

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE – POLAND IN COMPARISON WITH SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this article is to assess the possibility of balancing work and non-work life in Poland against selected European countries.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The article employs the Z. Hellwig development pattern method. Using 11 diagnostic characteristics, a composite measure of work-life balance was derived. A ranking of 30 European countries was then compiled, based on their ability to balance work and non-work life.

**Findings:** Given the characteristics selected for this study, the capacity for work-life balance in Poland is relatively low, particularly when compared to countries like the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, and Finland. Conversely, Cyprus and Greece are notable for their especially low ability to maintain a balance between these two spheres of life.

**Research limitations/implications:** The research presented here can contribute to a more profound analysis of the factors influencing work-life balance in economic, social, and psychological terms. An intriguing avenue for future research might be to identify the potential shifts in the broadly understood work culture, especially considering the growing aspirations of younger generations to maintain a balance between work and other life activities.

**Originality/value:** The article provides a critical review of concepts related to maintaining a balance between work and non-work life, considering changes in the labor market. Based on the diagnostic characteristics chosen by the author, a composite indicator was constructed to evaluate European countries in terms of their ability to balance work and non-work life. Leaders in this area were identified, and the gap between Poland and these leading nations was assessed. The results of the research are intended for public authorities and business entities within the surveyed European countries. For the former, they may guide the creation and development of legal and economic solutions that foster a balance between work and non-work life, especially family life. This is becoming increasingly significant given the aging population and demographic crisis in European countries. For the latter, the results can offer employers insights for creating a work-life balance-oriented approach to human resource management.

**Keywords:** work-life balance, flexible forms of employment, working time reduction, Z. Hellwig method.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## 1. Introduction

The issue of work-life balance, despite being part of economic, psychological, and management science discourses for over fifty years, remains pertinent. However, its conceptualizations are evolving, largely in response to socio-economic shifts. Intensified competition due to globalization, advancements in information and communication technologies, the need to enhance labor efficiency, increasing customer demands, and fluctuating demand all contribute to the transformation of the labor market. Employees are compelled to continually improve and develop their professional skills, not only to advance in their chosen career paths but also to secure and retain employment, reducing the risk of unemployment. This leads to a de-standardization of the work life trajectory (Kotowska, 2004), increasing the amount of time devoted not just to work, but also to job acquisition and retention. This often comes at the expense of non-work activities such as family life, hobbies, and personal development.

The impact of remote work is also a point of contention. This working mode, propelled by the digitalization of the economy, the fourth industrial revolution, and more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic, has complicated work-life balance. On one hand, remote work offers time-saving benefits related to preparation and commuting, along with the flexibility to tailor work hours to individual preferences. On the other hand, it blurs the line between personal and professional life, leading to a sense of "constant work" (Sidor-Rządowska, 2021).

Remote work, by merging the workplace with the home, increasingly intertwines these two domains of human life (Sadowska-Snarska, 2014).

In highly developed European countries, efforts have been made for years to promote measures that balance work and non-work life. Countries are enacting relevant regulations, exemplified by the Directive of the European Parliament and Council (EU) 2019/1158 of June 20, 2019, on work-life balance for parents and caregivers. This directive has now been implemented in Poland.

The purpose of this article is to assess the possibility of balancing work and non-work life in Poland against selected European countries.

Our research employs the Z. Hellwig development pattern method. Based on 11 diagnostic characteristics, a composite measure was developed. This measure then served as the foundation for constructing a ranking of countries based on their ability to balance work and non-work life. The study encompassed 30 European countries.

The first part of the article offers a critical review of the work-life balance concept, while the second part presents the findings of the research. When examining the consequences of an imbalance between work and non-work life, references were made to international research and studies conducted in this field.

## 2. Work-Life Balance (WLB) – a critical review of the concept

The WLB concept originated in the United States in the 1970s. Its roots lie in the crisis of the traditional family model, where women focused their efforts on family responsibilities, and men focused on professional work. Women's emancipation, coupled with their increasing educational and professional aspirations leading to their massive entrance into the labor market, necessitated the creation of solutions to reconcile work and family life.

