

Quality of (working) life and work-life balance



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Outline of the Presentation

- Good jobs and impact on quality of life
- Work-Life Balance and the EU Agenda
- Work–Life Balance: theoretical considerations
- Demands and resources approach
- Work–Life conflict in Germany and Spain: outcomes and challenges for WLB

The Meaning of Work

- to avoid misunderstanding: Being in paid employment is consistently ranked as one of the most important determinants of a high quality of life in Europe.
- Work:
 - - not only provides people with an adequate amount of money to make ends meet
 - - but also provides individuals with a clear time structure, a sense of identity, social status and integration, and opportunities for personal development.

Study: Good Job, Good Life?

- How do working conditions affect overall life satisfaction?
- Is the association direct or indirect through job (dis)satisfaction?
- What is the role of work-life or work-family balance/interference?
- Are there cross-country differences?

Theoretical Considerations

- Three types of mechanisms that link life domains:
 - Spillover
 - Segmentation
 - Compensation
- Previous studies:
 - Spillover explanation used when examining the relationship between job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction
 - Inter-role conflict: work-family interference

EU- supported project Quality of Life and Work in Europe

Data: European Quality of Life Survey, EQLS 2003

Countries included in the study:

- Finland
- Sweden
- The Netherlands
- Germany
- United Kingdom
- Portugal
- (Spain)
- Hungary
- Bulgaria

Variables

Dependent variable: overall life satisfaction

Independent variables:

- working hours, working hours-squared
- commuting time
- Supervisor status
- permanent contract
- job demanding/ stressful
- time pressure
- job dangerous/unhealthy
- job insecurity
- well-paid job
- autonomy
- career prospects
- job dull/boring

Variables

Independen variables (contin.):

- Job satisfaction
- Work-Life Interference
- GDP per capita
- Country dummies

- (Gender, Age, Education, Marital status, Children)

Models (from Drobnič, Beham, & Präg (2010): “Good Job, Good Life? Working Conditions and Quality of Life in Europe” Social Indicators Research, 99, 2: 205-225)

Life Satisfaction Regressed on Working Conditions for Pooled Data (OLS)

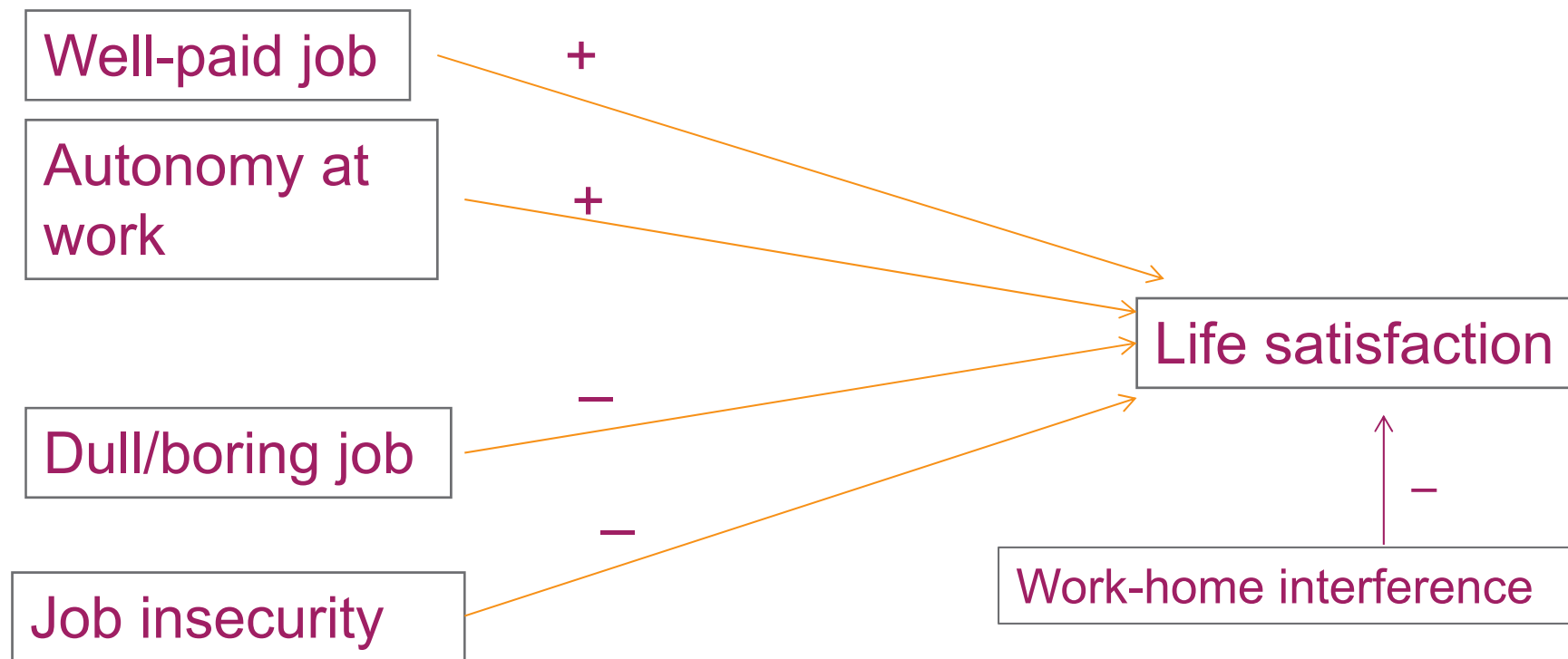
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Working conditions	X	X	X	X	X	X
job satisfaction				X		X
work-home interference					X	X
GDP per capita		X	X	X	X	X
Country dummies			X	X	X	X
<i>N</i>	3354	3354	3354	3354	3354	3354
adj. R^2	0.180	0.304	0.337	0.391	0.351	0.399

