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Flexibility of Work in the Public and Private Sector in Slovenia[1]

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ABSTRACT

Discussions about flexibility of organizations in the field of work are more frequent in the recent years, mostly as a result of the economic recession. Structural changes and globalization have had a severe effect on both, organizations and employees. Therefore, organizations must remain flexible to respond to unexpected changes to the area of demand, as well as adjust to new technologies and other influences. Organizations implement various measures to increase their flexibility of work and timing of work and internal mobility of employees or in the field of wages and labor costs. The article presents results of the research which examined whether there are differences in the flexibility of organizations in the field of work between employees in the public and private sectors in Slovenia. The results showed that private organizations enabled internal, numerical, functional and locational flexibility more often than public organizations. The most flexible among public organizations are public agencies and institutions.

Keywords: *numerical flexibility, functional flexibility, flexibility of wages, mobility, flexible forms of employment contract, public sector, private sector*

JEL: J00, J24, J30, J60

1 Introduction

Organizations must remain flexible, if they want to act timely to unexpected changes and/or adapt to new technologies and other influences. Organizations perform various acts to increase flexibility, mostly in the field of time scope and timetable of work, internal mobility of employees and regarding wages and labor cost. The research wanted to present the flexibility of work in the public and private sectors in Slovenia with the aim to analyze and to compare differences of the flexibility in the public and private sector. Two hypotheses were tested:

H1: Employees in the public sector evaluate values of the variables of flexibility different than employees in the private sectors.

1 Results are summarized by the doctoral dissertation: Kozjek, T. (2013).

H2: Employees in the public agencies and institutions evaluate values of the variables of flexibility statistically significant higher than employees in other organizations of public sector.

The research was made by CAWI method (computer assisted web interview). A link to an online questionnaire was sent to official electronic mail adresses in public organizations so they could forward our link to their employees. The results are intended for those who prepare materials regarding changes in the Slovenian labor legislation and for managers of organizations as an aspect of a well-organized working process, which also effects on the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

The first part of the article presents various types of flexibility of work, based on literature and research. The second part presents results of the analysis and comparison of the differences between flexibility of work in the public and private sector in Slovenia.

2 Types of Flexibility in the Field of Work

For better understanding of the variables, studied in the research, each type of flexibility mentioned in this section and also in the literature, is explained. Goodwin (2002, p.109) defines numerical flexibility as capability of organizations and employers to adjust the number of employees to their needs. Altuzarra and Serrano (2010, p. 328) define numerical flexibility as the statistical flexibility and relate it with other job contracts. Tros and Wilthagen (2004, p. 171), ILO (2004, p. 14) and Wachsen and Blind (2011, p. 11) describe numerical flexibility as external and internal numerical flexibility. External flexibility is defined as ability of the organization to adjust number of employees to the business activities by using different types of employment, whether they reduce or increase the number of employees. Internal flexibility indicates the ability of the organization to adjust their work to their business needs by changing their work time.

In addition to the timing aspect and the adjustment of the number of employees, another important organizational aspect is the subject of the functional flexibility. According to Tros's and Wilthagn's (2004, p. 171), and ILO's (2004, p. 14) opinion, functional flexibility relates to organizational adjustment of their work to their business needs by defining tasks and relocating employees to different job positions. Goodwin (2002, p. 110) and Wachsen and Blind (2011, p. 11) interpret functional flexibility as multi-functionality or capability to do other work besides their own. Altuzarra and Serrano (2010, p. 328), define that type of flexibility as dynamic flexibility. Eichhorst and others (2010, p. 4), distinguish external and internal functional flexibility. The external type of flexibility includes qualified, trained, educated and competent individuals, who are able to adapt to structural changes. Internal flexibility defines the ability of organizations to respond to changes

on demand with a flexible organized working process, requiring skilled, well trained and competent employees, who are able to perform multiple tasks.

The economic aspect is analyzed in the context of wage flexibility and features the variable part of wage regarding job performance and overall business performance (Tros & Wilthagen, 2004, p. 171; ILO, 2004, p. 14; Wachsen & Blind, 2011, p. 11). Eichhorst and others (2010, pg 4) associate that type of flexibility with adjustment of actual wages to macroeconomic circumstances. Vermeylen and Hurley (2007, p. 69) defined externalization of flexibility, which means that possibility of employment and unemployment contract (employment through employment agencies).

