

Social Quality and the Policy Domain of Employment

Belgian National Report

Hoger Instituut van de Arbeid

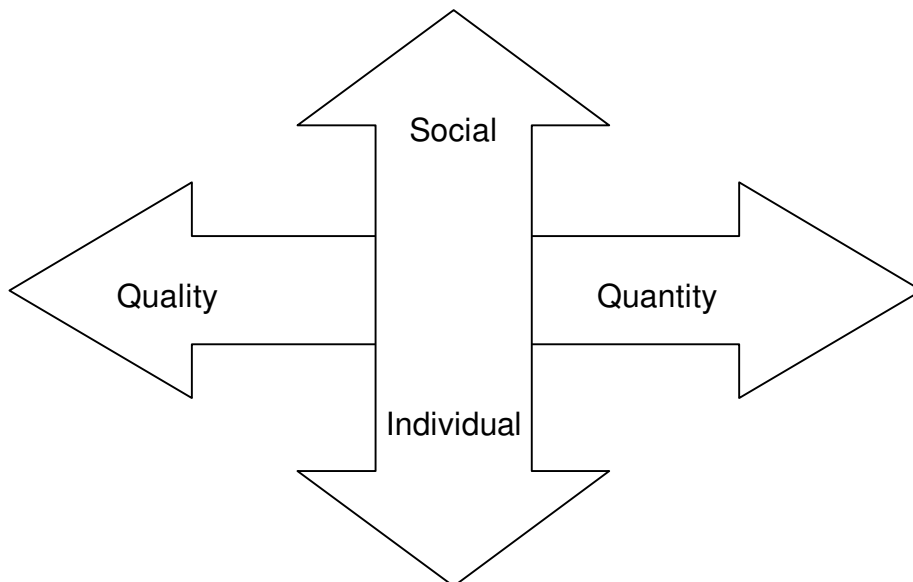
By Prof.dr. J. Pacolet and A. Marchal

Leuven, 29 April 2002

1. Introduction

What's in a name? 'Social quality' is an attractive although unclear concept. It appeals for notions of post-industrial, beyond quantitative and material, aspiration, aiming at qualitative, immaterial goals and it calls for 'social' aspects, beyond individualistic preoccupations and oriented towards collective and solidaristic considerations. We could schematise this in two dimensions in which the notion of social quality is situated in the upper left quadrant. Is that really the content of this 'container concept' and does it reflect by that the present everyday reality?

Figure 1: Two dimensions of social quality



The concept of social quality is adapted (or rather adopted) for the labour market in 'flexicurity'. We will discover that this includes to a large extent both ends of the dimensions or that the notion is not what it seems to be.

At the end of the nineties, or for some the end of the last century or millennium, we could observe in the Belgian economy a high level of social protection, sometimes even after decades of a public discourse on less state and for most of the last decennia had known continued positive economic growth, with even an upsurge at the last years of the nineties. But at the same time the full employment once realised in the early seventies remained there as a lost paradise, leaving us with a large number of people not (more) active in the labour market, or with a substantial group left with permanent insecurity and the other group with increased threat of insecurity and pressure for more

flexibility. This double dependency created an additional pressure on the welfare state and public finances to accommodate those shifts in traditional ways (unemployment benefits, early pensions, training, family support, additional fiscal and parafiscal incentives) but also in new ways (new personal services, new forms of combining work and family life, paid informal care and childhood allowances, time credits). The traditional role of the state and in particular the welfare state in this context of insuring and financing certain individual risks and needs of life, over the life and family cycle, consisted in socialising the risk premiums. The traditional risks seemed to remain here, but new individual needs are formulated and even fulfilled. Many of them are still related with the life cycle; others are determined by the needs of the economy or the need for self-fulfilment or a symbiosis of both (training and lifetime learning). The socialization of those new needs illustrates the dawn of a better and better welfare state ('toujours davantage') but can they be too the detriment of the existing welfare state, entering a twilight zone (Götterdämmerung) of the traditional welfare state?

2. Working force and the quality of the industrial structure

In 2001 the Belgian workforce reached 4,4 million persons of which around 4 million were active, as employer or self-employed. Another 0,4 million were unemployed in a narrow sense. More than 1/3 of the employment is situated in the public sector or so called quaternary sector. In the last quarter of the century (1973-1999), and counted in FTE, the employment in the market sector declined with almost 15 %; the job volume in the quaternary sector increased with 65 %. The total salaried job volume remained constant over that period so that it was completely supported by the expansion of the public sector, first by expanding administration and education, later by expansion of the health sector and in the last decade the social and the cultural sector (Pacolet, 2001). The employment in self employed jobs reduced slightly but is, from a European perspective, on a high level. The same goes for the public employment. Belgium situates close to the Scandinavian countries with regard to the public employment, and compares the Mediterranean countries for the number of self-employed jobs (Pacolet J. and Van Damme B., 2002).

The public sector represents to a large extend not only the classical state functions, but it contains also more and more and better-staffed services of the so called welfare state. It gives even the impression that the public services first continued to develop their own services (in kind services, but not so high as the Scandinavian welfare state) at the detriment of better replacement income. Only at the end of the nineties some debate emerged about the need to improve the replacement ratio of the social transfers. The majority of those public jobs are of a high standard and secure nature but nevertheless a relatively high part of the public employment was until recently situated in so called active employment programmes of a more (although in relative terms) precarious nature. But even there regularisation is taking place.

The public sector is good for 50 % of the female employment, compared with 23 % of the male employment, especially for the health and caring sector, but also for education. A policy of job creation in this sector meant almost identical job creation for women, implying an implicit positive discrimination for female employment (Federaal ministerie van Tewerkstelling en Arbeid, 2002, p. 26).

Table 1: Labour force in Belgium, 1997–2001 (Estimate and prospects)

Labour force, the employment and unemployment (in thousands)	June 1997	June 1999 (estimate)	June 2000 (estimate)	June 2001 (prospects)
A. Employed labour force	3,807.3	3,896.1	3,946.6	3,997
1. Wage earners	3,055	3,151.1	3,202.6	3,255
1.1 Private sector	2,082.1	2,153.9	2,200.0	2,252
a. Standard employment	2,047.2	2,119	2,164.0	2,210
b. Programmes of re-employment	34.9	34.9	36	42
1.2 Public Sector	972.9	997.2	1,002.6	1,003
a. Standard employment	825.8	840	842.0	844
b. Programmes of re-employment	99.2	117.2	122.6	123
c. Armed force	47.9	40	38	36
2. Self-employed and helpers	699.9	690	688	685
3. Cross border work (net)	52.4	55	56	57
B. Unemployed labour force	540.6	475.1	439.1	403
1. Unemployed people entitled to a benefit	456.7	394.7	361.8	330
2. Obligated registered unemployed (not working)	62.2	57.7	51.4	50
3. Voluntary registered unemployed (not working)	21.7	22.7	25.9	23
C. Total of labour force (A + B)	4,347.9	4,371.2	4,385.7	4,400
Degree of unemployment (in %)	12.4	10.9	10	9.2
Degree of employment (in %)	56.8	58	58.8	59.5
Degree of activity (age of 15-64) (%)	64.9	65.1	65.3	65.5

Source: Federaal ministerie van Arbeid en Tewerkstelling, Het federaal werkgelegenheidsbeleid, evaluatierapport 2000, p. 39.

Table 2: Evolution of the paid employment in Belgium, in number and FTE, 1973-1999

	1973	1982	1992	1997	1999
<i>A. Employment (in number)</i>					
Agriculture	11,900	11,206	15,678	30,104	31,388
Energy	67,900	61,177	36,368	36,486	38,019
Industry	1,018,100	790,909	708,441	636,082	636,607
Building industry	,253,100	189,327	191,785	184,469	187,633
Service sector	1,020,600	882,336	1,119,948	1,207,982	1,261,984
Quaternary sector	,688,803	930,430	1,086,795	1,152,175	1,200,625
Market sector	2,371,600	1,934,955	2,072,220	2,095,123	2,155,631
Total	3,060,403	2,865,385	3,159,015	3,247,298	3,356,256
<i>B. Employment in FTE: supposing 60%*</i>					
Agriculture	11,833	10,185	14,249	26,738	29,203
Energy	67,520	60,391	35,901	35,394	36,331
Industry	1,012,399	776,325	695,377	623,106	621,838
Building industry	251,683	186,934	189,361	182,241	185,306
Service sector	994,881	805,749	1,022,737	1,087,667	1,124,680
Quaternary sector	636,454	826,706	965,639	1,019,444	1,045,504
Market sector	2,338,315	1,839,584	1,957,625	1,955,146	1,997,359
Total	2,974,769	2,666,290	2,923,264	2,974,591	3,042,863

* To convert to FTE we accept as a hypothesis the working ratio for a part-time employee of 60%

Source: Pacolet J., 2002.

Table 3: Salaried employment per sector of activity in 1999

Sector of activity	Men (in 1,000)	Women (in 1,000)	Total (in 1,000)	Part of women	Structure in %
Agriculture	62	34	96	35.4	2
Industry	835	192	1,027	18.7	11.4
Mines and stone quarry	10	-	10	-	-
Processing industry	575	164	739	22.2	9.8
Electricity/gas/water	25	4	29	13.8	2
Building industry	225	23	248	9.3	1.4
Services	1,408	1,456	2,864	50.8	86.6
Of which public administration	206	160	366	43.7	9.5
Other public services	335	689	1,024	67.3	41
Total	2,306	1,682	3,988	42.2	100

Source: Eurostat in Federaal ministerie van Arbeid en Tewerkstelling, Belgisch rapport over de kwaliteit van de arbeid, 2002, p. 26.