Notes: Gender, age in linear and quadratic form, marital status, number of children, and education are controlled.

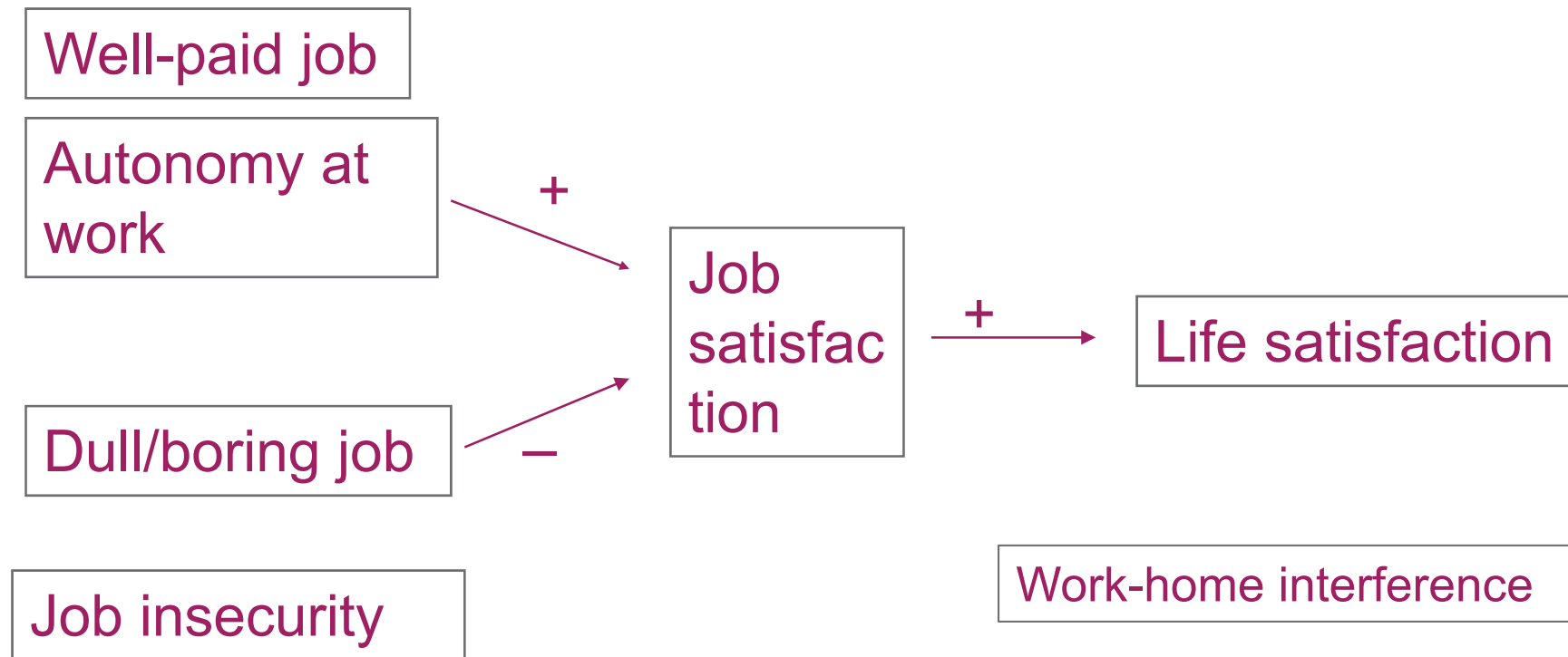
Results

- Substantial differences in terms of working conditions and life satisfaction among European countries.
- Life satisfaction outcomes are significantly influenced by the economic development of countries as measured by GDP per capita and other country characteristics
- Working conditions do have important effects