To define the meaning of the flexibility to work, we have to first define the definition of work and narrow the meaning of the definition considering the flexibility of the employees, work preparations, work items and tasks. That means that employee must finish certain working tasks by the deadline, but he/she can work wherever and whenever he/she wants. The employee also has available options for work preparations and other work accessories that are needed. If we consider flexibility of work from the organizational point of view, the wider aspect of definition means that employee is employed by the employment contract. Understanding of flexible forms of employment from the narrow point of view, is introduced by following sources: ILO (2004a, p. 4), Černigoj Sadar and others (2007, p. 137), Pit Catouphesova and others (2009, p. 4), Richman and others (2010, p. 4) classify job contracts, part time jobs, teleworking, job sharing, condensed work week, flexible working hours, as another aspect of flexible forms of employment. Therefore wider aspect also includes consideration of working time and working condition.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Hypothesis

In the context of the research two hypotheses were tested:

H1: Employees in the public sector evaluate values of the variables of the flexibility different than employees in the private sectors.

H2: Employees in the public agencies and institutions evaluate values of the variables of the flexibility statistically significant higher than employees in other organizations of public sector.

3.2 Research Instrumentation

In order to verify hypotheses, a questionnaire, composed of two parts, was created:

The first part was made to gather demographic data of the employees, who participated in the research. The second part was made to gather information

about flexibility of organizations. Employees who participated in the research had to evaluate variables of flexibility numerically to scale from the lowest (1) to the highest (7) mark. The scale was made as follows:

- 1 – very inflexible
- 2 – inflexible
- 3 – partly inflexible
- 4 – neither is, nor is flexible
- 5 – partly flexible
- 6 – flexible
- 7 – very flexible

Questions about the flexibility of organizations included the issues of external and internal numerical flexibility, functional flexibility, flexibility of wages, and wage cost, locational flexibility (mobility) and flexibility of employment contracts.

Considering external and internal aspects of numerical flexibility, the capability of organization was evaluated for its ability to adjust:

- The level and /or number of employees to the need of organization (F1),
- The work of organizational and/or business needs by using different forms of employment (F2),
- The work of organizational and/or business needs through overtime work (F3),
- The work of organizational and/or business needs by using copyrights or similar job contracts –service contract (F4),
- The work of organizational and/or business needs by hiring students (F5),
- The work of organizational and/or business by reducing the number of employees (F6),
- The work of organizational and/or business by increasing the number of employees (F7),
- The work of organizational and/or business by changing the volume of working hours (F8),
- The work of organizational and/or business by timing of work or by changing working time (F9).

Considering functional flexibility, the capability of organization to adjust the content of work of an individual to organizational and /or business needs was evaluated:

- In the context of the definition of working assignments by changing systematization (F10),

- In the context of the definition of working assignments by organizational instructions (F11),
- By relocating employees to different job positions without changing employment contract (F12),
- By relocating employees to different job positions with termination of an old and offer of a new employment contract (F13),

Relating to wage flexibility the ability of the organizations to adjust wages was evaluated:

- By job performance of an individual employee (F14),
- By business results and business effectiveness (F15).

In association with locational flexibility (or so called geographical flexibility) the ability of the organization to transfer employees to other job positions or to other locations was evaluated (F16).

In the context of flexible forms of employment contracts, the organization was evaluated on its ability to create flexible employment contracts that would meet the needs of the organization with:

- Teleworking from home, within domestic country (F17),
- Teleworking from abroad (F18),
- Contract jobs (F19),
- Flexible working hours (F20),
- Half or part-time working (F21),
- Job-sharing (F22),
- Concentrated work week days, for example: 4 days longer working time, the 5th day is off (F23),
- Hiring employees from employment agency (F24),
- Hiring occasional employees (F25),
- Hiring students (F26),

The research was made in Slovenia from September 26, 2011, to October 26, 2011. Data was gathered using the Computer Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) method. The link to the online questionnaire of the public sector organizations was emailed to the Slovenian Government, ministries, directorates, ministries authorities, government departments, administrative units, municipalities, (public) agencies, the National Electoral and Audit Committee, the Ombudsman, Information Commissioner, the Bank of Slovenia, the Constitutional Court of Auditors, the Bar Association of Notaries, the Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office, Supreme Court, National Assembly and National Council. The response was good; therefore, the link to the online questionnaire was sent only once.

