



Marmara Municipalities Union
Guide - 2026/3

Time Policy Handbook for Local Governments



Contributors:

Ayşe Göç Yalçınkaya
Burcuhan Şener
Görsev Argın Uz
İmge Haliloğlu
Marc Martorell Escofet*

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Gamze Aydın

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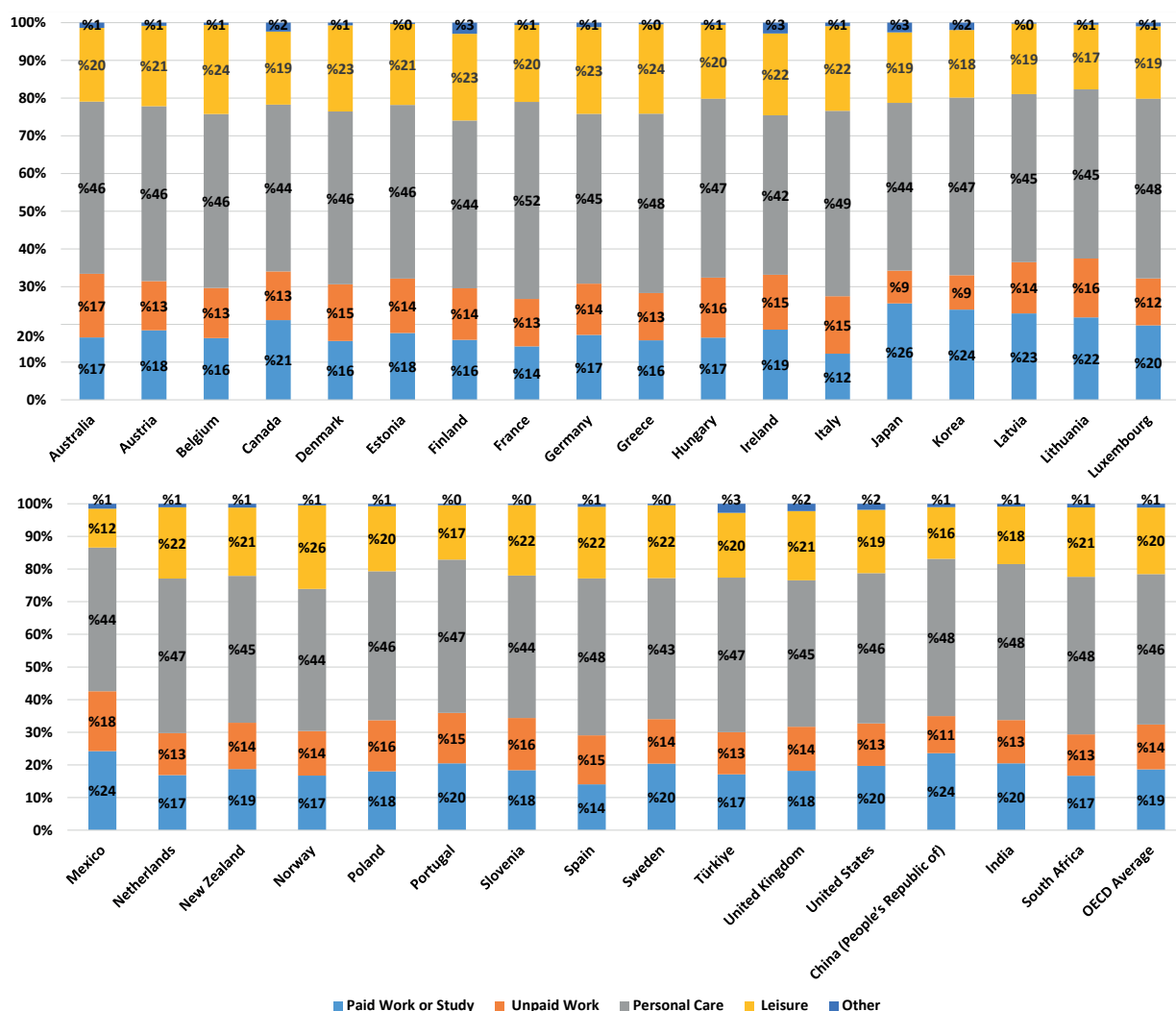
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Time Agenda

