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### INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN EUROPE 1981-1990

Over the period 1986/1990 industrial disputes in the European Community showed a general downward trend compared with the period 1981/1985: the number of days lost per 1 000 employees through strikes or lock-outs fell by more than 50% in eight of the twelve Member States.

WORKING DAYS LOST PER 1000 EMPLOYEES											
	D	F	I	NL	L	UK	IRL	DK	E	GR	P
1981/1985	50	113	652	22	116	440	476	297	593	438	175
1986/1990	5	75	271	8	7	136	244	40	647	887	84
% change	-91	-33	-58	-63	-93	-69	-49	-86	+10	+103	-53

*The basic indicator of propensity to disputes, the "Number of working days lost per 1 000 employees", is the ratio of the number of days lost through strikes or lock-outs in a year to the average number of employees during the same period.*

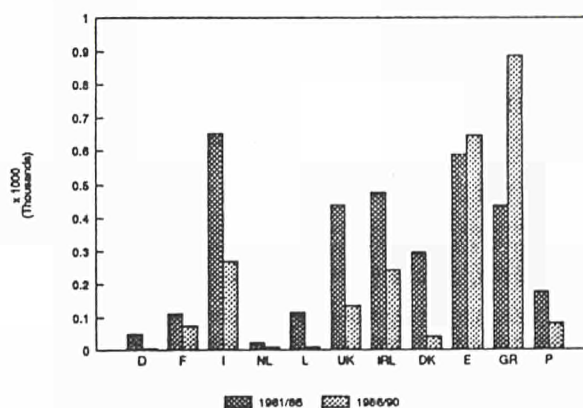
Unlike the figures for the major socio-economic aggregates (population, employment, gross domestic product), which show a relatively steady pattern, the series for industrial disputes shows abrupt changes due to general strikes or long-term sectoral strikes. Between 1981 and 1990, the peaks were reached in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1984 (strikes in the metalworking and other industries in support of the 35-hour week), the United Kingdom in 1984 (miners' strike), Denmark in 1985, Luxembourg in 1982, Spain in 1988 (general strike) and Greece in 1987 and 1990 (general strikes). No figures are available for Belgium, which stopped regular collection of data on industrial disputes in 1980.

Of the countries with a low propensity for disputes (fewer than 10 days lost), Luxembourg has a remarkable record with eight strike-free years out of ten, the only exceptions being 1982 and 1990. However, the Netherlands has the lowest figures over the ten-year period under review: 8 days for the period

1986/1990, 63% down on the previous period (22 days). The Federal Republic of Germany recorded the lowest figure in the Community for 1986/1990 (5 days), 91% down on the previous period.

Of the countries with a moderate propensity for disputes (between 10 and 100 days lost), France showed a fall of 33% (from 113 to 75 days lost) with a fairly steady pattern, although civil service disputes are not recorded. Denmark had an average of 40

WORKING DAYS LOST/1000 EMPLOYEES



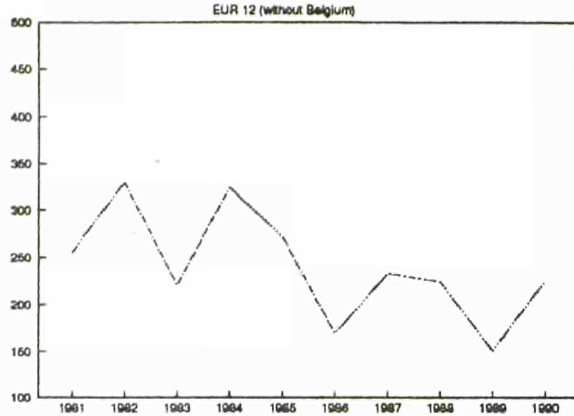
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## WORKING DAYS LOST/1000 EMPLOYEES



days for 1986/1990, 86% down on the previous period. There was a significant drop in Portugal too (-53%): 84 days lost in 1986/1990 as against 175 in the previous period.

In the countries with a higher propensity to disputes, there has been a substantial decrease in the United Kingdom since 1981 (as a result of the various changes in labour legislation), the number of days lost falling from 440 to 136 (-69%). Similarly, Italy, which had the highest figure for the period 1981/1985, showed a significant reduction in the number of days lost (-58%) in the latter period (an average of 271 days despite a renewed rise in 1990). Ireland is fairly similar to these two countries, with a drop of 49% and an average of 244 days lost for 1986/1990.

Two Member States show completely opposite trends: Greece, where the figure doubled (+103%) as a result of the wave of general strikes in 1987 and 1990 and the numerous disputes in the public sector, and Spain, where the increase is estimated at less than 10%. However the quality of the data for Spain is very poor because there are no figures for certain regions and on account of the changes made in 1986 in the method of recording strikes. Nevertheless, it seems clear that Spain is not following the general trend of a reduction in the propensity to disputes.

## WORKERS INVOLVED

*The Indicator "Workers Involved per 1 000 employees", which gives the ratio of the number of workers involved in strike action to the average number of employees, shows a fairly similar pattern to that of the number of days lost, with a significant fall in most Member States.*

This fall is particularly significant in Denmark (-75%), Ireland (-65%), the Netherlands (-63%), which is still the country with the lowest involvement in industrial

disputes, and Italy (-57%), which had the highest average for this indicator in 1981/1985.