3. Employment level

With an activity degree of the population at active age of 65.5 %, the Belgian activity degree is one of the lowest in the European Union. Table 3 compares this activity degree according to age and gender with the Lisbon – objectives of the European Union. The way to reach this objective will be hard, not only for Belgium but also for Europe. Correcting for part time work the situation is even comparable for Belgium and the EU. The Belgian National Bank even stipulates that within the next ten year the double of jobs in proportion to the number realised under the past economic boom, needs to be created, supposing that this high labour market participation can be obtained. We believe this seems even to be unfeasible within the present labour market regime, reminding the track record of the past 25 years where industrial change caused a decline of market jobs and only the public sector and the welfare state could take care for the needed job expansion, well below the level to realise full employment,. We will come back to this when arguing for more fundamental redistribution of work. If Belgium wants to succeed in this effort, it would have to create yearly jobs for about 80,000 persons, knowing that it succeeded in only 40,000 places in the second half of the nineties and a boom year 2000 meant ‘only’ 62,000. The National Bank of Belgium calls it ‘extremely ambitious’ (Jaarverslag Nationale Bank , 2001, p. 61-62).

Table 4: The employment rates in Belgium and the European challenge

	Employment rates in 1995/2000				Targets to be obtained by the EU	
	Belgium 1995	Belgium 2000	EU 1995	EU 2000	Lisbon targets 2005	Lisbon targets 2010
Total population		60.9		63.1	67	70
Total men	67.4					
In FTE	66.4	74.4				
Total women	45.7	51.9		53.8	57	60
In FTE	39.1	46.6				
Persons between 55 - 64		25		37.5	-	50

Source: National Bank of Belgium, Report 2001, p 59.; federaal ministerie van Tewerkstelling en Arbeid, 2002, p. 40.

Compared to some other countries the female participation is low as again can be observed from the above table; it is relative in a middle position for the part-time work (NBB of HRW, 2001). The relative low labour market participation of the women is because of former generations with a relative low level of labour market participation (only 50 %). Remarkable is that they, once entered the labour market, stayed in the labour market until pension age. New cohorts of women now are characterised by higher levels of labour market participation, and they will remain active, so that the labour market - participation will increase systematically, although probably not fast enough to reach the Lisbon objectives.¹ Going together with this younger age structure is probably the effect that the qualification of active women is substantially higher for women than for men, and higher than the European level (Federaal ministerie van Tewerkstelling en Arbeid, 2002, p 22). Nevertheless in Belgium the number of persons declaring they are performing their job under stress is 23 % (compared to 28% in EU) and 40% says that their work has some influence on their health (compared with 57 % in the EU) (Federaal ministerie van Tewerkstelling en Arbeid, 2002, p. 33). The most remarkable is the increase of people declaring they are working under high pressure (for at least 25 % of their labour time). From 1990 until 2000 this increased from 44 until 52 %, but in the EU this level went up from 48 till 56% (Federaal ministerie van Tewerkstelling en Arbeid, 2002, p. 34).

So the Belgian labour market is characterised by a low level of participation and by the implied insecurity for the huge amount of persistent unemployment (see further) and at the same time we observe an increased job stress.

How to cope with new demands for more free time? Since the early eighties, the debate about generalised labour time reduction did not gain any momentum. Not even now when there is a generalised 38 hours week, and in reality labour time is in many cases even higher. The total number of yearly worked hours remains rather stable for the conventional hours, and it is only reduced by an increase of part time work. As mentioned earlier, this resulted in a stabilisation of the total employed FTE (over 25 years), allowing some increase of the persons working. It nevertheless gives the impression that part-time work is more forced by labour demand, than by the needs of the workforce. The part-time is substantially higher for women (but on EU average) and increases with age for women but not for men (Federaal ministerie van Tewerkstelling en Arbeid, 2002, p. 38). Some 20 % of the part-time working men and 53 % of women says that their choice is inspired for personal reasons and childcare; 34 % of men and 21 % of women state they did not find a full time job.

¹ It will increase in this decade also because until 1996 the pension age for women in the private sector was 60 and will gradually increase to 65 by the year 2009 (Pensioenzakboekje, 2001, p.69).

4. Quality of contracts and dimensions of flexibility

Compared with the EU, the structure of the Belgian employment is of high quality: this means a relative low level of temporary work, of which almost half is for a determined period, 17 % is interim work, and 9.3 % is a job in a local employment agency.

The number of temporary unemployment is declining, not only in recent years of high economic growth, but also structurally because of the increase of interim labour (which is used relatively more for low qualified jobs than for high skilled labour) and by the almost doubling of temporary jobs (between 1995 and 2000) (from 5 % to 9 %). Also part-time work continued to increase.

Table 5: Atypical labour in Belgium, 2000

	Part time	Undefined period	Temporary contracts	of which for defined period	interim	local employment agency	education	other
<i>Men</i>								
Aged 15-24	11.5	71.9	28.1					
Aged 25-49	4.3	95.2	4.8					
Aged 50 +	6.8	97.6	2.4					
Total				41.5	22.2	3.6	14.4	18.4
<i>Women</i>								
Aged 15-24	29.2	65.7	34.3					
Aged 25-49	38.9	89.4	10.6					
Aged 50 +	43.9	94.9	5.1					
Total				49.9	13.1	9.3	9	18.5

Source: Eurostat in Federaal Ministerie van Tewerkstelling en Arbeid, Rapport over de kwaliteit van de arbeid, 2002, p.37-39

Together with some other countries, we did not create neither too much low productivity jobs, nor (too) low income jobs. Already since 1975 minimum wages are guaranteed.

The interim sector for instance increased from 1985 until 2000 from 50,591 until 303,722 persons, good for around 71,395 FTE in 2000 or 575,500 interim jobs (Delmotte, Van Hootegeem, Dejonckheere, 2001, p. 33 – 34.). This was a net increase of interim labour in 2000 (in FTE) of 8,734.

Compared with the gross inflows of the labour market in 2000 of 578,000, as documented in Delmotte, Van Hootegem and Dejonckheere, the 575,500 interim jobs comes to 49.5 of the grand total of both, what is an impressive share (*Ibidem*, p. 16 and 18) (see also point 5). But the average FTE-job is 0.12 or equivalent to 1.5 month. To put this extremely flexible jobs further in perspective, interim- work is estimated according to the Labour Force survey as 1.5 % of total employment in 2000 (HRW, June 2001, p. I-7). In that same year the job increase in salaried employment was 70,000 persons (some 60,000 FTE) meaning that the interim sector could provide some 15 % of net job growth. Both elements illustrate its growing importance.

From 1975 on a guaranteed average minimum income of at that time 404.56 € in nominal terms to become (figure 1998) 1074.44 € nowadays was installed, what is in purchasing power almost 50.4 % of median gross wage (Federaal ministerie van Tewerkstelling en Arbeid, 2002, p. 60, 67). More remarkable is however that in real terms this minimum wage only increased from 1975 until 1998 with 5.9 %, so the 'generosity' (if it was one) did not kept pace with real growth of the economy. From this period (1974) dated also the minimum income, for a couple situated at 133.17 € in 1974 to reach 691.33 € in 1998, a legal guaranteed income that remains below the threshold of national or international accepted poverty lines (Federaal ministerie van Tewerkstelling en Arbeid, 2002, p. 64-66), but nevertheless guaranteeing a level of poverty relative lower in a European comparative way (6 % of the population according to Eurostat- standards).

Some in depth analysis of the 'flexicurity' (or is it only flexibility) in the Belgian labour market has been published recently. Flexicurity is defined by those authors (Forrier, Sels a.o., 2002, p. 95) as well determined by the interest of the employer as the employee. But in reality they distinguish only a substantial presence of forms to the benefit of the employer (although it can be beneficial for both, a.o. the part-time jobs). Table 6 illustrates how as well the so called contractual flexibility as time flexibility increased in the last decade (Van der Steene, Sels, a.o., 2002, p. 26). Rigidity in certain characteristics of the labour conditions can bypassed by other forms. So it is observed that temporary contracts are more used the more the fixed contract is better protected. Temporary contracts are more present in the quaternary sector than in the private sector, and within that private sector it is more present for white collar workers than for blue collar workers (Sels L., Van der Steene a.o., 2002, p. 23.). Fortunately the wage differences between temporary and permanent contracts are the less where it is the most widely spread, as it is the case in the quaternary sector (L. Sels, H. De Witte e.a., 2002, p. 53,54). For another becoming popular form of flexibility over almost the complete line of additional compensation elements, the interim labour, its situation is worse of (Sels, De Witte, e.a., 2002, p. 39). Forrier A., Sels a.o. (2002, p. 102 –104) describe well the disadvantages of the present forms of flexicurity and it should be attempted to give more 'security to flexibility' (as in the Dutch law

on 'Flexibiliteit en zekerheid'). But even this law seems to be limited in its ambition (some more security for the interim labour, at the cost of faster procedure for dismissal for the rest) and result (no substantial decline in the offer of those jobs). The authors conclude that the Belgian possibilities of flexibility (including temporary unemployment) seems to be 'a valuable alternative' (L. Sels, T. Van der Steene, e.a., 2002, p. 47-50). But perhaps the most important observation from this study is that in Flanders/Belgium it is said that 'lifetime employment' is perhaps going to be replaced by 'lifetime employability'. In any case the high acceptance in job mobility of the temporary workers is explained by their search ... for stable employment. The classical career with one employer and with job security did not disappear from the ambition of the workforce, not even from those who (temporarily) accepted a temporary job.

Table 6: Evolution of some indicators in flexibility in Belgium, 1990-2000, as a % of total concerned group or index

	1990	2000
Contractual flexibility		
Temporary contracts	5.9 %	10.3%
Interim contract	1.07%	1.9%
Index vacancies fixed jobs	100	139.9
Index vacancies temporary jobs	100	329.4
Employment programmes	100	132.6
Temporary contract (% of total), Flanders		45%
Time flexibility		
Part time work	12.59	19.76
Because of family reason, for women		46.9
Temporary unemployment		declined
Interruption of career		Increased

5. Persisting unemployment

The high level of unemployment reveals the macro-economic flexibility of the Belgian economy (industrial change) at the expense of individual insecurity and the public purse. It is in the yearly reports of the Unemployment Insurance (RVA) that the real size and burden for Belgium can be discovered. Synthesising some information in table 7 illustrates that besides some 380 000 unemployed persons in a narrow definition, some 600 000 other persons are withdrawn from the labour market in one regime or another and are receiving some benefit from the unemployment insurance system. In annex those figures are somewhat reduced by using 'some' 'full time equivalent number'.