Today, time is organized not as a personal resource or a right that individuals can manage through their own will, but rather through the systems and social arrangements in which we live. Because the organization of time directly affects individuals' health, well-being, social equality and economic productivity, it constitutes a critical area of public policy.

In recent years, time use has increasingly become part of the agenda of academia, international organizations, and local and central governments, representing a “new generation welfare state” approach. While the traditional welfare state focused on the redistribution of material resources, this new approach aims to regulate and distribute time in a fair manner. These policies cover a wide range of areas, from aligning daily life with biological rhythms, to urban planning approaches such as “15-minute cities”, and to the humane regulation of working hours. One of the most tangible outcomes of this movement, [the Barcelona Declaration on Time Policies](#), was signed by more than 80 organizations in October 2021, placing the sustainable, fair and healthy use of time on the global agenda. The Declaration builds on the 2010 resolutions of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (Time Use Initiative [TUI], 2023b).



Graph 1: Time Use Across Activities: Daily Time Allocation in OECD Countries (%)
Source: OECD, 2024

International organizations such as the OECD currently utilize time-use data as a fundamental metric of development and well-being. As illustrated in Graph 1, North and West European countries (e.g., Norway, Belgium, France) exhibit a more balanced life profile with higher shares of leisure and personal care. Conversely, East Asian countries (such as Japan and Korea) and Mexico are compelled to allocate a significantly larger portion of their time to “Paid Work/Education” activities. This divergence indicates that, alongside the level of economic development, cultural work habits act as a direct determinant of time management. Personal care, which predominantly comprises mandatory activities such as sleeping, eating, and personal hygiene, accounts for the largest share across all countries. One of the most striking contrasts in the chart manifests itself in the distribution of leisure time: while individuals in Norway can dedicate 26% of their day to entirely leisure activities, this rate drops by half in Mexico to just 12%. This time poverty in Mexico stems from the combination of high paid work (24%) and intensive domestic unpaid labor (18%), which collectively consume nearly half of the day.

OECD data reveal that the daily time use of individuals in Türkiye exhibits a distribution highly consistent with the global OECD average. In Türkiye, the largest share of daily time is allocated to personal care activities (sleeping, nutrition, etc.) encompassing biological and physiological necessities at 47%. While the share of paid work and education activities in daily time stands at 17%, the share of unpaid labor (domestic work and care services), representing household reproduction, is at 13%. Furthermore, the share of leisure (free time), a key indicator of individual well-being and quality of life, is measured at 20%. In this context, Türkiye presents a transition profile between East Asian countries (e.g., Japan and Korea) that exhibit highly work-intensive time patterns, and Scandinavian countries (e.g., Norway) characterized by high leisure ratios.

Inequalities linked to the organization and use of time are becoming increasingly visible and widely debated. In Türkiye, 37% of households do not have sufficient time to meet the demands of paid work, unpaid care labor, education, and personal needs. This inequality becomes even more pronounced from a gender perspective: while the rate of time poverty among employed men is 34%, it rises to 59% among women (Zacharias et. al., 2014).