The link to the online questionnaire for organizations in the private sector was sent by e-mail to 6,000 official email addresses. Organizations were randomly selected; email addresses were obtained in the Slovenian Business Register. The link was sent twice: the first time on September 26, 2011, to 3,000 official email addresses and for the second time on October 13, 2011 to 6,000 email addresses.

3.3 Sample of the Participating Employees in the Research

The questionnaire was fulfilled by 1,009 employees in organizations in the private and the public sectors. The participants are broken down as follows: 25. 5 % were employed in the private sector and 74.5 % in the public sector. 3.8 % in government services, 12.9 % in the ministries, 0.7 % in the directorates, 2.0 % in the tax administration, 4.0 % in the social work centers, 4.6 % in the inspectorates, 17.8 % in the administrative units, 14.2 % in the municipalities and 5.1 % in the public institutions and the public agencies.

A link to the online questionnaire was sent by electronic mail to official addresses with a request to forward the link to employees. That means that only employees in the field of administration and employees from other different fields of work participated and filled out the questionnaire. Lower responsiveness of individuals within organizations was due to the fact that the research was implemented online. Among other reasons for non-participation, the individuals stated following:

- They were occupied with other online research.
- The management decided that employees were not allowed to participate in the research.
- Lack of time.

The conclusions are therefore limited only to the part of population which has been included in the sample.

4 Results of the Research

4.1 The Comparison between Public and Private Sector Employees

Reliability Test, Cronbach's Alpha (0.916), showed that data of twenty-six variables are suitable for analysis. In order to verify the hypothesis *H1:"Employees in the public sector evaluate values of the variables of the flexibility different than employees in the private sectors."*, the comparison has been made between average estimates and statistically significant differences of each variable of flexibility in the public and the private sector. The results are shown in the Table 1.

Employees in the public sector who participated in the research evaluated the capability of the organization to adjust work content of individuals, with average estimates of 3.73 (as the second best evaluated variable of flexibility), by changing systematization for the needs of organization. This is quite surprising, considering the legally complex and time-consuming process of changing systematization. According to the Civil Servant Act (ZJU-UPB3, Article 40., 41.), the Government must establish a common solution to systemize the bodies of the state and local administration. Employees who are employed in the organizations of the private sectors evaluated variables of flexibility with estimates of 2.99, mostly because the systematization is performed differently in the private sector than in the public sector.

Even more surprising is the average estimate of 3.67 which was evaluated by employees in the organization of the public sector (as the third highest evaluated variable). Employees evaluated variable of the flexibility of organization to adjust the number of employees, according to the changing needs of the organization. Authorities have to act according to the Civil Servant Act (ZJU-UPB3, Articles 42., 43., and 44.), which defines that labor relations and personnel plans must be prepared in accordance to the structure and number of employees for the two-year action program. A proposal of the personnel plans must be also prepared by the Principal for the public administration bodies. The proposal of the personnel plans must be harmonized with the plan of assignments, work programmers and proposed budget.

Employees in organizations of the public sectors evaluated the capability of the organizations to adjust work by reducing the number of the employees, with an average estimate of 3.10, which is, according to the current labor legislation, a highly estimated variable. Labor legislation at that time in Slovenia was quite rigid regarding termination of the job contract in the public sector. Therefore the estimate correlates to the general development in the labor market, during economic crisis.

Employees in the public sector evaluate with the estimate of 3 and higher (3.04) the capability of the organization to increase hiring students. Employees in the private sector evaluated the same variable with average estimate 3.81, which also indicates rigidity of labor legislation. Organizations are aware of the main problem of rigid Slovenian labor legislation and therefore they rather employ students, who are not well secured on the labor market regarding job loss.