The state prevented that the industrial change, the transition of the industrial 'tissue' described in chapter 1 resulted in massive employment by expanding the public employment, by means of the further development of the welfare state. It could however not prevent all unemployment, on the contrary this continued to grow in total numbers in the seventies and eighties and remained at that high level in the nineties, including many opportunities for exit from the labour market (forced or sometimes more unclear if it is voluntary exit). The burden of this unemployment remains high, perhaps even not so much in terms of money (that remains in spending as a share of GDP rather low and may explain why there is not a persistent ambition to reduce unemployment), but especially in terms of waste of human resources, as illustrated above. Also the number of persons aged 50 years and more is extremely high: some 354 640, as large as the narrow definition of unemployment, but not any more counted as such. The 37 679 persons employed in the local employment agencies in 2001 provide 1,1 million hours per month or a FTE of about 8000 jobs (RVA, Statistisch Jaarboek, 2001, p. 240-241). Some of them remain in employment programmes.

Compared with the EU the Belgian labour market seems to be characterised with some rigidities. This is not so much a matter of sectoral mobility but there seems to be a substantial discrepancy between qualifications and regions (National Bank Belgium, Report 2001, p. 58). Unemployment between Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels differs from 5.1 %, 12.4 % and 15.8 % and on the level of qualifications there is a persistence of vacancies for certain qualifications (not fulfilled) and unemployment for others. Training but also lack of sensitivity of the education system for the needs of the labour market may explain those discrepancies (for instance observed in the caring sector). But there might be another element to explain this paradox. In the growing interest for the transitions in the Belgian labour market (see further) it is observed that there seems to be a growing number of transitions within the labour market, shopping from one job to another creating vacancies but not necessarily for net new/additional jobs (see further, point 5, Delmotte J., Van Hootgemem G.,

Dejonckheere J., 2001). It can even be an indicator for substituting one type of labour by another. We observed this phenomena in some health care sectors for instance where net more younger people were hired (direct from school) in the hospital sector while mid age categories left the sector probably to other caring sectors and finally the older categories left, probably to the pension phase of life (Pacolet J., Van De Putte I., Marchal A., 2002). Going together with this gross flows was in the end a much lower total net growth of jobs and also a observable shift from lower qualified personnel to higher qualified. A distinction has to be made between in- and outflows induced by the workers in view of their life cycle and career, and the flows caused by demand of industrial change.

Table 7: Total number of unemployment in Belgium, in persons, 2001

	Total	50 – 55	55 – 60	60 – 65	Total 50-65
<i>1. Unemployed in search of work entitled to an allowance of the RVA</i>					
After labour	271,271	20,314	12,308	2,846	35,468
After studies	108,101	3	1	0	4
Total	379,372	20,316	12,309	2,846	35,471
<i>2. Unemployed not in search of work entitled to an allowance of the RVA</i>					
Older unemployed	147,919	55,358	62,910	29,651	14,7919
Social and familial problems	9,214	19	1	0	20
Other exemptions	12,722	195	60	7	262
Full-time early retirement	109,950	7,158	36,919	65,874	109,951
Full-time interruption of career	29,885	2,027	1,693	80	3,800
Total	309,689	64,757	101,582	95,612	261,951

Table 7: Total number of unemployment in Belgium, in persons, 2001 (Continued)

	Total	50 – 55	55 – 60	60 – 65	Total 50-65
<i>3. Employed entitled to an allowance of the RVA</i>					
Part-time employees while retaining rights and guarantee of income benefits	38,071	2,620	1,137	233	3,990
Unemployed people with exemption RVA	16,396	364	32	5	401
Unemployed with exemption for professional training	10,176	133	33	2	168
Employees in sheltered workshops	699	60	23	6	89
Temporary unemployed	130,230	12,078	4,507	451	17,036
Half-time early retirement	1,214	0	1,014	200	1,214
Part time interruption of career	82,109	21,158	10,811	1,050	33,019
Total	278,895	36,413	17,557	1,947	55,917
<i>4. Measures of activation</i>					
Doorstromingsprogramma's	5,665	169	43	2	214
Dienstenbaan	10,333	776	191	29	996
Sociale inschakelingseconomie	815	70	21	2	93
Banenplanuitkering	56	7	1	0	8
Begeleidingsuitkering	550	0	0	0	0
Total	17,419	1,022	256	33	1,311
5. Total	985,375	122,508	13,1704	100,438	354,650

Source: RVA, Statistisch Jaarboek 2001

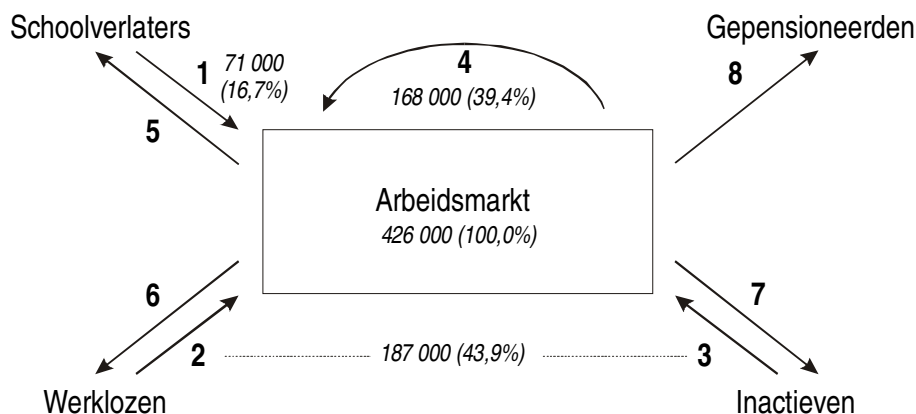
6. The emerging debate on 'flexicurity' in theory ...

The concept of 'flexicurity' and the related concept of 'transitional labour market' has become very popular in Belgium and in the Netherlands (see a.o. van den Heuvel N., Holderbeke F., Wielers R. red., 2001). At least in Flanders, labour market studies (for instance the 2002 research programme on the labour market) are launched under the heading of 'transitional labour markets' (Viona Onderzoeksprogramma 2002, p. 2 and annexes). It illustrates the growing attention for combination of work and family life, but also other aspects of (lifelong) learning and retirement are considered.

6.1 Gross and net entry and exit in the Belgian and Flemish labour market

For Flanders and Belgium those transitional phases where the population at active age are situated are summarised in following scheme.

Figure 2: Mobility on the Belgian labour market



Source: Denolf L., Denys J., Simoens P. (1998)

The interest for those transitions in the labour market dates however from earlier periods. Those earlier studies also indicate a lesser degree of flexibility compared to other countries. Studies of B. Vanderlinden and HIVA on the gross and net changes in labour supply and demand in work force and jobs based on administrative data and survey (summarised in Centrale Raad voor het Bedrijfsleven-NAR, 2000, p. 98-103) show a substantial job destruction and job creation ratio's in the Belgian economy, but nevertheless it seems to be less than in for instance the USA (p. 102). Due to a substantial group of long term unemployment, also the population of unemployed compared to other countries is rather stable. Due to different methodologies and definitions, it is not clear how those

dynamics of employment are changing. Based on measurements and surveys of HIVA, there seems to be a growing turnover in labour market what could indicate a growing flexibility (Delmotte J., Van Hootegeem G., Dejonckheere J., 2001). The question is if we should call it flexibility (demand or supply induced) or should we call it 'volatility', becoming typical for a faster and faster path of industrial change.

6.2 The 'transitional labour market' as an analytical device

The concept of 'transitional labour market' (Schmid, 1998) has become a point of reference in Flanders for research but perhaps also for political debate. Hereafter we quote some of the elements retained in the Flemish research programme 2002 on the labour market (VIONA). Above we give some information of the flows of people in the labour market that were already documented. In annex some additional information is given for Flanders. They show a substantial and apparently growing number of transition between the various phases. Perhaps they underestimate even the flexibility.