WLB is defined as an individual's equal involvement in work and family roles, characterized by an equal amount of time devoted to work and family commitments, and equal satisfaction derived from both roles (Greenhaus, Collins, & Show, 2003). The concept, as proposed by H. Greenhaus, K.M. Collins, and J.D. Shaw, raises several objections. Firstly, it presumes a clear boundary between work and life outside of it and even suggests competition between these two spheres of human activity, whereas they are inseparable and interpenetrate each other. Secondly, the balance between involvement in work and non-work life varies over time (depending on life cycle phase), and an imbalance does not necessarily result in lower satisfaction levels in either sphere. In this context, it is accurate to state that "when we talk about work-life balance, we mean that the individual has sufficient influence (autonomy) over when, where, and how much time they spend on tasks in both the work and non-work domains" (Machol-Zajda, 2008a). Additionally, "the idea of WLB is to help individuals find fulfillment in each of these areas, not only bringing them satisfaction, but also enhancing their capabilities and potential" (Sadowska-Snarska, 2014). Additionally, S. Friedman highlights that life is not just about the interaction between work and home, but also involves community and self (Friedman, 2014). The quality of a person's life depends on the relationships among all these domains.

Often, the relationship between work and non-work life is perceived as conflicting, stemming from the differing expectations of these two life spheres (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Another definition follows this line of thought, positing that work-life balance is a state where an individual effectively navigates potential conflicts in managing their time and energy, thereby achieving well-being and a sense of fulfillment (Clutterbuck, 2005).

This conflicting view of the relationship between work and non-work life overlooks the fact that these domains can positively interact with each other, mutually "enriching" work and non-work experiences. Here, "enrichment" refers to "the degree to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role" (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). D. Mroczkowska and M. Kubacka offered a critique of the work-life balance concept, proposing the more contemporary concept of work boundaries as a better fit for modern socio-economic conditions (Mroczkowska & Kubacka, 2020). According to these authors, work-life balance "is a kind of utopia, representing a state that is impossible to achieve under modern conditions" (Mroczkowska & Kubacka, 2020). Boundary areas, in contrast, signify the overlap of different

spheres of human functioning and the various roles individuals perform in life, which shape their experiences (Mroczkowska & Kubacka, 2020). Boundary areas are a consequence of individuals actively transitioning between work and non-work domains where "blurring" of roles is commonplace (Allen, Cho, & Meier, 2014).

### 3. Methodology of own research

The purpose of this article is to assess the possibility of balancing work and non-work life in Poland against selected European countries.

A critical review of work-life balance concepts in the literature served as the basis for developing an operational definition of this concept. For the purpose of our research, work-life balance was defined as a state in which the spheres of work and life outside of work coexist and intersect without causing disruption to an individual's function in either, allowing for personal satisfaction. It was assumed "that balance is not achieved by sacrificing certain areas of life, but rather by integrating them in such a way that all interests, needs, and responsibilities merge into one harmonious whole" (Wilson, 2012). This interpretation of balance rules out any discord between the two spheres of human life.

To evaluate the ability to balance work and non-work life, 11 diagnostic characteristics were utilized (Table 1), which formed the basis for calculating the synthetic Z. Hellwig index. The selection of diagnostic characteristics was informed by a range of criteria – substantive, formal, statistical, data availability, and the researcher's discretionary decisions.

These diagnostic characteristics were derived from a diagnostic survey conducted as part of the 2021 European Working Conditions Survey by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound, 2021). The selection of respondents in this study was random, with sample sizes ranging from 1,000 to 4,200 people per country. As Eurofound indicates, this allows for highly robust estimates at the European level that can aid in analyzing thematic modules and developing detailed secondary analyses. It also enables the collection of data and analysis on the quality of work at the national level (Eurofound, 2021). Diagnostic traits for assessing the ability to balance work and non-work life in selected countries pertain to two aspects of the phenomenon under investigation, namely, the time allocated to work and the capacity to adapt it to the respondents' needs (traits:  $x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_8$ ) and the psychophysical burden of work and family responsibilities (traits:  $x_5, x_6, x_7, x_9, x_{10}, x_{10}, x_{11}$ ). The study includes statistics for 2021.

Original research started with the creation of a statistical database and the conversion of de-stimulants into stimulants.

The diagnostic characteristics were then standardized using the so-called zero-one formula, taking into account the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the set of values of the standardized characteristic (see formula (1)).

$$Z_{ik} = \frac{x_{ik} - \bar{x}_k}{s_k} \quad (1)$$

where:

$z_{ik}$  – the standardized value of trait  $k$  in unit  $i$ ,

$x_{ik}$  – the absolute value of feature  $k$  in unit  $i$ ,

$\bar{x}_k$  – arithmetic mean of feature  $k$ ,

$s_k$  – standard deviation of feature  $k$ .

