

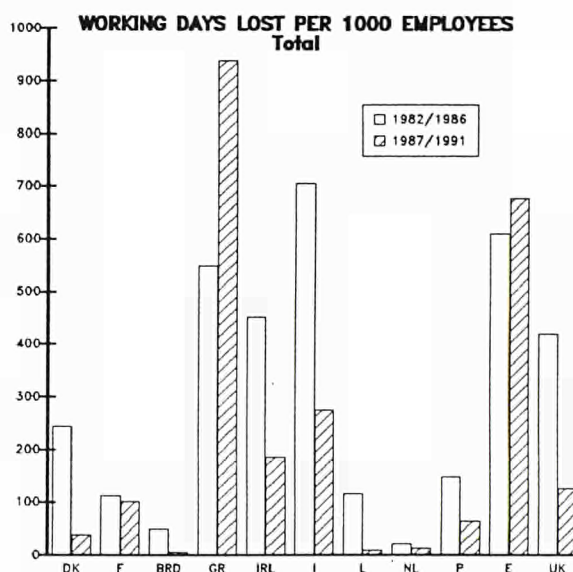
THE TREND OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (1982-1991)

6.3 million workers took part in industrial disputes in the European Community in 1991, compared with 4.7 million in 1990. Although the number of workers involved in these disputes increased by over 30%, the number of working days lost per 1 000 employees declined from 151 to 103. Fewer days were lost in eleven of the twelve Member States, the only exception being Spain where the figure rose by nearly 80%. In ten Member States, there is a downward trend in the incidence rate in terms of the number of working days lost per 1 000 employees, on average, in the years 1987-1991 compared with the average for 1982-1986. On the other hand, the trend in Greece shows a rise of more than 70%. The figures available for 1992 do not confirm the downtrend observed in 1991: they indicate a rise in the number of employees involved and in the number of days lost in the majority of Member States.

In contrast with other major socio-economic aggregates (population, employment, gross domestic product) which tend to follow a relatively steady trend, the series on working days lost per 1 000 employees is notable for its sudden blips which are due to general strikes or protracted stoppages in specific sectors. Moreover, the incidence of disputes is affected by the timing of negotiations in the form of collective bargaining or the negotiation of budgetary or social measures) which may also be relatively long-drawn-out. Eurostat therefore bases most of its analyses of this phenomenon on five-year periods which enable it to observe the incidence of industrial disputes in a longer historical timeframe. But annual data are nevertheless available.

It is essential, when comparing the incidence of days lost in different countries, to take account of the notes on comparability at the end of this document.

The basic indicator in this context, the number of working days lost per 1 000 employees, is an incidence rate relating the number of days lost through strikes and lockouts in the course of a year to the average number of employees over the same period.



TREND OF THE INCIDENCE RATE 1982/91

Comparison of the period 1987/1991 with the period 1982/1986 reveals a substantial fall in the incidence rate in nine Member States. Greece and Spain were the only two Member States in which there was a substantial rise in the number of disputes. The relative levels in Belgium cannot be ascertained, because no data are available for certain years of the decade under review.

The countries showing the lowest incidence rates (under 20 days) are the Federal Republic of Germany with an average of 6 days (-89%), Luxembourg with an average of 10 days (-92%) and the Netherlands with 14 days (-36%). In six of the last 10 years Luxembourg has recorded a zero incidence rate (the average value for 1982/1986 reflects the general stoppage of April 1982).

The most striking fall in the incidence rate in the countries in the middle of the table in this respect was recorded in Denmark (39 days, -84%). The figures for Portugal (65 days, -56%) and France (101 days, -10%) are also much lower and represent historical minima for these two Member States.

There has also been a marked downtrend in the incidence rate in the Member States which have traditionally been at the top end of the table. This applies to the United Kingdom (126 days, -70%), Ireland (186 days, -59%) and Italy (275 days, -61%).

The only two Member States showing a long-term uptrend in the incidence rate are also those with the highest incidence rates: Greece, with 939 days lost on average (+72%) has the highest incidence rate in the Community, largely due to the succession of general strikes and disputes in the public sector; and in the case of Spain, with 677 days on average over the period 1987/1991 (+11%), the picture reflects frequent generalized disputes and the general strike in 1988.

