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PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

Abstract

Part-time employment is the most dynamically developing form of making hours in the EU countries more flexible nowadays. The possibility of adjusting employment and hours to changing needs and abilities of an enterprise without any additional costs that would have to be borne by it is the advantage of unusual organization of hours. Besides, such a form of employment allows for professional activation of persons who, for various reasons (family situation, a person takes care of children, education) cannot take up a permanent and full-time job.

On the other hand, people who work part-time are not always treated, by employers, equally with full-time employees. Such a form of employment is often taken up not by choice, but because of the lack of a chance of taking up full-time employment. A difficult situation in a labour market bring about the fact that “unusual” employment becomes more and more accepted by employees and trade unions.

This article is aimed at presenting the share of part-time employment in the total employment in particular European Union countries. Apart from that, the diversity of the situation of men and women in this aspect will be presented as well.

Key words: labour market, full-time and part-time employment

Introduction

In the European Union countries, a necessity for the deregulation of the labour market can be noticed. Supporters of the liberalisation of legal regulations see a chance for improving processes of allocation of labour force and reducing unemployment. Opponents, on the other hand, pay attention to the risk to the social safety of employees. Making labour markets of market economy countries more flexible seems to be an unavoidable and even essential process in the situation of current changes in the national economy.

Too high unemployment makes one look for new solutions which may contribute to the increase in employment. Increasing the flexibility of the labour market is one of means of increasing employment.

Speaking of the flexibility of the labour market, one may mean (Wiśniewski, 1999):

- flexibility of employment;
- flexibility of hours;
- flexibility of pay;
- flexibility of labour supply;
- flexibility of demand for labour.

In this study, the flexibility of hours was paid special attention. The flexibility of hours implies using, to a greater and greater extent, so-called unusual forms of hours, which include the following:

- part-time employment, for instance:
 - job-sharing (sharing work and pay between two or more employees);
 - shortened daily hours (a regular part-time job, for example daily hours amount to four hours);
 - shortened flexible hours within particular days (e.g., working four days a week, different number of hours every day), weeks (e.g., two weeks at work, two weeks off), months (e.g., one month at work, one month off);
 - job, taking long-term leave into consideration (e.g., one-year academic/scientific leave).
- flexible individual hours of employees during a day, week, month and year;
- changeable week's company hours, and also making year's hours and hours which a person works during the entire professional life more flexible (e.g., through taking early retirement).

Part-time employment in comparison with full-time employment in the EU-25

There are 36,2 mln persons who work part-time in the European Union among 197,5 mln working people. Chart 1 shows a status of persons aged 15 or more in EU-25.

Among persons who work part-time, a particularly considerable share was recorded in the subpopulation of women. Women constitute 77,6% of all people who work part-time. At the same time, what should be noticed is the fact that women who have full-time jobs constitute only 36,6% of all working.

In the European Union, women who work full-time work 39,3 hours a week on average, and men - 42,8 hours. Persons who are in part-time employment devote 20,5 hours to work in the case of women, and 20,3 hours in the case of men.

