modernity work continued to be central to everyday life, not only as share of available time, but also in the way that the individuals imagined the functioning of the good society. Basic needs were derived from the output of the intense work, and people considered work as being very important per se.

However, the technological progress, and the increasing of productivity made easier and easier to fulfil the basic needs. Gaining more money continued to be very important, but, starting with a certain point, the marginal utility of the supplementary units sharply decreased. This means that, in the late modernity, people find less incentives to work so much, preferring to derive gratifications from other different activities. Time became more and more important, and its uses have known a high diversification. Leisure activities, meeting friends, self-expressing tend to become top incentives for more and more people. Hard working gradually loses from its salience among the most important values, even if it keeps one of the top positions.

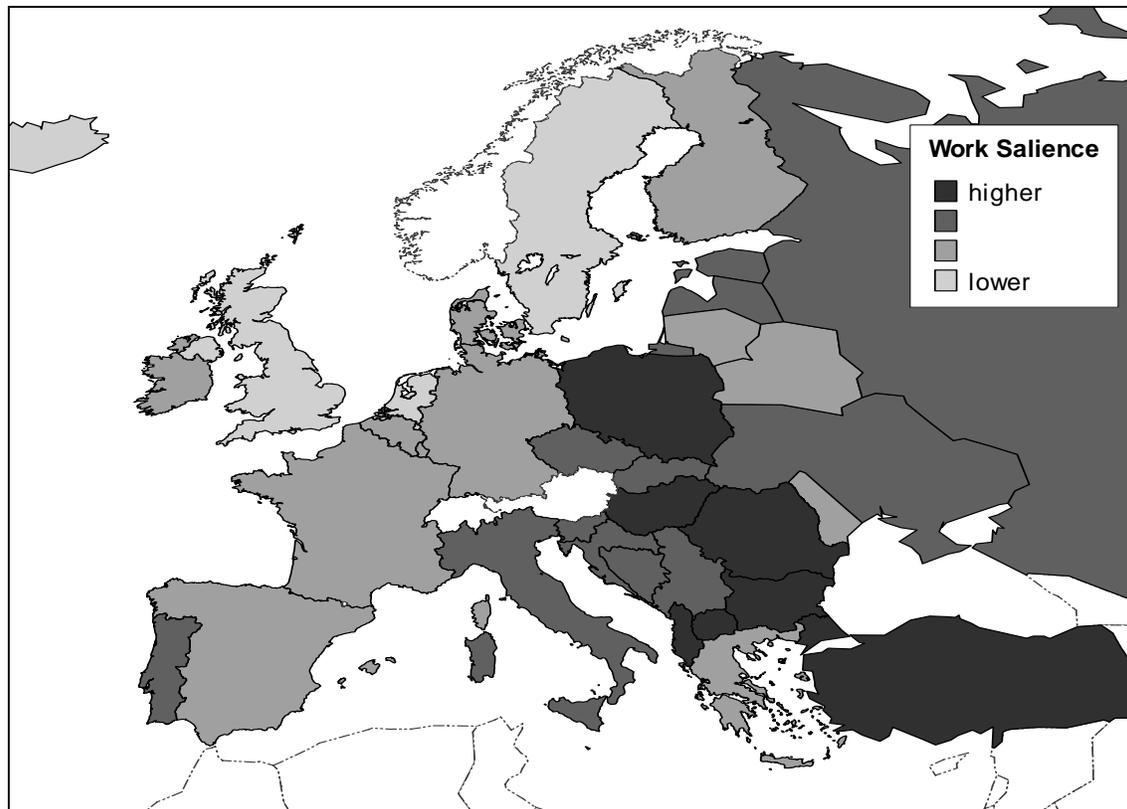
In countries which experience economic recession the things are apparently different: until the crisis is over, the salience of work increases, more people declaring that it is important or very important for their life (**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**), as the society tends to revert to more traditional values (Inglehart, Baker, 2000). However, in those societies which are oriented to a larger degree towards postmaterial values, work continues to have a moderate importance, even when during recession times.