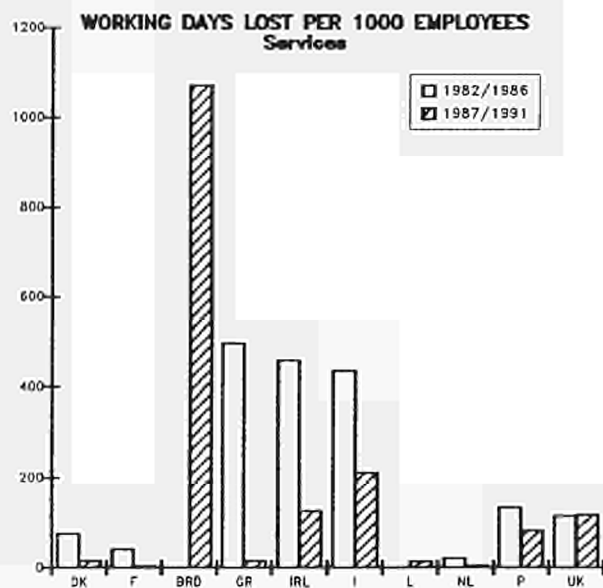
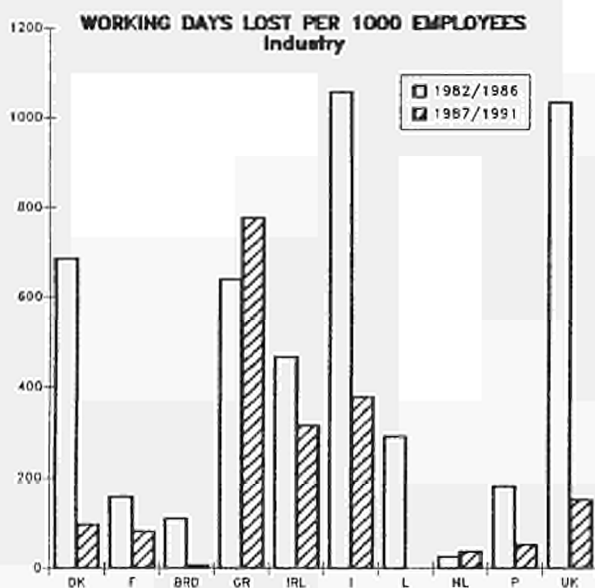
INCIDENCE RATES IN 1991

In 1991 the incidence rate fell sharply in eleven of the twelve Member States. The downtrend started in the first half of the year in the climate of uncertainty due to the conflict in the Persian Gulf which was reflected in the patterns of behaviour of the socio-economic operators. Spain was the only Member State to record an increased number of days lost (+75%) as a consequence, in particular of the frequent sectoral and national disputes in that country. In the other Member States, the trend was generally downwards, particularly in Greece (-74%). The incidence rate also showed a notable fall in the United Kingdom (-59%) to its lowest value since the second world war, and a similar development was observed in Ireland (-62%). The incidence rate was very low in the Federal Republic of Germany (6 days), in Luxembourg (12 days) and the Netherlands (17 days).

The figures available for the first months of 1992 point to a considerable upswing in the incidence rate in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Greece, Italy, Ireland and Spain.

THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES INVOLVED IN DISPUTES IN 1991

In contrast with the number of days lost, the number of employees involved increased in 1991. This is because the average duration of disputes was shorter in most Member States with strikes being restricted, generally speaking, to the periods of collective bargaining. The rise in the number of persons involved in Italy (from 1.7 to 2.9 million) with a 43% reduction in the number of days lost, and in France (from 0.3 to 0.4 million) with a 29% reduction in the number of working days lost, are representative of this trend.



BREAKDOWN OF DISPUTES BY SECTOR 1982/91

The sectoral breakdown of the number of working days lost through stoppages reveals a downtrend in the industrial sector and a modest rise in the services sector. The incidence rate in agriculture remains marginal.

Disputes in the agricultural sector are limited to the countries of southern Europe (and to Spain and Italy in particular) which still have a large number of employees in the agricultural sector.