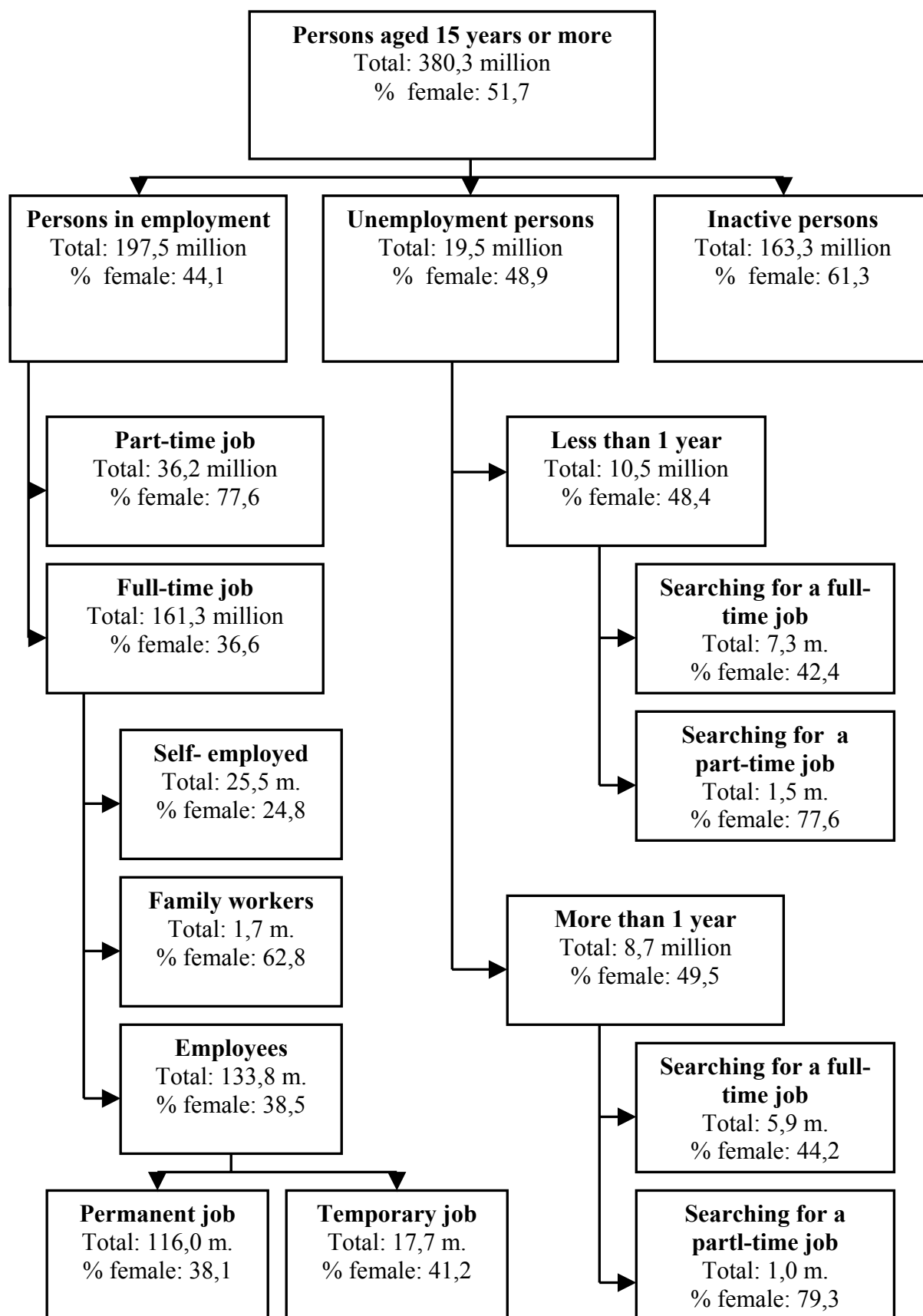
Table 1. Average actual hours worked in all jobs per week by full-time/part-time distinction and sex in EU-25, 2005.

	Total	Full-time	Part-time
Men and Women	37,7	41,5	20,4
Men	41,1	42,8	20,3
Women	33,2	39,3	20,5

Source: own compilation based on: Statistic in focus- Population and Social Conditions no 11/2006 "Labour Market Latest Trends. 4th quarter 2005". Eurostat, 13.07.2006.

