

Working time reduction is gaining some ground.

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1. Spain: Support for industrial SMEs to reduce working time.

The Spanish government will provide 10 million euros in support for 60 to 70 SMEs, with subsidies of up to €150,000 for each. The aim is to increase productivity while reducing working hours by at least 10%, without any reduction in pay for workers. They will be compensated via public subsidy. Companies with fewer than 250 workers in the industrial sector will be encouraged to switch to a shorter working week and take part in the program.

2. Portugal: Four-day working week pilot project.

In Portugal, the government will select companies and conduct training during the first six months of 2023 to prepare a pilot project on working time reduction. The working time reductions will then take effect in the second half of 2023. Unlike the Spanish trial, the Portuguese state will not provide any financial compensation for shorter working time. The week will be 32, 34 or 36 hours, depending on the needs of the company, with no loss of pay for the worker. At the end of the six-month trial, private companies will have one month to decide whether to adopt the reduced working week, abandon it or opt for a hybrid model. At present, the working week in Portugal is 40 hours and 35 hours in the public sector.

3. The UK: Bank permanently adopts four-day working week.

After more than a year of testing the four-day working week, Atom Bank has decided to permanently implement the shorter working period. The group started testing the shorter week in November 2021. It then switched to a 34-hour working week spread over four days, while keeping the same wages. The change did not take place without difficulties. It took a lot of planning, communication and listening. Atom Bank was one of about 70 companies that participated in a four-day week test organised by the 4 Day Week Global lobby group. It is the first of these companies to officially make this organisational model permanent in the UK.

Edited by industriAll Europe.