The development pattern was then defined as the object with the highest values for the stimulants.

The distance between the individual countries and the  $P_0$  object (pattern), marked as  $c_{i0}$ , was calculated using the formula:

$$c_{i0} = \sqrt{\sum_{k=1}^K (z_{ik} - z_{0k})^2} \quad (2)$$

( $i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, N$ ).

The created  $c_{i0}$  variable, according to formula (2), is not normalized. In order to meet this requirement, a so-called relative taxonomic development meter is constructed, which is calculated according to the formula:

$$d_i = 1 - \frac{c_{i0}}{c_0} \quad (3)$$

( $i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, N$ ),

where:

$$c_0 = \bar{c}_0 + 3 \cdot s_0 \quad (4)$$

$\bar{c}_0$ ,  $s_0$  – respectively the arithmetic mean and the standard deviation of the  $c_{i0}$  sequence ( $i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, N$ );

$d_i$  – synthetic indicator;

whereas:

$$\bar{c}_0 = \frac{1}{N} \cdot \sum_{i=1}^N c_{i0} \quad (5)$$

and

$$s_0 = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \cdot \sum_{i=1}^N (c_{i0} - \bar{c}_0)^2} \quad (6)$$

Synthetic measure of development  $d_i$  (3) takes values from 0 to 1. The closer the value of the  $d_i$  measure is to one, the less distant an object, in this case a country, is from the benchmark and the higher is the level of the work-life balance index.

Z. Hellwig's synthetic measure was used for identifying four groups of European countries with different levels of the work-life balance index. These are accordingly:

- 1) group I – countries with the highest level of the work-life balance index, where  $d_i \geq \bar{d}_i + S_{di}$ ,
- 2) group II – countries with an average level of the work-life balance index, where  $\bar{d}_i \leq d_i < \bar{d}_i + S_{di}$
- 3) group III – countries with a low level of the work-life balance index, where  $\bar{d}_i - S_{di} \leq d_i < \bar{d}_i$
- 4) group IV – countries with the lowest level of the work-life balance index, where  $d_i < \bar{d}_i - S_{di}$ ,

where:

$d_i$  – value of the synthetic indicator,

$\bar{d}_i$  – average value of the synthetic indicator  $d_i$ ,

$S_{di}$  – standard deviation of the indicator  $d_i$ .

**Table 1.**

*Diagnostic features adopted in the study*

Feature no.	Name of the diagnostic feature
x <sub>1</sub>	Individuals stating the need to report to work several times a week promptly when summoned by the employer.
x <sub>2</sub>	The combined number of hours worked by respondents at their primary and secondary jobs per week.
x <sub>3</sub>	Individuals stating the need to work (several times a week) during their leisure time to fulfill job requirements.
x <sub>4</sub>	Individuals expressing a significant challenge in taking 1 or 2 hours off during work time to address personal or family matters.
x <sub>5</sub>	Individuals stating that work-related fatigue prevented them from completing essential household chores over the past 12 months.
x <sub>6</sub>	Individuals stating their inability to concentrate on work due to family responsibilities.
x <sub>7</sub>	Individuals stating that they were worried about work-related matters during their leisure time in the past 12 months.
x <sub>8</sub>	Individuals stating very poor or poor ability to adjust working hours to family and social commitments.
x <sub>9</sub>	Individuals reporting emotional exhaustion from work.
x <sub>10</sub>	Individuals reporting physical exhaustion from work.
x <sub>11</sub>	Individuals reporting feelings of health and safety risks due to work.

Source: Original Research.

#### 4. Research findings – work-life balance in European countries

Own study showed a moderate degree of variation in diagnostic characteristics. The coefficient of variation ranged from 5.6% to 39.3%. European countries are notably characterized by a similar total of hours dedicated to work at primary and secondary workplaces per week. For this diagnostic characteristic, the coefficient of variation reached the lowest value. Greeks reported the highest number of working hours, i.e., 44.3 hours, while the Dutch reported the lowest, at 33 hours. The feature that most differentiated countries was the need to report promptly to an employer's call outside working hours even several times a week. This was reported primarily by residents of Romania (10% of respondents). In contrast, Lithuania had the lowest percentage of such reports (1.5%).

