

TENTH MEETING OF THE SRM TWG

(14 - 18 SEPTEMBER 2026)

EXAMINATION OF INSTRUMENTS CONCERNING WORKING TIME

Overview document: Background information applicable to the examination of instruments concerning working time

- This overview document provides background information applicable to the review by the SRM TWG of the instruments concerning working time that it will review at its tenth meeting in September 2026.

14 August 2026

Table 1. OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS ON WORKING TIME

47 C.1 Hours of work - industry 8h/day + 48h/week [interim]	27 C.30 Hours of work - commerce & offices 8h/day + 48h/week [interim]	R.8 Inland navigation [up to date]	21 C.175 & R.182 Part-time work [up-to-date]	9 C.49 Glass bottle works [outdated]	12 C.43 Sheet glass works [outdated]	36 C.52 & R.47 Holidays with pay 6days/year [outdated]
15 C.47 Forty-hour week 40h/week [interim]	R.116 Reduction of hours of work Progressive reduction [up to date]	9 C.153 & R.161 Road transport [to be revised]				120 C.14 Weekly rest – industry 24h/week [up to date]
17 C.171 & R.178 Night work [up to date]	44 C.89 Night work (women) [interim]	3 P.89 Night work of women [up to date]	63 C.106 + R.103 Weekly rest - commerce and offices 24h/week; 36h/week [up to date]	34 C.101 & R.93 Holidays with pay - agriculture 1week/year [outdated]		
9 C.20 Night work - bakeries [outdated]		R.13 Night work of women - agriculture [request for information]	R.98 Holidays with pay 2weeks/year [interim]			
HOURS OF WORK, INCLUDING NIGHT WORK			FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS		WEEKLY REST	ANNUAL LEAVE

[Instruments in orange are included in the SRM TWG's initial programme of work; classifications in bold were given by the SRM TWG; ratification numbers are in red.]

1. ILO developments

Working time, rest and the organization of working hours and rest periods (working-time arrangements) significantly impact both employers and workers. While workers have highlighted the need for regulated working hours to ensure safety and health, employers have emphasized that effective working-time regulation supports enterprise performance by optimizing resource use, workforce availability and labour costs.¹ Although workers, employers, and governments may differ in relation to the approach that should be taken to these issues, their common recognition of the importance of regulating hours of work and rest periods has led to the adoption of ILO standards.²

Over a 90-year period, working-time standards have been adopted on interrelated issues such as hours of work, weekly rest, annual leave, night work, and part-time work. The development of working-time standards has followed a piecemeal approach, shaped by the complexity of different aspects of working time and needs of various sectors. At the same time, they aim to balance enterprise productivity with the protection of workers. Over time, the ILO standards on working time have developed to address various aspects of working time, including limiting excessive hours of work,³ ensuring adequate rest periods,⁴ providing protections for specific groups of workers,⁵ and adapting working-time arrangements to specific labour market and sector needs.⁶

One of the earliest and most fundamental aspects of working-time regulation was the establishment of limits on daily and weekly working hours. At the inception of the ILO, efforts focused on reducing the excessively long workdays characteristic of early industrialization, leading to the adoption of the eight-hour workday and the 48-hour workweek as a standard in industry.⁷ These protections were later extended to salaried employees in commerce and offices.⁸ Following the Great Depression in 1929, the promotion of a 40-hour workweek aimed to support fair job distribution while maintaining living standards.⁹ Additionally, various sector-specific instruments were introduced to regulate maximum daily and weekly working

¹ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 4-5.

² ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 3.

³ E.g., the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1) (Art. 2) and the Hours of Work (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1930 (No. 30) (Art. 3) ensure that normal hours of work would not exceed eight per day and 48 hours per week; and the Forty-Hour Week Convention, 1935 (No. 47) promotes the principle of a 40-hour workweek.

⁴ While international labour standards on weekly rest and paid leave have been adopted, minimum daily rest periods - a period of continuous non-working hours between one period of work and another - are not explicitly regulated. However, by limiting the daily number of hours allowed to be worked, Conventions Nos 1 and 30 implicitly recognize a minimum period of daily rest. E.g., the Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14) (Art. 2) and the Weekly Rest (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1957 (No. 106) (Art. 6) ensure that, within every seven-day period, workers were entitled to a rest period of at least twenty-four consecutive hours; the Holidays with Pay Convention (Revised), 1970 (No. 132) (Art.3) ensures a minimum of three weeks of paid leave per year of service. ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para 159.

⁵ E.g., the Night Work Convention, 1990 (No. 171) is designed to protect the health and rights of all night workers and the Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175) aims to guarantee equal treatment between part- and full-time workers.

