

The concept of balancing work and private life

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Abstract: The article describes selected elements of the *work-life balance* system, paying particular attention to the instruments of balancing work and personal life, highlighting aspects of the employee's time balance. The concept of improving the working time system (research methodology) in terms of increasing work efficiency and flexibility is also presented. The aim of the article is to present the methodology of the analysis and reconstruction of the working time system in an enterprise, taking into account the principles of *work-life balance*, and to present the results of empirical research. It is worth emphasizing that the analysis of working time determinants still remains a poorly recognized issue of economic analysis. The basic problem of the research is the identification and parameterization of the gap that exists between the working method used in the enterprise and the working time system, on the one hand, and the requirements of professional and private life on the other, as well as an indication of possible ways and instruments for its reduction. A thesis was adopted that assumed compliance between the working time system and the working method. The concept of the method of work mentioned in the article includes the technological system, the economic system, and the social system including *work-life balance* indicators. Based on the adopted thesis, the empirical part of the article presents the results of the research in the form of a case study analysis. Working time systems were described and assessed along with the identified working methods in the examined workplace. Organizational solutions were indicated that contributed to the improvement of the existing working time systems. The research methods used are: economic analysis, elements of ergonomic analysis, interview and questionnaire.

Keywords: working time system, working method, methodology of improving working time, *work-life balance*

Financed by:
Małopolska School of Economics
in Tarnów with support
of the Ministry of Science
and Higher Education
("Support for scientific journals")

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1. Introduction

In numerous and extensive studies on the essence of the allocation of time, determinants of shortening working time, methodology of improving the working time system in an en-

terprise, and the effectiveness of flexible forms of working time, the beneficial effect of these solutions on the non-working life of employees is given as an argument for their use, and more broadly on well-being of employees. This is related to the problem of balancing professional life with leisure activities, which has often been raised since the beginning of the 1970s.¹

The concept of *work-life balance* was, according to numerous researchers, a reaction to prolonged working time and socio-cultural changes, such as, for example, the large and still growing participation of women in the labour market and the related new distribution of roles in the family differing from the traditional one, e.g. men's involvement in family and caring responsibilities (Kot-Radojewska, 2016), as well as significant changes in the nature and content of work. These phenomena caused employees' indisposition, illnesses, burnout, deterioration of family relationships, as well as a massive decrease in creativity, productivity and involvement of employees, further stimulating intentions to resign from their job (Samojlik, 2016; Zalewska, 2006), and also excessive work, fatigue, lack of job satisfaction, stress, low self-esteem and an increased sense of instability (Chou, Hecker and Martin, 2012; Zhao, 2012; Styhre, 2011). The conclusions presented from research, often fragmentary and piecemeal, poorly empirically justified, are nevertheless worthy of attention, they direct the researcher's reflection to issues less known to a wider audience, important from the point of view of improving an enterprise's performance and increasing employee well-being.

The article presents selected elements of the *work-life balance* system, paying particular attention to the premises and manifestations as well as the instruments of balancing work and personal life. The concept of analysis and reconstruction of the working time system in an enterprise in terms of increasing the efficiency and flexibility of work is also presented.

The aim of the article is to present the methodology of the analysis and reconstruction of the working time system in an enterprise, taking into account the principles of *work-life balance*, and to present the results of empirical research—case studies.

The basic problem of the research is the identification and parameterization of the gap that exists between the requirements of professional and private life, an enterprise's working methods and the working time systems used, as well as indicating the instruments for its limitation. It should be emphasized that an increase in the volatility of the environment and competition in the market in which the enterprise operates requires the creation and improvement of working methods and appropriate working time systems. The results of research and analyses often force us to verify or even reject the existing technological and organizational solutions or standards of research proceedings—we come to the conclusion that they have a limited scope of adequacy and relevance to reality.

¹ Already in the mid-twentieth century, authors dealing with the issue of time allocation, examining employee time budgets, emphasized the importance of free time in the development and improvement of the human being, on the one hand, and the development of science, technology and work organization on the other. They also indicated the processes of mutual interpenetration and stimulation of changes occurring simultaneously both in the sphere of work and in the sphere of time outside work, especially in free time. As a result of these changes, there has been a deepening of the creative nature of work and the creation of conditions for the development of modern production (Danecki, 1970; Greis, 1984; Ghez and Becker, 1975; Wnuk-Lipiński, 1981).