In several countries (Federal Republic of Germany, United Kingdom, Denmark, France and Portugal), the number of workers involved is falling at a slightly slower rate than the number of days lost, with disputes tending to be more localized and of shorter duration and to involve more workers than in the rest of the Community.

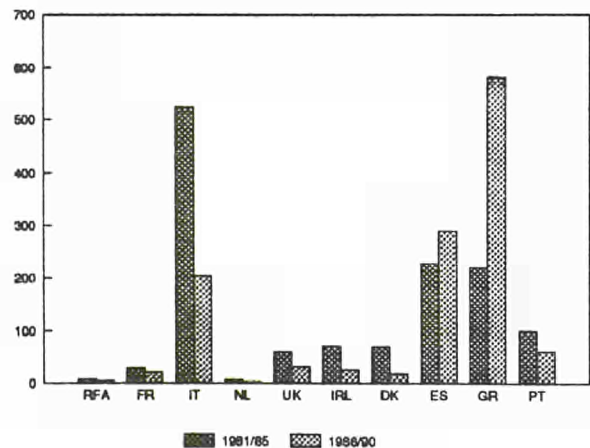
The number of workers involved is rising only in Greece (+163%) and Spain (+12% approximately). In the case of Greece this increase, which is higher than that in the number of days lost, is due to the proliferation of general strikes of a political nature. In Spain, the number of workers involved was relatively stable throughout the decade, with a peak in 1988 (general strike) and a sharp drop in 1990.

## DISPUTES BY SECTOR

*The sectoral breakdown of the number of working days lost per 1 000 employees shows a general downward trend in the propensity to disputes in the industrial sector and a slight rise in the services sector. In agriculture it is becoming marginal.*

Industrial disputes in the agricultural sector are confined to the countries of southern Europe, where there is still a sizeable proportion of employees. There was a significant fall in Spain (-43%), the country with the highest averages, Italy (-19%) and Greece (-17%), the latter having no disputes in 1989. In Portugal, the substantial leap in the average (+409%) is due to the disputes recorded in 1986 and 1987.

## WORKERS INVOLVED/1000 EMPLOYEES



Generally speaking, the propensity to disputes in industry is falling in most Member States. In all the countries (except the Netherlands) it was twice as high in 1981/1986 in the industrial sector (including building) than in the economy as a whole. Over the following five years the gap narrowed considerably in most Member States with the exception of France and Denmark, which were still well above average, and Greece, which remained below. The falls were quite substantial in the countries with a long tradition of industrial disputes: the United Kingdom (-83% despite the miners' strike in 1984) and Italy (-66% as a result of the drop in the number of strikes in the car industry). There were no strikes at all in Luxembourg's industry and the number fell by 95% in the Federal Republic of Germany, which had the lowest figure for the period 1986/1990 (5 days lost).

Appreciable falls were also recorded in Portugal (-73%) and Ireland (-43%), where the propensity to disputes in industry is lower than in the economy as a whole, and in France (-51%) and Denmark (-86%), although in these two countries the propensity to disputes is still higher in industry than in the services sector.

Spain saw a rise (approximately 10%) in the number of disputes in industry, which still has a greater propensity than the services sector; in Greece (+7%) the increase was due primarily to the exceptional seriousness of the disputes in 1990. In the Nether-

lands it was the building strike in 1990 that was at the root of the sharp rise (+63%), although the average level is still very moderate.

In several Member States the services sector recorded an increase in the propensity to disputes: Spain (over 200%), Greece (+144%) and the Federal Republic of Germany (+183%), although the latter is still well below the Community average. Luxembourg had nine dispute-free years until 1990 (postal strike), while the figure remained virtually unchanged in the United Kingdom (+1%).

On the other hand, there was an appreciable drop in Denmark (-87%), the Netherlands (-81%) and Ireland (-67%), with significant falls in the other Member States as well, although in countries such as Portugal the propensity to disputes in the services sector is already higher than it is in industry. In France (-31%) the information is somewhat fragmentary because certain disputes (particularly those in public corporations such as the BNP in 1990) are not included.

All in all, the propensity to disputes in the services sector moved closer to the trend in the economy as a whole between 1986 and 1990.

#### COMPARABILITY OF DATA

The principles underlying the compilation of statistics on industrial disputes are contained in the ILO's interim Resolution on statistics of strikes and lock-outs, adopted by the 14th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (1987). Nevertheless, this Resolution is not implemented in identical fashion in all the Member States. International comparisons therefore call for a great deal of caution.