⁶ E.g., the Sheet-Glass Works Convention, 1934 (No. 43), the Reduction of Hours of Work (Glass-Bottle Works) Convention, 1935 (No. 49) and the Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Convention, 1979 (No. 153) set out provisions to regulate working hours and mandatory rest periods for glass workers and road transport workers, respectively.

⁷ Convention No. 1.

⁸ Convention No. 30.

⁹ The Forty-Hour Week Convention, 1935 (No. 47).

hours in sectors such as glass manufacturing and road transport.¹⁰ During this period, recognizing the importance of rest and recovery, new ILO standards progressively introduced provisions for paid annual leave. Early instruments granted a minimum of six working days of leave, with subsequent instruments extending these protections to agricultural workers.¹¹ The most recent standards adopted in the decades that followed further strengthened these provisions, establishing a minimum entitlement of three weeks of paid leave.¹²

In parallel, other ILO standards have addressed the organization of working time, particularly through standards ensuring weekly rest. Early instruments established a minimum uninterrupted rest period of 24 hours within each seven-day period, initially for industrial workers¹³ and later extended to those in commerce and offices.¹⁴ Wherever possible, weekly rest should be coordinated so that all workers in an establishment can take it at the same time, while also respecting national traditions, customs, and the practices of religious minorities.

From its early days, the ILO also placed increasing emphasis on the regulation of night work, recognizing its potential health and safety risks. Initially, efforts focused on restricting night work for specific groups, particularly women¹⁵ and young workers,¹⁶ reflecting the prevailing belief that they required special protection. Certain sectors, such as bakeries, were also subject to early restrictions.¹⁷ Towards the end of the century, however, the regulatory approach evolved from prohibiting night work to managing its risks, acknowledging its growing necessity in certain industries while ensuring adequate worker protections.¹⁸ Additionally, the regulatory approach evolved from a blanket prohibition on women's night work to the provision of protections for all workers engaged in night work, with specific protections for reproductive health.

The most recent ILO instruments on working time, adopted in the 1990s, focus on new forms of working-time organization, particularly part-time work.¹⁹ These standards emphasize the importance of productive and freely chosen employment for all workers, the economic value of part-time work and its role in facilitating additional employment opportunities, and the need to ensure protection for part-time workers in the areas of access to employment, working

¹⁰ Conventions Nos 43 and 49; and the Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Convention, 1939 (No. 67), abrogated in 2017, which was revised by the Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Convention, 1979 (No. 153) and accompanying Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport) Recommendation, 1979 (No. 161).

¹¹ The Holidays with Pay Convention, 1936 (No. 52), the Holidays with Pay Recommendation, 1936 (No. 47), the Holidays with Pay (Agriculture) Convention, 1952 (No. 101) and the Holidays with Pay (Agriculture) Recommendation, 1952 (No. 93).

¹² The Holidays with Pay Recommendation, 1954 (No. 98) and the Holidays with Pay Convention (Revised), 1970 (No. 132).

¹³ The Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14), and the Weekly Rest (Commerce) Recommendation, 1921 (No. 18) withdrawn in 2004.

¹⁴ The Weekly Rest (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1957 (No. 106) and the Weekly Rest (Commerce and Offices) Recommendation, 1957 (No. 103).

¹⁵ The Night Work (Women) Convention, 1919 (No. 4) and the Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1934 (No. 41) abrogated in 2017. The Night Work of Women (Agriculture) Recommendation, 1921 (No. 13). The Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 89) and the Protocol of 1990 to the Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948.

¹⁶ The Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 6), the Night Work of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Convention, 1946 (No. 79), the Night Work of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations) Recommendation, 1946 (No. 80), the Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 90) and the Night Work of Children and Young Persons (Agriculture) Recommendation, 1921 (No. 14). These instruments were reviewed by the SRM TWG at its eighth meeting in 2023.

¹⁷ The Night Work (Bakeries) Convention, 1925 (No. 20).

¹⁸ The Night Work Convention, 1990 (No. 171) and the Night Work Recommendation, 1990 (No. 178).

¹⁹ The Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175) and the Part-Time Work Recommendation, 1994 (No. 182).

conditions, social security, freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, occupational safety and health and protection against discrimination.

The question of the potential revision of existing standards on working time, perhaps including the possible adoption of new standards on working time arrangements, has been discussed since the 1960s.²⁰ The Cartier Working Group examined the working time instruments between 1996 and 2001.²¹ At that time, in relation to a suggestion from the Office that the Working Group consider technical revision of the hours of work conventions, the Cartier Working Group recommended that the revision of standards on hours of work could encompass working time arrangements.²² Between 1994 and 1997, the Governing Body considered proposals to place a standard-setting item on working time on the agenda of a future session of the Conference but the topic was never selected.²³ Until 2008, when it was reshaped in the context of the recurrent discussions concerning labour protection,²⁴ working time continued to be among the proposals considered by the Governing Body for a general discussion.²⁵

2. ILO discussions on working time

Discussions on working time standards have taken place in various tripartite settings over the years, highlighting the continued relevance of working-time regulation, the potential need for revisions, and the complexity of the topic.