The following research methods were used to achieve this goal: elements of economic and ergonomic analysis, analysis of influence factors, interview and questionnaire by the Gap Model.²

2. Work-life balance—the content and scope of the concept

The term *work-life balance* has often been used as a synonym for such terms as: reflection on one's own experiences, the level of involvement and social roles played, or life satisfaction (Ferguson et al., 2012), the pleasure of combining work and personal life (Kalliath and Kalliath, 2014), conscious control of the roles played in life, harmonious combination and penetration of the private and professional spheres so that work, family life and passions form a coherent whole (Nieżurawska, Dziadkiewicz and Kowalewska, 2015).

There are many definitions of this phenomenon in the literature, some of which are described here. According to D. Clutterbuck, a balance between work and private life occurs when an individual deals with a potential conflict between various requirements for his time and energy in such a way that his desire for well-being and fulfilment is satisfied (Clutterbuck, 2005, p. 26). The *work-life balance* system is a specific set of management programmes and practices, as well as the dominant philosophy in the organization, supporting active efforts to help employees achieve success both at work and at home (Armstrong, 2000). It is an idea and practical activities aimed at motivating employees to work more effectively (Walentek, 2019). In fact, it is about the ability to allocate available time, not necessarily equally, according to needs, into areas of private and professional life, and to treat these two planes as complementary (Bargij, 2014; Gerlach, 2014; Siemieniak and Łuczka, 2016) so that they form a whole and bring general satisfaction.³

The observed changes in the sphere of professional and family life mean that it is necessary to make a choice: how to allocate time, energy and resources into both types of activity—important from the point of view of the individual's well-being. According to the theory of resource conservation by S. Hobfoll (1989), this choice may create a threat and even result in the loss of an individual's resources. This activity (choosing) leads to tension and stress in the decision-maker, especially in a situation where professional and family roles conflict, when the requirements of one role make it difficult to fulfil the other (Cinamon and Rich, 2002; Demerouti, Geurts and Kompier, 2004; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Recently, more and more studies have been undertaken to investigate the relationships between conflicts of pro-

² A less well-known technique of analysis is the Gap Model presented by A. Parasuraman, V. A. Zeithaml and L. Berry (1985, pp. 44–45), further developed by: Guglielmetti (2010, pp. 5–36), Torre (2016, pp. 192–193), Ingaldi (2018, pp. 54–59). Using the Gap Model, the mentioned authors try to define the differences between the quality of services offered in the insurance and reinsurance sector and the expectations of customers.

³ For an employee, all directions and methods of spending time that contribute to satisfying his needs are important. Various ways of presenting the essence of the allocation of the employee's time can be found in the works of Anglo-Saxon authors who belong to the research trend called allocation of time theory (see Jevons, 1924; DeSerpa, 1971, p. 63; Sharp, 1981, pp. 22–32). In the light of this concept, this utility is maximized when the marginal utility of a unit of time in which a given activity is performed is higher than that of a unit of time of another activity that could be undertaken in place of the activity performed. In particular, this choice is made with regard to working time and time outside work. An attempt is being made to solve this on the basis of subjective experiences related to work and free time, applying marginal calculus and referring to the theory of choice.

fessional and family roles and self-esteem, emotional intelligence and other characteristics of a person, emphasizing the importance of intelligence in coping with the effects of stress (Ogińska-Bulik and Juczyński, 2008; Jaworowska and Matczak, 2008), although the relationship with emotional intelligence should be considered weak.

Psychological research on role conflict is conducted in three dimensions: behaviour, tension and time. In the first case, the conflict is related to the requirement of different behaviour in professional and family roles. In the second case, it is about the emotional tension resulting from the performance of a given role, resulting in increased anxiety (Chodkiewicz and Hauk, 2012), or fatigue, which makes it difficult to perform the duties of the second role.

According to the concept of J. H. Greenhaus, K. M. Collins and J. D. Shaw, work-family balance includes the following dimensions: time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance, which concern the individual in work and family life (Sadowska-Snarska, 2014).

Authors dealing with conflicts of professional and family roles have focused mainly on the first two levels of behaviour and tension, searching for the relationship of these conflicts with the well-being of an individual and his work results, and even with workaholism. The results of these (psychological) studies are based on the demonstration of cause-effect relationships, and the conclusions resulting from them, as well as the adopted theses and generalizations, constitute a good basis for further, appropriately in-depth research.

In the time plane, there is the issue of the lack of this resource, which makes it difficult or impossible to undertake particular forms of activity.

