



Mental health: overemployment, underemployment, unemployment and healthy jobs

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ABSTRACT

Globalisation and regional economic imperatives have no doubt led to modern work environments increasingly characterised by 'too much work', 'not enough work' and 'no work' rather than optimal 'healthy-productive' work. Besides negative implications for national economies, there is a strong belief that mental health problems and stress-related disorders are the biggest overall cause of premature death in Europe (WHO 2001; Levi, 2002). Income inequality arising from such disparate work states seems to have negative health consequences for all members of society as social cohesion that characterises healthy egalitarian societies progressively breaks down (Wilkinson, 1996).

This paper explores the various work states, and draws upon a range of work stress and unemployment theories and empirical evidence to describe possible relationships between the meaning of work, work states, their features, and mental health. It also explores the 'holy grail': the balance between healthy work and productivity.