- The 1993 Meeting of Experts on Working Time acknowledged that certain provisions of Conventions Nos 1 and 30, particularly those limiting maximum hours of work over different periods, did not fully reflect recent developments in working-time arrangements. The meeting recognized that, aside from these exceptions, Conventions Nos 1 and 30 remained relevant.²⁶
- In 2005, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) conducted a General Survey on Conventions Nos 1 and 30, noting that these instruments did not fully reflect modern realities in the regulation of

²⁰ [GB.270/2](#), 1997, para. 168 and [GB.273/2](#), 1998, para. 113.

²¹ For specific recommendations, see the corresponding technical notes.

²² In the context of the examination of Convention No. 47, the Office stated that it was “generally considered that, from the technical standpoint, the Conventions on hours of work need revising”, but that “for lack of a consensus, however, this has not yet proved possible.” The Cartier Working Party recommended “maintaining the status quo as regards Convention No. 47, pending the adoption of revised standards on hours of work and working-time arrangements”. See [GB.265/LILS/WP/PRS/1](#), p. 38 and [GB.267/LILS/WP/PRS/2](#), pp 20-22

²³ [GB.261/2/1](#), 1994, para. 14; [GB.264/2](#), 1995, para. 9; [GB.267/2](#), 1996, para. 13; [GB.270/2](#), 1997, paras 164 – 184. Between 1998 and 2007, a separate item was often included in the portfolio of proposals for the agenda of the ILC concerning the revision of instruments on working time in road transport, C.153 and R.161, but was never selected. See: [GB.273/2](#), 1998, paras 145-152; [GB.276/2](#), 1999, paras 294-301; [GB.297/2](#), 2006, paras 13 and 83; [GB.300/2/2](#), 2007, para. 81.

²⁴ [GB.303/3/2](#), 2008, para 10.

²⁵ [GB.273/2](#), 1998, paras 109 – 123; [GB.276/2](#), 1999, paras 198-212; [GB.282/2/1](#), 2001, paras 133-149; [GB.285/2](#), 2002, paras 125-141; [GB.288/2/2\(& Corr.\)](#), 2003, paras 53-57; [GB.291/2](#), 2004, paras 64-68; [GB.294/2/2](#), 2005, paras 19-24; [GB.297/2](#), 2006, paras 88-93; [GB.300/2/2](#), 2007, paras 68-73.

²⁶ ILO: *Report of the Meeting of Experts on Working Time* (Geneva, 11-19 Oct. 1993), MEWT/1993/8, Geneva, 1993, Annex 1, Conclusions, p. 35.

working time and that there were elements of the Conventions that are clearly outdated.²⁷ While reaffirming the importance of minimum standards for working hours, the CEACR was of the view that changes since the adoption of Conventions Nos 1 and 30 warranted their revision, and suggested certain factors which could be taken into account by the appropriate bodies of the ILO, if a decision was taken to consider revision.²⁸ Its findings were subsequently discussed at the 2005 Conference Committee on the Application of Standards, which reaffirmed the sensitivity of the issue. While many members of the Committee welcomed the idea of a revision of Conventions Nos 1 and 30, potentially taking the form of a single instrument on both working and non-working time issues, others expressed strong reservations or suggested cautiousness in planning any new standard-setting activities in this field.²⁹

- The 2011 Meeting of Experts on Working-time arrangements recognized that the provisions of existing ILO standards relating to daily and weekly hours of work, weekly rest, paid annual leave, part-time and night work, remained relevant in the twenty-first century, and should be promoted in order to facilitate decent work.³⁰
- In 2015, the ILC adopted Conclusions concerning the recurrent discussion on social protection (labour protection), which recalled that the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, for all workers regardless of the type of employment relationship, is a principle enshrined in the ILO's Constitution and remained an important objective. It recalled that flexible working-time arrangements can be mutually beneficial when they meet the legitimate needs of enterprises and workers. The Resolution stated that, with a view to coming up with recommendations in the area of working time and work-life balance, the Governing Body may wish to consider organizing a tripartite meeting of experts on the various developments and challenges and their impact on the organization and scheduling of working time.³¹
- In 2018, the CEACR conducted another General Survey on working time, which acknowledged that modern flexible working-time arrangements, including the averaging of hours worked over longer periods, may call into question the relevance of maximum daily and weekly working-hour restrictions in Conventions Nos 1 and 30. It emphasized that any changes to these standards should include reasonable limits and protective safeguards to ensure that new arrangements did not compromise workers' health, safety, or work-life

²⁷ ILO: *General Survey, Hours of Work, From fixed to flexible?*, Report III (Part 1B), International Labour Conference, 93rd Session, Geneva, 2005, para. 322.