Box.1 'Transitional labour markets' as an analytical device

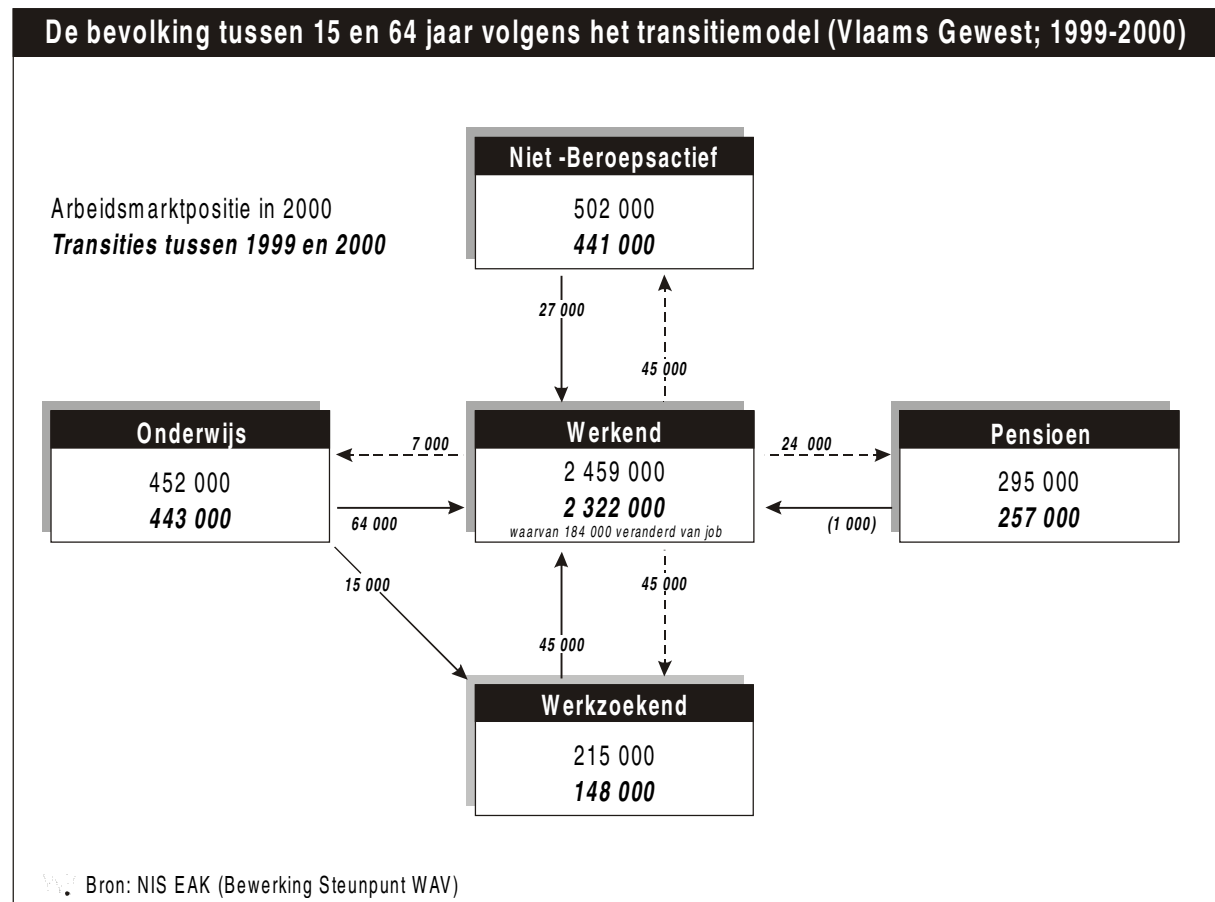
'Transitional labour markets' would be the complementary element to the innovation and investment strategy required to solve the employment crisis in Europe. They are defined as institutionalised arrangements which allow or support the change of the employment status or the combination of labour market work with other socially (and to some extent even economically) useful activities. Important elements of such a strategy are the combination of working time reduction with life-long learning, the use of explicit wage subsidies for lower income groups or hard-to-place people, and legally or contractually bargained entitlements to transitional employment. Such transitional labour markets would also serve as a flexible buffer which expand in periods of recession and contract during booms."

To summarise in operative terms, transitional labour markets are characterised by four principles:

- From an organisational point of view, they are a combination of gainful employment and other useful social activities that are not valued on the market;
- from an income point of view, they are a combination of wages, transfer payments and other income sources;
- from a social policy point of view, they are legally, collectively or privately contracted entitlements to opt for transitional employment;

from a fiscal point of view, transitional labour markets finance employment or other useful activities instead of unemployment.

Source: Schmid, 1998, quoted in the Viona Research Programme Flanders 2002.



6.3 Transition or combination of work and family

T. Van Den Brande (2002) compared Belgium with some other EU-member states for those transitions, with information of the Labour Force Survey. The conclusion was that Belgium had a rather traditional and rather stable life cycle pattern for those transitions. The situation for the large majority of the population remains the same and transitions goes from school to work to pensions. Perhaps is the quality, or security, of this transitions to be found in the stability of this, we would even call it natural (?), life cycle pattern.

The transitions described above seems to be in number of persons. The notion of transitional labour markets calls for two way tickets. The transitions need not be permanent or can be part time. This brings us even closer to the changing character of the new labour market with two family wage earners as a standard, combining work and family life as good as possible. Van Dongen, Omey, Wijngaerts (2001) prefer in this context the concept of combining some of those stages of life and work career. Instead of focusing on the transition between different stages, they underscore the

'combination' of those several spheres of daily life, and ask for public support of this combination. They come to the conclusion that the passive welfare state of the past century needs to be replaced in the 21st century by the active welfare state, and that in all its institutional settings, including fiscal pressure, needs to be adapted to those aspects, for instance by not only taking into account for taxation income but also labour time (p. 239, 292). It is a similar debate as our starting point: first, is there a change going on from the old welfare state 'fading away' and second, is the new welfare state emerging and how much of the old welfare state is included in the new one. If there is a topping up of both, then no choices need to be made between both types, but we probably are only left with the cost of both. It seems to us that the new welfare state is arriving at the moment that the price ticket of the old system is becoming more and more overt: it will be the growing costs in the net decades for more and better pension and health and care systems. Is there much financial margin for this new welfare state? The question should be if this needs a transition from taxing income (and activity) towards a subsidy for non-activity, at least in the formal labour market. The strategy to stimulate the transition to non-labour market activities can be a heritage of a strategy towards reducing labour supply in times of massive unemployment, but can they continue or even be accentuated in the next decades of a demographic transition towards less active persons and more pensioners? It is our feeling that this strategy can only be guaranteed by indeed higher labour market participation and job creation, and – if that seems not to be possible- by better redistribution of labour time.

6.4 Selective and voluntary (even subsidized) transitions are generalise redistribution of work

Beyond the 'transitional labour market' notion of Schmid some see a wrongly argumentation for redistribution of jobs and active working time (de Koning, Gelderblom, 2001, p. 208), among others because they believe there is not enough evidence of crowding out of lower qualified persons by higher educated. Nevertheless, this is what can be expected with massive unemployment (open or hidden). We think that, if that is the strategy, there is truth in this target for redistribution. The question remains if this strategy is the best one. It is for instance demonstrated in Belgium that reduction of contributions for low skilled/low wages has the most positive effects for the job creation for low qualified persons among others because there is a substitution between high qualified and low qualified, illustrating that before some crowding out took place.²

² De Koning and Gelderblom warn for a proliferation of low qualified jobs. This certainly seems not to be the case in Belgium. We withhold from previous studies the picture of our economy of relative little job creation, but combined with substantial economic growth, a profile comparable with for instance the German economy (Pacolet, 1997). Now even measures to support low wage jobs prove to have a positive record. That wage measures. Risk to disappear from 2000 on in an attempt to simplify employment measures (Jaarverslag NBB, 2001, p. 64; Pacolet J., Van De Putte I., 2002).

There is a need for rebalance this disturbed equilibrium (Stockman P., 2001). But again, this can only be solved when the quantitative disequilibrium of massive unemployment (or substantial underemployment) is restored. The stagnation of the total labour volume, confronted with an increasing labour force is another argument for this redistribution. One argument may be that now also forms of non activity are subsidised or allowed (the acceptance of our unemployment level) and that this can be replaced by new forms. The dramatic need for increasing the labour market participation will give additional arguments for this. If the public budget benefits from it, certain new types of non-activity, or should we call it, socially useful activities, we certainly should 'go for it'. But that is dependent on a cost-benefit calculation between different types of measures. The first question might be: is there budgetary room for new measures?

Many of the measurements taken above are linked with certain events in life and concentrated on certain categories of activities, for instance allowing persons to stay at home for child care, elderly care, reasons of palliative care. Other propositions generalise this to broader uses and speak about a 'time credit card for universal use (for care, education, or a sabbatical for any other good reason). Some measures are only conditional for age (the time credit for permanent reduction to 4/5 jobs for older workers) or where for this age group in the health and social care sector (non profit sector), aiming at the retention of older workers in the work force. This illustrates that strategies of labour time reduction (reducing the supply of labour) are not 'per se' reducing the total work force, on the contrary. But the question remains if this kind of *generalised* doesn't need to be replaced by a debate on generalizing labour time reduction ,a debate that in Belgium seemed to be abruptly ended in the mid eighties and later at European level in the nineties, even before it started properly.

7. ... and practice: care , care leave and provisions for care

7.1 Some definitions

The doctrine about transitional labour markets and the need for more flexicurity (for the worker) starts with the household situation of the labour supply, as all good handbook for labour economics does when it describes labour supply: it is the choice between leisure time (and how it is used) and work in the formal labour market. It is handsome to disentangle the leisure time in its further components, as can be nowadays more easily documented with the use of time budget studies (as one recently is published for Flanders). Important categories are the real leisure activities, household work, care for children (and others; but that is not documented so well in the time budget study, but it will be captured for the first time extensively in the census 2001), personal care, sleep and work (including also mobility time). It is about this allocation of scarce time that the transitional labour market and flexibility is about. How can it be better attributed per day, per week, per year or ever across a life time, *spraw* finally in the end of reaching a higher standard of living including a better quality of life. Here the one breadwinner is replaced by families with two breadwinners (but also there exist a substantial number of new categories of one person families and single parent families. What should be the consequence of it for the labour division in the family and in the labour market? An important amount of attention in this debate went to care work: care for children and care for ill and elderly people. How can it be maintained or supported? Should it not even be rewarded or will it be replaced to a larger extend by formal care? Here again the question is to what extend it should be supported/financed by the state. Somewhat related is even the debate about other domestic housekeeping activities that are provided by the household themselves or bought from the market. Again the question presents itself to what extend this should be supported/ financed by the state. In Belgium this debate is lively. All those activities, market and domestic work, they all are important and necessary , as Schmid calls it 'useful'. The question remains how they should be paid /compensated in one way or another. There is one important difference between the market labour and domestic labour for which it should be remunerated different: market labour is production for consumption of others, and for that reason you require a price and an income. On the other hand, household production is production for yourself, or the significant others such as partner, children, parents, and for that reason the one producing the service, is at the same time consuming it (the '*prosumption*' as it was called decades ago). Should that be rewarded/supported additionally and supposing affirmative in what cases? For categories of merit goods of child care and health and elderly care there are arguments for a state intervention (by subsidies or in the tax and social security system). Many welfare states created a long list of services of child care and elderly care, and are now entering the debate on how they should treat the care provided by the family. Here forms of care leave, with or without compensation, or at least retention of

social security rights and a minimal statute comes in. They are situated in labour market or welfare policies and more and more also, for the elderly, in long term care schemes. Here again the trade off has to be made about the appropriate use of the funds of the state.