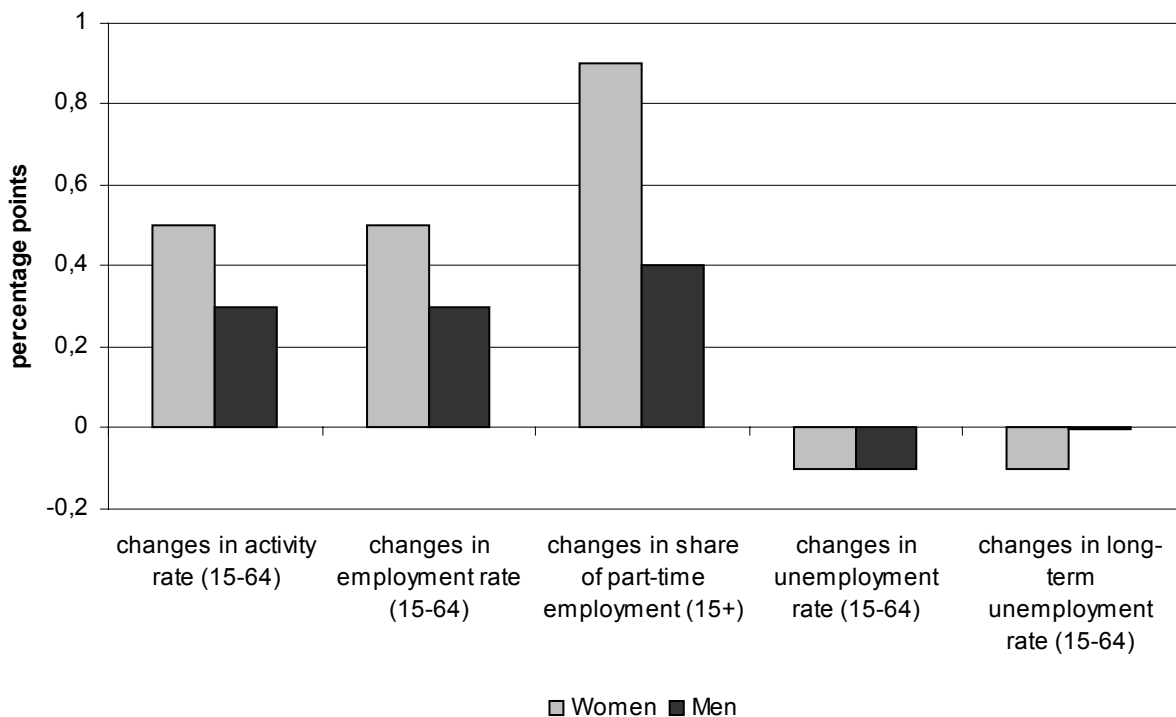
Nowadays, part-time employment is the most dynamically developing form of making hours more flexible in the EU countries. The share of persons who are in part-time employment increased during last year in EU-25, in the case of women- by 0,9 percentage point, and in the case of men by 0,4 percentage point, which is shown in chart 2.

Chart 1. Work status of persons aged 15 years or more in EU-25, 2005.



Source: Statistic in focus. Population and Social Conditions no 13/2006. "EU Labour Force Survey". Eurostat, 11.09.2006.

Chart 2. Changes in the labour market indicators in the EU-25 from 2004Q4 to 2005Q4 (in percentage points).



Source: Statistic in focus- Population and Social Conditions no 11/2006 “ Labour Market Latest Trends. 4th quarter 2005”. Eurostat, 13.07.2006.

The growth in the number of people who work part-time was greater than the growth in the total of working people. This means that part-time employment is the most frequently chosen form of employment in the EU countries. In this context, the answer to the question about the degree of diversity of part-time employment in particular European Union countries seemed to be puzzling.