Table 1: Differences in average estimates and statistically relevant differences of variables of flexibility of employees in the public (PuS) and private sectors (PrS), who participated in the research.

Variable of Flexibility	Average Estimates			Standard Deviation	F	p
	PuS	PrS	Differences (PuS-PrS)			
F1	3,67	2,88	0,79	1,621	3,09	0,079
F2	3,31	3,79	0,31	1,755	13,91	0,000
F3	3,43	4,72	−1,29	1,912	92,74	0,000
F4	2,86	2,78	0,08	1,829	0,39	0,533
F5	3,17	3,81	−0,64	1,896	21,25	0,000
F6	3,10	2,69	0,41	1,834	9,13	0,003
F7	2,72	3,06	−0,34	1,693	7,48	0,006
F8	3,07	4,60	−1,53	1,928	124,80	0,000
F9	3,40	5,30	−1,90	1,990	194,80	0,000
F10	3,73	2,99	0,74	1,822	29,89	0,000
F11	4,14	4,91	−0,77	1,647	39,81	0,000
F12	3,53	4,06	−0,53	1,825	14,90	0,000
F13	2,71	2,45	0,26	1,694	4,22	0,400
F14	2,16	2,68	−0,52	1,651	17,79	0,000
F15	2,09	2,96	−0,87	1,639	51,09	0,000
F16	2,87	4,21	−1,34	1,865	98,77	0,000
F17	1,97	2,79	−0,82	1,751	37,79	0,000
F18	1,73	2,07	−0,34	1,498	8,14	0,004
F19	3,15	4,57	−1,60	1,872	106,08	0,000
F20	2,92	5,01	−2,09	1,984	236,07	0,000
F21	2,83	3,80	−0,97	1,837	48,87	0,000
F22	2,53	3,10	−0,57	1,744	18,21	0,000
F23	1,87	2,88	−1,01	1,673	64,82	0,000
F24	1,68	1,92	−0,24	1,362	4,81	0,029
F25	1,74	1,88	−0,14	1,374	1,68	0,195
F26	3,04	3,75	−0,71	1,873	25,03	0,000

Source: Own

The analysis of the statistically relevant differences between estimated averages of the variables of flexibility in the public and private sectors showed, that organizations of the private sectors use most of the types of employment flexibility more often than organizations of the public sectors. The biggest statistically relevant differences occur in the evaluations of the capability of organization to achieve flexible types of employment contracts with flexible

working hours (difference among organizations between public and private sector is – 2.09; $F = 236.7$; $\alpha < 0.001$), and capability of organizations to adjust work with timing (the difference between estimates in organizations of the public and the private sector is – 1.9; $F = 194.8$; $\alpha < 0.001$). Analysis of the statisitically relevant diferences showed that organizations in the public sectors adjust work by reducing the number of employees more often than organizations in the private sector. Variable was evaluated with average estimate of 2.69 in the private and 3.10 in the public sector ($F = 9.1$; $\alpha < 0.005$). The result is the consequence of the current state on the labor market and higher unemployment. Employees in the public sector are often under the presurre, regarding the safety of their employment.

The results also show that employment flexibility is better in the private sector than in the public sector, especially in the following types of employment flexibility: enabling of time adjustment to work, flexible working hours and volume adjustment of the working hours. The possibilities to reallocate to different job positions without changing employment contracts are evaluated by employees in the private sector better than employees in the public sector. The comparison between employees in the public and private sector shows that employees in the private sector have better opportunities regarding internal, numerical and functional flexibility and mobility than employees in the public sector. Employees in the public sector evaluated their possibilities regarding employment flexibility lower than employees in the private sector. Therefore significant changes of labor legislation are necessary to in order to achieve better employment flexibility for employees in public sector.

