

**Working  
Conditions in  
Hotels and  
Restaurants  
National Report for  
France**

**European Foundation  
for the Improvement  
of Living and  
Working Conditions**

**Project 018/010.256**

**London Economics**

**October 2002**

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Restaurants  
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## **Executive Summary**

London Economics has been commissioned by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions to undertake a study of working conditions in hotels and restaurants in France.

The hotels and restaurants sector is the fifth largest private sector employer in France. The sector employs a large percentage of women, and it relies on part-time work and fixed-term employment to a greater extent than other sectors of the economy. France is a top tourist destination and there is, as a result, a strong demand for seasonal employment in hotels and restaurants.

There are many positive aspects about work in hotels and restaurants, but the report identifies a number of issues affecting negatively the quality of work and employment. Working time requirements is one of them. Overall, hours worked have declined in the sector over the past decade, although they remain higher than what is observed in the economy at large. Managing hours worked outside normal daytime is also a challenge. Employees in the sector benefit from additional compensation when they work nights or during weekends.

Nonetheless, long and non-standard working time makes it difficult to balance work and non-working life. Combining work and family responsibilities is a particular concern for women, who tend to be employed in the sector in a greater proportion than in the rest of the economy. The report also brings to the fore safety concerns arising for employees returning home late at night after work. Again, this is an issue that affects women particularly.

As in many other sectors of the economy, employees in hotels and restaurants are feeling stressed about work, and this is impacting negatively on their ability to sleep and on their private life. Career and employment opportunities exist, but not necessarily for all workers. Within the sector, there is a group comprising unskilled workers on fixed-term contracts and illegal immigrants who are in precarious work situations.

Finally, health in the workplace is a matter deserving more attention. While there is awareness of the risk of injuries arising from the work in the sector, there seems to be limited focus so far on the risk entailed by combined exposure to physical demands and a high pace of work. A better understanding of the long-term health consequences of working in hotels and restaurants would be welcome.

Healthy growth in the business and low retention of employees has resulted in labour shortage. There are many programs or initiatives to attract young people into the sector and various options exist for those wishing to receive training. But, as discussed in the study, these initiatives have had limited success so far. As a result, existing employees continue to face significant pressure from management to work longer hours.

The study reports a high concentration of activity in small operations, with about half of the people working for companies with fewer than 10 employees. For many of these small operations, margins are thin and the focus is on surviving. The working conditions of employees do not typically get much attention under such circumstances.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Context and aim

In 2000, the European Foundation carried out its third European Survey on Working Conditions and collected information on working conditions, health and well-being of the employed and self-employed in the fifteen EU member states. A total of three surveys (1990, 1995 and 2000) provided a general picture on the main characteristics of the economic sectors with regard to working conditions. This general picture is sufficient to set priorities, but not enough to understand the reasons underlying the situation described, and the policies, at various levels, undertaken to deal with such.

The sector surveys on working conditions for each of the 15 Member States on the sectors of Road Transport and Hotels and Restaurants have the objective to provide a cross-sectional overview of employment conditions in these two sectors as two examples of the European economy. The research covers a very large number of aspects of working conditions with as much detail as is possible to obtain given the availability of national statistics.

## 1.2 Structure of the report

This report is organised according to the format designated in the guidelines provided for the national reports. In section 2 we describe the sector characteristics. In section 3 we give as much detail as was available with respect to the quality of working conditions and employment. Section 4 deals with the policies and roles of the social partners. Section 5 presents the views of the key informers and representatives of the social partners which we interviewed in the course of this research project. Finally, section 6 provides a discussion of main points and presents our conclusions.

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## 2 Sector characteristics

It is generally agreed that tourism is a significant source of employment both in Europe and throughout the world. With 9 million workers presently employed in the tourism industry, i.e. 6% of employment and a corresponding 5.5% of EU GDP, tourism is a major source of employment in the European Union.

Both general policy and employment regulations have an impact on tourism services and their costs. Its highly seasonal nature and the great demand for available, varied supply mean that the tourism industry requires considerable flexibility and fluidity as regards work. The growth of tourism therefore has to be met with policies that provide some flexibility for the sector.

Tourism is also one of the areas in which employment measures by the public authorities are likely to have the greatest impact because of the actual nature of the activities and jobs created.

Tourism offers many job opportunities requiring few qualifications and is therefore a good source of work for young people and women, who are those hardest hit by unemployment in the European Union. It is highly labour-intensive because of the limited scope for automation and a relatively low level of productivity. Apart from a few highly skilled jobs in competitive activities at international level, tourism for the most part generates jobs which provide an entry into the labour market, often in very small businesses.