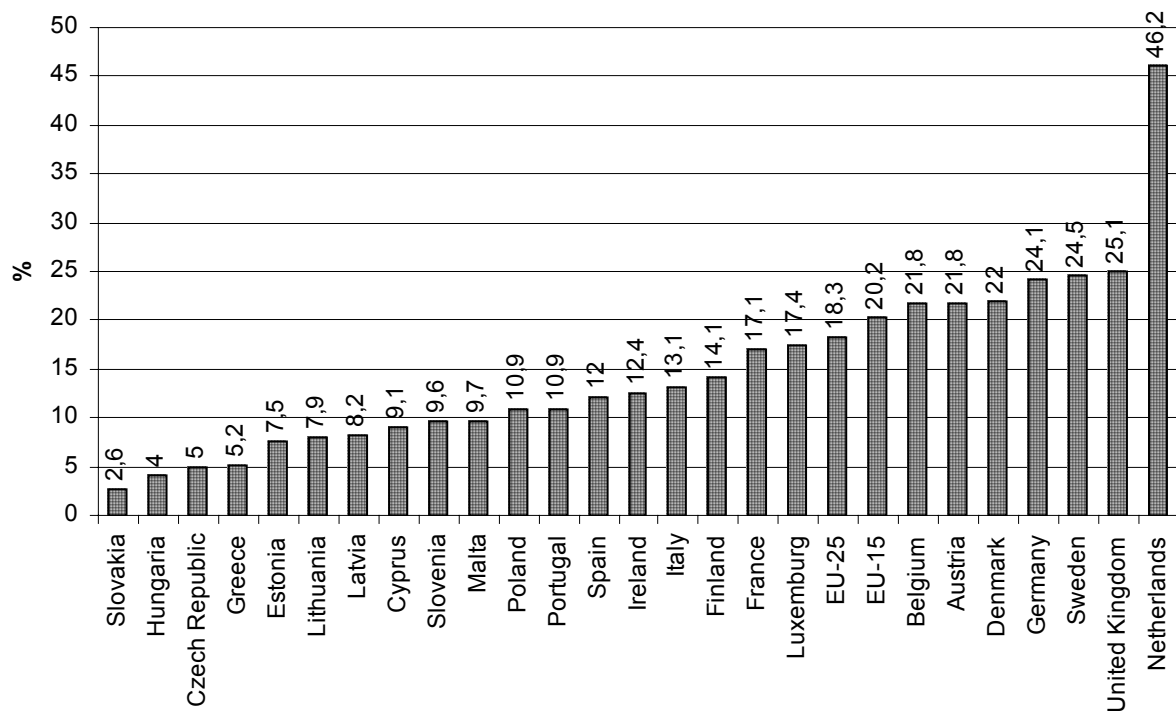
Part-time employment in the EU countries

The share of people who work part-time in the total of working people differs in particular European Union countries.

The Netherlands is a country which is characterised by the greatest share of people work part-time in the total of working people. As many as 46,2% of all working Dutch people work part-time. More than 20% share of persons who are in part-time employment was recorded in Great Britain, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Austria and Belgium. By contrast, the smallest share (not exceeding 5%) was recorded in Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

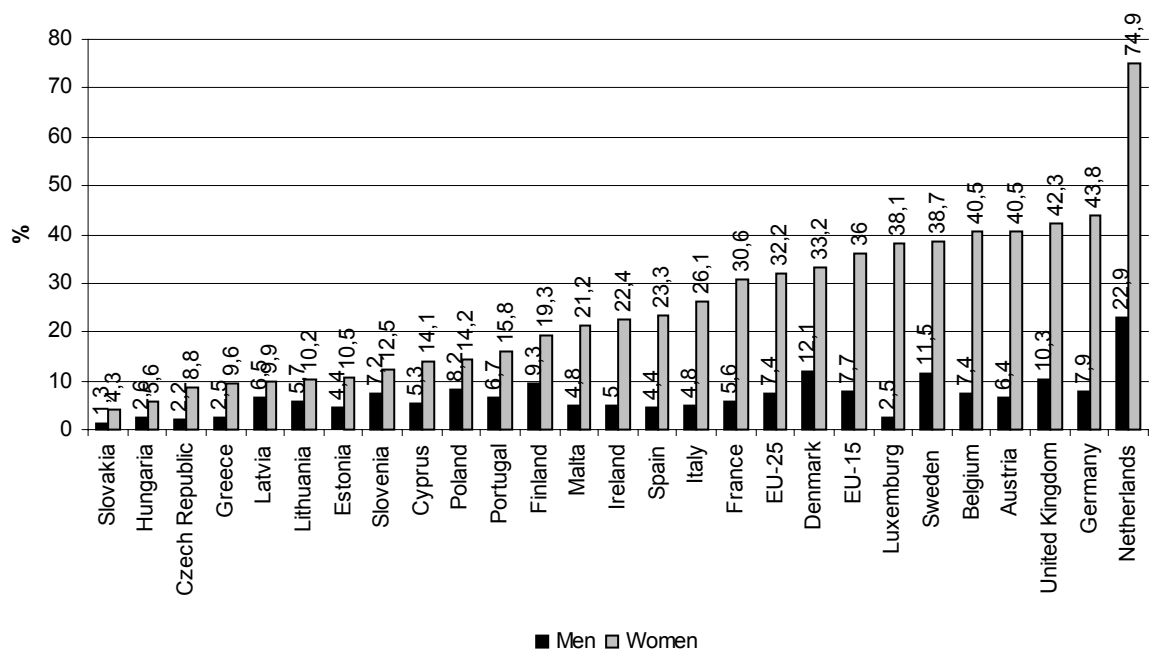
In addition, it should be noticed that there is a great diversity not only among particular countries but also with regard to sexes in particular countries, which is shown in chart 4.