**Table 1. Dynamics of the percentage of those who declare that work is important: 1990-2006, selected societies.**

country	1990-1993	1995-1997	1999-2001	2005-2006
Turkey	84%	94%	93%	
Romania	73%		79%	89%
Poland	87%	83%	83%	86%
Italy	70%		71%	75%
Ukraine		49%	51%	55%
Austria	57%		53%	
Bulgaria	27%	41%	45%	49%
Finland	37%	45%	45%	45%
Hungary	50%	42%	42%	
France	42%		37%	41%
Great Britain	45%		37%	40%
Germany	33%	27%	28%	34%
Netherlands	44%		37%	31%
Sweden	27%	29%	35%	29%
Spain	52%	58%	46%	

Data sources: European Values Survey/World Values Survey (EVS/WVS). Empty cells indicate lack of data for the respective society, in the respective EVS/WVS wave.

Figure 3. Relative Work Salience across Europe



Source: Own computations according to EVS/WVS 1999-2001. For the white-colored countries, there were no data available. The work salience index is computed as factor score, and explain the variance of agreeing with the following five items: “To fully develop your talents, you need to have a job”; “It is humiliating to receive money without working for it”; “People who don’t work become lazy”; “Work is a duty toward society”; “Work should always come first, even if it means less free time”. For each 5-points scale item I have recoded indecision and no answers as mid-scale. The index indicate the relative position of each country as compared to the others, not the absolute salience of work.

Inspecting the current differences across the European societies may illustrate this point. Three out of four Romanians declare that work should always come first, even if this means less free time<sup>6</sup>. The same opinion is common for two thirds of the Poles and Italians, half of the Germans, and only a third of the Swedes. Romanians, Poles and Italians declare with a huge majority that one has to have a job in order to fully develop ones talents, Germans support the same opinion but at lower extent, while only about half of the Fins and the Swedes do agree that work is *that* important<sup>7</sup>.

The work salience generally decreases from East to West and from South to North (see Figure 2), following the same patterns as other phenomena do. Economic development, cultural modernity, postmodern social values also differ across Europe, describing similar polarities. The better developed societies tend to put less importance on work as compared with few decades ago. The same happens with the other societies, but at lower extent.

Let also note that various survey data allow assessing the changes recorded for the work

<sup>6</sup> The figures that I invoke in this paragraph come from the World Values Survey, the 2005-2006 wave.

<sup>7</sup> Since Finland experienced economic recession in the 90s, one might expect a higher salience of work. However, the scale of preferences for time using changes very difficult, and the short period of recession did not affected it so much, maintaining interest for personal development and leisure at relatively high levels.

ethos between 1990 and 2005<sup>8</sup>. Almost all European societies, no matter from which part of the continent, knew small but firm decreases during this period of time<sup>9</sup>. This supports the hypothesis that there is a long term tendency of decreasing the importance of work in everyday life. Work remain salient for the society as a whole (without work the society can not continue to function), but when discussing about the individuals' scales of preferences, there is much more variety. Work, leisure, friends, self-development, self-expressing are part of a mix that become more and more balanced in a sort of evolutionary change.

### **Ongoing transformations: Connections between the processes**

In order to test the existence of the connection between the various processes that I have briefly described, I have employed several regression models. I was not interested in the prediction power of these models<sup>10</sup>, but in testing if the social values related to work maintain their impact on the average number of working hours when controlling for the level of economic development (measured through the GDP per capita), the technological development of the society, the recent tendencies on the labour market (dynamics of unemployment), the share of part time jobs in the total employment, the access of women on the labour market (women employment).

I have build up a data base, including this information aggregated at country level.