²⁸ While it recognized lacking the mandate to make concrete proposals, the CEACR outlined parameters for consideration by the relevant ILO bodies if a revision process were initiated. It also referenced the possibility of a single instrument that would revise both Conventions and encompass working time and non-working time, including weekly rest and paid annual leave. ILO: *2005 General Survey*, paras 328-329.

²⁹ ILO: *Report of the Committee on the Application of Standards*, Provisional Record, Part One, General Report, International Labour Conference, 93rd Session, Geneva, 2005, para. 113.

³⁰ ILO: *Final report of the Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Working-time arrangements* (Geneva, 17-21 October 2011), TMEWTA/2011/6, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2011, p. 29.

³¹ ILO: *Conclusions concerning the recurrent discussion on social protection (labour protection)* (2015), paras 12, 13 and 21(a).

balance.³² These findings were discussed at the 2018 Conference Committee on the Application of Standards. In its conclusions, the Committee considered that the adoption of an appropriate regulatory framework on working time was important both to protect workers and to ensure a level playing field for employers and that the General Survey, together with the report and outcome of its discussion, should contribute to the work of the SRM TWG on this matter.³³

- In 2019, the Centenary Declaration stated that all workers should enjoy adequate protection in accordance with the Decent Work Agenda, taking into account, among others, maximum limits on working time.³⁴
- In 2023, the Conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on labour protection called on Members to design and implement policies and strategies to limit working hours and overtime and preserve work–life balance, including through the promotion of flexible work arrangements and protection for workers’ disconnection. It also asked the Office to develop a proposal for the Governing Body for the convening of a tripartite meeting of experts on the organization and scheduling of working time.³⁵

3. Wider context and main trends in working time

Working time is a central aspect of employment, not only in terms of the number of hours worked but also regarding work schedules and how working hours are organized. Working time has a significant effect on workers' daily lives, influencing job quality, work-life balance, physical and mental health, safety, and earnings. It also plays a crucial role in business sustainability, productivity, and competitiveness. It is a frequent target of policies aimed at improving working conditions. Decisions on working time have broad economic and social consequences, affecting employment levels, industry competitiveness, infrastructure needs, and public services. Regulation of working time can contribute to addressing social issues like work-life balance and worker health and safety, and therefore issues relating to working time and rest periods have long been at the centre of debates, not only between workers and employers, but in society at large.³⁶

During early industrialization, long workdays were common, with workers enduring excessive hours.³⁷ Over time, legislative reforms and collective bargaining played a crucial role in setting standardized limits, such as the eight-hour workday and the 48- or 40-hour workweek, which were a central demand of workers’ organisations and were embedded in early international

³² ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 178 and 180.

³³ ILO: [2018 Conference Committee on the Application of Standards](#), p. 36.

³⁴ ILO: [Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work](#) (2019), Part III(b)(iii).

³⁵ ILO: [Conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on labour protection](#), paras 22 (g) and 23(j). Proposals for this tripartite Meeting of Experts on the organization and scheduling of working time will be presented to the Governing Body in due course. [GB.356/INS/2/1](#), para 12.

³⁶ ILO: [General Survey](#), [Ensuring decent working time for the future](#), Report III (Part B), International Labour Conference, 107th Session, Geneva, 2018, para. 6.

³⁷ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 12.

labour standards.³⁸ While limiting the number of hours of work to protect workers' health has been an important workplace issue for more than a century, work-life balance has emerged as a social goal stemming from an increased awareness of the need to reconcile personal lives and work,³⁹ and studies have shown that companies implementing work-life balance policies benefit from improved worker retention, recruitment, reduced absenteeism, and increased productivity.⁴⁰

