



Work Autonomy,  
Flexibility and  
Work-Life Balance

# Flexible working in companies across Europe: high performance or family friendly strategies?

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# Flexible working as a buzz word...

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Emily Schmitt

3/16/2009 @ 6:00PM

## How A Flexible Work Schedule Can Help You Strike The Balance

Tammy Hunter was obsessed with her handheld device. It got so bad that her children would bring it to her whenever it lit up, because they knew she wouldn't want to miss any important call about work. She faced a very familiar



# Clegg announces flexible hours plans

Deputy prime minister to unveil scheme to stop British women being 'locked out of the workplace' and boost GDP

Patrick Wintour

Sunday 11 November 2012 21.45 GMT

31 comments

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📷 Nick Clegg's plan aims to put to use the million women missing from the UK economy. Photograph: Barbara Lindberg/Rex Features



# Use of flexitime

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- Which companies / countries provide flexitime?  
Family demands driven or high performance strategy driven?
- Much of the analysis of flexitime based on individual level data and/or for (mostly Anglo-Saxon) single countries
- Not much know in a cross-national comparative perspective, especially using company level data
- (Changes over time 2004-2009)



# Theories



# Working time flexibility (flexi-time)

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- Ability to start and end work days flexibly
- Ability to accumulate hours to take days/weeks off (calculated across the year, or years) – working time accounts



# Family friendly flexitime



- Flexitime allows workers to adapt work life to **family demands** - work-family border theory (Clark 2000)  
Flexibility enactment theory (Kossek et al 2005)
- Women are still the main carers of children / relatives  
→  
companies/industries/countries with women more likely to use flexitime



# Institutions and company behaviour

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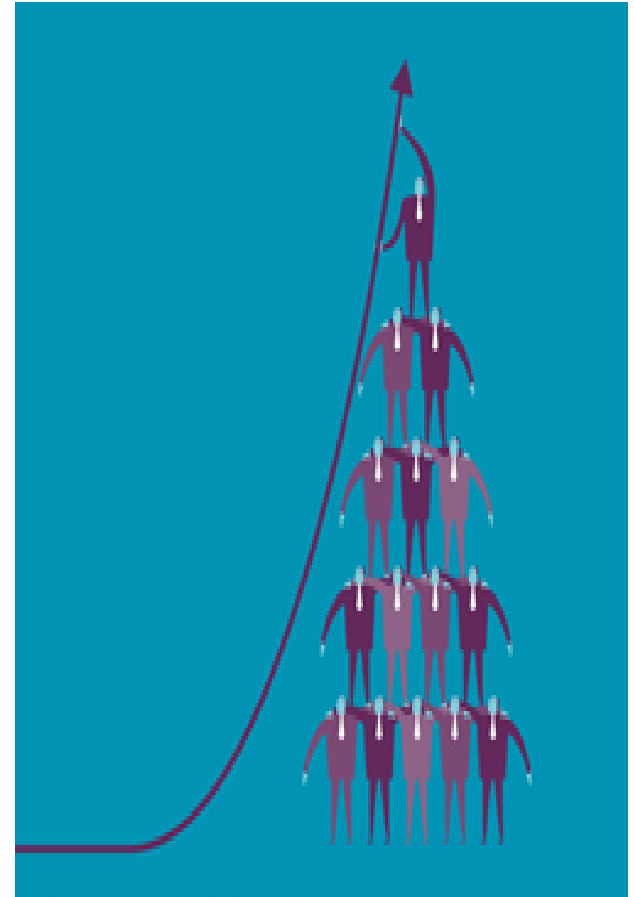
- Crowding out theory (e.g. Etzioni)
  - Generous welfare states/ family policies crowd out occupational systems
- Crowding in (van Oorschot et al.)
  - Generous family policies encourage occupational systems to develop
- Institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell)
  - Influence of institutions as coercive/mimetic powers





# High performance strategy flexitime

- Flexitime as a **high performance strategy** : encourage workers to influence the organisation of work and allowing discretion to improve productivity (Appelbaum, 2000; Davis and Kalleberg, 2006)
- Firms with skilled workers, skill intensive industries & countries most likely to make use of flexitime