The dependent variable (for all the models from Table 2) is the *average number of weekly working hours*, in both main and second job, computed at country level by Voicu (2006) based on the 2003 wave of EQLS. EQLS estimates, even if not as robust as the ones from Eurostat, have the advantage to include both the time spend working for the first and for the second job. The aggregate data provided by Eurostat do not allow computing the total number of working hours, but only averages for the first employment and for the second employment. Summing the two figures can not provide adequate information about the average time weekly spent for working. Since moonlighting is more frequent in the countries were work is more salient, particularly in the former communist societies, this total number of working hours is more adequate to the purposes of the analysis. Another survey that provides such data is ESS, but I have preferred EQLS due to the fact that it provides information for the some set of countries as Eurostat.

For all the objective independent variables (economic output, unemployment growth, women employment, and part time share) I have employed the figures provided by or computed from data provided by Eurostat for 2002, one year before the data collection for the dependent variable. The implicit assumption is that all the all the changes in a society influence the *future* condition of that society.

The *GDP per capita* is expressed at the purchasing power standards (PPS). The *women employment rate* refers to the age group 25-54, in order to avoid the eventual impact of cross-

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<sup>8</sup> The structure of the index described in Figure 3 is stable over time (see Voicu, 2007). The above remarks about decreasing work salience are referring to studying the variation of this index for the European countries included in the EVS/WVS, in the waves for which data collection was done in 1990-1993, 1999-2002, 2005-2006.

<sup>9</sup> This can not be an effect of wording, since the same questions where used in all invoked survey, and the meaning of work is said to remain stable (Harpaz & Fu, 2002) over similar periods of time as the one that I have analyzed.

<sup>10</sup> However, let note that the explained variance is greater than 50% for each of the tested models (see Table 2).

country differences regarding the retirement age or the age of entering on the labour market. The *part-time share* represents the part-time workers in percents of total employment. The *Summary Innovation Index*, provided by Hollanders & Arundel (2006), reflects the level of technological development of each country, including the knowledge and innovation current production and capacity of production. The index highly correlates with GDP per capita. I have also employed the values for 2002. The *unemployment growth rate* represents the average rate of increasing unemployment between 2000 and 2002. I have computed the index from the estimates of annual unemployment rates provided by the Eurostat online database. The average unemployment growth for the previous years stands for the dynamics of job security and, implicitly, for the level of material security.

The only “subjective” independent variable is the *work salience*, the same indicator which is presented in Figure 3. I have computed the index using factor analysis on data from the 1999-2001 wave of the EVS/WVS. It taps for the relative importance of work of each of each respondent as compared to the other respondents from the respective sample. The higher the score is, the more the respective individual is oriented towards considering work as very important, mandatory for social recognition and for fulfilling personal needs. For the models from Table 2, I have computed the average of the *Work Salience* index for each of the considered countries. Most of the data comes from 1999, but in some countries the survey was done later, in 2000, 2001 or 2002. However, using the 2005-2006 WVS wave and confirmatory factor analysis (structural equations modelling), I have shown (Voicu, 2007), that the changes from a year to another are in most cases insignificant.

**Table 2. Multivariate analysis of the country-level determinants of the average number of working hours (main and second job)**

Predictors	OLS regression models (standardized regression coefficients)				SEM model (standardized regression weights)
	OLS 1	OLS 2	OLS 3	OLS 4	
Work Salience	0,30		0,55	0,36	4,29
GDP per capita (PPS)	-0,56	-0,52		-0,56	-0,04
Unemployment growth rate	0,19	0,32			0,69
Women Employment				-0,08	-0,02
Part-Time Share		-0,29	-0,29		-0,07
Summary Innovation Index					-2,75

Notes: All cases are countries N=28 (the 27 EU countries and Turkey). See text for the description of the variables and of the (full) models. Empty cells indicate that the respective independent variable was not used as predictor in the correspondent model.