These features also lead to a particularly high turnover of staff, which in turn restricts the professionalisation of the industry. The high rate of turnover is linked to various factors, both psychological and material. Jobs in tourism are unattractive due to their poor reputation: the working conditions, in particular, often impinge on the worker's private life. Additionally, there are few opportunities for workers in the tourism industry to increase their skills with a view to career development and the seasonal nature of the work makes it precarious.

Social dialogue is certainly the most effective way of mobilising everybody concerned with a business in order to increase its competitiveness, optimise its job-creating capacity and consolidate employment. The experiences across Europe show that such dialogue can help find appropriate solutions to the problems surrounding the development and improvement of employment in the tourism industry. For instance:

- *Vocational training*: social dialogue allows an optimum balance to be sought between the tourism business's need for greater skills and the legitimate aspirations of employees for personal development; it also makes it possible to nurture a spirit of loyalty to the business and consensus on the objectives to be achieved;
- *Inreasing competitiveness through negotiated flexibility*: unlike an industrial activity for which all the social regulations on the number of

hours worked a week have been fixed, tourism more than any other service requires an extremely flexible work model, given the unavoidably seasonal nature of the activity.

## 2.1 Economic characteristics of the sector

In this section we present a number of tables that summarise the economic characteristics of the sector.

Table 2.1: **Turnover (2000)** (in millions of euros)

	Sector	National <sup>1</sup>
Latest information - 2000	49,897	2,140,723
Change: 4 years back - 1996	36,062	2,019,189

(1) 1999 figures. Source: Insee, Enquête annuelle d'entreprise dans les services

The turnover of hotels and restaurants rose a healthy 38.4% between 1996 and 2000.

Table 2.2: **Number of companies (2000)**

	Sector	National <sup>1</sup>
Latest information - 2000	179,905	1,584,340
Change: 4 years back - 1996	158,630	1,504,592

(1) 1999 figures. Source: Insee, Enquête annuelle d'entreprise dans les services

Between 1996 and 2000, the number of companies in hotels and restaurants increased by 13.4%.

Table 2.3: **Number of companies according to company size (2000)**

Company size (number of employees)	Sector	National
0-9 employees	166,582 (92.6)	1,254,857 (82.7)
10-49 employees	10,835 (6.0)	213,416 (14.1)
50+employees	766 (0.5)	47,260 (3.1)

Source: Insee, Enquête annuelle d'entreprise dans les services

The sector is characterised by a large number of small firms. According to the enquête annuelle d'entreprise dans les services, in 2000, there were 179,905 companies in the sector. Of these, 51,996 companies did not have any employee, representing 28.9% of companies.

In 2000, 127,909 companies had at least one employee, of which 114,586 (63.7%) had between 1 and 9 employees. Only 6.5% of firms had 10 or more employees. This compares with 17.2% for the economy at large. Firms in the hotels and restaurants sector have, on average, 5.8 employees.

There has been some significant change in the company demography over the past few years. For example, the number of companies in hotels and restaurants fell nearly 10% between 1996 and 2000 (and their share of total companies fell accordingly).

Table 2.4: Share of turnover according to company size (2000)

Percentage of turnover	Sector
Latest information - 2000	
○ 0 employees	5.8
○ 1-9 employees	41.6
○ 10-49 employees	23.3
○ 50-249 employees	8.0
○ 250+ employees	18.9
Change: 4 years back - 1996	
○ 0 employees	8.9
○ 1-9 employees	42.3
○ 10-49 employees	23.8
○ 50-249 employees	7.2
○ 250+ employees	16.4

Source: Insee, Enquête annuelle d'entreprise dans les services

Over the past 4 years, companies with fewer than 10 employees have seen a decline in their share of the total sector turnover (from 50.6% in 1996 to 47.4% in 2000). At the same time, companies with more than 250 employees have seen their share of total sector turnover increase significantly.

Table 2.5: Number and percentage of closings over the last 10 years

The information is not available.

Table 2.6: Bankruptcy rates (2001)

	Sector	National
Bankruptcy rate	1.9	1.7

Source: Insee, Bodacc

The number of bankruptcies in France has been falling since 1997. The bankruptcy rate fell over these 5 years, from 2.4% to 1.7%. The bankruptcy rate for hotels and restaurants also fell over the same period to reach 1.9%, although it remains higher than the national average.

Table 2.7: **Number and percentage by company status (public/private)**

The information is not available.

## 2.2 Labour Market Issues

Table 2.8: **Number and percentage of people employed according to gender<sup>1</sup>**

(2000)	Sector	National
Men	52.4	58.0
Women	47.6	42.0
Total	100.0	100.0

(1) Companies with at least one employee.