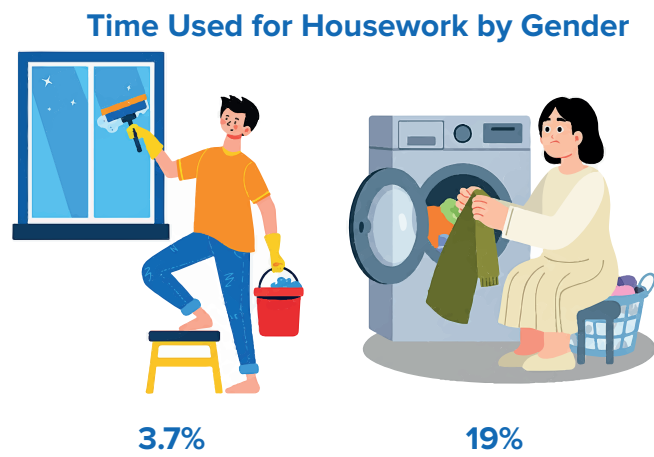


Figure 1: Time Allocated to Housework by Gender

Source: TurkStat, 2015

The time devoted to housework is also closely linked to the leisure time of individual need in order to recover and renew themselves, and it is most often distributed unequally between women and men. Time policies are, therefore, the necessary public policies that municipalities can implement in order to improve their citizens' health and well-being, and to build more sustainable urban environments. They offer an innovative opportunity to change daily realities at the pace and approach each institution needs. Furthermore, by approaching the social organisation of day-to-day life, they offer a unique opportunity to create cross-sectoral policies that enable public institutions to look at rising issues from a transversal point of view.

Glossary of Time Policies

Time policies: Policies that regulate the use of time in a sustainable, fair and healthy manner in order to improve citizens' quality of life, health and well-being.

Right to time: The right of individuals and communities to have agency over how they use their time. This right aims to secure the fair distribution of time and the freedom of individuals to experience and shape their own life rhythms.

Right to disconnect: A regulatory framework that safeguards workers' right to disconnect and rest outside working hours in response to information and communication technologies that render employees constantly reachable.

Time poverty: A condition in which individuals do not have enough time of their own after the time required for paid (labor) and unpaid (care) work, education, and essential daily needs (such as sleeping, cooking, and eating) has been deducted from the 24 hours of the day. This phenomenon, which disproportionately affects women due to unpaid domestic and care responsibilities, is also closely linked to income poverty. Those people having less than 3 hours a day for their own use are generally considered to be "time poor."

Time discrimination: The structural and unequal distribution of time among different social groups. For example, restrictions on women's participation in the labor market due to inadequate access to childcare services constitute a form of time discrimination.

Violation of the right to time: Violations of the right to time refer to situations that prevent individuals and groups from using their time freely and equally in daily life. These violations may occur in various forms (TUI, 2023a):

1. The ways individuals or groups use their time being directed by others (i.e., social norms, gender expectations, etc) rather than by their own will,
2. The structural unequal distribution of time among groups (e.g., between women and men or across social classes), often intertwined with discrimination,
3. Certain forms of time being systematically devalued, as is frequently observed among unemployed or elderly individuals,
4. The disregard of individuals' and groups' culturally specific time-use needs.

Time as a Policy

It has been confirmed, most notably by the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2017, that the social organization of time directly affects human health through the disruption of daily biological rhythms, and that this is associated with a wide range of health problems, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, obesity and mental health disorders. Achieving lasting and transformative impact in economic, environmental and social policy fields is only possible if time is addressed as a policy domain in its own right (TUI, 2023a). Meeting the structural needs of the twenty-first century requires the adoption of a holistic time policy approach and the recognition of the right to time as a human right as its legal foundation.