Considering the diagnostic features used in the study, the greatest ability to balance work and non-work life was found in six countries: the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, and Lithuania (Table 2).

Another group of seven countries (Estonia, Ireland, Slovenia, Austria, Latvia, Germany, Sweden) had an average index level, indicating fewer work-life balance opportunities (Table 2).

**Table 2.**

*Ranking of European countries in terms of work-life balance in 2021*

No.	Country	The value of the synthetic Z. Hellwig index (di)
Countries with the highest index		
1.	Netherlands	0.787
2.	Norway	0.693
3.	Denmark	0.643
4.	Finland	0.627
5.	Switzerland	0.613
6.	Lithuania	0.612
Countries with an average index		
7.	Estonia	0.595
8.	Ireland	0.550
9.	Slovenia	0.547
10.	Austria	0.519
11.	Latvia	0.506
12.	Germany	0.497
13.	Sweden	0.492
Countries with a low index		
14.	Croatia	0.455
15.	Portugal	0.451
16.	Romania	0.445
17.	Belgium	0.442
18.	Hungary	0.431
19.	Great Britain	0.421
20.	Italy	0.396
21.	Slovakia	0.393
22.	Poland	0.386

Cont. table 2.

23.	Bulgaria	0.383
24.	Spain	0.355
25.	Luxembourg	0.348
26.	Czech Republic	0.325
27.	Malta	0.324
28.	France	0.319
Countries with the lowest index		
29.	Cyprus	0.134
30.	Greece	0.063

Source: Original Research.

The largest group of countries, which also includes Poland, are those with low levels of this indicator (Table 2). Poland ranks 22nd. Z. Hellwig's index characterizing Poland was more than twice lower than that of the top-ranked country, the Netherlands. The ability to balance work and non-work life in Poland is similar to that in Slovakia and Bulgaria.

Workers in Cyprus and Greece have the lowest ability to balance work and non-work life (Table 2). It's worth noting that within this group, Greeks struggle much more to maintain a work-life balance. In their case, Hellwig's synthetic index is more than twice lower than for Cyprus.

Greece and Cyprus, whose economies are largely based on tourism services, present specific challenges. Both working time and workload are unevenly distributed in these countries, and private life and work are particularly strongly intertwined. The demands of the tourism market often require work on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, coinciding with the leisure time of other family members, especially children. This scenario hinders the family's ability to fulfill care, socialization, or integration functions. Under these conditions, achieving a sense of balance between work and life outside of work can be difficult.

#### 4.1. Work-life balance in Poland in the light of own study

In the following part of the article, the focus shifts to a detailed analysis of the situation of Polish workers in terms of the diagnostic features adopted in the survey. These features pertain to two aspects of the phenomenon under study: the time allocated to work and the possibility of adapting it to the needs of respondents, as well as the psychophysical strain of work and family responsibilities.

Working time is subject to numerous legal regulations both at national and sector-specific levels and in collective agreements, as well as in the international legislation of the European Union and conventions of the International Labor Organization. The aim of these regulations is to protect the health and safety of workers by setting minimum standards for working hours. In European Union member states, this issue is primarily regulated by Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of November 4, 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organization of working time. According to this directive, the maximum weekly working hours, including overtime, should not exceed 48 hours.



Despite a trend toward shorter formal working hours in European Union countries, they are often, in reality, extended. Several reasons contribute to the extension of working hours. On one hand, individuals fear wage reduction or job loss, particularly in environments of high unemployment. On the other hand, the desire to advance one's career also prompts longer working hours. The increasing demand for highly skilled and proficient workers, professionals in their professional fields, accompanied by high wages, keeps them working longer. For these workers, reducing their work not only implies higher unused opportunity costs, but also the necessity to curb career aspirations and a strong orientation towards career development. Consequently, highly educated individuals are more likely to experience conflict between work and personal life, finding it particularly challenging to balance both spheres (Michoń, 2015).

According to Eurostat, the average weekly working time in the European Union in 2021 was 36.4 hours. However, research by Eurofund indicates that Polish workers were working significantly longer. The total hours worked in their primary and secondary jobs were among the highest in Europe, averaging 41.5 hours. Only Greeks (44.3 hours), Cypriots (42.2 hours), and Czechs (41.3 hours) reported a higher number of working hours in contrast, Dutch workers reported the fewest working hours, with 33 hours per week, which is more than 8 hours less than in Poland. The relatively lower number of working hours in the Netherlands can be attributed to a higher proportion of part-time workers.