Source: INSEE, Déclarations annuelles de données sociales (données d'entreprises) Union nationale interprofessionnelle pour l'emploi dans l'industrie et le commerce, Statistique annuelle des effectifs

The hotels and restaurants sector employs a relatively higher percentage of women than the national average. In 2000, 47.6% of employees were women and 52.4% of employees were men. Also, the proportion of women working in the sector has increased over the past 5 years or so (it was 47.1% in 1996). In the economy at large, women represents 42% of the labour force, almost 6 percentage points less than in the sector.

Table 2.9: **Number of people employed according to age/seniority (2000)**

Employees in the sector tend to be young and have short work experience. For example, a third of cooks and half of other employees (including managers) are younger than 30 years of age. And, only 15% of cooks and 10% of other employees are older than 50 years of age. This compares with about 20% for the whole labour force.

About 20% of cooks and 37% of other employees have been working for less than a year (compared 12% for all sectors of the economy). Cooks have, on average, 7.7 years of work experience while other employees in the sector have, on average, 4.1 years of experience.

Table 2.10: **Number and percentage of employees by EU or non-EU status**

The information is not available. However, it is suspected that the proportion of workers with non-EU status is higher than in other sectors of the economy

because of reports of restaurants employing illegal immigrants from non-EU countries.

Table 2.11: Number and percentage of employed by company size (2000)

	Sector	National <sup>1</sup>
Latest information - 2000		
○ 0-9 employees	382,369 (48.0)	3,789,722 (25.4)
○ 10-49 employees	196,858 (24.7)	4,222,853 (28.4)
○ 50+ employees	213,413 (26.8)	6,870,245 (46.2)

(1) 1999 figures. Source: Insee, Enquête annuelle d'entreprise dans les services Insee, Enquête emploi

In 2000, nearly half of people working in hotels and restaurants were in companies of fewer than 10 employed (less than the 55% recorded for 1996). Nonetheless, this about twice as important as that observed for the whole economy.

About 60% of employees of the sector work in restaurants (traditional), 30% work in hotels while the remaining work in cafés, catering operations, etc.

Table 2.12: Status of contracts of people employed (2000)

Percentage of employees	Cooks	Other employees (including managers)
Apprentice	1.9	8.0
Precarious <sup>1</sup>	9.2	14.1

(1) Defined as interim, fixed-term contracts, subsidised training and employment (but not apprentice). Source: Insee, Enquête emploi

There are a number of specific features to the sector, compared to the whole economy.

There is a greater proportion of self-employed, of fixed-term employment (including apprenticeship, fixed-term contracts and seasonal employment).

#### *Self-employed*

Overall, there are about 52,000 self-employed in the sector (without employees).

#### *Precarious employment*

About 9% of cooks are in a precarious work situation (defined as interim, fixed-term and subsidized employment). For other employees in the sector, the proportion is even higher.

#### *Seasonal employment*

France is the top tourist destination in the world, and there is accordingly a high demand for seasonal employment. Seasonal employment is estimated to be about 200,000. The vast majority (88%) of these employees work in companies with less than 10 employees. Two-thirds of seasonal employees are younger than 25 years of age. A high proportion of seasonal employees work part time (42% in summer and 37% in winter). Most of the seasonal employment is fixed-term employment of less than a year. Contracts average 38 days in summer and 32 days in winter.

There are three distinct groups within seasonal employees. First, about 20% of seasonal employees belong to so-called professionals of seasonal tourism. This group is well integrated socially, well qualified and has a good working experience. The second group, also comprising about 20% of seasonal employment, tends to have a second job (usually not in the hotels and restaurants sector). This group typically works in mountain resorts. The third group, comprising about 60% of seasonal employment, is made up of students who will not stay in the hotels and restaurants sector or young people who have had training for one of the occupations of the sector (e.g. cook). This third group also includes young people (but no longer students) in more precarious conditions, both in terms of employment and social conditions. These young people are usually not well prepared to work in the sector and have not had any prior training.

**Table 2.13: Percentage of people employed according to educational level (2000)**

	Cooks	Other employees	National
No Diploma or BEPC	29.9%	45.2%	34%
CAP BEP	58.6%	31.7%	28%
Bac or more	11.5%	23.1%	38%

Source: Insee, Enquête emploi

As indicated above, the level of education of employees in the sector tends to be lower than it is for the working population at large.