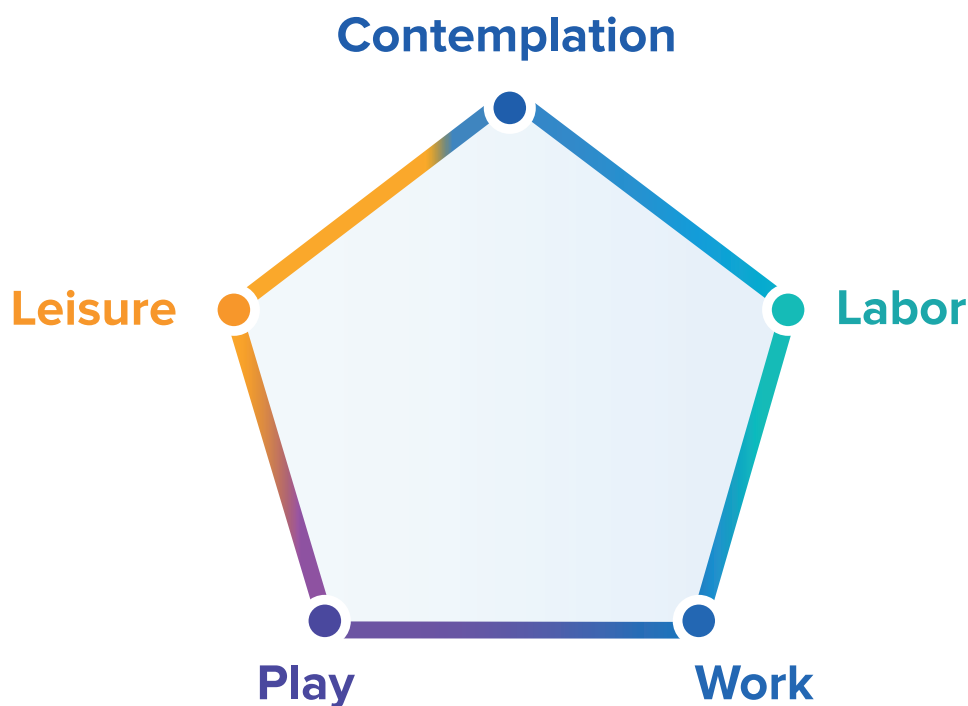


Figure 2: Time in Ancient Greek

Source: Guy Standing, 2023

In *The Politics of Time*, Guy Standing, drawing on conceptions of time in Ancient Greece, reminds us that life was understood as consisting of five fundamental activities. In this framework, time begins with a clear distinction between labor, referring to necessary and paid work performed for survival, and work, which is oriented toward social bonds, care activities, civic friendship (*philia*), and the individual's self-development. However, in ancient Greek thought, the sphere of true freedom is completed by leisure, which goes beyond passive rest to signify active participation in political and social life; play, as a space of creativity and unrestricted exploration; and contemplation, through which the individual reflects deeply on their own existence and the nature of the universe.