The quantity and quality of employees' free time is influenced by many different factors, which can be categorized into four main groups:

- a) personal situation of the employee, in particular his qualifications, marital status, number and age of children, type of work of the spouse, equipment of the household with labour-saving devices and their own habits;
- b) the needs of families related to the specificity of the functioning of educational, care and social institutions;
- c) production system, which consists of: a technical and technological system, economic system, social system and a working time system;
- d) characteristics and qualities of the individual, e.g. emotional intelligence, self-esteem, job satisfaction.

For the purposes of further analysis, attention was paid mainly to technological, economic and social determinants, with particular emphasis on the *work-life balance* principles regarding time balance. The subject of the research was limited to the internal factors of balancing working time and time outside work on which the enterprise has a significant influence.

3. The concept of *work-life balance* in shaping working time in an enterprise

The problem of the conflict of professional and family roles in the time plane can be considered more broadly, i.e. in the dimension of the enterprise and its production system in particular. Among the numerous determinants of the production system, especially the production environment, the ones selected were those that significantly and permanently shape the

features of the working method and the working time system, namely elements of the technical and technological system, elements of the economic system and elements of the social system, paying particular attention to the importance of balance between work and activities outside of work. These elements can be thought of as subsystems of a working method component. Subsystems should take into account three basic principles: feasibility, economy and balance (Kozioł, Mikos and Karaś, 2019).

This approach uses the category of working method. This category is the strategic link between the elements of the production system and the working time system (see Figure 1). A thesis was adopted assuming a correspondence between the working time system and the working method. In the light of the methodological assumptions of the research, it is the working time system that should respond to and support the phenomena and processes constituting the working method. The said thesis assumes that achieving the maximum production potential is possible only thanks to the integration of elements of the working method and elements of the working time system.⁴

The aforementioned elements of the production system shaping the features of the working method require clarification and determination of their connections and relationships. One of the most important elements of the working method shaping the organization of working time in an enterprise is the technical and technological system, understood as a set of inter-related means of production and equipment as well as processes of transforming factors of production into finished products.

The economic system of an enterprise can be defined as a set of phenomena and processes that, within a specific structure, shape its results, reflected in the form of technical, economic and financial measures and indicators.

Despite the ever faster, even dizzying, technological and organizational progress, expressed, among others, in the computerization and automation of production and management processes, the human-worker has not lost their decisive importance in both of these processes. These achievements constitute the potential to increase productivity; however, the activation and use of this potential is fully dependent on the human factor, on their work potential, and more broadly, on the adaptability of the social system to absorb new technical and organizational solutions.

⁴ In recent years, a growing discrepancy between the size and pace of implementing technical innovations and organizational changes in an enterprise and the pace of changes in the working time system has been observed more and more often and clearly. Changes in the working time system also do not keep up with the requirements of the enterprise environment, resulting from the pressure of competitors in the area of costs, globalization of the economy, hypertrophy of the consumer market or arrhythmia of social life. This discrepancy creates a particular organizational gap, which is highly costly for the enterprise and the economy. The growing organizational gap in working time is becoming an increasing problem for many enterprises and institutions, and its elimination turns out to be an important research issue (see: Kozioł and Kozioł, 2018).

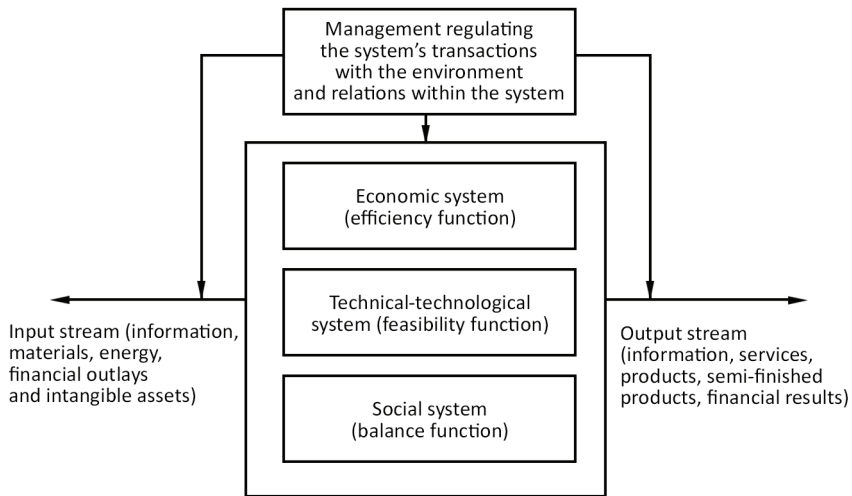


Figure 1. Model of the working method of the manufacturing system

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The fulfilment of the equilibrium function by the social system is associated with the implementation of the adaptation process and the flexibility of the enterprise, on the one hand, and ensuring a balance between work and activities outside work, on the other hand. Such a balance occurs when work does not appropriate private life and vice versa, when life outside work does not happen at its expense (Borkowska, 2004, p. 54).