When running the multivariate analysis I was confronted with two basic technical problems. The first one is colinearity. Almost all independent variables correlate with each other, making difficult to set up OLS regression models. To overpass the inconvenient, I have set up several such models, controlling in pairs for the influence of each indicator. The second obstacle is the reduced number of cases (28, including all 27 EU countries and Turkey), which made difficult both the regression models and the structural equation model that I have set up. The last one accepted the

independent variables to covariate<sup>11</sup>, but the low number of cases imposes caution when considering the results.

The inspection of the coefficients from Table 2 reveals that, with all above-cautions, they have similar meanings in all models. The results fully confirm the expectations formulated in the previous sections. When controlling for the other predictors, the influence of each independent variable is still present. The more affluent a society is, the less working hours. More women on the labour market, or more part time, or higher technological development, or more part-time jobs, all determine a decrease of the weekly working hours. Recent increases in unemployment have the opposed effect. Latent orientations towards increased importance of work, determine a higher weekly workload, as measured through time spent at job. More, the Work Salience is, along with the economic & technological development, the most important predictor of the working hours.

This means that all the previously described ongoing transformations have a certain impact on the evolution of the shape of the work, decreasing the working hours.

### **Ongoing transformations: New forms of working**

As a consequence of this changes, new forms of working recently emerged. To have flexible hours is the principle that shapes them. Teleworking is one of the visible manifestations. Part time, temporary working, and shared jobs add.

They allow people to develop their own life style, to better manage their time, adapting their schedule to their individual needs, aspirations, and pleasures. Particularly the development of the Internet facilitated such an approach. Space no longer impedes teamwork, since communication at long distance become everyday safer and safer and is already instantaneous. Related production costs decrease, while, in many cases, productivity increases.

Time costs are also highly reduced, with an important gain for the workers. The possibility to control time seems to be the key of all these changes. When having time, people may easily develop their own personality, their own life style, may much easier derive pleasure from their actions. There is not such a haphazard that the communist regimes in Eastern Europe have been trying to control the people by completely occupying their time with goalless activities.

When fulfilling their basic needs, people feel an acute need for having more time to fulfil their little pleasures, and they put more emphasis on having more free time. Part time and temporary working are some of the solutions. The factors that lead to such choices are various. Some are objective: the pressure to divide the same number of jobs to more citizens; the need to attract to an active life the traditionally inactive groups (such as less educated women); the higher productivity of labour; etc. Others come from the perspective that I am arguing in this paper, being more “subjective”: the need of the late modern human being to have more free time in order to self-express.

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<sup>11</sup> Table 2 presents only the standardized regression weights, not the covariates.

## **Implications for future scenarios**

Are the current tendencies of shrinking the working time and of decreasing the salience of work going to continue in the future? As I have already suggested, the process seems to be a natural evolution, and it will definitively continue in a status quo situation, which include a further technological progress. Since the technological progress is likely to continue, no matter at which pace, the question that raise is related to other factors that do affect the current social structure. In the following paragraphs I will emphasis few of the current challenges that the European societies face up, selecting only few of those that might have a greater impact on work, and that are somehow related to the above argumentations.

One of the most common fears today is that the *technological progress and the increasing productivity may lead to a sharp decrease of the number of job places*. On the other hand, the new technologies are likely to create some supplementary new jobs in the new professions. Science fiction literature provides a lot of examples. However, the number of such new created jobs will be probably highly exceeded by the number of the job-places that will disappear, or where the machine will replace the human employees.

*The low fertility* will bring an opposite tension, related to *the need for more labour force*, due to the smaller size of the new generations. Less people on active age obviously means less supply with labour force.

*Increasing life expectancy* and the better health comes together with the potential of the human being to work until a higher age. This creates a supplementary need for working places.

*The less developed societies will continue to provide a labour force more eager to hard-work as compared to the better developed societies*. The reasons were already explained in the above sections. Immigration is one of the visible phenomena. Emigration of jobs is the other one, both putting pressure towards higher unemployment in the better developed societies. However, one may also be aware that *the less developed societies are currently developing*, this including the changing of their values towards modern and postmodern ones. Consequently, their citizens tend to become less eager to work for long weeks, as well as for less money.