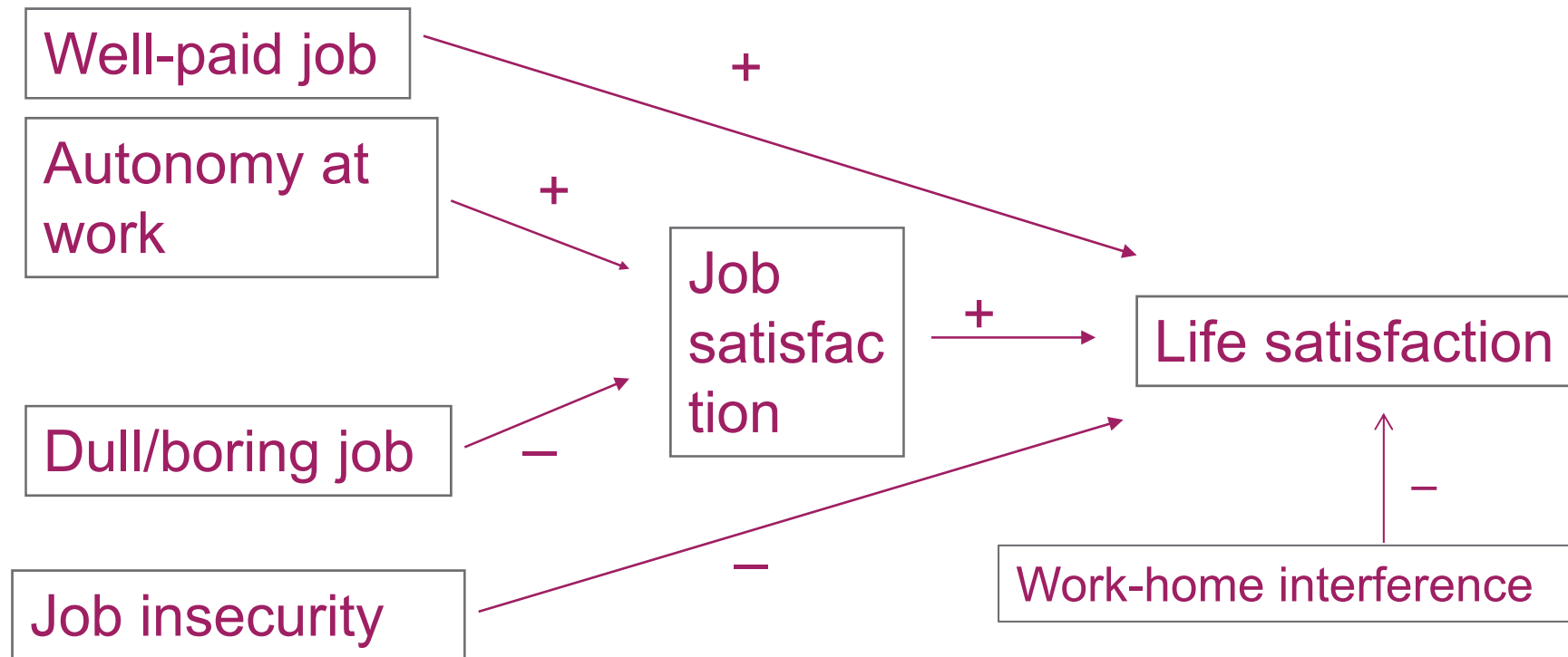
Results



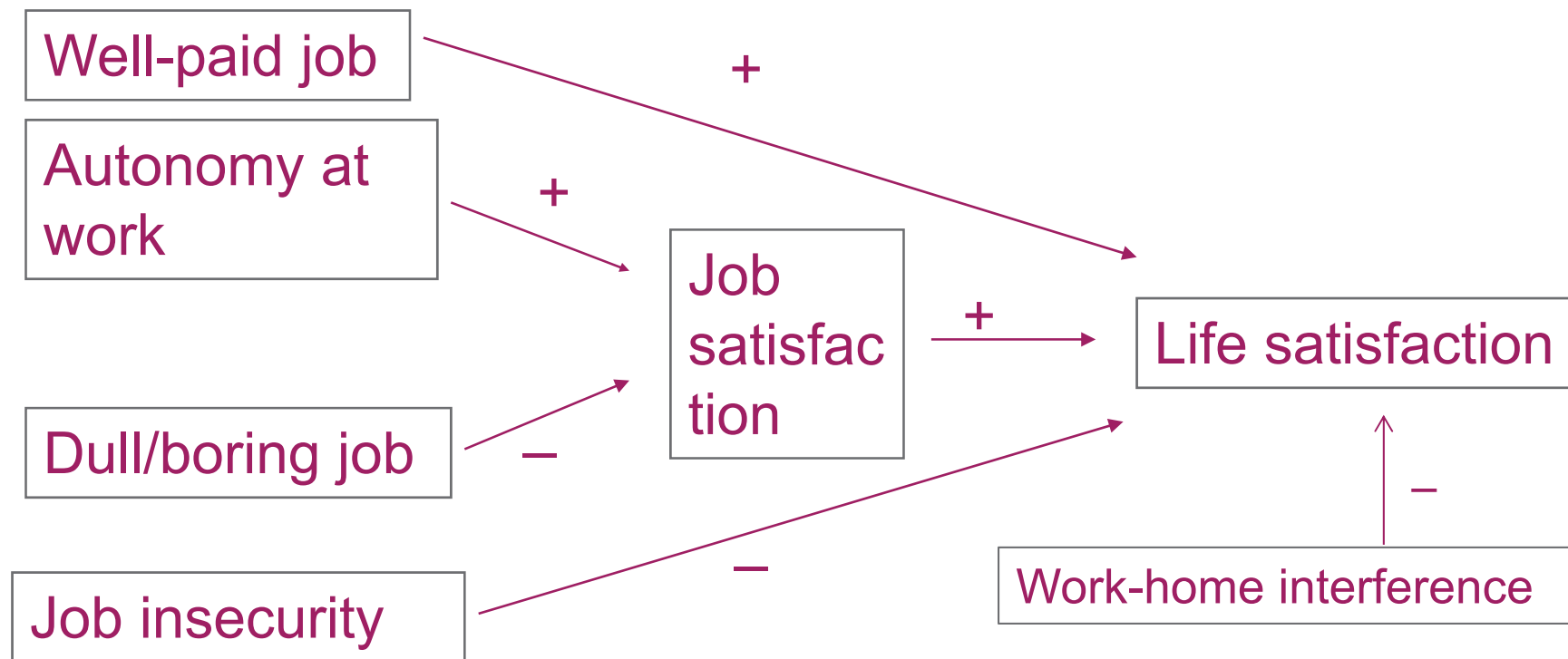
Results



Results



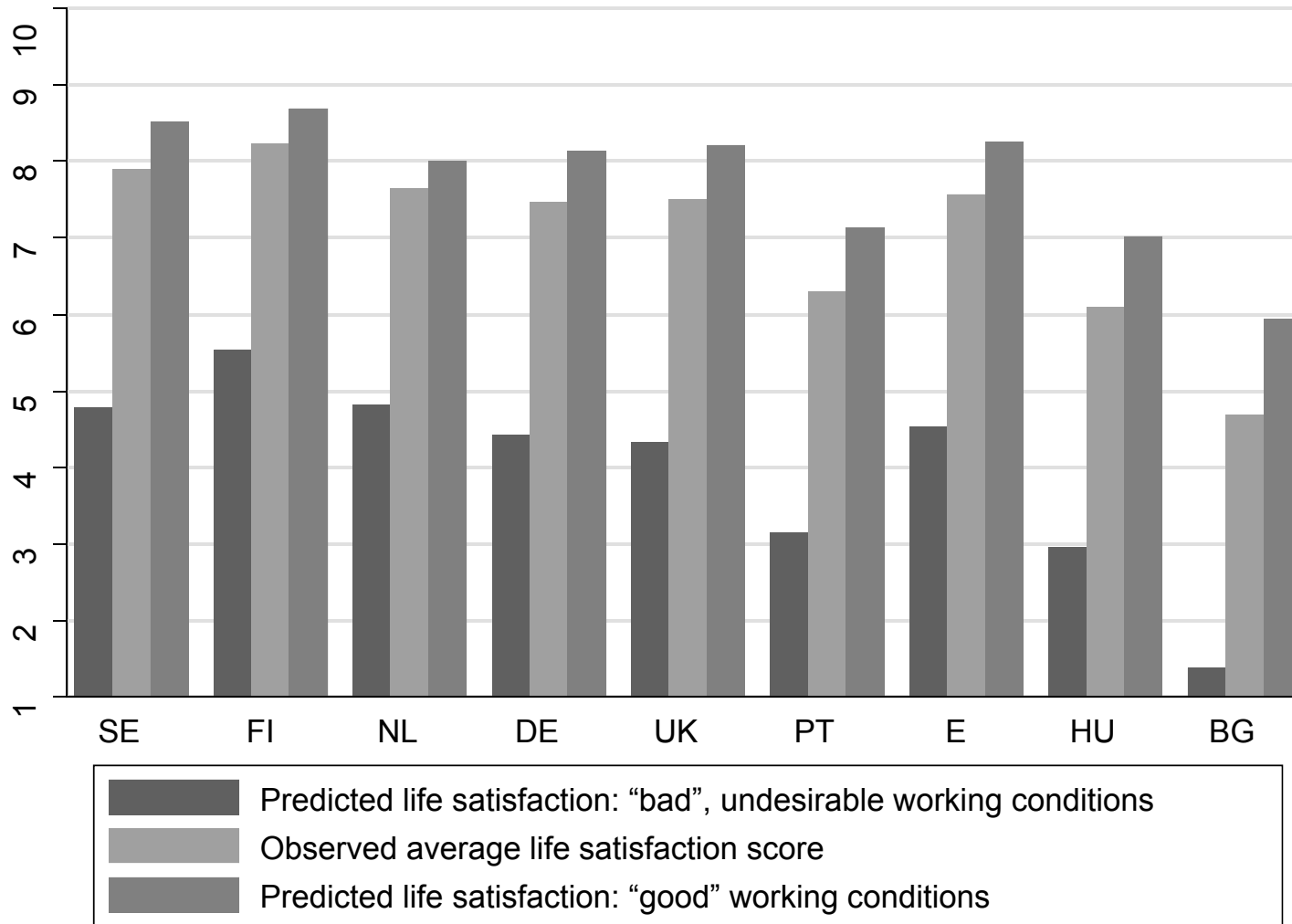
Results



Security (secure job, economic security) is the key element in employment that in a most straightforward manner affects people's quality of life. WLB has an independent effect.

Results

- “Bad jobs” are more effective in lowering life satisfaction than “good jobs” in augmenting it.



Results

- The effect of working conditions on overall life satisfaction is stronger in poorer countries in Eastern and Southern Europe than in Nordic and Western European societies.
- Salience of work dimensions changes:
- From... dangerous/unhealthy job to... boring job, lack of autonomy, intensification/time pressure.

Results

- Reported conflict between work and home is in effect weaker in Western and Nordic countries but the negative effect on life satisfaction is stronger („affluence work-home paradox“)

Policy Implications

- Policy-makers have to respond to differing needs when striving to fulfil the Lisbon goal of ‘more and better jobs’ as well as achieving high quality of life for European citizens:
- For poorer countries in Eastern and Southern Europe, security of employment, dangerous and unhealthy working conditions and decent pay are most crucial issues at present (linked to the concept of “decent work” (ILO 1999) as a key component of national development).