In the industrial sector, the incidence rate is falling in most Member States. At the lower end of the table, stoppages have disappeared from the Luxembourg statistics and fallen by 94% in the Federal Republic of Germany. The incidence rate has also dropped sharply in Denmark (-86%), in Portugal (-71%) and in France (-47%), in spite of a substantial rise in the extractive industries. In the Netherlands, the unrest in the building sector in 1990 explains the inter-period rise in the incidence rate (44%) although the overall situation in that country can still be described as average.

In the two Member States with the highest incidence rates in 1982/86, which were Italy (-64%) and the United Kingdom (-85%), the retrenchment is considerable in comparison with the earlier figures: in these two Member States, the incidence rate has dropped sharply in the manufacturing and extractive industries and has also declined at a slower rate in the

building sector. The trend in Ireland (-32%) is similar to the trend in these two Member Countries, with a more modest fall in the manufacturing sector.

In Greece, in which the incidence rate in industry is roughly the same as the rate for every branch of activity taken together, the rate is rising (+21%), particularly in the extractive industries. A comparable trend is probably underway in Spain, where inter-periodic comparisons are fraught with difficulty for want of a reliable breakdown of the data by sector for 1982/1987.

In the services sector, in which employment has expanded considerably in recent years, the incidence rate is currently rising gradually. This applies to the Federal Republic of Germany (where there were strikes in the public services in 1990) which nevertheless still has the lowest average for the 1986/91 period, and to France (+38%) which felt the impact of disputes in the public administration sector, in the United Kingdom (+2%) following the disputes in the transport sector (in spite of the falling incidence rate in the other branches), and in Luxembourg which had experienced a six-year period without any recorded disputes. In Greece, there was a very substantial rise (+116%) in the incidence rate, particularly in the water/gas/electricity services sector and in the banking sector. The level is also very high in Spain. Falling incidence rates were recorded in the Netherlands (-75%) which held on to its second place in the group of countries with low incidence rates in the services sector, in Ireland (-73%) and in Portugal (-37%).

COMPARABILITY OF DATA

The principles of the elaboration of statistics on industrial disputes are spelled out in the ILO's interim Resolution on statistics on strikes and lock-outs adopted by the fourteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (1987). But the application of this Resolution is not identical in all the Member States of the European Community. International comparisons therefore need to be made with considerable care. The main methodological differences are to be found at the following levels:

a) **exclusion of certain sectors and regions:** France excludes stoppages in the agricultural sector and days lost through strikes in the civil service were not included in statistics until 1982. Portugal has excluded stoppages in the public sector and general strikes since 1986. Belgium does not include days lost through strikes in the public sector. Spain excludes the data for Catalonia for the period 1983/85. For these four Member States, therefore, these sectors and regions are not included in total employment when calculating the number of working days lost per 1000 employees. Denmark excludes strikes in enterprises which are not members of the Employers' Federation;

b) **the minimum criteria for inclusion in statistics:** the threshold for Denmark is 100 days lost, and the number of days lost through stoppages is therefore underestimated in that country's statistics. Ireland excludes stoppages of less than one working day. The threshold for Greece and Spain is 1 hour, and in the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany the minimum criteria are ten workers and one day unless one hundred or more days are lost. France excludes all stoppages in which the product of the number of days of the stoppage and the number of employees involved is less than 8 hours. There are no minimum criteria for inclusion in statistics in the other Member States;

c) **the unit at which the stoppage occurs:** disputes are invariably associated with local units (where the stoppage starts), although the French statistics distinguish between local disputes and more general disputes. France restricts its breakdown by sector to local enterprises and excludes the local units of larger enterprises and its sectoral data are therefore underestimated;

d) **the collection of data:** enterprises are not obliged to supply data on stoppages (except in the Federal Republic of Germany) and such information must therefore be obtained from the administrative bodies which collect these data. In Denmark, the Employers' Federation is responsible for collection. Italy and Greece collect data on hours lost (and Eurostat converts the data to days lost). In Spain, responsibility for collecting these data is shared by the central and regional administrations and there is some doubt concerning the comparability of Spanish sectoral statistics on stoppages up to 1988;

e) **the rupture of statistical series:** in Spain since 1986 (change of method), in Portugal since 1986 (exclusion of the public sector) and in France since 1982 (inclusion of the public sector).