Regrettably, work often "invades" employees' leisure time. The research shows that the necessity to work during free time, even several times a week, is a common feature across all countries. Formal working hours often fall short for the tasks and responsibilities that employees are assigned. This phenomenon is most pronounced in Greece, with over 25% of Greeks reporting having to surrender their leisure time for work multiple times during the week. In Poland, 15% of employees reported similar situations.

Availability is now a standard requirement for employment. Unfortunately, it can disrupt the balance between work and non-work life, particularly when employers excessively impose it. This is evident in survey results indicating that a substantial percentage of respondents in many countries are obliged to report to work swiftly multiple times a week upon their employer's request. Workers in Romania (10.5%) and Greece (9.7%) were most likely to face this situation, while Lithuanians (1.5%) were least likely. In Poland, such workers accounted for just over 5%.

In this context, it's worth citing the conclusions of international studies advocating for reducing working hours. These studies affirm that shorter working hours generally increase productivity (Bosch & Lehndorff, 2001),(Golden, 2012).

J.H. Pencavel differentiated between nominal and effective working hours and suggested that reducing nominal working hours can increase so-called effective working hours, leading to enhanced labor productivity (Pencavel, 2018). Studies also confirm the positive impact of shorter working hours on health and life satisfaction, which in turn reduces absenteeism at

work (Albertsen, 2008). Long working hours increase the risk of developing depression, with those working more than 11 hours a day facing risks 2.5 times higher than those working 7-8 hours (Virtanen, Stansfeld, Fuhrer, Ferrie, & Kivimäki, 2012).

Flexibility in forms of employment and working hours is considered a factor in maintaining a balance between work and non-work life. However, it's crucial to note that this is only applicable to so-called positive flexibility, that is, when the employee chooses the form of employment and working hours to suit their own preferences. Situations where an employer enforces flexible solutions of their own preference, motivated solely by their own interests, can hardly be viewed as promoting a balance between work and non-work life. These instances are a manifestation of negative flexibility, which often means working on short-term contracts or reduced hours (in the absence of alternative choices), during inconvenient or extended hours, with no opportunity for the employee to object (Machol-Zajda, 2008). It can also entail frequent overtime work, whether compensated financially or through time off, and unpredictable alterations in work schedules (Machol-Zajda, 2008).

The study also addressed the issue of the so-called positive flexibility of working hours. Countries like Poland, Greece, Cyprus, and Bulgaria have a relatively high percentage of workers who report a limited ability to adjust their working hours to accommodate family and social obligations. Over 27% of Poles made such a declaration. The highest percentage of such workers were in Greece (30.4%), Cyprus (28.9%), and Bulgaria (27.6%). Conversely, the Netherlands (9.4%) and Denmark (11.1%) had the fewest, suggesting that these countries have the highest levels of positive working time flexibility. A relatively high percentage of Poles, 24.8%, also reported problems with taking 1 or 2 hours off during work to take care of personal or family matters. By comparison, the Netherlands had the fewest individuals with this problem, at 10.2%.

The disruption of the balance between work and non-work time adversely affects an individual's functionality across all activities. It hinders the fulfillment of family and social responsibilities, leisure time, and the development of passions and interests. Often, an intense commitment to work, coupled with high professional ambitions and perfectionism, leads to a compulsion to ponder work-related tasks, even after work hours. This risk is particularly high among white-collar workers engaged in non-standard, conceptual work. In such situations, balancing work and broader non-work life becomes difficult, increasing the likelihood of professional burnout.

Survey results clearly indicate a relatively high percentage of respondents who reported concern over work-related issues in their free time. Luxembourgers (44%), Croats (40.5%), and Cypriots (38.3%) reported the highest numbers. On the other hand, Austrians (15%) and the Dutch (15.4%) reported the lowest numbers. In Poland, the figure stood at 27.4%.

Working under time pressure is a characteristic of current economic processes. This is evident in the labelling of modern organizations as always "in a hurry" (Pluta, 2015). The push for maintaining a competitive edge places organizations in a perpetual race against

time. These "hurried organizations" need to meet their commitments faster, collecting information on the development of new products, services, and processes, executing ambitious projects, innovating, and responding to specific customer demands subject to ever-changing trends as quickly as possible (Pluta, 2015).