7.2 Combining time for work and family in Flanders

Much of the debate in Belgium and Flanders on flexibility for the workers and transitional labour markets started with the growing pressure for two earnings families on their time budget. A very recent time budget study for Flanders illustrates the difference in time use according to gender, degree of activity and age group. Remarkable for this time budget study is that time life seems to end at 75 years (in the previous study of OIVO it was even before 65), leaving a lot of care for the family members undocumented. From this time budget we can learn the importance of time spend to domestic work and child care. The latter seems not to differ substantially between women working full time or part time. What does differ is the time available for domestic work, where the part time working women seems to have 9 hours a week more to be spend on those activities, while the man working part time on the contrary seems to spend 1 hour less on housekeeping jobs (notice that their part time job is on average 27 hours compared to 20 hours for women). The information on the time spend to other care is limited. A distinction should be made for care for grand children and care for the elderly. Baby-sitting occurs especially for the women not working (some 20 % of them) and in that case it takes some 4 hours a week (half a working day). It is taken up by women and it increases somewhat in participation rate and time with age.

Other care for persons in the family is even less/ much less present. It is only mentioned for 1 to 8 % of the women and even less for men. If it is mentioned, the time spend to it is between some minutes and some hours. This combined information results in some minutes on average in the weekly time budget of the population.

For us it is a confirmation that *time for care* is limited in volume also for the average of the population and that it comes on the forefront for those occasions where long term care is needed or substantial dependency occurs. Those situations are related with health problems and by definition those are unequally spread in the population. If occurring, the burden is significant. As mentioned a lot of this care is also provided by the partner and this probably beyond the age of 75 when the partner becomes older and more dependent. That is a second reason why it occurs almost less or even not in this picture. However there can be an important implication for the labour market debate and the discussion on transitional labour markets. That is a third reason why this time budget study does not reveal the real burden of informal care. Several studies we made on care for dependent persons (see

a.o. Pacolet J., Hedeboew G., Winters S (eds), 2001) reveal that either care is hidden in traditional housekeeping activities, and then it should be asked for 'What is the additional time needed because of a dependent person?'. Do those housekeeping jobs, and even *stressing* is the need of permanence (for instance a patient with Alzheimer disease who can not be left alone). For all those reasons more specific surveys are indispensable, just like specific research methods. Nevertheless the occurrence of some of those specific caring situations seems to be limited, again guaranteeing the affordability by the welfare state in rich economy as we are living in. Hereafter we describe how those needs are provided for in de Belgian welfare state. Substantially it is provided in the form of professional care, but to a growing extend also in the form of care leave and even payment for care.

The need to allow persons to take up, unless in rare occasions, for this kind of help is appearing when most of the main carers left already the labour market definitely, so that support for that role is limited.

Support for older generations to leave the labour market in favour of care for the grandchildren seems to be neither dominantly present since we can observe a decline of availability of that part of child care. But that decline should perhaps be prevented. It should be further investigated if there is a potential to increase that share again.

We can confront this information with some more detailed information on care given by women above 55. There those situations seems to be present much more for care for grandchildren, while the care for partners and others remain rather limited, and sometimes in line with the percentage above. (some 8%). The percentage of care for grandchildren can be explained by a broader definition of child care than 'baby-sitting). The hours spend on care should not be misunderstood. A lot of housekeeping activities, and also the need to be present (for young children, for dependent older persons or severe handicapped persons) can imply a substantial stress on the main carer, but anyway also the impossibility to combine work with care. When the real demand for informal caring time seems to be limited, the impact for certain categories can be substantial. The way in which the welfare state provides these specific care leaves or care allowances is important for the quality of the welfare state.

Table 8: Average time spend to an activity during one week by Flemish people between 16 and 75 years in 1999

<i>In hours, minutes</i>	Not working		Part-time		Full-time		
	Men (n=281)	Women (n=387)	Men (n=20)	Women (n=150)	Men (n=451)	Women (n=201)	
1. Work	2,47	1,22	27,16	20,21	38,00	34,05	
2. Domestic work	14,60	27,40	10,25	27,18	11,50	18,17	
3. Time for children	0,43	3,42	1,14	4,11	1,39	3,04	
3.1 Care for children	0,29	2,29	0,26	2,35	0,44	1,55	
Of which babysitter	0,22	0,54	0,15	0,07	0,07	0,07	
Degree of participation (1)		8%	21%	19%	4%	5%	4%
Duration per participant (2)		4,25	4,20	1,20	2,33	2,16	2,28
4. Personal care	15,17	15,26	15,43	13,33	13,56	13,54	
5. Sleep and rest	63,17	62,36	58,42	57,23	56,20	58,23	
6. Training/schooling	8,00	6,43	1,52	0,34	0,59	0,60	
7. Social participation	10,33	11,35	10,47	9,45	8,09	8,39	
8. Leisure	39,47	27,18	24,45	19,36	24,17	18,27	
9. Waiting	0,14	0,12	0,07	0,12	0,09	0,10	
10. In transfer	6,03	5,07	7,55	7,17	8,11	7,28	
11. For the rest	6,18	6,20	9,15	7,50	4,29	4,33	
Of which							
Care for other relatives	0,02	0,05	0,01	0,08	0,01	0,02	
Degree of participation (1)		2%	7%	5%	9%	2%	3%
Duration per participant (2)		1,18	1,07	0,20	1,33	0,34	1,12
Unpaid help for members of the household	0,05	0,03	0,00	0,01	0,01	0,00	
Degree of participation (1)		2%	2%	0%	2%	1%	0%
Duration per participant (2)		3,35	2,01	0,00	0,29	2,02	1,50

(1) Degree of participation = the percentage of respondents that has done the activity in the limited period of time

(2) Duration per participant = the average time spent on the activity in a limited period of time, calculated for all the participants for that activity

Source: Glorieux I. e.a., TOR – VUB (2000)

Table 9: Average time spend to an activity during one week, Flanders, 16-75, 1999

<i>In hours, minutes</i>	Under		Between		Between		Between	
	24 years		24 – 43 years		43 – 66 years		66 – 75	
	Men (n=109)	Women (n= 88)	Men (n=267)	Women (n=299)	Men (n=297)	Women (n=261)	Men (n=80)	Women (n=96)
1. Work	13,51	7,17	36,25	22,14	24,20	12,18	1,04	0,23
2. Domestic work	4,28	7,35	11,29	23,42	15,41	30,41	19,20	30,02
3. Care for children	0,16	0,50	2,37	6,34	0,45	2,03	0,16	1,15
Of which: babysitter	0,07	0,31	0,11	0,06	0,18	0,51	0,06	0,55
Degree of participation (1)	3	13	9	5	7	21	2	16
Duration per participant (2)	4,24	4,01	2,13	2,09	3,57	4,04	4,39	5,44
4. Personal care	12,52	14,33	13,48	13,46	14,37	14,46	18,27	17,03
5. Sleep and rest	60,44	62,36	57,20	59,04	58,24	58,53	64,02	66,38
6. Training/schooling	19,07	25,37	1,24	1,22	0,45	0,52	0,42	0,19
7. Social participation	7,59	10,45	8,09	9,23	9,31	10,41	12,13	12,28
8. Leisure	33,46	25,20	23,51	18,33	31,21	25,41	40,52	29,41
9. Waiting	0,19	0,29	0,11	0,12	0,09	0,09	0,07	0,02
10. In transfer	7,08	7,09	8,11	7,40	7,23	5,02	5,08	3,59
11. For the rest	7,30	5,50	4,35	5,32	5,03	6,53	5,49	6,10
Of which:								
Verzorging andere gezinsleden	0,01	0,03	0,01	0,04	0,02	0,04	0,00	0,10
Degree of participation (1)	1%	3%	2%	7%	3%	6%	2%	8%
Duration per participant (2)	1,20	2,02	0,32	0,56	1,06	1,11	0,10	2,02
Onbetaalde hulp aan inwonende familie	0,03	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,03	0,02	0,00	0,03
Degree of participation (1)	4%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	0	1%
Duration per participant (2)	1,11	1,29	3,41	0,52	4,59	1,46	0,00	4,05

(1) Degree of participation = the percentage of respondents that has done the activity in the limited period of time.

(2) Duration per participant = the average time spent on the activity in a limited period of time, calculated for all the participants for that activity.

Source: TOR (2000)

7.3 Child care provisions

Hereafter we give some information on the availability of services for child care in Flanders (for a more complete overview, see a.o. Vanpée K., Sannen L. 2000 and Pacolet J., Van De Putte I. a.o., 2002). The following table illustrates the substantial shift in the use of formal care compared to informal care, even in a short period. For instance, the number of working women with children between 1-12 years old who have a full-time job increased between 1997 and 2000 from 65.6 to 72.3%. Further, there is a substantial decline between 1993 and 1999 of grandparents who take care for children below 2.5 years and schoolgoing children. The number of formal child care places becomes not only important in relative terms more, but also in absolute numbers it means an increase of the available places of 60%. And also new services for out-of-school-care emerged.