The main methodological differences are as follows:

- a) **the exclusion of certain sectors:** France does not record strikes in the civil service or agriculture, Denmark excludes strikes in firms that are not members of the employers' confederation and Portugal does not include civil service strikes;
- b) **the minimum duration of the dispute for recording purposes:** Denmark does not include strikes involving the loss of fewer than 100 working days, which means that strikes are underestimated in this country. Ireland and France exclude strikes lasting less than 1 day, Greece those lasting less than 1 hour, Spain those lasting less than 1 hour (except in the Basque Country, where those lasting less than half a day are excluded) and the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany those lasting less than 1 day or involving fewer than 10 workers, unless the total number of days lost exceeds 100. There are no minimum limits in Portugal, Italy and the Netherlands;
- c) **the unit involved in the dispute:** disputes are always considered on the basis of the local units (place where the dispute broke out), although France distinguishes local disputes from widespread disputes in its statistics. This country gives a sectoral breakdown of local disputes only, omitting firms with several places of work, which means that the data by sector are underestimated;
- d) **data collection:** the provision of information about strikes is not compulsory for firms (except in the Federal Republic of Germany) and is therefore dependent on the administrative bodies responsible for data collection. Italy and Greece collect the data in terms of hours lost (Eurostat converts them into days lost). Belgium stopped regular collection of data in 1980. In France there is no sectoral breakdown of the number of workers involved. In Spain responsibility for data collection is shared between the central and regional authorities, which diminished the relevance of the sectoral statistics for the whole decade and of the totals for the period 1981/1985;
- e) **breaks in series:** in Spain since 1986 (change of method) and Portugal (civil service strikes have been excluded since 1986).

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**WORKING DAYS LOST PER 1000 EMPLOYEES**

	Total										
81/85	50	113	652	22	116	440	476	297	593	438	175
1981	2	104	598	5	0	195	503	302	673	418	280
1982	1	175	1122	49	580	248	505	43	381	707	166
1983	2	112	811	27	0	178	382	36	586	283	229
1984	246	104	511	7	0	1277	471	61	881	240	99
1985	1	69	220	20	0	300	521	1041	445	541	101
1986	1	82	328	9	0	90	378	40	335	623	138
1987	1	76	272	11	0	159	327	58	692	1153	40
1988	2	96	187	2	0	164	177	40	1506	443	76
1989	4	69	261	4	0	182	62	22	454	629	117
1990	15	53	307	14	35	83	275	42	247	1589	47
86/90	5	75	271	8	7	136	244	40	647	887	84
%VAR.	-91	-33	-58	-63	-93	-69	-49	-86	+10	+103	-53

	Agriculture										
81/85	0	:	294	0	0	1	35	:	471	13	4
1986	0	:	202	0	0	0	0	:	210	25	51
1987	0	:	239	0	0	0	0	:	128	0	48
1988	0	:	418	0	0	0	0	:	220	0	0
1989	0	:	199	0	0	0	0	:	664	27	0
1990	0	:	105	0	0	0	0	:	110	0	7
86/90	0	:	240	0	0	0	0	:	266	10	21
% VAR.	0	:	-19	0	0	-100	-100	:	-43	-17	+409

	Industry										
81/85	113	177	995	21	290	1088	612	727	586	625	255
1986	2	74	295	25	0	184	186	115	318	320	122
1987	3	67	376	9	0	125	450	111	849	606	34
1988	4	134	205	3	0	280	236	111	1079	615	40
1989	6	114	243	8	0	140	95	58	713	361	86
1990	11	47	557	129	0	175	763	103	274	1444	60
86/90	5	87	335	34	0	181	346	100	646	669	68
% VAR.	-95	-51	-66	+63	-100	-83	-43	-86	+10	+7	-73

	Services										
81/85	4	23	378	23	0	117	403	130	113	388	150
1986	20	11	362	2	0	47	278	10	282	864	161
1987	11	10	205	13	0	178	155	37	481	1569	45
1988	0	27	153	1	0	116	154	12	699	347	97
1989	3	11	277	3	0	203	47	9	184	229	153
1990	17	20	159	2	53	45	27	18	185	1733	40
86/90	10	16	231	4	11	118	132	17	366	948	99
% VAR.	+183	-31	-39	-81	-	+1	-67	-87	+223	+144	-34

**WORKERS INVOLVED PER 1000 EMPLOYEES**

	Total										
81/85	7	36	524	6	27	60	71	70	229	221	100
1981	11	35	568	2	0	69	37	25	190	236	151
1982	2	25	724	16	135	98	35	25	150	206	96
1983	4	35	477	5	0	27	37	19	231	131	96
1984	17	43	516	4	1	69	38	23	359	89	84
1985	3	43	336	5	1	37	210	259	214	444	73
1986	5	36	249	4	0	34	61	24	125	624	84
1987	7	28	294	2	0	41	32	24	254	897	29
1988	1	31	183	1	3	35	13	12	871	244	60
1989	2	23	302	3	0	32	5	11	164	432	97
1990	14	21	111	2	3	13	13	16	84	707	41
86/90	6	28	223	2	1	31	25	17	300	581	62
% VAR.	-22	-23	-57	-63	-96	-48	-65	-75	+12	+163	-38

**For further information:**  
**-CRONOS/SOCI database**  
**Publication "Employment and unemployment/working time"**  
**(in preparation)**  
**EUROSTAT E-1: 4301-3249 (A.Montserrat), 4301-2005 (A.Per-**  
**senaire), 4301-3831 (A.Marco)**