Both employees in the public and private sectors agree that organizations do not hire candidates from the employment agencies very often. The main reason may be possible bad experiences that some individuals might have had. Employees in the public sectors evaluated the possibility to teleworking with lower marks. Those employees in private and public sectors who participated in the research, evaluated external numerical flexibility and flexibility of the employment contracts very similarly. The major differences in the average estimates among those employees in the public and private sectors are shown in internal numerical flexibility, functional flexibility and geographical flexibility. The hypothesis H1: *"Employees in the public sector evaluate values of the variables of the flexibility different than employees in the private sectors."* is confirmed, based on the analysis of the results. Employees in the private sector evaluated variables related to flexibility of organization higher than employees in the public sector. The major differences occurred in the internal numerical flexibility.

4.2 The Comparison between Employees in Public Agencies and Public Institutions and Employees in other Organizations of the Public Sector

In order to verify the hypothesis *H2: "Employees in the public agencies and institutions evaluate values of the variables of the flexibility statistically significant higher than employees in other organizations of public sector."* comparison of average estimates and analysis of the statistically relevant differences between estimated averages of the variables of flexibility of individual organizations in the public sector is presented. There were created six groups of organizations:

- Ministries,
- Governmental services,
- Tax Administration,
- Inspectorates,
- Directorates,
- Social Security Services,
- Administration Units,
- Municipalities,
- Public agencies and
- Public Institutions.

The results are shown in the Table 2.

The analysis showed many statistically relevant differences such as: employees in the public agencies or institutions evaluated statistically relevant variables of flexibility higher. That was expected as public agencies act more independent in comparison to other organizations of the public sector. Although employees responded very critically about flexibility in the field of work, the results show that public agencies or public institutions in comparison to other organizations in the public sector enable flexible employment more often.

Employees who participated in the research evaluated that municipalities, in comparison to other organizations, more often adjust to:

- The level (number) of employees by changing the needs of organization ($F = 6,39$; $\alpha < 0,001$),
- Work by using overtime hours ($F = 4,27$; $\alpha < 0,001$),
- Work by hiring workers through employment agencies ($F = 3,70$; $\alpha < 0,005$),
- Work by hiring occasional workers ($F = 5,14$; $\alpha < 0,001$).

Hiring workers through employment agencies and hiring occasional workers is most likely related with implementation of various project within the public – private partnerships.

Table 2: Average estimates and statistically relevant difference of the variables of flexibility for individual organizations of the public sector

Variable of Flexibility	MIN VS	TAX IN DIR	SSS	AU	MU	PA PI	F	p
F1	3,21	3,42	2,89	3,97	4,12	3,84	6,39	0,000
F2	3,04	2,68	3,21	3,15	3,81	4,04	6,41	0,000
F3	3,13	3,12	3,22	3,27	3,99	3,84	4,27	0,000
F4	2,73	2,16	1,97	2,38	3,33	3,65	12,77	0,000
F5	3,31	3,32	1,94	2,40	3,69	4,16	13,28	0,000
F6	2,64	3,38	1,65	3,99	2,74	3,10	14,49	0,000
F7	2,75	2,18	2,08	2,30	3,15	3,43	7,46	0,000
F8	2,72	2,72	2,94	2,91	3,23	3,74	4,71	0,000
F9	3,09	2,85	3,09	3,21	3,77	4,24	5,57	0,000
F10	3,42	3,52	3,24	4,19	3,88	4,02	4,39	0,000
F11	3,68	4,13	4,15	4,61	4,22	4,43	4,77	0,000
F12	3,07	3,52	3,76	3,93	3,49	3,87	3,42	0,002
F13	2,26	2,64	2,36	2,79	2,93	3,39	4,27	0,000
F14	1,95	2,10	1,91	1,93	2,45	2,70	3,26	0,004
F15	1,89	1,92	1,94	1,92	2,47	2,24	2,84	0,010
F16	2,87	3,62	2,31	2,89	2,50	2,93	3,61	0,002
F17	2,07	1,66	1,39	1,50	2,03	2,23	9,40	0,000
F18	1,84	1,52	1,30	1,35	1,76	1,88	6,41	0,000
F19	3,22	2,38	3,10	2,77	3,35	3,36	5,85	0,000
F20	2,76	2,45	3,00	2,64	3,25	3,70	4,03	0,001
F21	2,81	2,45	3,37	2,42	2,79	3,14	4,93	0,000
F22	2,19	2,24	2,90	2,72	2,45	2,63	3,02	0,007
F23	1,75	1,54	1,97	1,81	1,90	2,00	2,04	0,058
F24	1,63	1,55	1,20	1,44	2,01	1,95	3,70	0,001
F25	1,64	1,58	1,40	1,39	2,11	2,07	5,14	0,000
F26	3,23	3,11	2,20	2,00	3,50	4,26	16,51	0,000