Table 10: Use of child care provisions and profile of parents

	1990	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<i>Use of day nursery for children younger than 2.5 years (not school going), in%</i>									
Regular use		53.3		53.7		57.2		61.6	
Grandparents		41.4		40.1		38		27.3	
Crèche		13.2		15.8		15.3		22.5	
Private initiative		17.6		20.7		21.9		30	
<i>Use of day nursery for children older than 2,5 years, in %</i>									
<i>Aged 3-6</i>									
total				46		40		49.4	
Grandparents				53.3		55.2		45.2	
<i>Aged 6-12</i>									
total				29		30		28.6	
Grandparents				45.5		68.3		34.3	
<i>Number of existing places/children in day nursery for children (crèches, private initiatives)</i>									
Places in day nursery	35,787								61,393
Children in day nursery	63,936								107,941
Children in after school initiatives							70,937		81,180

Table 10: Use of child care provisions and profile of parents (Continued)

	1990	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<i>Participation in employment of parents from not school going children, in %</i>									
Paid job									
<i>Mother</i>						63			68.7
<i>Father</i>						95.6			953.8
<i>of which Full-time*</i>									
<i>Mother</i>						65.6			72.3
<i>Father</i>						97.8			98.3
<i>of which Part-time</i>									
<i>Mother</i>						34.4			27.7
<i>Father</i>						2.2			0.7
Not paid job									
<i>Mother</i>						32.7			19.1
<i>Father</i>						4.4			4.2
Temporary interruption of job									
<i>Mother</i>						4.3			12.2
<i>Father</i>						0			0

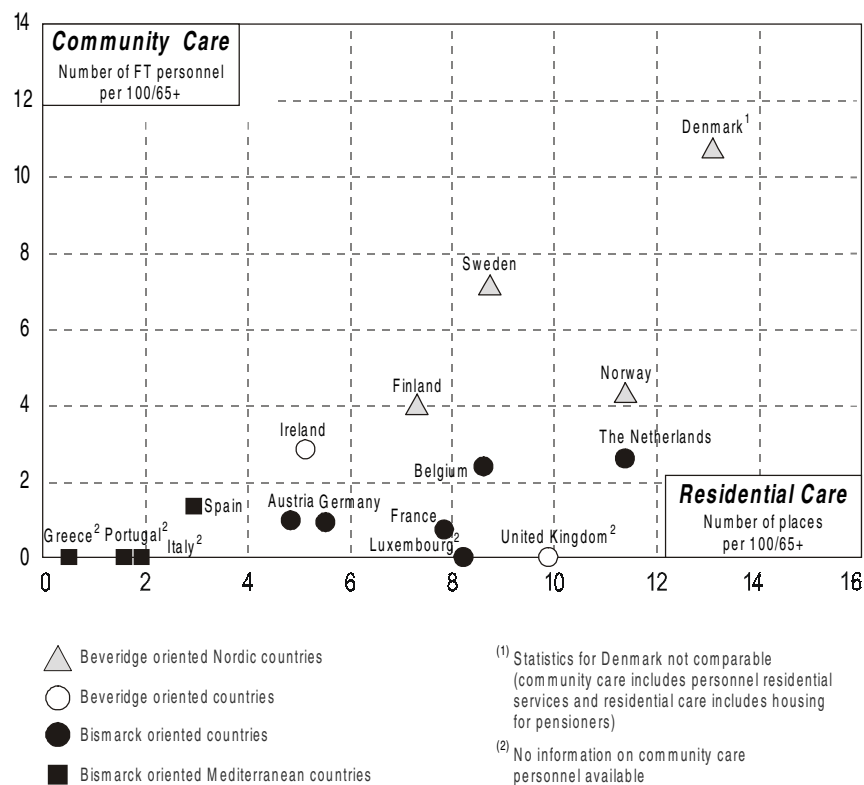
* Only two income families are considered

Source: Kind en Gezin, Jaarverslagen; Enquête Kind en gezin, Vanpée K., Sannen L., 2000

7.4 Care and care provision for the elderly

Belgium is characterized by a large scope of services for the elderly and a relative high level of availability, as well in residential services as in community services and a growing number in semi-residential services. (See Pacolet, Bouten, Versieck, Lanoye, 1998). In an international perspective those services are relative oriented towards institutional care (in Wallonia and Brussels more than in Flanders) but nevertheless also community care is well available, relative more in Flanders than in Wallonia and Brussels.

Figure 3: Development of residential and community services for older people in Europe



Source: Pacolet J., R. Bouten, H. Lanoye, K. Versieck, 1999, p. 23

Nevertheless the majority of the care for the elderly is provided for the patients at home by the partner and the family of the dependent older persons. When on average the formal care is about a 8 hours per week job, the informal care is from 40 to 60 hours a week. For very old persons with Alzheimer disease this care is to a large extent complete bared by the also old partner and to a lesser extent the daughter. Despite this continued availability of as well professional as informal care, there is still a slight increase of institutionalisation, among others because for instance in Flanders also semi-

institutional provisions as service flats (combining limited care but especially well adapted housing for the elderly), but probably also because still growing needs for institutionalisation, despite also almost two decennia of discourse in favour of care in the community. This leaves certainly room for also further expansion of professional community care.

On the other hand there is a growing concern about the burden of the informal main care. As showed above especially for patients with dementia this burden for the main carer is high (Pacolet, Hedebouw, Winters) but also on average the informal care for the elderly is substantial.

Table 11: Results of the time diary methodology: time for formal and informal care for AD patients (in min./day)

	Flanders	Ireland ²	Finland	Spain	Greece ¹
Informal care (wide definition)	725	752	395	1 054	804
Informal care (narrow definition)	493	386	344	884	456
Informal care from within household	665			731	771
Informal care from outside household	60			321	33
Formal care	94	19	32	60	n/a
Formal care/informal care wide definition (in %)	13%	2.5%	8%	6%	n/a
Narrow definition (in %)	19%	5%	9%	7%	n/a

¹ Based on 10 patients.

² Based on macro-data.

Source: J. Pacolet, G. Hedebouw, S. Winters (2001), based on National surveys AD patients 1998

From the Household Panel survey it is known that of the care providing women above 55, some 44% provide 1 to 5 hours a week, 25% provide 6 to 10 hours and yet another 1/5 more than 20 hours (Pacolet, Hedebouw, 2002). Care for the elderly does not exclude also care for the future generations. As shown in next table some 14% of the older women are involved in this task, of which half of it is combining care for parents with care for grandchildren. For the youngest age group (55-59) this is even almost 30%, of which 20% is combining it with care for grandchildren. This table illustrates also how the care for grandchildren is substantially the case for the age groups of 55-69. On average only 20% of those age groups of women do not provide any care (Ibidem). Important for the future seems to be, besides the partner, the availability of a daughter/daughter-in-law. Projections for men and women between 1996 and 2016 show that more old and very old elderly will live with the partner and/or the child. For those men living alone will even decline for the very old and for both gender groups there seems to be expected a decline of those living with others/in institutions (Jacobs, Audenaert, 2000, p. 120). This can imply that institutionalisation will decline because people can stay

longer at home, not only because they are less dependent but also because they will need someone for 'companionship'. An important variable is further the availability of women between 55– 64 per 100 elderly women the present above 85. Dooghe (quoted in Jacobs, Audenaert) calculated that proportion could decline from 4 times to 2 times in 2025 and 1 in 2050, thus predicting a substantial increase of the burden on a smaller number of informal carers. The experience in the care situation is that the care is most of the times the responsibility of only one main carer (if not the partner) so that there are less troubling indicators. Jacobs and Audenaert (2001, p. 122-123) show that on a shorter period (between 1996 and 2016) the relationship between women between 55-65 and women above 85 seems to remain stable and in the future the older persons that have at least one child alive will increase due to previous shift in socio-demographic behaviour: the new generations of elderly will relatively get married more than before and will have also relatively more at least one child. Demographic calculations illustrate also that the new generations have an increasing chance to belong to a four generation family (four generations alive) as a consequence of increased longevity. (Jacobs, Audenart, 2001, p. 123).

In this context of a maintained or even growing potential of informal care there is also a growing appreciation and awareness of the burden of this care. Unprecedented is also the impact of growing labour marked participation of those women between 55 and 65. Their labour market participation is low for the moment, but it is also demonstrated that those who entered the labour market stay in that market until the retirement age. What will happen when the political ambition to realise that higher labour market participation will succeed? On the other hand the improved health and the improved longevity of partners will postpone the period of dependency of children beyond the age of 85, and thus even beyond the pensionable age of the next generation of main carers and so not demanding care from persons at active age. But perhaps also the willingness to provide this care will decline, in many countries among others because of increased labour market participation some care allowance of payment for care is provided (Pacolet, Bouten, Lanoye, Versieck, 1998). Also in Belgium after a long period of request by the organisation of home carers, a minimal judicial statute has been attributed to the informal carer, and the debate for a care allowance also emerged. Some local and provincial authorities give some symbolic allowance for those providing care, but this did not result in a real payment for care. Only recently this could emerge de facto because in Flanders the recently installed long term care insurance will allow from 2002 an allowance for informal care. On the other hand several systems of care leave support partially the taken up of care (see further). Those elements can support the willingness to provide informal care.

Table 12: Care taken up by women above 55 (in %, N=657)

	55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80+	Total
No care	18	16	45	75	89	88	49
Care for parents and partner	9	5	5	5	7	9	7
Care for grandchildren	50	67	44	17	4	1	35
Care for own children	1	1	2	-	-	-	1
Care for grandchildren and children	1	-	2	-	-	-	1
Care for grandchildren and parents	20	11	2	3	-	1	7

Source: Cliquet, 1996, quoted in Pacolet, Hedeboom, 2002

7.5 Provisions for care leave

The Belgian labour law contains some situations in which the labour contract can be suspended, while retaining social rights and sometimes even a financial compensation (ex. Familial situations, technical unemployment,). In the following section we describe the relevant possibilities to employees to take leave for care and for training. Care allowances are also mentioned.

7.5.1 Maternity leave (paid and unpaid) and paternity leave/Adoption

According to the Belgian Labour law³ and the Law concerning the obligatory health insurance, mothers with a contract of employment are entitled to take maternity leave for a period of 15 weeks (17 weeks for a multiple birth). A maximum of seven weeks can be taken before the anticipated date of birth (nine weeks for a multiple birth), a minimum of seven days has to be taken before the date of birth. After giving birth, a woman is entitled to eight weeks of leave (10 in the case of twins). The days not taken before birth can be carried forward to the period after the birth. It's forbidden to begin working before eight weeks after giving birth have passed.

During the maternity leave an allowance is paid by the health (RIZIV), as a percentage of the salary. The first 30 days the amount of the allowance amounts to 82% of the unlimited salaries. After this period a limited salary is considered (75% of a limited salaries). There is no difference in entitlement

³ Labour law of 16 March 1971 (BS 30 March 1974) and the KB concerning the obliged insurance for medical treatment and benefits coordinated at 14 July 1994 (BS 27 August 1994).

for first, second or subsequent children. The rules are different for the self-employed, who are only allowed a three-week period of maternity leave on a fixed allowance (presumption of disablement).

In Belgium there exist no lactation leave. Nevertheless, women can make use of other existing forms to take leave to expand their maternity leave.

