



Tunghai University – 17 May 2011

Quality of Work and Quality of Life in Europe

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This presentation first addresses trends in job quality in European countries over time. Data are taken from three waves of the European Working Conditions Survey for the EU15 countries. Next, a question is raised to what extent and how employment and job characteristics affect the overall quality of life of workers in selected European countries. This part of presentation is partly based on a study conducted within the EU-project "Quality of Life in a Changing Europe" (QUALITY) and published as Drobnič, S., B. Beham, and P. Präg (2010): "Good Job, Good Life? Working Conditions and Quality of Life in Europe" *Social Indicators Research*, 99, 2: 205-225.

Soc Indic Res (2010) 99:205–225

Good Job, Good Life? Working Conditions and Quality of Life in Europe

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Abstract Cross-national comparisons generally show large differences in life satisfaction of individuals within and between European countries. This paper addresses the question of whether and how job quality and working conditions contribute to the quality of life of employed populations in nine strategically selected EU countries: Finland, Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Using data from the European Quality of Life Survey 2003, we examine relationships between working conditions and satisfaction with life, as well as whether spillover or segmentation mechanisms better explain the link between work domain and overall life satisfaction. Results show that the level of life satisfaction varies significantly across countries, with higher quality of life in more affluent societies. However, the impact of working conditions on life satisfaction is stronger in Southern and Eastern European countries. Our study suggests that the issue of security, such as security of employment and pay which provides economic security, is the key element that in a straightforward manner affects people's quality of life. Other working conditions, such as autonomy at work, good career prospects and an interesting job seem to translate into high job satisfaction, which in turn increases life satisfaction indirectly. In general, bad-quality jobs tend to be more 'effective' in worsening workers' perception of their life conditions than good jobs are in improving their quality of life. We discuss the differences in job-related determinants of life satisfaction between the countries and consider theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

Keywords Job quality _ Life satisfaction _ Quality of life _ Europe _ Cross-national comparison

Sonja Drobnič is Professor of Sociology/Social Science Research Methods at the University of Hamburg, Germany. Her research interests include social inequalities and gender inequalities in the household and in the labour market, social networks and social capital, issues in social stratification, and quality of life and work. In terms of methodology, she is particularly interested in cross-national research and longitudinal research methods.

She has completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. She received an M.A. degree at Syracuse University and holds a Ph.D from Cornell University, USA. She has held positions of Senior Researcher and Assistant Professor at the University of Bremen, Associate Professor at the University of Erfurt, and Full Professor/ Chair in Sociology at the University of Hamburg, Germany. She was a guest researcher at Stockholm University and KU Leuven, and a visiting scholar at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

Her current and recent research projects include: “Networks, Social Capital and Gender Inequalities” (European Science Foundation and German Research Foundation); “Job Quality and Tensions between Work and Private Life” (EU-Network of Excellence RECOWE – Reconciling Work and Welfare in Europe); “The Division of Household Labor in Cross-National Comparison: Household Decisions or Macro-Level Influences?” (Alexander von Humboldt Foundation); “Quality of Life in a Changing Europe (European Commission, Programme FP 6); “Evaluation of Consulting Services for the Self-Employed” (German Federal Ministry of Education and Research).

Her publications include the books *Careers of Couples in Contemporary Societies: From Male Breadwinner to Dual-Earner Families* (eds. Blossfeld and Drobnič, Oxford University Press, 2001), *Dividing the Domestic: Men, Women and Household Work in Cross-National Perspective* (eds. Treas and Drobnič, Stanford University Press, 2010); *Work–Life Balance in Europe. The Role of Job Quality* (eds. Drobnič and Guillen, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). She has published in journals such as *American Sociological Review*, *European Sociological Review*, *International Journal of Sociology*, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Revue française de sociologie*, *Social Indicators Research*, *Social Politics*, *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*.