Chart 3. Part-time employment as share of total employment by countries, 2005.



Source: own compilation based on: Statistic in focus- Population and Social Conditions no 11/2006 “Labour Market Latest Trends. 4th quarter 2005”. Eurostat, 13.07.2006.

Chart 4. Part-time employment as share of total employment by countries and sex, 2005.



Source: own compilation based on: Statistic in focus- Population and Social Conditions no 11/2006 “Labour Market Latest Trends. 4th quarter 2005”. Eurostat, 13.07.2006.

In all European Union countries, women are characterised by a greater share as for those who work part-time than men. The greatest share of women who work part-time in the

subpopulation of women was recorded in the Netherlands where as many as three fourths of women worked in such a way. More than 40% share was also recorded in Germany, Great Britain, Austria and Belgium. The smallest share (less than 10%) was registered in Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Greece and Latvia.

In the case of men, the greatest share of those who worked part-time in the total of working was recorded in the Netherlands (22,9%), Denmark (12,1%), Sweden (11,5%) as well as Great Britain (10,3%). By contrast, the smallest share was recorded in Slovakia (1,3%), the Czech Republic, Greece, Luxemburg and Hungary (between 2% and 3%).

In EU-25, women are in part-time employment 4,4 times more often (on average) than men which is shown in table 2.

Table 2. Proportion of the share of women who work part-time in the total of working women to the share of men who work part-time in the total of working men in EU-25, 2005.

	The share of men who work part-time	The share of women who work part-time	The proportion of the share of women to the share of men
Luxemburg	2,5	38,1	15,2
Austria	6,4	40,5	6,3
France	5,6	30,6	5,5
Belgium	7,4	40,5	5,5
Germany	7,9	43,8	5,5
Italy	4,8	26,1	5,4
Spain	4,4	23,3	5,3
EU-15	7,7	36	4,7
Ireland	5	22,4	4,5
Malta	4,8	21,2	4,4
EU-25	7,4	32,2	4,4
United Kingdom	10,3	42,3	4,1
the Czech Republic	2,2	8,8	4
Greece	2,5	9,6	3,8
Sweden	11,5	38,7	3,4
Slovakia	1,3	4,3	3,3
the Netherlands	22,9	74,9	3,3
Cyprus	5,3	14,1	2,7
Denmark	12,1	33,2	2,7
Estonia	4,4	10,5	2,4
Portugal	6,7	15,8	2,4
Hungary	2,6	5,6	2,2
Finland	9,3	19,3	2,1
Lithuania	5,7	10,2	1,8
Slovenia	7,2	12,5	1,7
Poland	8,2	14,2	1,7
Latvia	6,5	9,9	1,5

Source: own compilation based on chart 4.

The great diversity between women and men could be found in Luxemburg where the share of women who worked part-time with regard to the total of working women in relation to the proportion to such a share of men was 15 times greater.

Part-time employment – choice or necessity?

The answer to the question concerning the fact whether people who worked part-time had chosen such a form of employment or were forced to take up one because of high unemployment seemed to be crucial as well. Part-time employment should meet two fundamental conditions (Wratny, 2001):

1. employees should be provided with industrial safety, just as the one to which people who are employed in a traditional system are entitled;
2. a rule concerning the freedom of taking up part-time job should be respected.