Since industrialization, trends in working time have evolved differently across the globe, reflecting historical, economic, and social factors. A feature of contemporary working-time patterns is the uneven distribution of hours, with available evidence indicating that while some workers experience excessive working hours, others face underemployment or involuntary part-time work. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global average of hours worked was approximately 43.9 hours per week. However, at that time, more than one-third of the global workforce worked over 48 hours per week, while one-fifth had part-time schedules (under 35 hours per week), with about a third of these working fewer than 20 hours per week.⁴¹ Long-term trends show regional differences. Industrialized nations have seen a steady decline in annual working hours from the late 19th to the 20th century, before reaching a plateau or, in some cases, rising slightly. By contrast, developing economies have generally maintained longer working hours.⁴² The evidence suggests that hours of work tend to be longer in global supply chains than in non-exporters, but to date such evidence is limited to a handful of countries.⁴³ Further, workers in the informal economy experience highly variable working hours. Although the global average converges around 44 hours per week for both informal and formal workers, this masks disparities. Informal workers are more likely to have either very short or excessively long hours, often associated with exclusion from working-time regulations and low earnings. Overall, nearly two-thirds of informal workers operate outside the "normal" 35–48-hour range, compared to 40% of formal workers.⁴⁴

In recent decades, working time arrangements have become more diverse,⁴⁵ reflecting developments such as globalization, digitalization, increased use of information and communication technologies, and the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁶ Working time arrangements vary significantly across the globe and are an area of interest for policymakers and stakeholders. Laws and regulations guide workers and employers in establishing these arrangements, often through collective agreements and workplace policies.⁴⁷

³⁸ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras. 12 and 44.

³⁹ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), International Labour Office, Geneva, 2022, p. 1.

⁴⁰ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), p. 2.

⁴¹ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), p. 48.

⁴² ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), 2022, p. 14.

⁴³ ILO: Bureau for Employers' Activities Research Note, [Wages and working conditions in and out of global supply chains A comparative empirical review](#) (2018), pp. iv, 16.

⁴⁴ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), pp 41–42

⁴⁵ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), p. iii, 13.

⁴⁶ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), p. 1.

⁴⁷ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 723.

The standard workweek remains the most common method for arranging working-time in formal economies worldwide, characterized by fixed daily hours over five or six days. Its origins can be traced from early international efforts to regulate working time through the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1), which established the eight-hour workday and forty-eight-hour workweek. While the standard workweek provides stability and predictability, its inflexibility can pose challenges for work–life balance.⁴⁸ Part-time work has become an increasingly prevalent alternative, particularly in high-income countries, where it serves as a means of providing flexibility to both employers and workers. The proportion of part-time workers varies widely, with some countries reporting over 50% of their workforce in part-time employment, while others have minimal rates of part-time work.⁴⁹ Women are disproportionately represented in part-time employment, particularly in the services sector.⁵⁰ Part-time employment can potentially benefit work–life balance by reducing working hours, allowing workers to better manage personal and family responsibilities.⁵¹ However, its benefits largely depend on whether it is a voluntary or involuntary arrangement. When part-time work results from a lack of full-time options, it may be associated with lower income security and negatively impact work-life balance.⁵²

Alongside the standard workweek and part-time work, alternative arrangements accommodate diverse work demands and improve flexibility. Notably, shift work enables continuous operations in industries that require round-the-clock service. It is categorized into fixed shifts, where workers maintain a consistent schedule, and rotating shifts, where schedules change periodically. Despite its global prevalence, its distribution varies significantly, with shift work accounting for up to a third of workers in some Member States. Shift work, especially during atypical hours such as night shifts, may be associated with challenges to work–life balance.⁵³ Other alternative arrangements include hours-averaging schemes, often adopted in sectors with seasonal or fluctuating demand, such as tourism, agriculture, and healthcare, where work intensity varies over time. These schemes allow for flexible distribution of hours within a specified period while ensuring compliance with statutory limits.⁵⁴ Depending on the way in which hours-averaging schemes are designed and implemented, they could have the potential to support work–life balance by aligning work schedules with personal commitments, particularly if implemented in close collaboration with employees.⁵⁵

Another approach is the compressed workweek, which condenses standard weekly hours into fewer days, which can help to reduce commuting time and operational costs, as well as improve work-life balance. This model, for example structured around four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days, has gained traction in various industries, though regulations on its implementation

⁴⁸ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), pp 51-52.

⁴⁹ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), pp 22 and 56.

⁵⁰ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 558 and 921.

⁵¹ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), p.7

⁵² ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), pp 56-59.

⁵³ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), pp 52-53.

⁵⁴ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 678, 687.

