



Job Quality in the EU: Salient Issues and Key Challenges

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European Employment Strategy 2001

- Shift in EU policy objectives in the area of employment and social integration under the slogan:
‘Not just more jobs but also better jobs’
- Policy objectives formulated in terms of common indicators and measurable targets
- → “What makes a good job?”



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- Multi-dimensional approach, including
 - objective characteristics of the job
 - subjective evaluations by workers
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The EU definition of job quality:

- Multi-dimensional approach, including
 - objective characteristics of the job
 - subjective evaluations by workers
 - workers' characteristics
 - the match between the worker and the job
 - Among the 10 indicators for monitoring employment quality:
 - **work organization and work–life balance;**



Selected key issues and challenges

- Some trends in job characteristics over time
- Critical issues in Work-Life Balance
- The link between job quality and life satisfaction



Trends in Job Quality I

- All in all, several indicators of job quality indicate improved working conditions: e.g. a declining trend in long hours and unsocial hours (except in Eastern European cluster); using skills at work (but not UK, Ireland)
- But new elements are emerging that make jobs „demanding“: e.g. intensification of work and boundary blurring
- Persistent gender differences and new gender inequalities: e.g. fixed-term contracts more common for women than men.



Trends in Job Quality II

- Important country differences: A general shift in perception of problems fromdangerous and unhealthy working conditions to intensification of work with tight deadlines , balancing work and private life.



What is Work-Life Balance (WLB)?

- Shorthand for „work“ and „the rest of life“
- Life domains in which people perform different roles
- **Theory of role strain** (Goode 1960)
- Role conflict due to conflict in time, place, resources → total role obligations are overdemanding
- **Enhancement arguments** (Marks 1977; Sieber 1974) suggest that engagement in multiple life roles can generate social and economic resources
- Research on the work-family interface has been heavily dominated by a conflict perspective



Work – Life (Family, Home, Nonwork) Interface

- Type and direction of interaction:
 - **Negative** aspects of Work–Life Interface: work–family conflict, interference
 - **Positive** aspects of Work–Life Interface: work-family facilitation, enhancement...
 - **Bi-directional** concept: work can interfere with or facilitate the family/home domain AND family can interfere with or facilitate the work domain