# Data & Methods



# European Company Survey

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- 2004(EU15+6 new accession countries), 2009(EU27+3candidate) approximately 1000 companies per country
- Representative of companies with more than 10 employees (excludes micro companies, agriculture & fishery sectors)



# Definitions

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- Provision of flexitime
  - “Does your establishment offer employees the possibility to adapt - within certain limits - the time when they **begin or finish their daily work according to their personal needs or wishes?**”
  - “Is it possible to work longer on some days and to compensate this later by working less on other days?”
  - “Is it possible for employees to use accumulated hours for full days off?”
- The proportion of workers covered by the scheme



# Independent variables (company level) (1)

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- Workforce composition: women, skilled
- Size, sector(industry) Nace R.1, public sector
- Management approach in WLB (only in 2004)
  - Company should take into consideration the private responsibilities of its employees in its work organisation and working time regulations (0-10)
- Industrial relations
  - ER representative exists
  - Work climate : How would you rate the current general work climate in your establishment? Is it very good, quite good, somewhat strained or very strained? (only in 2009)



# Independent variables (company level) (2)

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- Economic condition
  - Economic condition: How would you rate the economic situation of this establishment? Is it very good, quite good, neither good nor bad, quite bad or very bad?
- High performance strategy (in 2009 only)
  - Performance related pay
  - Team work – self managed



# National level data

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- Family friendly policies/institutions
  - Family policy expenditure (EUROSTAT)
  - Effective parental leave (Multilinks)
    - Parental leave months\*pay
- High performance strategy
  - Size of high+medium-high tech industries & knowledge intensive services (HTI&KIS)(% of emp.) (EUROSTAT)
    - Based on technological intensity (R&D expenditure/value added) & % of tertiary educated employees
  - R&D expenditure as a % of GDP (EUROSTAT)



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## ■ Other controls

- Industrial relations: density, collective bargaining coverage, centralisation (ICTWSS)
- Unemployment rate, service sector % (Eurostat), size of public sector (ECS)
- Gender norms: ISSP 2002, EVS 2008
- Work Centrality: EVS 1999, 2008
- GDP per capita (Eurostat)
- Female labour market participation rate (EUROSTAT)