Table 2.14: Percentage of people employed according to occupational group

Occupations (2000)	Percentage of employees
Restaurants:	
Cook	23.3
Kitchen helper	7.2
Chef cook	0.7
Waiter/waitress	34.7
Head-waiter	0.6
Multi task occupation	6.6
Manager	0.3
Hotel:	
Floor employee (cleaner)	14.3
Receptionist	4.7
Manager	0.3
Cafés, bars, pubs:	
Employees	5.8
Barman	1.6

Source: ANPE , Statistics are for Ile-de-France.

About one third of employees in the sector works as waiter/waitress, followed by about a fourth working as cook. The third largest occupation is hotel cleaner (about 15% of all occupations).

Table 2.15: **Percentage of full- and part-time workers<sup>1</sup> (2000)**

Percentage of employees	Sector			National
	Men	Women	Total	Total
Latest information - 2000				
Full time	74.9	53.5	64.7	87.1
Part time	25.1	46.5	35.3	12.9

(1) In firms of at least one employee. Source: Insee, Déclarations annuelles des données sociales (données d'entreprises)

In 2000, 35.3% of employees in firms of at least one employee worked part time, slightly more than the 33.6% observed in 1996, and about three times as much as for the whole economy. The breakdown between full- and part-time is very different between men and women. For instance, one out of four men worked part time in 2000, whereas nearly half of women (46.5%) worked part time in 2000. The repartition of full-time and part-time work by gender has remained stable over the past few years.

Table 2.16: **Number and percentage of vacancies, unemployed or having a second job, and personnel turnover in the sector and at national level**

Labour shortage is a significant problem in hotels and restaurants in France. It is estimated that there is a deficit of about 50,000 employees in the sector (compared to total employment of about 750,000).

Employers are finding it difficult to attract and retain personal because the sector is not well perceived due to low wages, long hours - often outside normal daytime-- and generally difficult working conditions. With a high turnover, efforts have been made to promote employment in hotels and restaurants. For instance, training programs have been enhanced to try to attract young people to the sector. But the results have been disappointing.

Too few young people are joining these training programs. And those who join are not well always well suited for the type of work involved in the sector. This results in a high drop out rate. For example, young people can join a training program called "contrat d'alternance" whereby, he/she will alternate between school and work in the sector. It is estimated that more than half of young people will stop before completing the program. Young people can also receive their training in formal school "école d'hotellerie". The drop out rate is quite high as well, with 30% of people leaving their job in the first six months of employment.

## 2.3 Conclusions on the Labour Market

The hotels and restaurants sector is the fifth largest private sector employer in the French economy behind trade, construction and transport. The sector has a highly feminized work force, and the proportion of women working in the sector is also increasing. The hotels and restaurants rely on part-time work and fixed-term employment to a greater extent than other sectors of the economy. Seasonal employment is also significant. There is a high concentration of activity in small operations, with about half of people working for companies with fewer than 10 employees. Within the sector, restaurants are the largest employers, with over half of employees.

The sustained growth in activity and low retention of employment has resulted in labour shortage. Efforts are underway to try to attract young people, and there are many options for those wishing to receive training to work in the sector. There are also reports of some employers hiring illegal immigrants to solve their labour shortage.

## 2.4 Background information on the regulatory framework governing the sector

Table 2.17: Specific directives/regulations on or relevant as a background to the improvement of quality of work and employment in the sector

See Table 4.1.

Table 2.18: Membership of employers' organisations in the sector

Number and percentage	Sector
Union des métiers et des industries de l'hôtellerie	80,000

Source: Union des métiers et des industries de l'hôtellerie

Table 2.19: Number and percentage of employees who are member of one of the unions in the sector and at the national level

Number and percentage of employees	Sector

Fédération générale des travailleurs de l'agriculture, de l'alimentation, des tabacs et activités connexes - Force ouvrière	
Fédération CGT commerce distribution (CGT services)	
Syndicat national CFTC du personnel des hotels, cafés, restaurants, bars et collectivités	
Fédération des services CFDT	
Total number of employees	

Source: European Federation of Trade Union in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism and allied branches

Table 2.20: **Number of current collective agreements relevant as background for issues of quality of work & employment.**

Number of agreements	Number of employees involved
1 Supra sector level ("Accord de branche")	Covers all employees in the sector
Company level : information not available	Information not available

Source: Fédération générale des travailleurs de l'agriculture, de l'alimentation, des tabacs et activités connexes - Force ouvrière

The sector collective agreement covers all employees working in the sector (whether they are a member of a trade union or not). Also, there are collective agreements at the company level. Benefits provided in these are more favorable than those provided in the sector agreement. There is no detailed information available on company collective agreements.

Table 2.21: Specification of the quality of work & employment issues in these collective agreements

See Table 4.1.