The given system illustrates the process of mutual interpenetration and stimulation of changes occurring in parallel in the sphere of the elements of the production system, in the working time system, and in the time system outside work. As a result, it is possible to meet the aforementioned principles: feasibility (production results), economy (economic results), and balance (development), including the deepening of the creative nature of work and an increase in employee well-being in the final analysis. The process repeats itself (see Figure 2). The authors make a reservation, however, that the above arrangement may function relatively undisturbed only in conditions of a high level and pace of technological development, knowledge in the field of production and work organization, cooperation of social partners in the enterprise and high flexibility of working time.

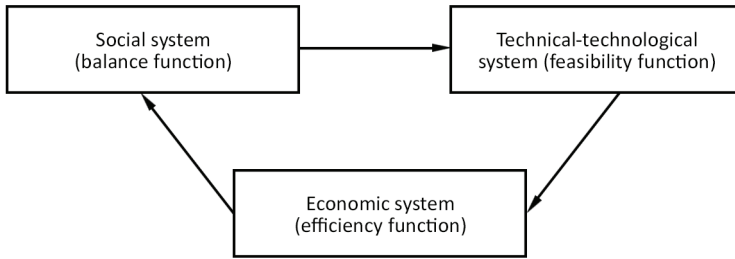


Figure 2. The system of stimulating changes in the sphere of work

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The allocation of time can be done according to many criteria. The easiest way is to break it down into basic life activities, such as: working time, time for commuting to and from work, time for compulsory classes, time to satisfy physiological needs, and free time related to personal development. According to the population time budget survey conducted by the Central Statistical Office in 2013 and subsequent years, Poles from the age of 15 spent the largest proportion of their time, as much as 46% of a day, on satisfying physiological needs, such as: personal hygiene, eating, sleeping. 30% of their time was spent on duties—studying, helping others, housework, work, religious practice. Over 4% of the day was spent on travelling to various places; 20% of the day was left for free time—hobbies, cinema, computer, rest, meeting friends, recreation, sport, television (GUS, 2015, p. 90, and subsequent years).

From the quoted remarks it can be concluded that it is the employee who is the architect of their time budget structure and that he is responsible for the balance between work and home. However, there are definitions and opinions of researchers that largely transfer this responsibility to the employer. They emphasize that a balance can be achieved by “introducing organizational changes, special intervention programmes and benefits, and that the harmony between these two areas depends to a large extent on the organizational culture of the enterprise” (Dąbrowska, 2014). Increasingly, enterprises themselves implement programmes for the idea under discussion. The most important *work-life balance* activities include: reconstruction and flexibility of working time, wider use of e-learning and remote work, limiting the scope of work responsibilities in order to make time to learn, development of social programmes, paying particular attention to facilities for parents, as well as knowledge of the principles and skilful use of them in managing one's time (Kozioł, Mikos and Leśniak, 2018, p. 8). It will be of little use if we do not identify and include the working method in the working time system adopted in the employee's time balance, and employees will not learn or acquire skills in how to rationally manage their own time, and in the context of work organization, mental resilience and skills for coping with stress, interpersonal communication skills, and even mastering the principles of *savoir-vivre*, are important.

The analysis and evaluation process was based on the principles of a holistic approach, which made it possible to precisely determine the degree of usefulness of the working time system used, as well as to identify the organizational gap and determine ways to eliminate it

by implementing new parameters of the elements of the working time system and *work-life balance* programmes.

A method including the following stages was used to verify the theses:

1. Identification of the enterprise's organizational units and the working method used.
2. Analysis and evaluation of the working time system.
3. Modelling and designing of a new working time system.
4. Implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of the system.

4. Results of empirical research—case study

The Rehabilitation and Social Welfare Centre is a municipal budgetary unit, which employs over 70 people in 4 organizational units (see Table 1). In organizational units, 3 working time systems are used: a basic one-shift system, a two-shift system and an equivalent work system (Table 2).