Policy Implications

- In several Northern and Western European countries, respondents often report that a dull and boring job, intensification of work with tight deadlines and balancing work and private life decisively contribute to their well-being.
- Together with employment security and pay (economic security), these are the areas where further research and policy interventions are most needed.

Why bother with Work-Life Balance

- Relevance:
- Lack of WLB has been linked to decreased job and life satisfaction and a whole range of stress-related outcomes and family outcomes, as well as social problems such as lower productivity, declining birth rates, ageing of society, gender inequality...
- My interest in WLB emerged from interest in working conditions in the European context...

European Employment Strategy 2001

- Shift in EU policy objectives in the area of employment and social integration under the slogan:
‘Not just more jobs but also better jobs’
- Policy objectives formulated in terms of common indicators and measurable targets
- → “What makes a good job?”

Groups of Indicators for monitoring employment quality (Laeken Indicators):

- intrinsic job quality;
- skills, life-long learning and career development;
- gender equality;
- health and safety at work;
- flexibility and security;
- inclusion and access to the labour market;
- **work organization and work–life balance;**
- social dialogue and worker involvement;
- diversity and non-discrimination;
- overall economic performance and productivity.

The EU Definition of Job Quality

- Multi-dimensional approach, including
 - objective characteristics of the job
 - subjective evaluations by workers
 - workers' characteristics
 - the match between the worker and the job

Among the 10 indicators for monitoring employment quality:
"work organization and work–life balance"

What is Work-Life Balance (WLB)

- Shorthand for „work“ and „the rest of life“
- Life domains in which people perform different roles
- **Theory of role strain** (Goode 1960)
- Role conflict due to conflict in time, place, resources → total role obligations are overdemanding
- **Enhancement arguments** (Marks 1977; Sieber 1974) suggest that engagement in multiple life roles can generate social and economic resources and have positive impact on people's life.

Resources-Demands Approach

- When role demands and resources in one domain are incompatible with role demands and resources in the other domain → conflict
- Types of demands:
 - time-based
 - strain-based
 - behavior-based

What is Work-Life Balance (WLB)?

- “Balance” another ill-defined term (Guest (2002): metaphor)
- ‘Perceptual phenomenon characterized by a sense of having achieved a satisfactory resolution of the multiple demands of work and family domains ‘; ‘ equilibrium or an overall sense of harmony in life’ ...
- Measurement: balance level, satisfaction with WLB
- But in most studies, the opposite is studied: tensions, interference, conflict , imbalance.
- Research on the work-family interface has been heavily dominated by a conflict perspective

Work – Life (Family/Home/Nonwork) Interface

- Type and direction of interaction:
 - Negative** aspects of Work–Life Interface: work–family conflict, interference
 - Positive** aspects of Work–Life Interface: work-family facilitation, enhancement, enrichment...
 - Bi-directional** concept: work can interfere with or facilitate the family/home domain AND family can interfere with or facilitate the work domain

Work – Life (Family/Home/Nonwork) Interface

- Two important considerations:
 - Work-to-Home spillover more prevailing and „stronger“ than Home-to-Work spillover → job characteristics and working conditions (job quality) are of primary importance
 - Societal context plays a very important role

Study of Work-Home Interference (WHI) in Germany and Spain

- WHI in relation to work-life balance: it draws attention to tensions, conflict
- WHI in relation to work-family interference: also employees without family-care responsibilities face the challenge of integration work and nonwork roles.

Resources-Demands Theoretical Framework

- Work demands:
 - time-based (e.g. long working hours, overtime, organizational time expectations...)
 - strain-based demands (work overload, work pressure, work distress, job insecurity...)
- Work resources: job autonomy, career opportunities,...

Data analysis: WHI in Germany and Spain

- European Quality of Life Survey, EQLS 2003
- European Social Survey, ESS 2004
- European Social Survey, ESS 2006

Measurement of WHI

- European Quality of Life survey (2003):
- I have come home from work too tired to do some of the household jobs which need to be done (strain-based demands)
- It has been difficult for me to fulfil my family responsibilities because of the amount of time I spend on the job (time-based demands)

Several times a week

Several times a month

Several times a year

Less often/rarely

Never

WHI (binary variable): if any of the two items experienced several times a week.