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES INVOLVED IN STOPPAGES

Total

1982	:	40.0	467.9	10483.0	69.8	:	80.1	2102.9	30.0	53.2	354.3	875.1	262.5
1983	:	94.1	617.2	6844.2	20.3	:	-	573.8	30.5	40.9	224.3	:	273.6
1984	:	537.3	555.0	7356.5	16.2	:	0.2	1464.3	31.0	50.8	155.3	:	230.5
1985	:	78.2	549.1	4842.8	22.8	34.3	0.2	791.3	168.7	581.3	785.7	:	199.0
1986	:	115.5	455.7	3606.7	17.0	:	-	720.2	50.0	56.7	1106.3	948.9	231.5
1987	:	155.0	359.7	4272.7	12.6	:	-	887.4	26.2	56.9	1609.2	2021.8	81.3
1988	11856.3	33.5	403.2	2712.1	5.2	23.1	0.4	790.0	10.2	29.6	449.4	7244.1	155.6
1989	8130.3	43.9	298.5	4451.8	15.4	19.5	-	727.0	3.7	27.2	795.7	1447.9	296.1
1990	4747.5	257.2	277.8	1664.0	25.0	10.3	0.6	290.0	10.3	37.4	1304.2	776.2	128.9
1991	6347.1	208.5	408.2	2951.2	42.0	11.1	2.1	176.0	17.9	37.9	476.6	1896.2	119.1

WORKING DAYS LOST PER 1000 EMPLOYEES

Total

1982	:	1	141	1283	49	:	580	248	505	43	809	363	166
1983	:	2	104	975	27	:	0	178	382	36	324	720	229
1984	:	246	135	611	7	:	0	1278	471	61	275	1087	99
1985	193	2	71	266	20	46	0	299	520	1041	618	546	101
1986	:	1	109	390	9	:	0	90	378	40	712	335	145
1987	:	1	100	316	12	:	0	164	327	58	1317	692	42
1988	239	2	109	224	2	75	3	166	177	40	505	1509	70
1989	181	4	179	300	4	50	0	182	62	23	702	454	123
1990	151	15	69	341	37	38	33	83	266	42	1720	265	50
1991	103	6	49	195	17	24	12	34	100	30	452	463	41
77/81	:	46	206	1135	30	182	0	570	817	131	905	1410	203
82/86	:	50	112	705	22	:	116	419	451	244	548	610	148
87/91	:	6	101	275	14	:	10	126	186	39	939	677	65

Industry

1982	:	1	286	2122	37	:	1091	307	695	130	1038	:	142
1983	:	4	165	1607	1	:	0	337	385	100	566	:	307
1984	:	550	172	770	8	:	0	3608	592	180	610	:	170
1985	:	2	97	434	59	102	0	732	476	2898	619	:	174
1986	:	2	74	350	25	:	0	184	187	116	365	:	119
1987	:	3	67	435	9	:	0	125	450	113	693	:	41
1988	227	4	133	255	3	75	0	279	237	118	703	1148	39
1989	168	6	114	282	8	113	0	138	98	59	408	744	85
1990	191	10	47	616	127	98	0	177	735	103	1609	342	57
1991	150	13	56	308	40	64	0	43	59	96	471	735	41

Services

1982	:	0	30	598	56	:	244	221	406	10	654	:	223
1983	:	0	52	503	39	:	0	98	397	13	155	:	176
1984	:	5	109	498	6	:	0	120	423	16	43	:	41
1985	:	1	42	145	4	17	0	92	568	332	643	:	41
1986	:	0	86	432	2	:	0	47	498	10	986	:	188
1987	:	0	78	240	1	:	0	186	277	37	1793	:	43
1988	151	0	87	180	1	76	4	120	154	10	397	755	112
1989	178	3	203	356	3	15	0	205	46	8	909	212	175
1990	101	18	60	177	2	6	49	45	27	18	1839	205	47
1991	50	1	13	101	8	3	17	32	126	4	422	178	45

: Not available _ Series breakdown

For further information consult:
- CRONOS/SOCI database
- Publication "Employment and Unemployment/Industrial Relations"
(under preparation)
EUROSTAT E-1: 4301-33249 (A.Montserrat), 4301-32005 (A.Persenaire), 4301-33831 A.Marco)