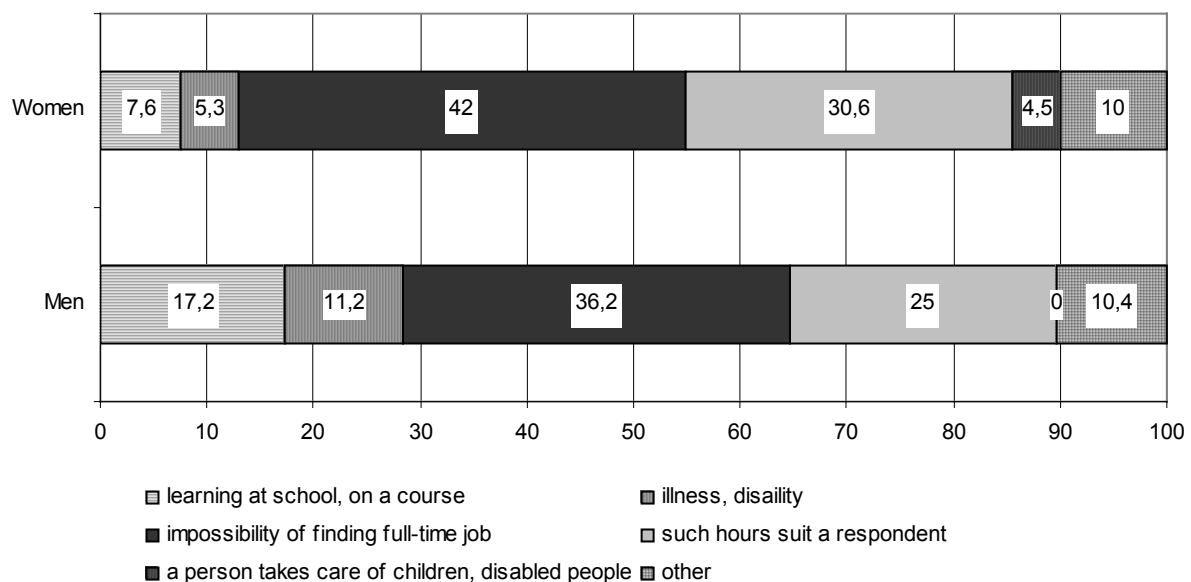
Yet, in fact, part-time job is often connected with lower earnings and slighter stability of employees (though, of course, not in all European Union countries).

Due to the lack of comparable data concerning particular EU countries, data concerning only Poland will be presented below.

If we take people working part-time in Poland into consideration, it will turn out that among employed women as many as 42% (198 000) women work part-time because of impossibility of finding full-time employment. For comparison, among hired workers, 36,2% (97 000) men work part-time because of such a situation.

Chart 5 shows the structure of hired workers who work part-time in Poland according to the reasons and sexes.

Chart 5. The structure of hired workers who work part-time in Poland according to the reasons and sexes in the 4th quarter 2004.



Source: own compilation based on GUS (2005), *Aktywność ekonomiczna ludności Polski IV kwartał 2004*, Warszawa.

To sum up, it can be stated that such a form of employment is not a choice but necessity for a great number of women and men who work part-time in Poland. Obviously,

the situation in other EU countries may be different. This depends, to a great extent, on existing legal regulations and on the situation in the labour market.

Conclusion

18,3% of all people working in EU-25 work part-time, 77,6% of whom constitute women.

The share of part-time workers in the total of working people differs in particular European Union countries. The Netherlands is a country, which is characterized by the greatest share of persons who work part-time (46,2%) in the total of working people. By contrast, the smallest share (not exceeding 5%) was recorded in Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. In addition, it should be noticed that there is a great diversity not only among particular countries but also between sexes in particular countries. In all EU countries, women are characterized by a greater share of those working part-time in the total of working than men. The greatest share of women who worked part-time was recorded in the Netherlands where as many as three fourths of women worked in such a way. The smallest share (less than 10%) was registered in Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Greece and Latvia. In EU-25, women work part-time 4,4 times more often (on average) than men. The greatest diversity between women and men could be found in Luxemburg where the share of women who worked part-time with regard to the total of working men in relation to such a share of men was 15 times greater. In contrast, it was the smallest in Latvia (1,5 times).

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