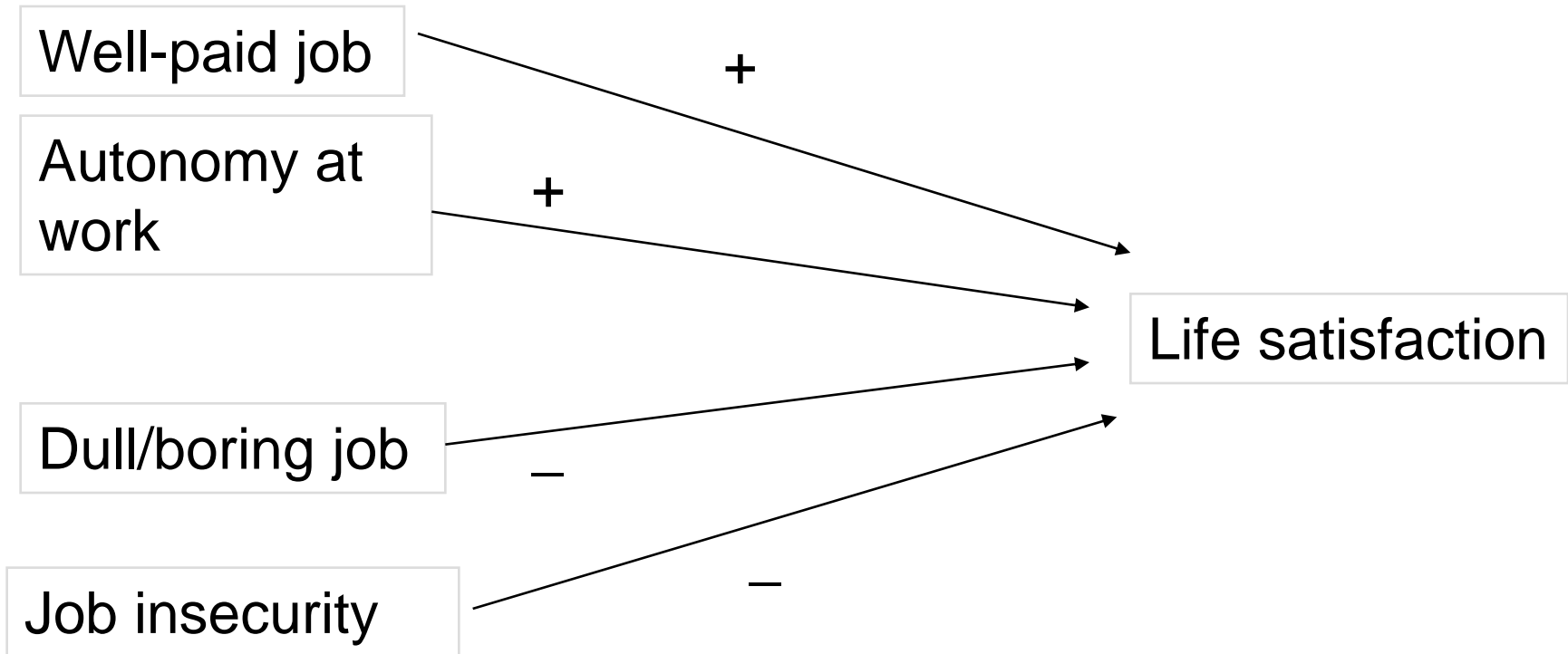


Challenge for Work-Life Balance

- Job demands, such as long working hours and job strain, increase work-life conflict (**expected!**)
- Job resources, i.e. good career prospects, decrease work-home interference (**expected!**)
- Autonomy and control over work – which were conceptualized as a job resource – are not a solution for work-life balance but are instead associated with increased conflict between work and home (**not expected!**)

