

Flexitime helps Swedes get the balance right [SE] ^[1]

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- Full text of article ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Tired of the same old workday routine? Working nine to five is no longer the standard way to make a living in Sweden. The country has been named in a European Union study as having among the most flexible working hours in Europe, allowing employees to strike a better balance between work and home life. More than half of Sweden's public and private sector employers allow their workers a degree of flexibility in when they start and end the working day, allowing them to spend more time with their children, leave early to go to the gym, or just stay in bed longer.

Flexitime (also called flexitime) was first introduced to Sweden in the 1960s following pressure from unions, but employers soon came to see the benefits it could bring, such as increased productivity, lower absenteeism and a happier workforce.

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Even at that most Swedish of public-sector institutions, Skatteverket (the Swedish Tax Authority), most employees are able to choose their working hours. Workers can start between 7am and 9am and leave their desks between 3pm and 7pm, which is very popular, according to Anders Andersson: "There are many benefits for employees, including being able to fit in your working day around daycare for your children."

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In a report by the EU's European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Sweden was ranked second for flexible working behind Latvia.

Erland Olason, of LO (Landsorganisationen & the Swedish Trade Union Confederation), says Sweden's flexitime system is the result of pressure from both sides, employees and employers, but on different grounds. For companies, having more contented employees can just make good business sense. "But I don't think it means we have more reasonable employers in Sweden than anywhere else," he says.

So if flexitime leads to greater productivity and more contented employees, could it not also be the answer for tired teenagers lacking motivation at school? Yes it could, according to Swedish research which shows that nearly half of 16-year-olds consider themselves "evening people" who struggle at school in the mornings due to tiredness.

About 20 schools in Sweden have introduced a flexitime system which allows pupils a degree of flexibility in when they start their day. Results have been positive, and other schools are considering it. The age-old cry of "get up & you're going to be late for school!" may one day be a thing of the past.

- reprinted from Sweden Today

Region: Europe ^[3]

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