⁵⁵ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), p.66.

remain inconsistent across countries.⁵⁶ Similarly, staggered working-hour arrangements, which assign different starting and finishing times to groups of workers, aim to alleviate congestion and optimize workplace efficiency without extending overall working hours.⁵⁷ Growing emphasis on work-life balance has also led to the adoption of flexitime arrangements in some contexts, allowing employees to adjust their working hours within defined limits. Typically structured around core hours when all employees must be present, flexitime enhances both worker autonomy and organizational adaptability. A further approach is time banking, which enables employees to accumulate extra hours for subsequent use, including compensatory time off, extended periods of leave, or other agreed arrangements.⁵⁸

Some occupations require availability beyond normal working hours, leading to various forms of on-call work arrangements, such as “on-call” hours, where workers remain on standby outside regular hours, as in sectors such as healthcare, emergency services, and transport, as well as other forms of “on-call work”, including arrangements that do not guarantee any specific working hours during a calendar day or week.⁵⁹ On-call work arrangements may be associated with issues of unpredictability, extended hours, and work-life balance.⁶⁰ In relation to “on-call” hours, legislative frameworks often distinguish between time spent on-site, which is considered working time, and off-site standby hours, which are only counted under such frameworks when actual duties are performed.⁶¹

Work-sharing has also been implemented as a strategy to reduce working hours across a workforce, particularly during economic downturns. By distributing available work among employees, work-sharing may contribute to maintaining employment levels while preserving income security. This arrangement may involve shorter workweeks, reduced daily hours or temporary shutdowns, sometimes supported by government wage supplements or partial unemployment benefits.⁶²

Telework, defined as using information and communications technologies (ICT) to perform work from outside the employer’s premises can be performed from almost any location, though it is typically performed either from a worker’s home (“home-based telework”, “working from home” or “home office”) or on a mobile basis (“mobile telework”, “mobile work” or “ICT mobile work”).⁶³ The rapid advancement of ICT has significantly altered work structures, enabling remote work and increasing connectivity.⁶⁴ During the COVID-19 pandemic telework surged globally, though its prevalence varied across countries.⁶⁵ Telework provides significant

⁵⁶ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 689.

⁵⁷ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 696.

⁵⁸ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 698-700.

⁵⁹ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 702-710 and 728-735.

⁶⁰ The Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201) advocates regulating maximum hours, rest periods, and remuneration for such arrangements. ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 702-703.

⁶¹ The EU Working Time Directive and related Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) decisions distinguish between time spent on-site (considered working time) and off-site standby, which is only considered working time when actual duties are performed. ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 704-706.

⁶² ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 711-721.

⁶³ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), p 110, footnote 21.

⁶⁴ ILO: [Working Time and Work-Life Balance Around the World](#), 2022, p 131.

⁶⁵ ILO: [Teleworking arrangements during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond](#), 2021, p. 3.

advantages, including greater autonomy, reduced commuting times, and improved work-life balance. However, it may also present challenges such as extended working hours and blurred boundaries between personal and professional life, which some employers have addressed by implementing specific measures, as well as concerns about worker privacy due to employer surveillance.⁶⁶

In addition, many countries recognize the need for individualized adjustments, allowing workers to modify their schedules due to personal circumstances, such as family responsibilities, health conditions, or religious obligations. These adjustments, governed in various countries through collective agreements, right-to-request policies and/or legislation, can provide additional flexibility to balance work and personal life while ensuring continued workforce participation.⁶⁷

Existing standards may not fully address all evolving themes in working time. In particular:

- *Minimum periods of rest and maximum shift lengths in the context of shift work* are regulated in Conventions Nos 43 and 49, which are sectoral standards on glass work. These provisions regulate spells of shift work, which is not replicated in other standards concerning working time for shift workers.⁶⁸ During its 2016 meeting, the SRM TWG discussed the follow-up to be taken in relation to the instruments on hours of work in glass work. Based on the SRM TWG recommendations, the Governing Body decided that the SRM TWG will consider the regulatory gap on the topic of shift work when it examines the follow-up to these instruments.
- *Minimum daily rest periods*, meaning a period of continuous non-working hours between one period of work and another, are not explicitly covered in Conventions Nos 1 and 30, or in other standards concerning working hours.
- *Rest breaks* are the intervals that workers are allowed to take in order to rest, eat, drink, pray or satisfy other important needs during the working day.⁶⁹ While taking regular, short breaks throughout the workday are important for preventing fatigue, these intra-shift breaks are not addressed by any working time instruments of general application.⁷⁰ In comparison, sectoral instruments such as the Hours of Work and Rest Periods (Road Transport)

⁶⁶ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 740, 746 and 748-749.

⁶⁷ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 660-666.

⁶⁸ While Convention No. 1 sets specific limits for working hours in the case of shift work, it does not comprehensively regulate working time for shift workers. Article 2(c) provides that shift workers may be employed in excess of eight hours in any one day and 48 hours in any one week, provided that these limits are respected over a three-week period. Article 4 provides additional flexibility in the case of “processes which are required by reason of the nature of the process to be carried on continuously by a succession of shifts”. In such cases, working hours may reach an average of 56 hours a week (no reference period is specified). ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 677.

⁶⁹ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 165.