# Modelling strategy

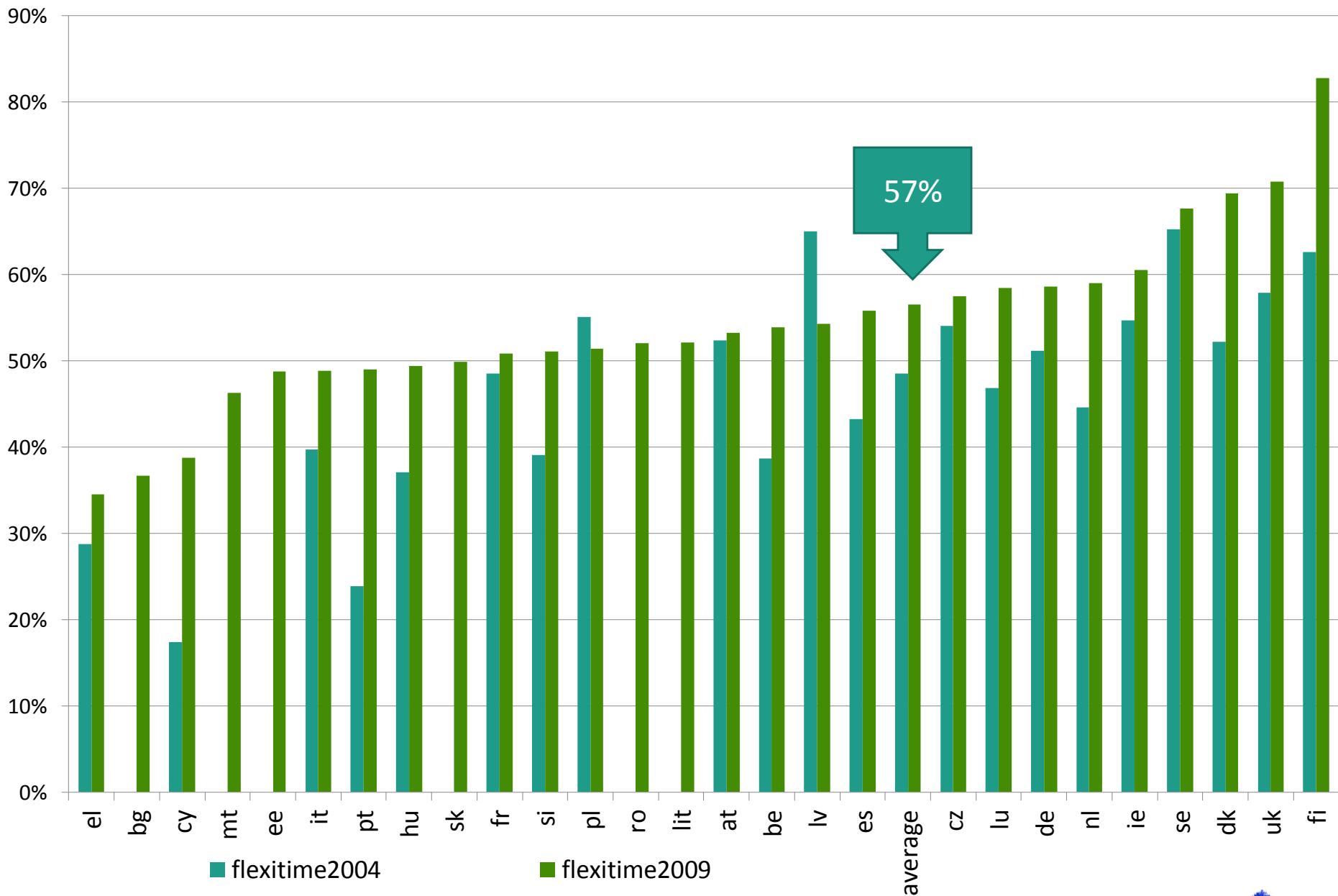
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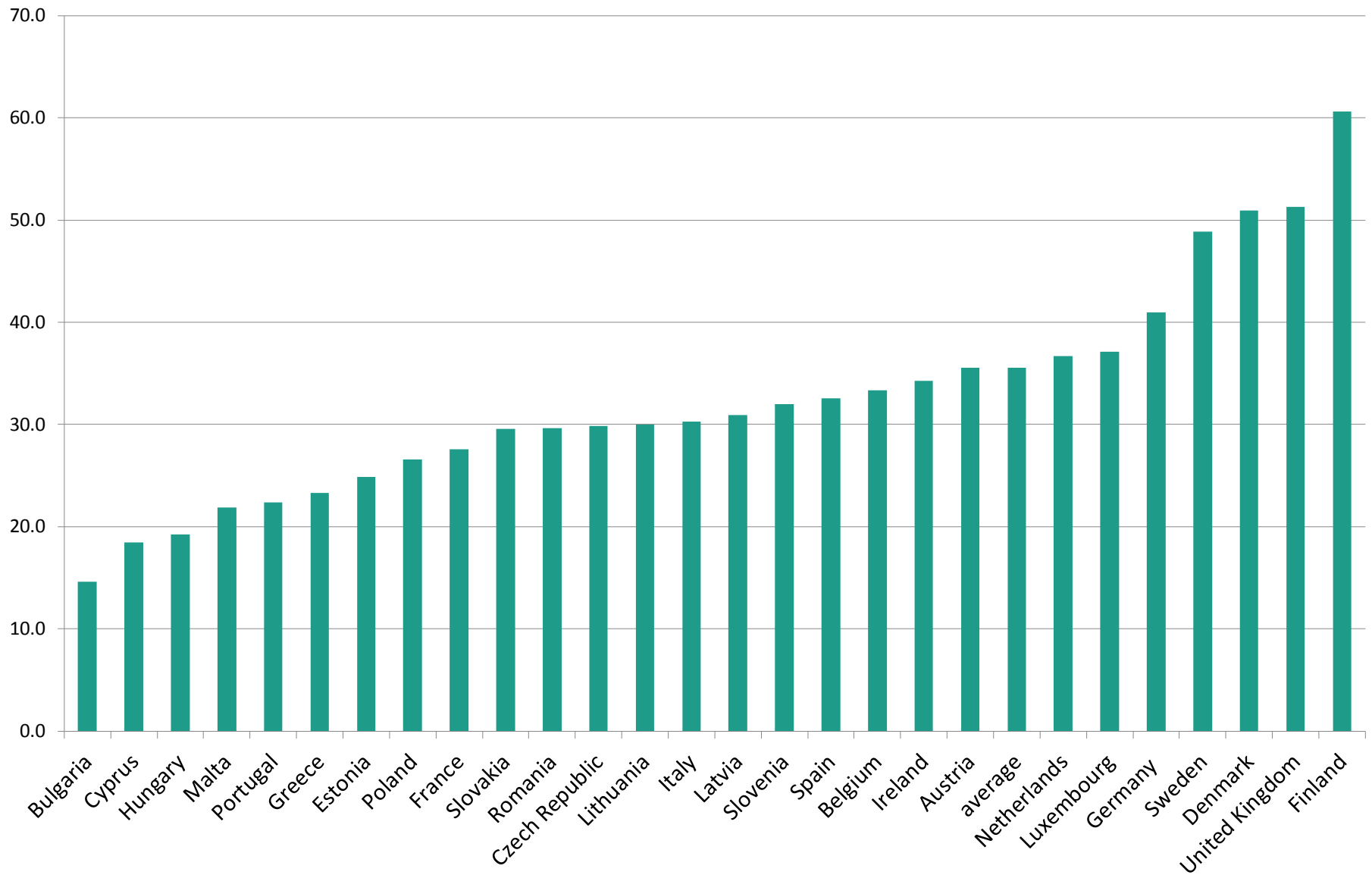
- **Multilevel modelling** technique
  - Companies are embedded in countries
  - Country/contexts effect the way companies behave
  - include determinants from different levels at the same time (company, country)
  - Examine country level determinants after having controlled for company level composition
  - Can only include 2 (maybe 3) at a time due to lack of country level cases