Fathers are allowed to 'inherit' the remainder of the mother's maternity leave in the case of her death. It is also allowed to carry over the leave to the father if the mother is unable to take care of the child or when she is hospitalised, provided the child has left the hospital and the mother is hospitalised for seven days or longer. The father's leave ceases on the discharge of the mother from the hospital.

Belgian fathers are entitled to take leave for a period of 3 working days, which can be taken within a period of 12 days following the birth of the child. The employer is required to continue payment of their full salary during the first three days. These regulation has recently be changed.⁴ From July 2002, the father will be entitled to a leave of 10 days that has to be taken in a period of 30 days after the birth of the child. The seven days that are added are paid by the Health insurance or mutual aid association (RIZIV).

As from July 2002 a new regulation will come into force concerning the adoption leave.⁵ Employees are entitled to a leave of ten days that has to be taken within a period of 30 days after the registration of the child in the municipal register. During the first three days, the employer is required to continue payment of their full salary, thereafter an allowance is paid by the Health insurance or mutual aid association (RIZIV) (implementing order in preparation).

7.5.2 Interruption of the employment

The system of interruption of the employment allows employees to suspend their employment contract for a limited period (five year), while retaining a payment and the social security rights.⁶ It was a measure of employment given that the employee concerned has to be replaced with an unemployed (exceptions). There exist three facilities to make use of this right: a full time interruption of the employment, a part time interruption or ending the employment with a system of part-time employment. Within these cases, a difference has to be made between the general system, the

⁴ Programmawet of 10 August 2001 (uitvoeringsbesluiten in voorbereiding).

⁵ Programmawet of 10 August 2001 (uitvoeringsbesluiten in voorbereiding).

⁶ Herstelwet van 22 januari 1985 houdende sociale bepalingen gewijzigd bij wet van 1 augustus 1985, het KB nr. 424 van 1 augustus 1986, de wet van 20 juli 1991, de wet van 21 december 1994, de wet van 22 december 1995, de wet van 13 februari 1998 en de wet van 22 februari 1998.

palliative leave and the care leave. Where the principles of these system are the same in the private as in the public sector, the practical organisation differs.

Since January 2002, a new regulation replaces the regime of career break which existed from 1985. The collective Agreement nr. 77bis and the Royal Decree of 12 December 2001⁷ provides some rights to the employees to facilitate the combination of working and improving 'quality of life'. It is applied to the employees in the private sector only. Exceptions can be made by a sectoral collective agreement or a company collective agreement. In companies with 10 employees, assertion of this right needs the approval of the employer.

The most important differences with the previous system are:

- the employer doesn't has to replace the employee;
- the duration is limited to one year (possibility to prolong by collective agreement);
- the allowance is increased;
- a seniority condition is installed.

The collective Agreement nr. 77 bis provides three different measures:

1. Time credit (Tijdskrediet)

Employees are entitled to one year 'time credit' during their whole career to interrupt it (take a sabbatical year) or to reduce it to a half-time job. It has to be taken in periods of minimum three months. A collective Agreement on the level of a sector or a company can prolong this duration to a maximum period of 5 years. It is required that the employee had a labour contract with the same employer for 12 months in the last 15 months before the application.

A financial compensation which amounts 515.81 euro per month for a full time interruption of the career and 257.9 euro per month for a half-time interruption of the career is granted, on the condition that the employee was working for the same employer during five years. If this condition is not fulfilled, the amounts are 386.86 euro and 193.42 euro respectively.

⁷ CAO 77bis (19 December 2001), tot vervanging van de collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst 77 van 14 februari 2001 tot invoering van een stelsel van tijdskrediet, loopbaanverminderingen vermindering van de arbeidsprestaties tot een halftijdse betrekking. Wet van 10 augustus 2001 betreffende de verzoening van werkgelegenheid en kwaliteit van het leven (BS 15 september 2001); KB van 12 december 2001 tot uitvoering van hoofdstuk IV van de wet van 10 augustus 2001 betreffende de verzoening van werkgelegenheid en kwaliteit van het leven betreffende het stelsel van tijdskrediet, loopbaanvermindering en vermindering van de prestaties tot een halftijdse betrekking (BS 18 december 2001).

2. Reducing the employment with 1/5 to a 4/5 week

Employees have the right to reduce their working ratio by one day a week or two half days a week during a period of minimum six months and maximum five years over their total career.

To exercise this right, some conditions have to be met:

- the employee is employed in a 5 or 6 working day-system;
- the employee worked full-time over the last 12 months;
- the employee had a labour contract with the same employer for 12 months during the last 15 months.

A financial compensation is granted which amounts to 127.37 euro a month for a 4/5 employment (from 1/02/02 onwards).

3. Only for employees aged 50 years and older: reducing the employment to 4/5 or half-time

An employee aged 50 years or older has the right to reduce his employment to a 4/5 week or a half-time job with a financial compensation. The duration of this right is undefined, with a minimum of six months (1/5) or three months (1/2). Some conditions have to be fulfilled. An allowance of 335.28 euro a month for reduction to half-time and 128.96 euro for a reduction by 1/5 is accorded.

Since 1994, the federal allowance can be completed with a Flemish incentive bonus, in the private sector as well as in the Flemish public sector (or Flemish education). This is allowed for a period of two years only. In the case where the employee is interrupting his career to go on course, the amount of the premium pay is doubled.

As from January 1st 2002, the existing system of Flemish premium pays has been differentiated for the private sector, the social profit sector and the public sector. The private sector for instance, provides a premium for schooling, a premium for to take care and a premium for companies in troubles or re-organization.⁸ In the social profit sector (health care, social care en socio-cultural sector) These kind of can also be granted to the systematic leave (following point).

7.5.3 Thematic leaves: Parental leave, leave for palliative care, leave to take care of ill relatives

The Federal Belgian Government provides a compensation for the loss of income in some circumstances that justify absence from work. In all cases, social security rights are preserved.

⁸ Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 14 december 2001.

1. Parental leave⁹

Both the employees in the private sector as well as the statutory and contractual personnel of the communities, provinces and agglomerations are entitled to parental leave to take care of their children. This right is governed by the Royal decree of 29 October 1997 on the introduction of the right on parental leave in the framework of interruption of career¹⁰ A three month period of leave is allocated per child, which can be taken by the father or the mother (accumulation of the rights of one of the parents by the other is not allowed) in three different ways. First, it can be taken in one block of three months. Secondly, a full-time employee can reduce his labour time to a half time over a period of six months. Thirdly, one can reduce the labour time with 1/5 over a period of 15 months.

In the case of adoption, the same right exists, which has to be taken in the period of four years after the registration of the child in the municipal register. This leave has to be ended before the child is eight years.

As it is a statutory right, the employer can not refuse it, although they may postpone it for up to six months. Parents in a full-time parental leave receive an allowance of 536.65 euro per month for a full-time employee. In the case of part-time employees or part-time parental leave, this amount is reduced proportionally.

2. Leave for palliative care¹¹

Employees have the right to take a leave for palliative care for an incurable/terminally ill person, who doesn't has to be a relative. The employer can not refuse a demand that is justified with a medical certificate. The leave can take maximum one month which can be extended with another month. Palliative leave has to be taken in the form of a full break of career, or an interruption with ½ or 1/5. During this period of leave, the financial compensation amounts to 536.65 euro per month in the case of a total break and 268.32 euro for a half-time break or 107.33 euro for a 1/5 break (older than 50: respectively 536.63 euro and 214.66 euro).

In addition to this, on certain conditions, employees in the Flemish Region can appeal on an incentive bonus from the Flemish government.

⁹ KB van 29 oktober 1997 (BS 7/11/1997).

¹⁰ KB tot de invoering van een recht op ouderschapsverlof in het kader van de onderbreking van de beroepsloopbaan (verschillende keren gewijzigd, laatst op 24 januari 2002).

¹¹ Wet van 22 januari 1985 en wet van 10 augustus 2001

3. Leave to take care of ill relatives¹²

Employees are entitled to a one year leave to take care of a seriously ill family member. A full-time employee has the possibility to interrupt his career for 12 months per patient in periods of minimum one month and maximum 3 months. Another possibility is to reduce the employment to a part-time job (1/2 or 4/5), for a period of maximum 24 months in periods of minimum one month and maximum 3 months. During this period of leave, the financial compensation amounts to 536.65 euro per month in the case of a total leave and 268.32 euro for a half-time leave or 107.33 euro for a 1/5 leave (older than 50: respectively 536.63 euro and 214.66 euro). In addition to this, on certain conditions, employees in the Flemish Region can apply for an incentive bonus from the Flemish government.

7.5.4 Paid study leave¹³, continued education¹⁴ and specific training programmer

The main purpose is to upgrade the general educational status of the labour force in the private sector (not applicable to the public sector) in Belgium.¹⁵ Therefore, some extra hours of leave are granted to attend courses during labour time or at one's leisure. This leave is paid by the employer, who himself can be reimbursed through a special fund. The number of paid hours as well as the allowance is limited.

The Flemish Community has developed a new initiative to encourage employees, employers and self employed in the private sector to go on 'refresher course'. Therefore, a 'training voucher' for the price of 50 euro can be granted as far as the training is organised by an acknowledged institution (half of it is paid by the government, half by the employer). As from 2002, yearly an amount close to euro 45 million will be provided in the form of those training vouchers.

The employment contract is suspended during the time an employee is attending courses for social promotion. Two categories of employees are involved. First, employees aged younger than 40 can follow these courses, that are organised by a youth-organisation, or a representative trade union (in collaboration with an employers' organization). Secondly, employees of a *public administration* can make an appeal to these kind of leave, to upgrade their qualification. The employer doesn't need to pay for these days, still the employee is entitled to a financial compensation of the federal Administration of Labour.

¹² Wet van 10 augustus 2001 and KB van 10 augustus 1998

¹³ Wet van 22 januari 1985 (BS 24/1/1985)

¹⁴ Wet van 1 juli 1963 houdende toekenning van een vergoeding voor sociale promotie (BS 17/7/1963); KB van 20 juli 1964; KB van 28 december 1973; MB 9 januari 1974

¹⁵ Herstelwet van 22 januari 1985 houdende sociale bepalingen (verschillende keren gewijzigd) (BS 24 januari 1985).