⁷⁰ ILO: [Report for discussion at the Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Working-Time Arrangements: Working time in the twenty-first century](#) (Geneva, 17–21 October, 2011), TMEWTA/2011, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2011, p. 65. At the EU level, the European Working Time Directive provides that where the working day is longer than six hours, every worker is entitled to a rest break. (Article 4 of the [Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time](#)).

Convention, 1979 (No. 153), and the Nursing Personnel Recommendation, 1977 (No. 157), provide for mandatory breaks.⁷¹

- *On-call work arrangements* are not explicitly regulated in Convention No. 1 or in Convention No. 30 and therefore potentially represent a regulatory gap.⁷² On-call hours mean that workers have to be on standby outside their regular hours of work and may be called to work in case of need by the employer.⁷³ The circumstances in which workers are on call vary, and often include situations in which workers are required to either stay at home, be in a specified place or be able to be contacted by telephone, in the event that they are required to attend work outside their regular work hours.⁷⁴ The issue of “waiting time” is likewise not explicitly addressed by these Conventions.⁷⁵ Other forms of on-call work arrangements do not guarantee any specific working hours, leading to unpredictable patterns of work and rest.⁷⁶ The Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201) encourages Member States to regulate the maximum number of hours, compensatory period and rate of remuneration for standby and on-call periods during which domestic workers should remain at the disposal of the household.⁷⁷
- *Flexible working time arrangements* encompass a variety of work arrangements, such as telework. While not comprehensively addressed in existing working time standards, they are increasingly used in many workplaces globally, raising questions concerning their implications for labour protection.

4. Ratification of international labour standards on working time

The following table illustrates the ratification rates of the relevant instruments concerning working time:

RATIFICATION: HOURS OF WORK		
Convention	Effective ratifications:	Further information
Convention No. 1	47 effective ratifications (1 denunciation)	Working time: Hours of work in industry

⁷¹ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 165.

⁷² ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 36. See also Art. 10 of Convention No. 189 on domestic workers; paras 19, 21, 30 and 31 of Recommendation No. 157 on nursing personnel.

⁷³ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 702.

⁷⁴ ILO: [2005 General Survey](#), para. 48. At the EU level, the Working Time Directive provides that “working time” means any period during which the worker is working, at the employer’s disposal and carrying out his activity or duties, in accordance with national laws and/or practice. The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has ruled on this in key cases regarding health professionals. The Court found that time spent on call at the workplace must be fully counted as working time, whereas if workers are merely required to be contactable, only time spent actively working qualifies. ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), paras 702-704.

⁷⁵ ILO: [Realizing decent work in the platform economy](#) (2024), para 79.

⁷⁶ ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 728.

⁷⁷ See Art. 10 of Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and Paragraphs 8 and 9 of The Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201); see Paras 19, 21, 30 and 31 of the Nursing Personnel Recommendation, 1977 (No. 157).

		• Current status: Interim • Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
Convention No. 30	27 effective ratifications (2 denunciations)	• Working time: Hours of work in commerce and offices • Current status: Interim • Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
Convention No. 43	12 effective ratifications (1 denunciation)	• Working time: Hours of work in Sheet-Glass Works • Current status: Outdated • Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
Convention No. 49	9 effective ratifications (1 denunciation)	• Working time: Hours of work in Glass-Bottle Works • Current status: Outdated • Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
Convention No. 153	9 effective ratifications	• Working time: Hours of work and rest periods in road transport • Current status: To be revised • Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
Convention No. 47	15 effective ratifications	• Working time: Hours of work • Current status: Interim • Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
RATIFICATION: ANNUAL LEAVE		
Convention	Effective ratifications:	Further information
Convention No. 52	36 effective ratifications (18 denunciations)	• Working time: Annual leave • Current status: Outdated • Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
Convention No. 101	34 effective ratifications (12 denunciations)	• Working time: Annual leave • Current status: Outdated • Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
Convention No. 132	39 effective ratifications	• Working time: Annual leave • Current status: Interim • Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
RATIFICATION: NIGHT WORK		
Convention	Effective ratifications:	Further information
Convention No. 20	9 effective ratifications (8 denunciations)	• Working time: Night work in bakeries • Current status: Outdated • Included in SRM TWG 2026 review

Convention No. 89	44 effective ratifications (23 denunciations)	- Working time: Night work of women - Current status: Interim - Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
Protocol No. 89	3 effective ratifications (2 denunciations)	- Working time: Night work of women - Current status: Up-to-date - Included in SRM TWG 2026 review
Convention No. 171	17 effective ratifications	- Working time: night work - Current status: Up-to-date - Included in SRM TWG 2026 review

RATIFICATION: PART-TIME WORK

Convention	Effective ratifications:	Further information
Convention No. 175	21 effective ratifications (0 denunciations)	- Working time: Part-time work - Current status: Up-to-date - Included in SRM TWG 2026 review

RATIFICATION: WEEKLY REST

Convention	Effective ratifications:	Further information
Convention No. 14	120 effective ratifications	- Working time: Weekly rest in industry - Current status: Up-to-date - Not included in SRM TWG 2026 review
Convention No. 106	63 effective ratifications	- Working time: Weekly rest in commerce and offices - Current status: Up-to-date - Not included in SRM TWG 2026 review

5. Review by the SRM TWG

At its tenth meeting, the SRM TWG will conduct its substantive review of instruments pertaining to working time.