# Analysis results







flexitime\*proportion of workers in 2009



# Provision of flexitime

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- Flexitime is commonly used
  - More than half of all companies surveyed provide flexitime.
  - When they do provide it, usually to more than half of its workforce.
  - When they do provide it, allowing possibilities for accumulations of hours and taking days off.
  - However, large cross-national variance



# Company level results

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- Family friendly
  - High proportion of female → more likely
  - However public, ER rep not significant
  - Companies facing problems recruiting skilled staff
  - Companies facing problems recruiting low skilled staff, those facing absenteeism – unlikely
- High performance
  - High proportion of skilled → more likely
  - Performance pay, team work → more likely



# Cross-national variation

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- Northern European countries + UK
  - Larger number of companies provide it, provide it to a larger group of workers within the company & use it flexibly(*not uk*)
- Southern European + some Eastern European (bg, ee, hu)
  - Smaller number of companies provide it, provide it to a smaller group of workers & not able to use it to accumulate hours/take days off



# Variance across countries

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- Variance at the country level
  - Most of the variance lies in intra-country variance/ rather than cross-national variance
  - 7.4% at the national level for flexi\*pro





# Country level determinants

Flexitime / model	1-1	1-2	1-3	1-4	1-5
Family expenditure	5.640**				
Effective parental leave		1.639			
Female lab market part.			5.893***		
HTI&KIS				7.844***	
R&D Expenditure					9.249***
R <sup>2</sup> level 2	26.31%	3.39%	32.32%	55.10%	72.79%
Log likelihood	-113339.47	-113343.06	-113338.4	-113332.99	-113326.46



Flexitime / model	1-6	1-7
Family expenditure	4.378*	
Effective parental leave	-3.105*	
Female labour market part.	4.627**	
HTI&KIS		2.820*
R&D Expenditure		7.188***
R <sup>2</sup> level 2	50.30%	76.18%
Log likelihood	-113334.34	-113324.77



# Results in sum

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- High performance strategy (R&D spending ) more important than institutions/family policy drivers
- This influence is strong/significant having controlled for various other context variables – e.g., GDP capita, work centrality norms etc.
- Using the chi-square test the best fit model