*More and more women tend to enter to the labour market*, as part of the tendency towards self-expressing. This also puts some pressure on the job suppliers.

Longitudinal studies shows that *the hours mismatch* at a certain point in time is one of the factors that predict the number of actually worked hours at a later point in the career (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Euwals, 2001; Reynolds & Aletraris, 2006). Also knowing that most of the nowadays working force claim to be overworked, one may interfere that the demand for less and less working hours will continue, and that the labor market will adapt to this demand in order to avoid the negative effects of decreasing productivity, loyalty, workforce cohesion, etc.

Under some circumstances, the *post-Fordist working place tends to become 'time-greedy'* (van Echtelt, 2007). Employees find more and more gratifying their work, through its intrinsic characteristics, and adopt unpaid overworking as a normal leisure, no matter if they work from home or in the office. They impose unreachable standards for the other employees (Lewis, 2003) and decrease the need for supplementary workforce. However, this type of employees represents a minority (Lewis, 2003; Reynolds & Aletraris, 2006).

**Table 1. Current processes and their consequences on the labor market**

Processes that <b>decrease the number of available job places</b> (as compared to the volume of the active population)	Processes that <b>increase the number of available job places</b> (as compared to the volume of the active population)
Technological progress and the increase of productivity	Technological progress creates new professions
Increasing the age limit of the active life	The low fertility rates => less numerous labour force
Immigration of labour force and the emigration of jobs	The less developed societies are developing, and the immigration flow decreases
More women tend to enter to the labour market	More people choose to work part-time for parenting reasons
	Development of institutional arrangements (“flexicurity”) encourage decreasing the working hours in order to stimulate fertility
	More people reach higher education => the higher the demand for less working hours
Some groups of employees, from post-Fordist organizations, tend to replace leisure with working overtime	Postmodernization increase the social acceptance and demand for working less
	There should be tendency to decrease the hours mismatch, which have negative effects on both employee and employer. The mismatch is currently related to overwork
<i>Too many people want to work relatively to the number of available jobs.</i>	<i>People put more value on their time, they prefer to work less.</i>

Table 1 summarize all the processes that I have listed bellow. One may see that the odds to have a new equilibrium are quite high. A challenge like mass unemployment due to the technological progress, may find its cure in the compensatory role of social values. They act as a self-regulatory mechanism, re-establishing a certain social equilibrium adequate to the various risks and challenges that humankind has to face. In the near future, it is likely that, the tendency of decreasing the number of weekly working hours to continue, both in the Western Europe, but also in the Eastern part of the Old Continent. This will probably compensate for the lower demand for labour force that will appear due to the increasing productivity.

Catastrophic events like wars or natural disasters are the hazards. When occurring, such risk lead to replication of the social values to more traditional ones (Inglehart, Baker, 2000), and, in the line of the argument that I have developed, may break the social equilibrium. However such hazards already broke the equilibrium and are likely to create a very high demand for labour force.

Therefore, I do expect that the technological progress will provide no other risk of unemployment than the one that it have always provoked during the last centuries. The main visible process that the European societies will experiment during the next decades is the continuation of reducing the length of the working week, which is on the top of the agenda of both decision makers, which aim mainly to increase fertility rates, and of the population.

The entire analysis in this paper refers the macro-level, but uses as argument processes originated at individual level. What I have always had in mind is the average citizen, and the

tendencies that will affect the societies and the individuals as a whole. Of course, in all European societies, one may find collectivities or individuals which will continue the traditional patterns, wanting to work more hours, or not allowing women access on the labour market, or not being interested in personal development and leisure time, or not accepting any form of teleworking and telecommuting. However, I expect that such cases to be less and less frequent, while the general trend will be to adopt the post-material pattern, which is common nowadays to a small span of our societies. Societies, as a whole will and are already adapting to this changes, as I have already argued.

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