Consideration by previous meetings

At its second meeting in October 2016, the SRM TWG discussed the follow-up to be taken in relation to 63 instruments previously identified as outdated by the Cartier Working Party, including certain instruments pertaining to working time. During this meeting, the SRM TWG recommended specific follow-up to be taken in relation to five outdated instruments concerning

working time, specifically Convention No. 20 on night work, Conventions Nos 52 and 101 on holidays with pay, Convention No. 43 on sheet-glass works and Convention No. 49 on glass-bottle works.⁷⁸

In approving the recommendations of the SRM TWG at its second meeting, the Governing Body decided that the SRM TWG would follow up on these instruments at later meetings.⁷⁹ With respect to Conventions No. 43 and 49, the Governing Body decided that, at that time, it will consider the regulatory gap on the topic of shift work.⁸⁰ The Governing Body also invited the Office to follow-up with the Member States bound by: i) Conventions Nos 52 and 101, encouraging them to ratify Convention No. 132, as the most up-to-date instrument on holidays with pay;⁸¹ and ii) Convention No. 20, encouraging them to ratify Convention No. 171, as the most up-to-date instrument on night work.⁸²

Questions to consider

At its tenth meeting, the SRM TWG will review nine Conventions and five Recommendations concerning working time. It will also examine the follow-up to be taken to a further five outdated Conventions and two Recommendations falling within this subject area. This will involve considering:

- *In relation to hours of work:* the classification of Conventions Nos 1, 30 and 47; and the appropriate follow-up action to be taken.
- *In relation to annual leave:* the classification of Convention No. 132 and Recommendation No. 98; the follow-up to be taken to outdated Conventions Nos 52 and 101 and Recommendations Nos 47 and 93; and the appropriate follow-up action to be taken.
- *In relation to night work:* the classification of Convention No. 171 and Recommendation No. 178; the follow-up to be taken to shelved Convention No. 20; and the appropriate follow-up action to be taken.
- *In relation to night work of women:* the classification of Convention No. 89 and its Protocol, and Recommendation No. 13; and the appropriate follow-up action to be taken.
- *In relation to part-time work:* the classification of Convention No. 175 and Recommendation No. 182; and the appropriate follow-up action to be taken.
- *In relation to working time in road transport:* the classification of Convention No. 153 and Recommendation No. 161; and the appropriate follow-up action to be taken.
- *In relation to working time in glass work:* the follow-up to be taken to outdated Conventions Nos 43 and 49; and the appropriate follow-up action to be taken.

Within its mandate as set out in paragraph 9(b) of its terms of reference and as requested by the Conference Committee on the Application of Standards in 2018, the SRM TWG

⁷⁸ See: [GB.328/LILS/2/1\(Rev.\)](#), Annex I, paras 12-13.

⁷⁹ ILO: [Decision on the second item on the agenda: The Standards Initiative](#), Governing Body, 328th Session, Geneva, November 2016.

⁸⁰ See: [GB.328/LILS/2/1\(Rev.\)](#), Annex I, paras 12-13; and Technical Note 1.7.

⁸¹ See: Technical Note 1.2.

⁸² See: Technical Note 1.3.

may wish to take into account the General Survey concerning working time instruments, together with the report and outcome of the 2018 discussion of the Conference Committee on that General Survey.

In considering the international regulation of working time, the SRM TWG may consider:

- i) whether any regulatory gaps exist in relation to instruments concerning working time, including, where appropriate, in relation to topics such as minimum periods of rest and maximum shift lengths in shift work, minimum daily rest periods, rest breaks, on-call work arrangements, including on-call hours, and flexible working-time arrangements, and if so, the appropriate follow-up action that could be recommended;
- ii) whether the existing international labour standards concerning working time continue to provide an appropriate basis for the international regulation of working time or if further action would be desirable through:
 - (a) the updating of existing international labour standards concerning working time, as relevant, while ensuring protection of workers' rights; or
 - (b) the adoption of a comprehensive instrument on working time, which could involve updating existing instruments, as relevant, while ensuring protection of workers' rights;

and make corresponding recommendations to the Governing Body.