## **2.5 Discussion and conclusion concerning sector characteristics**

To summarize, there are certain features that distinguish the hotels and restaurants sector from the rest of the economy. It employs a greater proportion of women and it relies on part-time work and fixed-term employment to a greater extent than other sectors of the economy. Non-permanent work takes many forms: it can be apprenticeship, fixed-term contract, seasonal employment or subsidized employment.

There is also a high concentration of employment in small operations - this feature has important repercussions on the quality of work (which will be discussed later in the report). Within the sector, restaurants are the largest employers, with over half of employees.

The sustained growth in activity and low retention of employment has resulted in labour shortage, particularly over the past few years. Efforts are underway to try to attract young people, although not always with great success.

All employees in the sector are covered by the branch collective agreement, whether they are members of a union or not (the key aspects of the agreement are discussed in Chapter 4).

### 3 Quality of work and employment

There are no detailed data available on physical and psychosocial environment. However, a recent survey of working conditions of waitering staff in Paris by Doctors specializing in occupational health provides a good insight on the various aspects of the quality of work discussed below.

#### 3.1 Physical working environment

Table 3.1: Ambient conditions

According to the survey, in 2000, 38.2% of waitering staff reported having to raise their voice to communicate with clients. Employees found that this contributed to fatigue: auditive because the employee needs to be attentive to hear properly, and vocal because she/he needs to speak louder to be heard. It also means that the employee will have to ask the client to repeat what he/she wants and there is a risk of mistake. The report also notes that loud music in some restaurants contributes to auditive fatigue, with a risk of possible hearing loss overtime. The report also notes that a very high proportion of staff suffered as a result of preparatory work before service (cleaning involving skin exposure to water and cleaning agents)

Table 3.2: Ergonomic conditions

Type of pain	Percentage of employees
Foot pain	63%
Leg pain	50%
Back pain	45%
Arm pain	12%

Source: La Restauration à table à Paris

A very high proportion of waitering staff reported suffering as a result of:

- Working in standing position
- Walking between rooms with different levels (stairs)
- High-heeled shoes (which can be compulsory in certain restaurants)
- Participation in reception of food and drink products (lifting).

Furthermore, two out of three employees suffered from at least 3 types of pain. Only 16% of employees did not suffer from any pain. The authors of

the study did not find any group more at risk within the sample. The repercussions were not affected by the age, gender, size of restaurants or experience on the job.

Doctors working in occupational health have reported that pregnancies are often difficult for waitresses because they have to work in a standing position for a long time and they have to carry loads. It has been suggested that this may be why the fertility rate of waitresses (20-40 years) is much lower than the national average. It is not clear whether women leave their employment when they become pregnant, or whether they chose to postpone having children

#### Table 3.3: **Safety conditions**

Safety concerns do not end at the workplace for employees in hotels and restaurants. Safety can also be an issue for employees who have to go back home late at night after work. Indeed, one out of five has reported having concerns over safety on the way home (86.4% of women and 13.6% of men). As a precaution, the vast majority of female restaurant workers will go home by taxi.

#### Table 3.4: **Number and percentage of employees who have access to specific equipment/technology**

There are no statistics available on the use of technology by employees. However, it should be noted that greater use of technology within the sector has had an impact on how tasks are performed and on work organisation generally. For example, there is greater use of sub-contracting.

### **3.2 Discussion and conclusions of the physical environment**

As far as the physical environment is concerned, unskilled workers are the ones at risk in the sector. And the risk factors vary according to occupations. Furthermore, there are typically multiple risk factors reinforcing each other. The following highlights the key ones.

Waitering staff (waiters/waitresses/helpers) -- The key risks arise from carrying loads -- particularly when walking surfaces are not even -- and from working in a standing position over an extended period of time.

Kitchen staff -- The key risks are heavy lifting, slippery floor and injuries from cutting and burning (see Table on occupational accidents by occupation). These risks are reinforced by heavy pressure of time during peak workload.

Possible actions that would contribute to reducing the negative impact of a challenging physical work environment include:

- A reduction of unsuitable walking surfaces

- An improvement of goods reception facilities
- A reduction of strenuous work postures

### 3.3 Work organization

#### Table 3.5: Pace of work, work intensity

No specific information is available.

#### Table 3.6: Skilled work and ability to learn in and from the job/work

Most of the training offered is prior to entering into the sector.

#### Table 3.7: Control in and over work

No detailed information available.

#### Table 3.8: Relations with colleagues

No detailed information available.

#### Table 3.9: Relations with the management:

In 2000, one of three employees complained about constant pressure from management. Trade unions have also reported racial discrimination, with colored people more likely to work in kitchen than in serving clients.

