

Another important policy tool is the strengthening of workers' rights to request changes in their working hours, and in particular to be able to move back from part-time to full-time hours after having moved from full-time to part-time – the “reversibility” clause. This policy would ease the reinsertion of parents returning from maternity and parental leave into the paid labour force and help to avoid the part-time trap in general (Messenger and Ray, 2015). In France, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland, part-time workers have the right to revert to full-time work in the same enterprise under national laws for employees (ILO, 2015c). Governments and firms should also establish policies to expand part-time work arrangements into higher skilled and higher paid occupations and actively promote the use of part-time arrangements by both men and women, especially to encourage men to assume a greater share of unpaid care work and to enable women to be more fully engaged in the labour force (Messenger and Ray, 2015).

Lastly, the protection of part-time workers is even more pressing given the rise of new contractual relations between employers and employees. In consequence, policymakers are tasked with protecting workers who, under these new conditions, may not be covered adequately by existing labour laws. Some States, however, such as the Netherlands, have adopted new legislative measures to ensure that workers outside the traditional definition of part-time employment are adequately protected (box 10).

Box 10 **Protection for part-time workers in the Netherlands**

The Netherlands has one of the most comprehensive legal protection systems for part-time workers. Under the 1996 Equal Treatment (Working Hours) Act, difference in treatment of workers on the basis of number of hours of work is prohibited. The 2000 Adjustment of Working Hours Act allows employees under certain conditions to change their working-time arrangements. The legislation also aims to increase men's uptake of part-time work in an effort to promote gender equality (ILO, 2015c). This protection is extended to those in marginal part-time work. In 1999, the Flexibility and Security Act restricted the use of zero-hours contracts, while balancing the need for flexibility for both employers and employees. Under this Act, three forms of marginal part-time employment are covered:

- First, workers on “pre-agreement contracts” can decide to accept or refuse work when contacted by the employer and can do so without consequences. After three contracts on a fixed-term basis, the employer must offer a permanent contract where the employer must pay the employee the hours agreed upon, even if the working hours are not offered by the employer (i.e. the employee is not called in).
- Second, workers on zero-hours contracts have no guaranteed hours during the first six months that they work and are paid only for the hours worked. After six months, regardless of whether the worker is called in, the employer is obliged to pay for the average number of hours worked in the previous three months. This regulation applies to workers who work at least once a week or a minimum of 20 hours a month.
- Third, workers on minimum-maximum contracts where the employer specifies both the minimum and maximum hours that an employee would work within a week, month or year are entitled to payment for additional hours worked on top of the maximum hours specified in the contract (Messenger and Wallot, 2015; Eurofound, 2015a).

In addition to covering these three types of marginal part-time employment, Netherlands legislation guarantees workers in casual employment the same entitlements on a pro-rata basis as full-time workers, including minimum wage, unemployment insurance, health insurance, holiday entitlements, pensions and protection against unfair dismissals (ibid.). Although workers engaging in these forms of marginal part-time employment are well protected under the country's legislation, they are still, nonetheless, working irregular hours and may not have access to benefits such as annual leave, even though it is stipulated by law (Messenger and Wallot, 2015).

5. Limiting long paid hours and overwork

The ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Recommendation, 1981 (No. 165) encourages the adoption of general measures targeting all workers and designed to improve working conditions and the quality of working life, including measures aiming at: “the progressive reduction of daily hours of work and the reduction of overtime, and more flexible arrangements as regards working schedules, rest periods and holidays”, taking into account the stage of development and the particular needs of the country and the different sectors of activity (para. 18) (box 11).