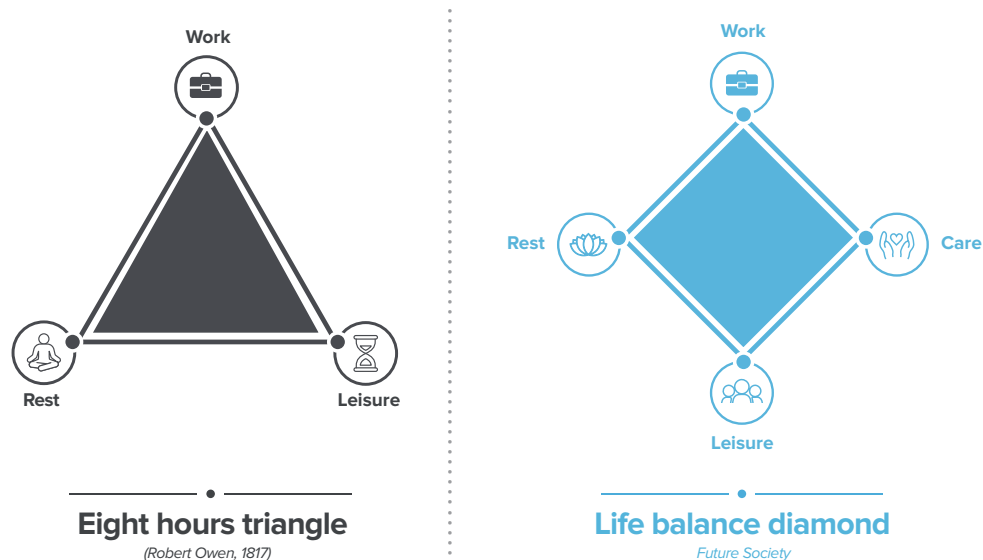


Figure 3: Change in Time Use Perspective
Source: Time Use Initiative

To approach time as a field of policy is, at its core, to make a choice about the purpose of human existence in the world. The mainstream model, represented by the “eight hour triangle,” conceptualizes time primarily as a mechanism for ensuring social reproduction and providing the minimum rest required to prepare the individual for the next working day. Within this framework, time functions as a mechanical fuel that sustains the system itself.

By contrast, the alternative model referred to as the “life balance diamond” redefines time as a sphere of freedom through which individuals can achieve well-being and realize their full potential. This perspective moves beyond viewing humans merely as continuously self-reproducing units of production. Instead, it integrates time into policy as a domain in which individuals can realize their capabilities, attain personal fulfillment, and access genuine well-being beyond processes of “mechanization.”

Access to a diamond-shaped model of time use requires the adoption of a holistic time policy approach and the recognition of a “right to time” as a fundamental human right. In today’s fragmented and acceleration-driven world, this right refers to individuals’ ability to exercise agency over their own time and to defend their life rhythms against time poverty and alienation. It highlights that time is not merely an economic resource, but a foundational dimension of health, gender equality, and sustainability. Time policies, in this sense, span a wide range of interventions, from aligning everyday life with biological rhythms to redesigning urban spaces according to the principle of proximity. These policy domains can be grouped under five main pillars: (1) care and gender equality, (2) mobility and sustainability, (3) governance and institutionalization, (4) the future of work, and (5) health and chronobiology (TUI, 2022).

1) Care and Gender Equality¹

One of the most critical intersections of time policies is care work. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) data, women perform 76.2% of unpaid care work globally. This imbalance limits women's access to education and employment opportunities, leading to time poverty. The Barcelona Declaration on Time Policies identifies the redistribution of care responsibilities and legally guaranteed access to childcare services as essential conditions for preventing time discrimination.

Bogotá: Care Blocks

Bogotá's Care Blocks initiative is a strong example of good practice that treats care work not merely as a social policy issue, but as an integral part of urban planning. In the city, a significant proportion of women, particularly those in low-income groups, spend most of their daily lives on unpaid care work. This heavy care burden makes it difficult for women to continue their education, access paid employment, rest, and allocate time for themselves. To reduce this inequality, Bogotá reorganizes services in line with caregivers' everyday life routes. Designed at the neighborhood scale, Care Blocks bring together education, health, psycho-social support, legal counseling, rest areas, and simultaneous services for children or dependent family members under one roof, all within walking distance.

Located at the neighborhood level, Care Blocks are designed to be accessible within an approximately 800-meter radius from residential areas, corresponding to a 15-20 minute walking distance for most users. The co-location of education, health, psychosocial support, legal counseling, rest spaces, and services for dependent family members enables caregivers to create time for themselves without neglecting their responsibilities. In this respect, the model offers a concrete urban solution that both makes care work visible and reduces time poverty. The innovative dimension of the system is not limited to fixed neighborhood centers. For caregivers living in rural and peripheral areas, Care Buses have been developed to deliver services in a mobile form, thereby reducing spatial inequalities. In addition, home-based care services are provided for individuals who care for severely disabled family members and are unable to leave their homes. Furthermore, Men's Care Schools aim to promote a more equitable distribution of care responsibilities by focusing on developing men's domestic labor and caregiving skills.

Barcelona: Vila Veïna

Barcelona's Vila Veïna model stands out as a strong local government initiative that addresses care needs at the neighborhood scale through a collective and proximity-based approach. Designed around local units of approximately 10,000 to 30,000 residents, the system relocates care services from large centralized facilities into people's everyday living environments.