#### Table 3.10: Relations with clients and the public

42% of employees interviewed felt that relations with clients were difficult. It has been suggested that constant pressure from management make it difficult for serving staff to have a relaxed interaction with clients.

Over a third of employees (37%) -- mostly women -- have been victims of sexual harassment, involving verbal abuse. And 16% of employees have been victims of sexual harassment, involving physical contact.

One out of ten waitering staff has been aggressed physically clients at some point in 2000.

The following two additional tables provide some interesting information about the impact of work on sleep and on private life. In 2000, one out of four employees reported having difficulty falling asleep because of work. One out of three reported not having enough sleep because of work. Nearly half of employees said that it was difficult to find time for activities. Also, about two

out of three employees reported that work impacted negatively on their marital and social life.

Table 3.11(A): Impact of work on sleep

Sleeping difficulties	Percentage of employees
Difficulty falling asleep	26.0%
Wake up frequently at night	17.6%
Wake up early in the morning	14.5%
Not enough sleep	32.1%

Source: La Restauration à table à Paris

Table 3.12(B): Impact of work on private life

Work is having a negative impact on:	Percentage of employees
Leisure	47.3%
Marital life	60.0%
Social life	63.4%

Source: La Restauration à table à Paris

### 3.4 General Discussion and conclusions on the psychosocial work environment

Survey results suggest that employees in the sector often feel squeezed between a demanding employers and clients. This is leading to stress and had negative repercussions outside the work life.

### 3.5 Working time

Table 3.13: Working hours (1991 and 1998)

Percentage of employees who	Hotels and Restaurants		National	
	1991	1998	1991	1998
Works more than 40 hours per week <sup>1</sup>	48	37	28	22

Works on Sunday	59	61	26	29
Works at night	22	22	14	15
Works > 10 hour/day	50	44	27	27
Works after 10:00 p.m.	23	22	2	3

(1) As a proportion of all employees. The proportion would be higher if expressed as a percentage of full-time employees. Source: Insee, Enquête conditions de travail

In the 1998 survey of working conditions, employees in hotels and restaurants have identified working time requirements as the most negative aspect of their work. Overall, hours worked have declined in the sector between 1991 and 1998, although they remain higher than what is observed in the economy at large. In 1998, 37% of all employees reported working more than 40 hours/week (compared to 22% for the whole working population). Also, 61% of employees have worked at least once on Sunday, compared to 22% for all sectors. Furthermore, 44% of employees reported working more than 10 hours per day. Finally, one out of five employees worked after 10:00 p.m, compared to 2% for all sectors.

Table 3.14: Working hours in number and percentage of people employed in the sector

Table 3.15: Non-standard working hours - Type of shifts (2000)

Percentage of employees	Restaurants Sector
Split shift	70.8%
Until closings	78.6%
Daytime	68.7%
Opening	60.3%
Morning	52.7%
Nights	32.1%

Source: La Restauration à table à Paris

The above table shows more recent survey results relating to working time (it is limited to waitering staff in the Paris region, but is believed to be indicative of general conditions).

The figures confirm that non-standard working time is a feature of the restaurants sector. There is a wide time span over which employers need staff - from the beginning of preparation to the end of service. Accordingly, there is a great variety of working pattern.

Over two-third (70.8%) of waiters/waitresses in restaurants work *split shift*. The average time between 2 shifts is 3 hours. About two out of three employees go back home between shifts (only possible if the time between shifts allows it). Time spent home is also limited by commuting time (70 minutes on average in France). For the other third, it is not possible to go back home. They either stay in the restaurant or go elsewhere. In these instances, it is not really rest time, but more time away from home.

Four out of five employees have reported working *night time* (i.e. until closing time, which can be as late as 2:00 a.m.)

87% of employees have 2 days in a row for rest (usually not Saturday and Sunday).

Finally, the average week is 43 hours, with 10% of employees reporting working more than 50 hours per week.

Table 3.16(A): Variation in shift (2000)

Number of shifts	Percentage of employees
One	17.7%
Two	21.5%
Three	9.2%
Four	6.2%
Five	20.8%
Six	24.6%

Source: La Restauration à table à Paris

Only 17.7% of employees worked one type of shift. 21.5% of employees worked two types of shift (so 39.2% of employees worked either one or two shifts). Nearly half of employees worked five or six different shifts. A great variation in the work pattern makes it difficult for employees to combine work and non-work life.

Table 3.17: Number and percentage of employees who report to have access to working time arrangement

There is no information.

### 3.6 Payment system and income

Table 3.18: Income level in the sector as related to the national level

Income level is a concern for employees in the sector. There are two considerations.