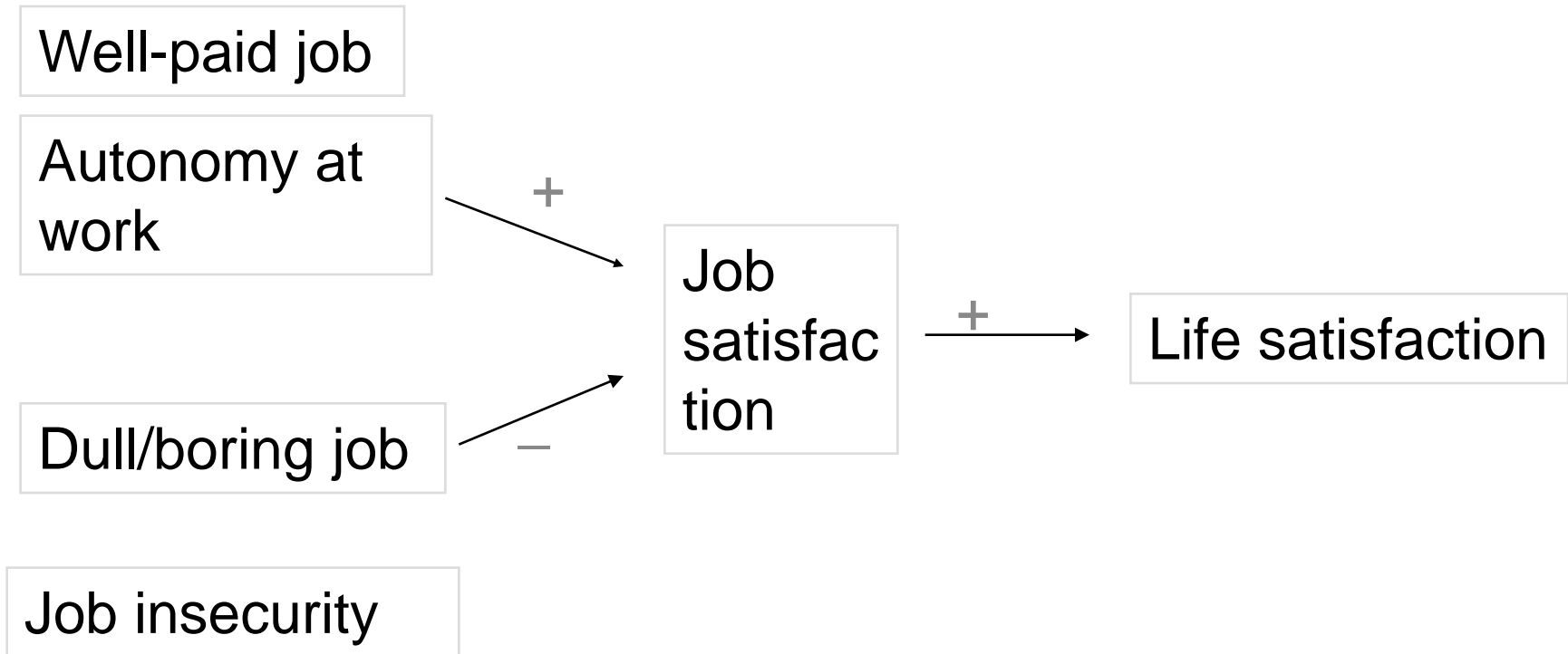


Job Characteristics and Life satisfaction



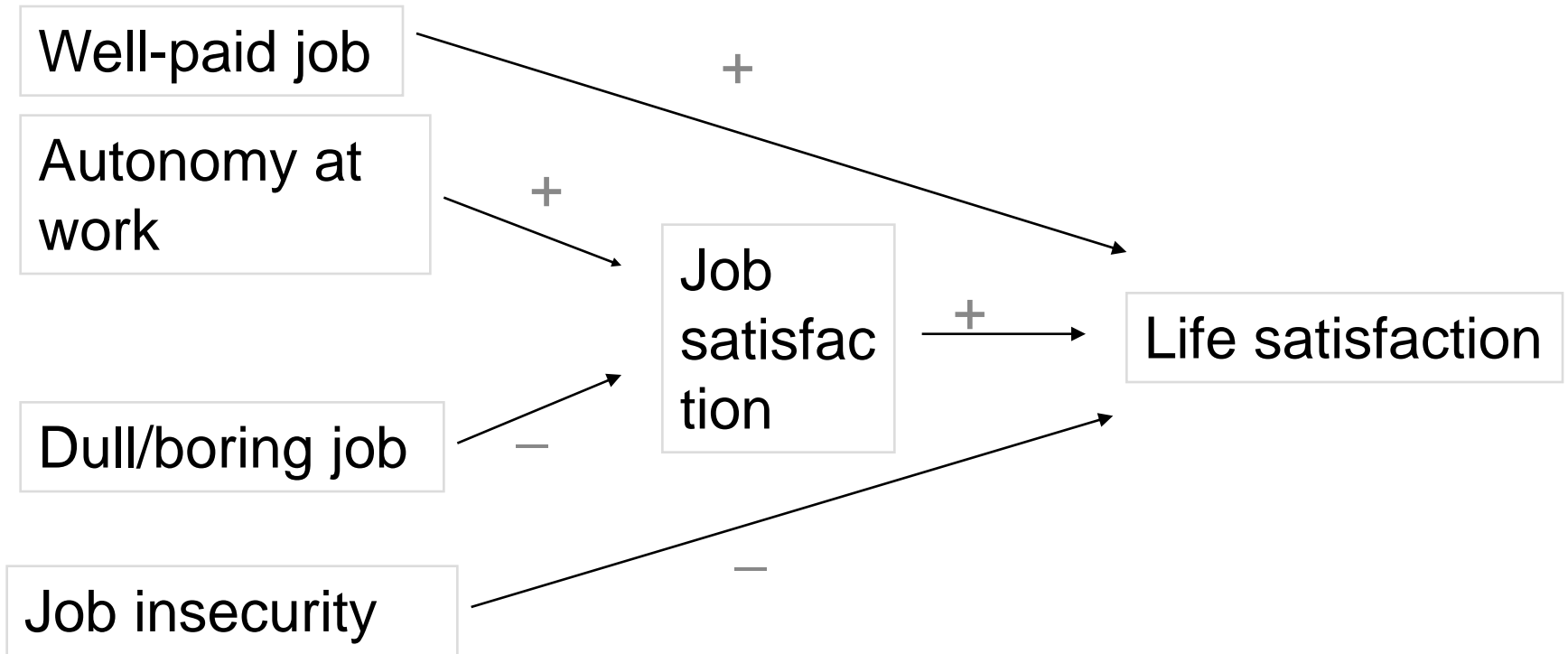


Findings



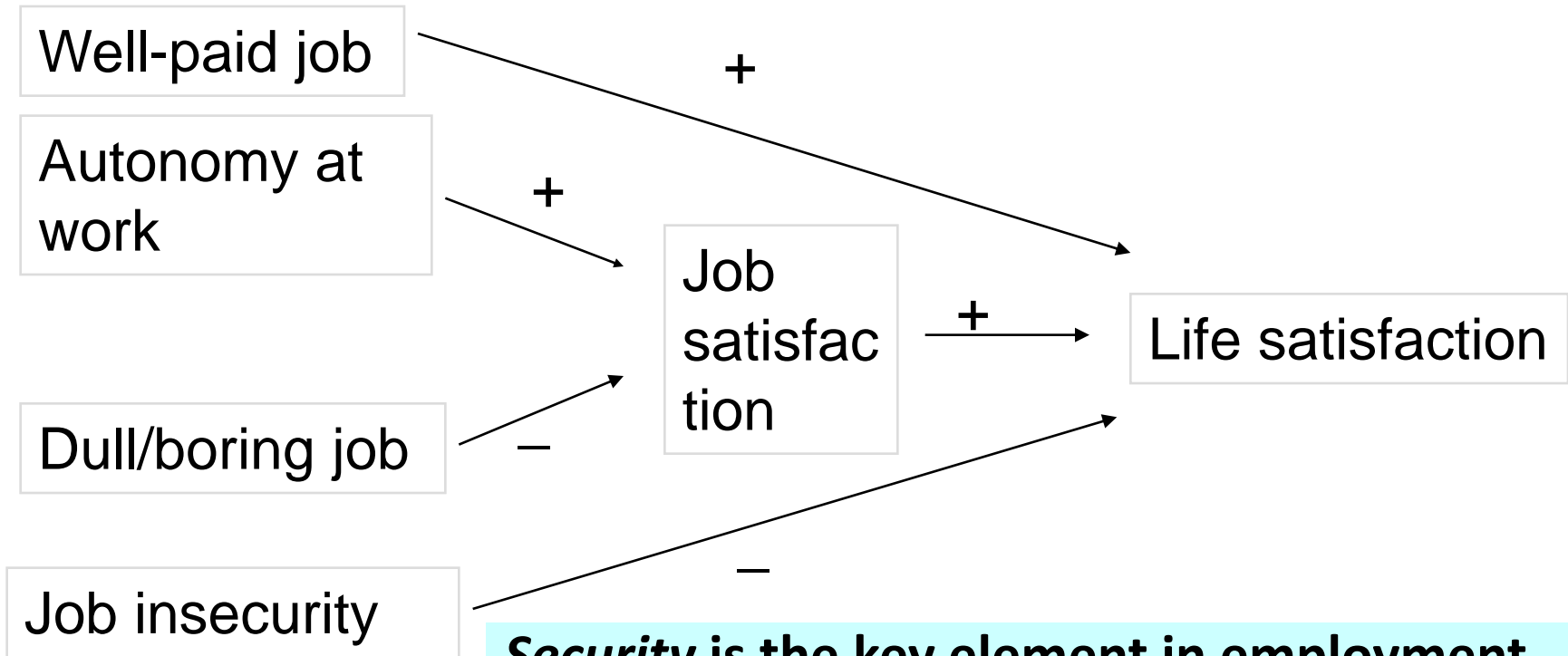


Findings





Findings



***Security* is the key element in employment that in a most straightforward manner affects people's quality of life.**