¹ The good practices presented from this section onward have been compiled from the respective reports (TUI, 2022; 2023b; 2023c; 2025).

The model emerged in response to the fact that care services and existing support mechanisms are often insufficiently known by residents, that care responsibilities are unevenly distributed within households, and that caregivers are frequently isolated. In response, Vila Veïna establish free information and support points in publicly accessible neighborhood facilities, enabling citizens to easily access care resources, social services, and legal counseling close to where they live. They also function as meeting spaces for families and caregivers, strengthening experience-sharing, solidarity, and collective responsibility within neighborhoods. One of the model's most significant strengths is its support for caregivers not only in terms of access to services but also access to time. Each neighborhood unit has at least one full-time professional who strengthens local networks, coordinates activities, and provides individual support. Workshops, support groups, and physical and emotional well-being programs help reduce caregivers' daily burden, while childcare services and "breathing spaces" enable individuals to allocate time for themselves. In this sense, Vila Veïna enhances social participation and self-care opportunities for caregivers. As of the end of 2022, the system had reached 16 centers, with a target of covering more than 320,000 people, approximately one-fifth of Barcelona's population, and was supported by a municipal investment of €3.5 million.

2) Mobility and Sustainability

The organization of time is directly linked to environmental sustainability and carbon footprint. Approaches such as the "15-minute city" or "45-minute regions" aim to reduce travel times by ensuring proximity to services and to promote more sustainable forms of mobility. These urban approaches not only enhance quality of life by reducing time spent in transit, but also contribute to lower energy consumption.

Milan: Mobility as a Service (MaaS) and Living Lab

Milan's Mobility as a Service (MaaS) and Living Lab initiative offers an integrated mobility governance model aimed at making urban mobility more accessible, sustainable, and time-efficient. At its core, the system brings together different modes of transport on a single digital platform, allowing users to seamlessly plan, book, and pay for their journeys.

The integration of public transport, bike sharing systems, micromobility options, taxis, and other shared mobility services within a single interface encourages users to shift from private cars to multimodal transport options. This approach not only simplifies individual travel experiences but also reduces daily time losses in the city, contributing to a more predictable and fluid mobility system.

An innovative aspect of the model is its treatment of mobility not only as a service provision mechanism but also as a data-driven tool of public governance. By aggregating data from different operators on a centralized platform, the municipality is able to analyze user behavior, peak demand hours, and intermodal transition patterns, thereby shaping medium and long-term transport policies.

Bolzano: The 15-Minute City

Bolzano's 15-Minute City approach offers a model that simultaneously enhances time savings, accessibility, and quality of life by bringing public services into citizens' immediate living environment. Although the city is relatively small, the concentration of most services in the historic center created significant accessibility challenges, particularly for older adults, families with children, and people with limited mobility. To address this, the municipality began decentralizing public services from the mid-1990s onward. Today, the city is organized into five districts, each providing essential services. Schools, healthcare facilities, social services, pharmacies, libraries, and municipal offices are located within just a few minutes' walking distance for residents, enabling citizens to complete daily tasks quickly and mostly on foot without traveling to the city center.

One of the model's key strengths is its integration of physical proximity with digital inclusion. To address barriers faced particularly by older adults and migrants in accessing digital services, neighborhood based civic centers have been established. These centers provide one-on-one assistance for online procedures, digital identity applications, and electronic documentation processes. The Digital-Bz center, launched in 2022, has not only reduced pressure on the central civil registry but has also become an important guidance hub for groups struggling with digital transformation.

3) Governance and Institutionalization

Time policies require a new model of governance at local and regional levels. In this context, it is proposed to establish new positions such as a "Time Chief Officer" to mainstream the time perspective within institutions, along with dedicated units within local governments. Furthermore, the implementation of such policies should be grounded in participatory methodologies and developed in cooperation with civil society.