# Conclusion

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- Flexitime provision driven by a variety of drivers: rather than family friendly, more of a high performance strategy
- At both company and country level, the reliance of high technology is the most important driving force explaining the variation
- Rethinking flexible working



# Thank you!

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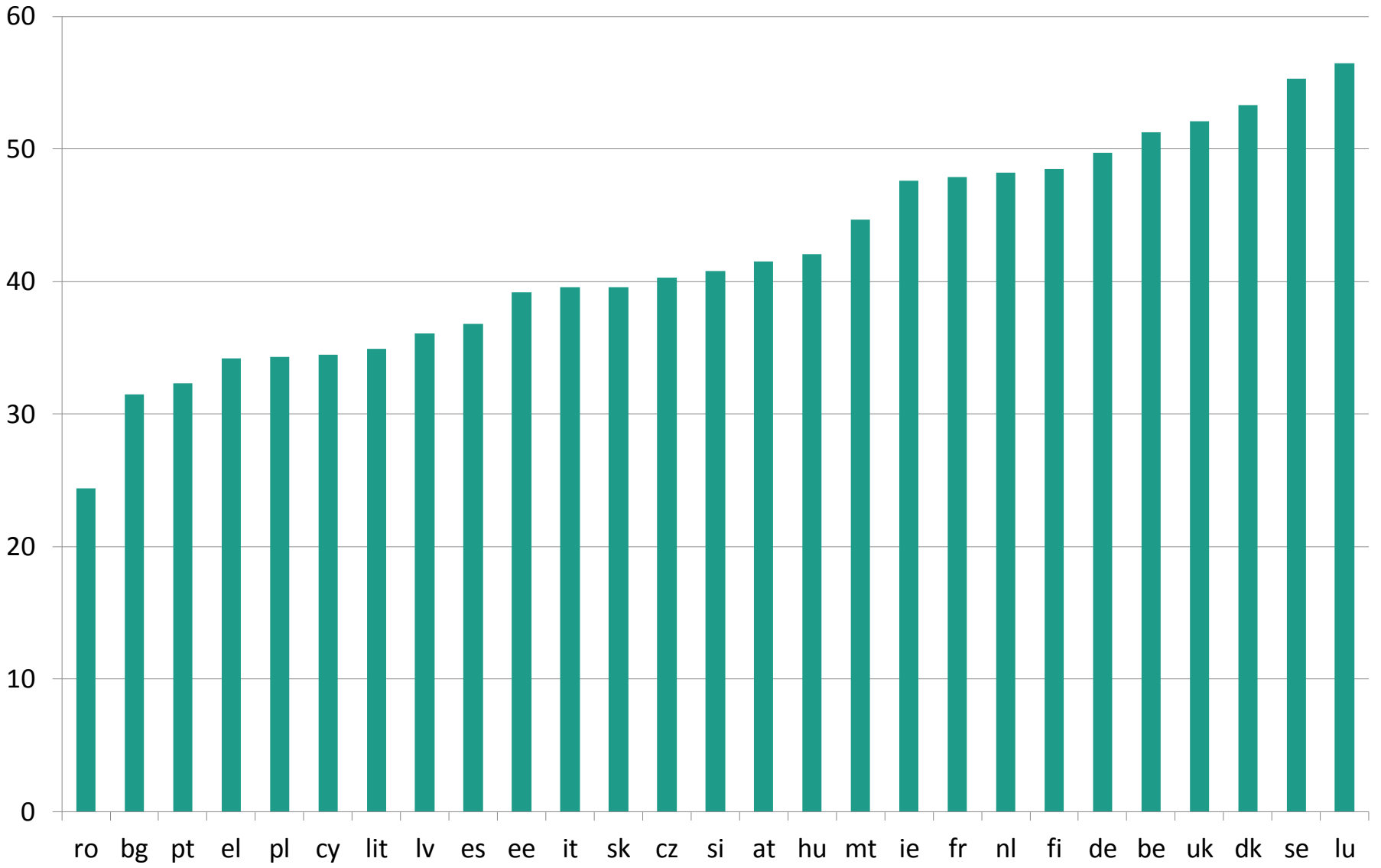
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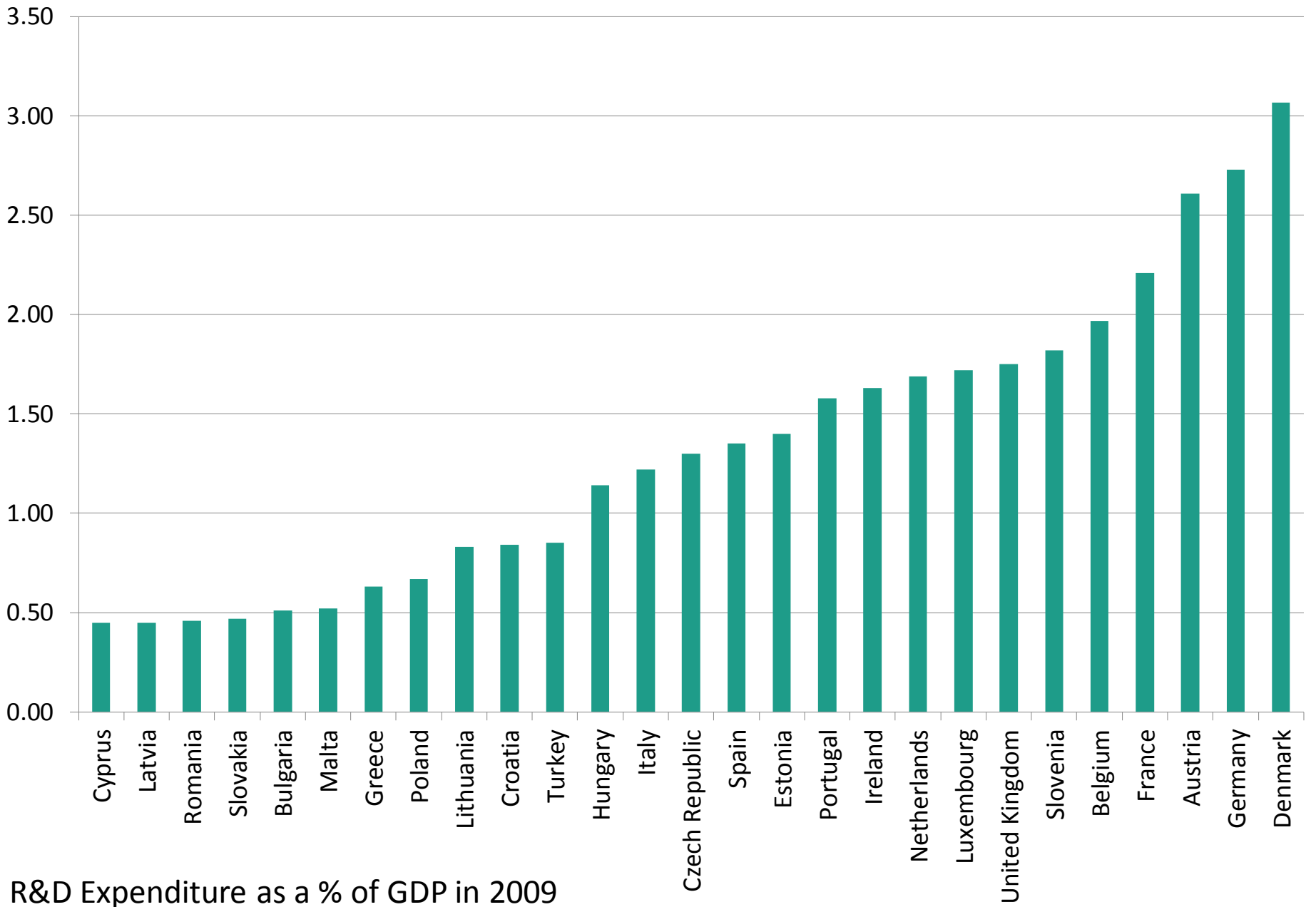




High & medium tech manufacturing + knowledge intensive

services  
32





R&D Expenditure as a % of GDP in 2009