Even though there is a progressive shortening of formal working hours to harmonize work and personal life, the pace of professional work simultaneously intensifies. This intensification is marked by work overload, multitasking, constant shifts in the nature of work and responsibilities, and the requirement of constant availability. How can one meet this challenge during ever-shrinking working hours? Paradoxically, the collision of these two processes – the reduction of working hours and the intensification of work's pace – incites frustration, emotional tension, and stress, leading to mental and physical exhaustion. As a result, the actual working time becomes noticeably longer than the formal one set by the current legal rules. Under these conditions, a harmonious and rewarding balance between work and non-work life is challenging to attain.

The survey results clearly indicate disruptions in the balanced functioning of employees in their work and personal life spheres. According to respondents, work responsibilities interfere with their family life. In Poland, 24% of workers reported that work fatigue had hindered them from performing necessary housework in the past 12 months, a rate more than 10 percentage points higher than in Slovenia and the Netherlands. Workers in Cyprus and Greece most frequently reported an inability to complete household chores due to work fatigue, with 41.9% of Cypriots and 36.3% of Greeks making such declarations. In all surveyed countries, the percentage of people reporting a negative impact of family life on fulfilling their work duties was significantly lower. The inability to concentrate on work due to family obligations was highest among Greeks (15%) and Cypriots (13.4%), and lowest among Danes (3.4%) and Finns (4.8%). In Poland, 9.4% of respondents made such declarations.

It's concerning that a relatively high number of workers feel that their work poses a threat to their health and safety. In Poland, over 37% of employees expressed such worries, while the highest number of such declarations was made by Spaniards (49.4% of employees). The Netherlands and Denmark had the lowest percentages of this concern, in both cases around 20%. It's therefore crucial to deepen research to identify the factors that cause employees to feel such threats.

Workers report both physical and mental exhaustion due to work. In Poland, nearly 20% of workers reported physical exhaustion, while 6% reported emotional exhaustion. Italy had the highest percentage of people reporting physical exhaustion, which was more than 11 percentage points higher than in Poland. Emotional exhaustion was most frequently reported by Cypriots (10% of respondents), and least frequently by the Dutch (1.8%).

## 5. Conclusion

Poland is characterized by a relatively low level of opportunities for maintaining a balance between work and personal life. This imbalance is exacerbated by a high number of working hours and limited opportunities for flexibly adjusting work schedules to accommodate employees' non-work responsibilities. This prevents the completion of necessary household tasks and creates a perception of health and safety risks.

In contrast, the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries, namely Norway, Denmark, and Finland, distinctly excel in implementing solutions that help maintain a balance between work and other facets of employees' lives. The success of these countries lies in a work culture rooted in social trust, marked by a high degree of development and utilization of flexible forms of employment and working hours. An individualized approach to employees, focusing not only on their professional development but also on supporting their personal life, fosters an atmosphere of cooperation, kindness, and support, which in turn generates a sense of security and well-being.

It's also worth noting that achieving a balance between work and personal life significantly depends on the values and choices of individual workers. Some prioritize family and personal life, treating work as a means to an end, while for others, work itself is an end in itself, and all other life activities are subordinated to it. Although maintaining equilibrium among all facets of human activity is most conducive to harmonious social, mental, and physical development, individuals often make choices that disrupt this balance. They misallocate their intellectual, emotional, and physical resources, subjecting themselves to stress and frustration, either due to work overload or frustration stemming from unmet career aspirations.

The pursuit of a balanced work-life becomes more pertinent in wealthier societies with relatively high levels of material needs satisfaction. This shift is evident in the attitudes of young Europeans entering the job market today. They are notably critical of the values held by their grandparents and parents, for whom work and career advancement were seen as paths to high material status and social advancement. Today's young workers are less willing to significantly subordinate their personal lives to work. The 2022 Randstad international survey reveals that nearly 60% of workers aged 18-24 are willing to quit their jobs if it hinders their enjoyment of life (Randstad, 2023). At the same time, as many as 38% of Generation Z employees have quit their jobs because they did not align with their personal lives (Randstad, 2023). These attitudes among young people necessitate a shift in employers' approaches to human capital management, which is crucial for gaining a competitive edge. Flexible hiring and reduced working hours are just the first steps in this transition. Another critical shift involves building partnerships based on mutual respect for the interests and needs of both employers and employees, participatory management, and the establishment of an organizational culture centered on humanistic values—respect, trust, and a sense of community.

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