Barcelona: Integrating the Time Perspective into Decision-Making Processes

The Barcelona City Council, which also includes a Time Chief Officer, adopts an innovative approach aimed at strengthening the participation of women, minority groups, and other vulnerable populations in decision-making processes. Time management is a key element in the checklist used in institutional decision-making. Accordingly, major internal events, meetings, and similar activities are designed to accommodate individuals with specific time constraints, including caregivers. Concrete measures include ensuring that meeting times do not overlap with school start and end times, organizing sessions twice when possible (morning and evening), and rotating meeting schedules. This flexible planning enables participants to manage their personal and family responsibilities while actively engaging in public decision-making processes. The implementation of this checklist is ongoing and forms part of the 2022-2025 Intercultural Action Plan in Barcelona's Ciutat Vella district. It demonstrates how time can be used as a resource to support more equitable participation. In this respect, the initiative positions time as a gender and equality sensitive policy tool.

4) The Future of Work

With Industry 4.0 and digitalization, the redefinition of working time has become inevitable. In this context, the “right to disconnect,” which allows employees to disengage from work-related communication outside working hours, and the four-day working week, increasingly tested in many countries, represent concrete actions of time policies in working life.

Strasbourg: Four-Day Working Model

The Four-Day Working Model (La Semaine de 4 Jours), implemented by the La Ville et l'Eurométropole de Strasbourg since 2024, stands out as a reform responding to changing expectations in working life. The model redistributes the standard 35-hour weekly working time across four days, enabling employees to obtain an additional fixed day of rest in exchange for longer working days. Its inclusive design, extending to occupational groups that do not have the possibility of remote work, strengthens the equity dimension of the policy.

The main objective of the reform is not only to improve work-life balance, but also to visibly recognize the labor of staff working under high workloads, reduce burnout risks, and foster a more sustainable working culture while maintaining the quality of public services. Initial results indicate that, despite longer daily working hours, employees report feeling less fatigued, and in particular, the additional third day of rest at the weekend provides significant relief in terms of family life, health, and personal affairs.

Catalonia: Guidelines to Ensure the Right to Digital Disconnection

The Guidelines to Ensure the Right to Digital Disconnection, prepared by the Labour Relations Council of Catalonia, offer an innovative example of time policy aimed at protecting the boundaries between work and private life. The expansion of digitalization and remote work has blurred the boundaries between working time and personal time, increasing risks of overload and digital fatigue among employees. This guideline aims to guarantee the right to digital disconnection for all workers, ensure respect for rest, leave, and holidays, and protect family and personal life.

The guideline provides a comprehensive framework with practical measures and implementation examples. Digital boundaries are defined through tools such as email scheduling, notification systems, and emergency communication protocols; meeting arrangements and exceptions are clearly regulated. In addition, awareness raising training is provided for employees, and the effectiveness of the implementation is regularly evaluated. Published in October 2023, the document has been widely disseminated among employers, trade unions, and public administrations, creating a space for dialogue on the regulation of working time in Catalonia.

5) Health and Chronobiology

Time policies also aim to protect the body's natural circadian rhythms. Research shows that well-designed temporal arrangements enhance productivity and learning capacity, while sleep and rest are increasingly recognized as fundamental safeguards of public health. In this context, the abolition of seasonal time changes and alignment with natural time zones have also become important policy debates.

Barcelona: Respir Programme

The Respir Programme of the Barcelona Provincial Council is a comprehensive policy initiative designed to reduce the burden on informal caregivers and improve their quality of life. The program specifically targets families caring for dependent individuals over the age of 65 or persons with intellectual disabilities, focusing particularly on enabling caregivers, mostly women, to achieve a better balance between personal life and care responsibilities.

The program provides respite periods ranging from 15 days to 2 months for older dependents, and from 3 days to 2 months for individuals with intellectual disabilities, thereby offering caregivers the free time they need. During this period, comprehensive care is provided to dependents, along with support in unexpected family situations, improving the well-being of both caregivers and care recipients.

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