Measurement of WHI

European Social Survey II 2004:

- How often do you feel too tired after work to enjoy the things you would like to do at home?
- How often do you find that your job prevents you from giving the time you want to your partner or family?
- How often do you keep worrying about work problems when you are not working?
- How often do you find that your partner or family gets fed up with the pressure of your job?

Never
Hardly ever
Sometimes
Often
Always

WHI (dummy): if at least one of the four problems is experienced *always* or at least two of the four problems are experienced *often*

Measurement of WHI

- European Social Survey III 2006:

“How satisfied are you with the balance between the time you spend on your paid work and the time you spend on other aspects of your life?”

extremely dissatisfied extremely satisfied

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Job characteristics and WHI /satisfaction with WLB

	German men			German women			Spanish men			Spanish women		
	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3
	WHI	WHI	Sat. WLB	WHI	WHI	Sat. WLB	WHI	WHI	Sat. WLB	WHI	WHI	Sat. WLB
Work: less than 30 hrs.					--	+			+			+
Work: 30-39 (reference)												
Work: 40-45			--			--	+			+		
Work: more than 45		+	--	+		--	+	+	--			--
long commute	--				+							
work hard/demanding/stressful			--	+	+	--		+	--	+	+	--
tight deadlines/time pressure	+	+			+			+				
Dangerous/unhealthy/health risk		+		+	+						+	
job insecurity	+	+	--				+					
job autonomy/job contrl		+	+	+	+						+	
career prospects	--		.	--	--	.			.			.
supervisor	.	.	--	--
job interesting	.	.	+	.	.	+	.	.	+	.	.	+
job appropriately paid	.	.	+	.	.	+	.	.	+	.	.	+

Children and WHI / satisfaction w. WHI

	German men			German women			Spanish men			Spanish women		
	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3
	WHI	WHI	Satis WLB	WHI	WHI	Satis WLB	WHI	WHI	Satis WLB	WHI	WHI	Satisf WLB
Child < 6 yrs				n.e.								
Child 6-12												
Child 13-17												

Children and WHI / satisfaction w. WHI

	German men			German women			Spanish men			Spanish women		
	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3	EQLS	ESS2	ESS3
	WHI	WHI	Satis WLB	WHI	WHI	Satis WLB	WHI	WHI	Satis WLB	WHI	WHI	Satisf WLB
Child < 6 yrs				n.e.								
Child 6-12												
Child 13-17												

Results not expected!

Challenges for Work-Life Balance

- Job demands, such as long working hours and job strain, increase work-life conflict (**expected!**)
- Job resources, i.e. good career prospects, decrease work-home interference (**expected!**)
- Autonomy and control over work – which were conceptualized as a job resource – are not a solution for work-life balance but are instead associated with increased conflict between work and home (**not expected!**)

Challenges for Work-Life Balance

Many findings support the demands-resources predictions

But...

- ... why are certain job characteristics differentially perceived as resources or stressors by the employees?
- ... what is the role of broader institutional and societal arrangement?
- ... how can significant country differences be explained within the resources-demands framework?

The Capability Approach (Amartya Sen)

- A key assumption in this framework is that work-life balance and avoidance of WHI is a valuable functioning that enhances capabilities and agency for attaining a better quality of life and increase an individual's well-being.
- Sen explores well-being in terms of a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being („what people are effectively be able to do or to be“)
- In our analysis, we focused on the means and resources individuals have to achieve the functioning. Sen refers to these means and resources as a 'capability set'.

The Capability Approach

- We contend that high quality jobs generate capabilities that allow incumbents to achieve work-home balance, and reduce negative interference between work and home.
- To assess a person's capability set, broader societal context has to be taken into account to understand how societal resources can be translated into agency and capability.

Publications in the area of job quality, work-life balance

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- Beham, Barbara, Sonja Drobnič and Patrick Präg (2014): “The work–family interface of service sector workers: A comparison of work resources and professional status across five European countries” *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 63 (1): 29-61.
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- Beham, Barbara and Sonja Drobnič (2010): “Satisfaction with work-family balance among German office workers” *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 25, 6: 669-689.
- Papers are available for download at the following link:<https://box.bigsss-bremen.de/public.php?service=files&t=8634e8dc2a9a9bdfa11daa60d345c6c0>

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