The first issue relates to the low level of income. Currently, about 40% of employees in the sector earn the minimum wage ("SMIC"). There is a gradual increase (starting at the minimum wage) incorporated in the collective agreement. However, the rates have not be updated since 1997. Furthermore, education is not recognised.

The second concern relates to employees having to work without receiving compensation. Indeed, there are reports that some employees are under pressure from their employers to exceed the legal time limit, and then are not paid. It is difficult to know the extent of the problem. It should be noted, though, that the hotels and restaurants sector is at the top of the list of sectors with cases before the "Tribunal prud'homme" (labour law court). And,

complaints related to unpaid work is at the top of the list of matters brought to the “Tribunal prud’homme”.

Table 3.19: Wage payment and compensation systems

Information on compensation is provided in chapter 4 (key measures of collective agreement).

### 3.7 Outcomes

Table 3.20: Occupational accidents according to consequences (2000)

Consequences	Incidence rate	
	Sector	National
All accidents	6.3	4.6

Source: Caisse nationale d’assurance maladie

Table 3.21: Professional categories with highest incidence of occupational accidents

Detailed information is not available.

Table 3.22: Main causes of accidents (2000)

Main causes	Percentage of accidents
1. Fall (even floor)	27%
2. Manual handling	26%
3. Injured by hand tool	15%
4. Fall (from heights)	11%
5. Burn	5%
6. Struck by falling object	3%

Source: Caisse nationale d’assurance maladie

About one out of four accidents in the restaurants sector occurs when employees fall. About the same proportion of accidents occurs while employees are involved in handling/lifting materials. Hand injuries represent about half of all injuries.

Table 3.23: Notified occupational diseases

The information is not available

Table 3.24: Morbidity in the sector

The information is not available.

Table 3.25: Diagnoses of those who receive disability pensions (new cases each year)

The information is not available.

Table 3.26: Sickness absenteeism

The information is not available.

### **3.8 Access to social protection**

Table 3.27: Number and percentage of workers ensured of income when they are on sickness leave.

As per national regime.

Table 3.28: Number and percentage of workers ensured of income when they are diagnosed disabled for work

As per national regime.

Table 3.29: Number and percentage of workers ensured of income when they become unemployed

As per national regime.

### **3.9 Conclusions on Quality of work & employment**

There are many challenges facing the sector as far as the quality of work and employment is concerned. As noted earlier, there are physical constraints – resulting from the working environment – which are causing pain for many workers on a regular basis. Also, employees in hotels and restaurants tend to suffer more from occupational accidents than the national average. Accidents occur when employees fall or when they are involved in handling. About one

out of four accidents in the restaurants sector occurs when employees fall. About the same proportion of accidents occurs while employees are involved in handling/lifting materials. Hand injuries represent about half of all injuries.

Like in other sectors of the economy, employees in the sector are feeling stressed as a result of an accelerating pace of work. They find that work impact negatively on their sleep and on their private life. Combined exposure to physical and mental strains is reinforcing each other.

But, the most important work issue in the sector relates to hours worked. Managing hours worked outside normal daytime is a major challenge. Financial and rest time compensation is an important dimension, but not the only one. As many observed, it is difficult to have a normal life when not working normal hours. Combining work and non-working life is not easy.

Career and employment opportunity exists, but not for all workers. Indeed, there is an increasing proportion of workers within the sector who are at risk. These would include unskilled workers on fixed-term contracts and illegal immigrants. Finally, significant efforts are underway to enhance training for new entrants, but the results so far have not lived up to expectations for many in the sector.

## 4 Quality of work & employment: policies and instruments

### 4.1 Regulations, collective bargaining and caselaw

Table 4.1: Specific directives/regulations on the improvement of quality of work and employment in the sector

See Table 4.3

Table 4.2: Number of current collective agreements on issues of quality of work & employment.

See Table 4.3

Table 4.3: Specification of the quality of work & employment issues in these collective agreements

The sector collective agreement covers all employees – whether they belong to a trade union or not. It was last modified in 2001. The agreement includes some enhancements over the French legislation. The following are the key aspects covered.

Hours -- Gradual reduction of maximum legal working time to 35 hours in 2007 (there are different stages, depending of the size of the company).

Holidays -- Covers annual leave, parental leave, educational leave and maternity leave

Wages – Rates start at minimum wage (salary rates have not been updated since 1997).