Legend: PrS – Organization of the private sector; MIN, GOV – Ministries, Government, Public services; TAX, IN, DIR – Tax Administration, inspectorate, directorate; SSS – Social Security Services; AU – administration Unit; MU – Municipality; PA, PI – Public Agency, Public Institution

Source: Own

The research showed that Administration Units in the field of flexible employment, the most commonly adjust to the following:

- Work by reducing number of employees ($F = 14,50$; $\alpha < 0,001$),
- Content of the work of an individual to adjust to the needs in the context of definition of working assignments by changing of the systematization ($F = 4,39$; $\alpha < 0,001$),
- Content of the work of an individual to adjusting to the needs in the context of definition of working assignments by organizational instructions ($F = 4,77$; $\alpha < 0,001$),
- Content of the work of an individual to adjust to the needs by reallocating of the employees to other job positions without changing the employment contract ($F = 3,42$; $\alpha < 0,005$).

An interesting fact is that employees in the Administration Unit that participated in the research evaluated flexibility regarding definitions of their working assignments by changing the systematization higher. In that case it can be assumed that some individuals who participated must have overseen the definition of "changing of the systematization" because the subject of changing the systematization in accordance to Slovenian legal legislation is a time-consuming process.

Hypothesis H2: *"Employees in the public agencies and institutions evaluate values of the variables of the flexibility statistically significant higher than employees in other organizations of public sector."* is confirmed. Analysis showed that functional, geographical and numerical (internal and external) flexibility of the public agencies and the public institutions is the most commonly enabled.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Results of the research regarding the flexibility of work show that employees in the private sector experience better flexibility than employees in the public sector. Employees in the private sector experience: time adjustment to work, flexibility regarding working hours and flexibility regarding extension of working hours. They evaluate the possibility of reallocating to different job positions, without changing their employment contract better than employees in the public sector. Therefore, employees in the private sector have better possibilities to experience numerical and functional flexibility and mobility. Employees in the public sector evaluate the possibilities to teleworking worse than employees in the private sector. Therefore the changes regarding increasing flexibility need to be performed by changing the policy of Labor legislation. Employees in the private and public sectors both agree that organizations do not hire employees through employment agencies very often. The reason might be lack of trust or previous bad experience that some individuals had in the past. We can avoid those problems by supervising these employment agencies.

Employees in the public sector in general evaluated the situation in the field of work flexibility low. Comparison between individual and organizations in the public sectors showed that employees experienced higher employment flexibility in public agencies and institutions. Comparison among the results and findings of the international research and their trends in the field of employment during the time of economic recession (Regus Global Report, 2011; Raisanen et al., 2012; European Commission, 2012) show that employees who are employed in Slovenian organizations do not choose for part-time jobs. Municipalities hire employees through employment agencies and they also hire occasional employees more often than other organizations of the public sectors, mostly because they perform various projects associated with public- private partnerships. Administration Units more often perform adjustments regarding reallocations of the employees to different job positions and reduce the number of employees by changing definition of working assignments.

Results of the research are intended for those who prepare materials and documentation regarding changes in Slovenian legal labor legislation and for managers of organizations. Flexibility of work has positive effects and motivates employees to increase their focus on work; increase satisfaction in the workplace; stimulate employees to increase productivity; has a positive effect regarding coordination between professional and personal life; increases quality of services and/or product; and stimulates loyalty to the organizations. Other research has proven that those effects have a better impact on the efficiency of the organization (Kossek & Michael, 2010; Regus Global Report, 2011). The state and organizations both have to be aware of the positive effects on the flexibility of work. Changes of the legal labor legislation have to be implemented regarding improvements of flexibility of work mostly for the employees in the public sector.

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