In view of a continued debate on shortage in the nursing profession, programmes have been created for caring personnel and lower qualified nurses, to enter again in a full time (or part time) education programme to obtain a degree of a graduated nurse, also physiotherapists (where there seems to be a surplus) full time paid education for a nursing degree. At least the first programme has proven to be successful, responding as well to the needs of the employers as the care sector.

7.5.5 Non paid leave

The employer may grant the worker a non-paid leave.

Table 13: Beneficiaries of career interruption in Belgium (1999 – 2000)

1999			2000		
Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
11 552	70 235	81 787	14 922	81 798	96 720

Source: RVA

Table 14: Evolution of the number of beneficiaries of the system of career break and the beneficiaries of the Flemish incentive bonus, Flanders

	Career break*	Flemish incentive bonus
1987	10 645	
1990	31 594	
1992	39 193	
1994		65
1995	33 378	1 466
1996		4 712
1997		6 142
1998	45 565	9 903
1999	56 056	14 265

* The system of career break has changed in 2002 in a new regulation

Source: Devisscher S. and Peeters A., Verslagboek arbeidsmarktonderzoeksdag 2001, p. 323

7.5.6 Care allowances

In many European countries in the context of some explicit or implicit long term care insurances, some form of payment for care or care allowance exists (see J. Pacolet, R. Bouten, H. Lanoye, K. Versieck, 1998 and also MISSOC 2001), and has been also object of further studies. They are an explicit

support for the informal care and can be defined as a sign of an advanced welfare state that first develops medical care, then social care and finally also start to financially support informal care. We are not at all suggesting here that professional care is not supporting the informal care, on the contrary they are even less of substitutes but in many times complementary to each other. But since the burden for informal care is real, and sometimes also the opportunity cost, any support is welcomed. In Belgium at federal level some systems of additional financial remuneration for third person help exists in certain cases. There is also an important minimal juridical statute. But since 2002 for Flanders the introduction of a new system of public long term care insurance (Vlaamse Zorgverzekering) introduces for the first time a remuneration in cash for the carer. The very dependent persons in community care situations and later in 2002 also in residential setting will be eligible for a in cash allowance of 75 € per month for only informal care, or 85 € for professional care and devices and 125 € for a combination of both forms. Early information on the uptake of this new allowance shows that especially this combined form is asked. Such a measure could stimulate informal care in future, although it will probably not create it when there is no main carer. But again, we should wait and see what this new long term care insurance provokes (brings about??). So is it for instance not expected that the informal care is provided by one person, but could be guaranteed by several persons.

8. Conclusions

Sometimes the rigidity of the Belgian labour market is highlighted. We defined here four levels of flexibility that seem to be growing all together: the flexibility of industrial changes, the growing number of transitions between all stages of work and non work, the growing number of combinations of those stages and finally the growing flexibility of labour contracts within this changing structure. Those levels are interrelated and may cause a similar corollary of flexibility: insecurity.

The Belgian labour market has been confronted with a growing macro-economic flexibility in terms of industrial change. It reveals the fragility of the total employment of an economy and ended in a greater and greater volatility of the industrial structure. Industries not only adapted by (due to?) emerging and disappearing activities leading to job creation and destruction, but they also seemed to pass (go?) through the growing volatility and insecurity in other ways. Many of those macro-economic shifts were carried on by the workers and alleviated by the state. The continued volatility seems now to be passed on in (have reached?) a second wave of flexibility. Those new forms of micro-flexibility can be of contractual or time nature, induced by the employer and sometimes induced by the workers. This flexibility can be caused by industrial volatility, or to compensate certain rigidities of the dominant labour relations or because the temporarily character of certain needs. This flexibility is itself for a in general risk averse population of a more secondary nature. Labour markets are becoming more secondary. But (Yet?) many additional indicators of precarity are indicated. Only a limited part of flexibility seems to converge with social-demographic changes in the labour force itself. 'Flexicurity' seems to be an euphemistic representation of a search for maintaining some security and compensation in a downgrading world of working conditions.

The? short overview we presented here of information on flexibility and quality of the Belgian labour market reveals reconfirms us that its quality can be found in the past and, certainly compared to other countries, relative stability and predictably of jobs and careers. This situations is changing for larger industrial, company and individual volatility and flexibility. The indicators of the latter even seems to go hand in hand with characteristics of a secondary labour market (lower conditions). Flexibility seems to be contradictory with security, by definition. 'Flexicurity' seems to be for that reason alone already by definition Orwellian (at least one person who succeeded in predicting the future well) newspeak.

It is a honourable strategy of policy makers and unions to reverse this trend in a strategy to gain more flexibility for workers to compensate their wants for adaptation work to family and individual aspirations, so allowing in this 'flexicurity' to realise those transitions and combinations of work and family and individual live. Lets hope it will be a wise and successful strategy. Can flexicurity be

realised? Now the sequence is greater flexibility means greater insecurity. It needs to be reversed in how greater security could allow greater flexibility. This seems to be the 'quadrature of the circle'.

It is remarkable that much of this required adaptation to personal needs is related to care activities (child care, elderly care). It is sometime unclear if motives behind those new proposals are situated in very traditional role patterns and labour division between man and women and strategies to reduce the welfare state again towards informal care. Gender equilibrium should be monitored, but how can it be promoted? We think that too much individual initiative is counter productive in this case. The individualistic choice guarantees the most individual freedom but not necessarily gender neutrality. But we doubt also if it guarantees enough change. The more universal solution of generalised working time reduction could guarantee this in a better way, including gender equilibrium.

The transitional labour markets guarantees flexible transitions or even combinations from work, unpaid work, education, leave, part time , full time work. Probably continued industrial change and mobility will imply also sectoral transitions, and transitions from public to private sector or from salaried to self-employed work, starting further from greater interchangeability between countries for education and training, continued with geographical interchangeability of work. Those new problems of flexibility will only be accepted when it goes together with more security and interchangeability or portability from one system to another, from one country to another of rights, social protection and security. Greater volatility will imply more individual risk that can only be insured in better, universal coverage of broader based social protection systems. Further harmonisation of social security for blue and white collar workers, for civil servants and for independent workers is needed when such flexibility, from employers and employees, is expected. In those better protected more universal systems, implying less individualisation, 'cafeteria plans', differentiation, greater flexibility and transitions will be possible, contributing perhaps better to the needs of the economy and to the individual fulfilment of a life time career. Some of the proposals as time credit, keeping entitlements to certain social security rights, are a step in that direction. But we then also must realise they have a cost.

But all those solutions do not correct structural disequilibrium, and those are on the one hand massive unemployment and on the other hand the demographic transition. Job creation seems to be unfeasible without generalised redistribution of work and work time reduction. With the exception almost of France this debate stopped in most of the EU countries. The EU itself should have paid tribute for that. The EU stimulated many substantial, massive changes in institutions and policy making, invaluable for economic, political and social progress (EMU and enlargement on a macro scale, employment guidelines and social convergence by the open method of co-ordination on a meso scale).

The public support for forms of combination of individual and family needs and work should be inspired by prioritising real needs and dependency, and not individual choices, as long as the state has limited funds. Those real needs don't even seem to occur the most ?? at working age. All the really needed or granted form of flexicurity will not be substantial enough to connect the real ?? in the Belgian labour market (underemployment and persistent unemployment) so that only redistribution of work can guarantee for the whole population some further degree of freedom, maintaining security for all those, adding to them (social) quality of life.

But their attitude of allowing only individual or sectoral and specific working time arrangements and no generalised universal working time reduction has perhaps been the reason why a lot of individual flexibility combined with security is far from realised within the present strategies and perhaps will never be reached as long as full employment realised within generalised redistribution of work is not on the political agenda.

The plea for flexibility as well from the side of employers and employees, aiming at transitional labour markets, flexicurity, combining work and family life, creates a new momentum to ?? again more universal solutions of ?? reduction of labour time opposite to many present marginal proposals. Let's hope we do not miss that momentum again, as we did in the eighties.

Annexes

Table 1: Total number (in full time number) of unemployment in Belgium, 2001

	Total	50 – 55	55 – 60	60 – 65	Total 50 - 65
<i>1. Unemployed in search of work entitled to an allowance of the RVA</i>					
After labour	234381	17243	10431	2460	30134
After studies	96259	3	1	0	4
Total	330640	17245	10432	2460	30137
<i>2. Unemployed not in search of work entitled to an allowance of the RVA</i>					
Older unemployed	147316	55019	62696	29601	147316
Social and familial problems	8992	19	1	0	20
Other exemptions*	11195	171	52	7	230
Full-time early retirement	108577	6965	36038	65574	108577
Full-time interruption of career	28390	2000	1683	79	3762
Total	304470	64175	100470	95260	259905

* Actual days/theoretical maximum number of days

Table 1: Total number (in full time number) of unemployment in Belgium, 2001. Continued

	Total	50 – 55	55 – 60	60 – 65	Total 50 - 65
<i>3. Employed entitled to an allowance of the RVA</i>					
Part-time employees while retaining rights and guarantee of income benefits	17993	1276	587	125	1988
Unemployed people with exemption RVA	16226	361	32	5	398
Unemployed with exemption for professional training	9058	121	30	2	153
Employees in sheltered workshops	620	53	22	6	81
Temporary unemployed	35228	3519	1465	170	5154
Half-time early retirement	1197	0	998	199	1197
Part time interruption of career	81385	21094	10781	1046	32921
Total	161707	26424	13915	1553	41892
<i>4. Measures of activation</i>					
Doorstromingsprogramma's					
Dienstenbaan					
Sociale inschakelingseconomie					
Banenplanuitkering					
Begeleidingsuitkering					
Totaal					
5. Total	796817	107844	124817	99273	331934

Source: RVA, Directie Statistieken, Statistisch Jaarboek 2001

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