Table 1. Classification of organizational units

Independent positions	Finance and Accounting Department (FAD) 2 positions	Administrative, Economic and Nutrition Department (AEND) 17 positions	Therapeutic and Care Department (TCD) 45 positions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Home Director (HD)—1 position 2. Deputy Home Director—1 position 3. Inspector for HR and payroll—1 position 4. Health and safety inspector—½ time 5. IT specialist—½ time 6. Inspector of Personal Data Protection—½ time 7. Legal counsel—½ time 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chief accountant 2. Settlement inspector 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Head of the Administrative, Economic and Nutrition Department 2. Secretary 3. Administration clerk 4. Conservator 5. Driver 6. Receptionist 7. Cleaner 8. Laundress 9. Seamstress 10. Ironer 11. Kitchen manager 12. Dietitian 13. Cook 14. Kitchen assistant 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social worker 2. Psychologist 3. Occupational therapist 4. Occupational therapy instructor 5. Cultural and educational instructor 6. Physiotherapist 7. Masseur 8. Carer 9. Housemaid 10. Chaplain 11. Senior nurse 12. Nurse

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Employees' opinions on the working time system were collected through a survey.

As a result of the analysis, 3 dysfunctional solutions in the field of working time organization were identified, which were important from the point of view of the comfort of employees' work.

Problem 1—the working time of medical caregivers

Medical caregivers, nurses and housemaids, as caregivers of dependent people, are responsible for providing round-the-clock care and assistance to physically disabled people and the elderly. They work at unusual times or days due to the rigidly set hours of the day care facilities.

According to the schedule, the caregivers on duty at the Rehabilitation and Social Welfare Centre work in a two-shift system, with 3–4 people, depending on the number of residents in the Home. The problem is high absenteeism of this category of employees for various reasons: sick leave, problems in the family, vacation on request, childcare and others. Caregivers, as well as nurses and housemaids who work at this time, must perform these activities with double intensity in order to do the work for the absent people. There are days when the shift is quiet, but there are often situations where there is a shortage of hands to work, especially when handling people who are bedridden or disabled, who are unable to function without the help of a caregiver, e.g. eating, changing, bathing. Work performed under time pressure and exceeding the normal workload is too difficult, stressful and causes dissatisfaction—this is an important factor of absenteeism. The respondents' statements show that they experience many problems related to balancing work and private life. There is a time conflict resulting from the working time system and excessive work intensity that hinder rest and the performance of non-professional functions.

Proposals for improving the system:

- a) another employee starts working overtime;
- b) employment of a person part-time;
- c) conclusion of a mandate contract with a person from outside the workplace.

Ultimately, the second option was chosen: taking on a part-time employee.

Problem 2—driver's working time

The driver works in a basic one-shift system from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm. He takes people (residents) for medical consultations and examinations carried out in various medical facilities and localities. The driver's working time often exceeds his daily norm. Therefore, the problem of overtime work appears as well as the problem of organizing the driver's time outside of work.

Proposed change of the working time system:

In the opinion of the management and the respondents, the driver's working time should be changed from the basic working time system to an equivalent system, which will allow the driver's working hours schedule to be set up in such a way as to ensure the necessary transport for residents for examinations and consultations, at the same time complying with the provision on an equivalent work system, according to which the driver has a sufficient number of hours to rest after work, e.g. 12 hours work—12 hours rest and possibly an additional day off from work.

Problem 3—working time of the Nutrition Department

In the current working time organization system, cooks work in a basic working time system in a single shift, between 6:30 am and 2:30 pm.

The kitchen assistant works in a two-shift working time system from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm and from 11:00 am to 7:00 pm. The kitchen often runs late as there is little time to prepare breakfast, which, according to the regulations of the Centre, starts at 8.00 am. When prepar-

ing meals, kitchen staff must take into account various diets and nutritional restrictions of the residents, which in turn increases the labour-intensity of preparing meals.

Another issue is cleaning after dinner, which takes, according to the regulations, from 6.00 pm to 7.00 pm. As experience shows, serving dinner takes longer, and there is also no time for cleaning and other finishing activities.

Suggestion to improve the system:

Introducing a change in working hours for people working as a kitchen assistant on the first shift from 6:30 am to 2:30 pm, which extends the time for preparing breakfast for such a large number of residents by half an hour, and on the second shift, the moving of working time from 11:00 am to 11:30 am, which in turn will allow adequate time to clean the kitchen and dining room and other finishing activities.