Contracts – Covers permanent, fixed-term, temporary, seasonal contracts

Union -- Freedom to belong to a trade union

Gender equality – Employer must not discriminate

### 4.2 OSH Prevention policies

Table 4.4: Percentage of the companies in the sector with (self-) audits on health and safety

Preventive services on health and safety are provided by the Caisse régionale d'assurance-maladie. In addition to undertaking health and safety inspections of companies, the Caisse régionale d'assurance-maladie provides advice on how to avoid occupational risks, and general information to

increase awareness of health and safety issues. It also promotes good practice within organisations.

Table 4.5: Preventive services on health and safety and services directed at the improvement of the quality of work and employment

See comment above

Table 4.6: Inspecting and enforcing organizations

See comment above.

Table 4.7: Means for enforcement regarding OSH

See comment above.

## 5 Issues and challenges

### 5.1 Views of the employers' organizations

As noted, the vast majority of employers in hotels and restaurants are small operations. For many of them, margins are thin and the only focus is on doing enough business to survive. As a result, the working conditions of work force do not get much attention. In other words, some employers are of the view that they can not afford any change to the way they operate. This attitude is more typical of small restaurant operations rather than of larger ones (and more so in restaurants than in hotels). Larger employers tend to be in better position (although not always) to address working conditions concerns. It is also easier for larger companies with human resources department to keep on top of the labour law/collective agreement framework.

Employers found the gradual reduction in working time to 35 hours a week challenging to implement, and feel that they have been left struggling with a reduced work force (although the hotels and restaurants negotiated a very gradual reduction to 35 hours per week in 2007).

As noted in the report, employers are facing hiring difficulties – both of skilled and unskilled workers. The main employer's organisation has undertaken an initiative to better understand the underlying causes of labour shortage. The Union des Métiers de l'Industrie et de l'Hotellerie is trying to find some solutions – or at least put forward some proposals for discussion – on how to address the sector's image problem with young people, their parents and career counsellors.

### 5.2 Views of the unions

One of the trade unions' key concerns relates to a sub-group of employees in the sector – those working for small operations without trade union representation and who, in their view, are very much at risk. Although there are no statistical information to quantify the problem, trade unions have had evidence of a "sub-sector" where legal requirements are not always met, where legal limit to working time is exceeded and where employees are not always paid for hours worked. These employees are in the most precarious situation. It is believed that illegal immigrants work in the sector and, that because of their status, are basically not treated properly. In addition, trade unions officials have indicated that employers do not always know how to organise work and to manage human resources. The upshot is that a good portion of employees in the sector face harsh working conditions.

The situation for employees working for large organisations is believed to be much better, with the regulatory framework governing the sector basically met. However, even these "better-off" employees do not earn a satisfactory

income considering the work constraints and what can be earned in other sectors of the economy.

Trade unions' representatives believe that it will be very difficult to resolve the labour shortage without addressing unsatisfactory working conditions, which, in their view, are the root cause of the recruitment problem.

### **5.3 Views from the authorities**

The hotels and restaurants sector is important to the French economy, and French authorities are preoccupied by the difficulties it is facing at the moment.

### **5.4 Overview of points of consensus and dissent**

There is a general agreement that working in the sector is demanding because of long opening time, workload peak and having to work standing up most of the time. There is also a common recognition that something ought to be done to solve the sector's hiring problems. It is not clear, however, that there is consensus on why it is difficult to attract people into the sector. As noted, some believe that unsatisfactory working conditions is the fundamental problem. At the same time, others seem to think that it is more an "image" problem (implying that it may not necessarily be the reality).

## 6 Overall discussion and conclusions

There are many positive aspects about work in the hotels and restaurants sector. But, there are major concerns as well affecting the quality of work and employment. Managing hours worked outside normal daytime is one of them. There has been improvement, but as indicated in surveys it continues to be a hardship factor for the workforce. Employees in the sector benefit from both financial and rest time compensation when they work nights or during weekends. While it is important consideration, it is not the only one. Work outside normal time makes it difficult to balance work and non-working life. Combining work and family responsibilities is a challenge for women, who tend to be employed in the sector in a greater proportion than in the rest of the economy. And, as indicated, late night work brings about security concerns for restaurant staff returning home.

Like in many other sectors of the economy, employees in hotels and restaurants are feeling stressed about work, and this is having repercussions on their ability to sleep and on their private life. Career and employment opportunity exists, but not necessarily for all workers. Within the sector, there is a group comprising unskilled workers on fixed-term contracts and illegal immigrants who are in precarious work situations. Opportunities for competence development remain limited.

Finally, health in the workplace is a matter deserving more attention. While there is awareness of the risk of injuries arising from the work in the sector, there seems to be limited focus so far on the risk entailed by combined exposure to physical demands and high pace of work. A better understanding of the long-term health consequences of working in hotels and restaurants would be welcome.

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