

THE TOSCA PARTNERS



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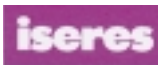


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OBSERVATION OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN CALL CENTRES



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The development of a global
information economy is bringing about
a transformation of many aspects of
working life, but perhaps no new form
of work has provoked
as much controversy as the call centre.

Does call centre employment open up
exciting new opportunities for knowledge-based work? Or is it a return to the
stressful and routinised working conditions which typified factory employment
in the past? Given that an estimated two million Europeans already work in
call centres, such questions have major policy importance.



TOSCA is the first project which has
been set up at a European level to
carry out systematic research on the
social conditions in call centres. It is
also unique as the only trade union led project funded under the European
Commission's Information Societies (IST) Programme. TOSCA stands for Table
d'Observation Sociale des Centres D'Appels. TOSCA was initiated by the French
social and economic research institute ISERES and is led by the ETUC, the European
Trade Union Confederation. The ETUC was established in 1973 to provide a trade
union counterbalance to the economic forces of European integration.



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At present, the ETUC has in its
membership 74 national trade union
confederations from a total of 34
European countries, as well as 11
European industry federations,
representing a total of 60 million
members. The ETUC is recognised by the
European Union, by the Council of
Europe and by EFTA as the only
representative cross-sectoral trade union
organisation at European level.



THE PROJECT'S WORK

Review of the existing evidence

TOSCA partners carried out a review of the existing literature and statistics and produced national reports on the situation in:

| | | | |
|---------|----------|--------|---------|
| Belgium | Bulgaria | France | Germany |
| Ireland | Italy | Spain | UK |

These national reports are available to be downloaded from the TOSCA website <http://www-it.fmi.uni-sofia.bg/TOSCA/>

A survey of call centres in Europe

In the eight participating countries, 531 call centres were surveyed to gain an overall impression of the characteristics of the sector across Europe. The results give a picture of:

- The sectors in which call centres are operating
- The functions involved in call centres
- The degree of automation and technologies used
- Call centre size and organisational structure
- The structure of the workforce
- Employment contracts
- Management and work monitoring
- Trade union recognition and collective bargaining

The results of the survey are available for downloading from <http://www-it.fmi.uni-sofia.bg/TOSCA/>

A bibliography

The web-based bibliography brings together more than a thousand bibliographical entries (books, articles, websites, reports and documents) relating to call centres in Europe, with a special focus on working conditions. This documentation is classified according type, author and title and a keyword search facility is currently being added. The bibliography can be accessed at <http://www-it.fmi.uni-sofia.bg/TOSCA/>

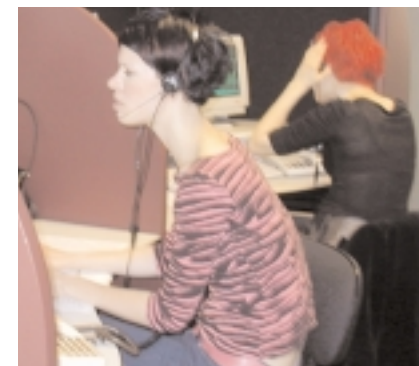


The case studies

At the core of TOSCA's work lie in-depth case studies of a range of call centres in the eight participating countries. In each country at least six of these case studies have been carried out involving interviews with managers, technical specialists and a range of call centre operators in each centre.

The results of these case studies provide a rich source of information on many aspects of working conditions in call centres including technological and organisational trends, including the evolution from call centres to contact centres.

- Outsourcing
- Flexible working patterns
- Virtual call centres and teleworking
- Working hours
- Pay and working conditions
- Monitoring and surveillance
- Health and safety
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Workload management
- Training and staff development



The report of these case studies will be available at <http://www-it.fmi.uni-sofia.bg/TOSCA/>

Handbook

The results of TOSCA's research will be made available in a user-friendly form as a handbook to be published in the Autumn of 2002 by the ETUC. The handbook will provide a checklist of points for consideration by policy-makers, human resource managers, trade unionists, training providers, recruitment consultants and other stakeholders committed to developing good practice in call centre employment in Europe.

Dissemination activities

TOSCA is arranging seminars, workshops and other dissemination activities in each of the participating countries. TOSCA partners welcome invitations to speak at conferences and seminars.

The TOSCA handbook will be launched at a major international symposium in Paris on September 24th, hosted by the French trade union, the CGT, Confédération Générale du Travail.