5. Conclusion

The article addresses the issue of improving the working time system in economic organizations and institutions, taking into account mainly technologically and economically important reasons (working method), but also the principles of *work-life balance*. The aspects of balancing work and private life constituted the main stream of research presented in the study. This is an important issue, because improper shaping of this system and the conditions of its functioning may result in significant losses for the economic entity, but also in the social sphere—the non-professional life of employees.

The presented methodology for the analysis and improvement of the working time system in an enterprise is based on the concept of the working method and the correspondence between the working method and the working time system used, on the one hand, and elements of the production system and the concept of *work-life balance* on the other.

In dynamic terms, the presented system illustrates the process of mutual interpenetration and stimulation of changes occurring simultaneously in the sphere of elements of the production system, in the working time system, and in the time system outside work (see Figure 2).

This concept was illustrated by a practical example (case study) at the Rehabilitation and Social Welfare Centre with a diversified scope of activity, which fulfils various economic and social functions, using various forms and varieties of working time.

The activity potential of the examined organizational unit does not allow much freedom in the selection of the working time system, mainly due to the social functions fulfilled, i.e. services for the Centre's residents. In this case, we can only talk about extending the scope of application of the balanced working time system (the driver's work), adjusting the work schedule of kitchen workers and increasing employment in the group of medical caregivers. When performing work, employees feel a lot of fatigue and discomfort, which undoubtedly affects the effectiveness of their work, hence the suggestion put forward by employees regarding the possibility of taking advantage of additional holidays seems justified.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing the benefits of using a methodology of improving the working time system in which the elements of the production system and the principles of balance between work and private life are central.

From the cited comments, it can be concluded that the above system can function relatively undisturbed only in conditions of a high level and pace of technological development, knowledge in the field of production and work organization, cooperation of social partners in the enterprise and high flexibility of working time.

It should be emphasized that it is the employee who is the architect of their time budget structure and that he is responsible for the balance between work and home. Of course, the employers are also responsible for this balance. It is in the employer's decision-making sphere to introduce appropriate organizational changes and programmes. The most important of them include: reconstruction and flexibility of working time, wider use of e-learning and remote work, limiting the scope of work responsibilities in order to make time to learn, development of social and living programmes, paying particular attention to facilities for parents as well as knowledge of the principles and skilful use of them in managing one's time (Kozioł, Mikos, and Leśniak, 2018, p. 8). It will be of little use if we do not identify and include the working method in the working time system adopted in the employee's time balance, and employees will not learn or acquire skills in how to rationally manage their own time. In the context of the organization of one's own work, mental resilience and skills for coping with stress, interpersonal communication skills, and even mastering the principles of *savoir-vivre*, are important.

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Koncepcja równoważenia życia zawodowego i prywatnego

Abstrakt: W artykule opisano wybrane elementy systemu *work-life balance*, ze zwróceniem uwagi szczególnie na instrumenty równoważenia życia zawodowego i osobistego, eksponując przy tym aspekty równowagi czasowej pracownika. Przedstawiono także koncepcję doskonalenia systemu czasu pracy (metodykę badań) w aspekcie zwiększania efektywności i elastyczności pracy. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie metodyki analizy i rekonstrukcji systemu czasu pracy w przedsiębiorstwie z uwzględnieniem zasad *work-life balance* oraz prezentacja wyników badań empirycznych. Warto podkreślić, że analiza determinant czasu pracy nadal pozostaje słabo rozpoznany zagadnieniem analizy ekonomicznej. Podstawowy problem badań to identyfikacja i parametryzacja luki istniejącej między metodą pracy stosowaną w firmie a systemem czasu pracy z jednej

strony oraz wymaganiami zawodowymi i prywatnymi z drugiej, jak również wskazanie możliwych sposobów i instrumentów jej ograniczenia. Przyjęto tezę, która zakłada zgodność między systemem czasu pracy a metodą pracy. Wspomniana w artykule koncepcja metody pracy obejmuje system technologiczny, system ekonomiczny, system społeczny obejmujący wskazania *work-life balance*. Na bazie przyjętej tezy w empirycznej części artykułu przedstawiono wyniki badań w postaci studium przypadku (analiza *case study*). Opisano i oceniono systemy czasu pracy wraz ze zidentyfikowanymi metodami pracy w badanym zakładzie pracy. Wskazano rozwiązania organizacyjne, które przysłużyły się do poprawy istniejących systemów czasu pracy. Wykorzystane metody badawcze to: analiza ekonomiczna, elementy analizy ergonomicznej, wywiad i ankieta.

Słowa kluczowe: system czasu pracy, metoda pracy, metodyka doskonalenia czasu pracy, *work-life balance*