

Work-life 'balance' in Europe ^[1]

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Abstract: Although work-life 'balance' is an EU policy priority, within Europe there are considerable variations in the nature and extent of supports that national governments have offered to dual-earner families. In general, the Nordic welfare states offer the highest level of supports, although other countries, such as France, have historically offered extensive childcare supports to working mothers. We examine national variations in reported levels of work-life conflict, drawing upon questions fielded in the 2002 Family module International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) surveys for Britain, France, Finland, Norway and Portugal. We find evidence of a 'societal effect' in the cases of Finland and Norway, in that significantly lower levels of work-life conflict are reported in these countries even after a range of factors have been controlled for. However, support for childcare in France does not appear to have had a similar impact. Further explorations of the data reveal that the domestic division of labour is relatively traditional in France, and that this is associated with higher levels of work-life conflict.

Region: Europe ^[3]

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