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# Young people at risk: how changes in work are affecting young Italians' health and safety

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Daniele Di Nunzio (ed.)

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## Preface

**Laurent Vogel,**  
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Work and employment in Europe have grown increasingly casualised over the past thirty years, reflected in the proliferating types of employment relationships: part-time, agency labour, fixed-term contracts and a wide variety of downgraded work experience and welfare-to-work schemes. Even the content of jobs has undergone radical changes resulting from reduced control over work activities and production goals that are at odds with the quality of work, health and safety. Often, casualisation is due to a lack of strong trade unions – the main conduits for collective representation and fighting for better working conditions.

This summary of the report coordinated by Daniele Di Nunzio explores the various aspects of casualised work for young Italians. Its backdrop is a society where public policy has been consistently family-focused. In Italy, more than elsewhere in Europe, the family has a particularly big established role as a “social safety net” which detracts from public policies on housing, assistance to elderly and support for students. It is central to a conservative and patriarchal vision of society that goes far beyond the left-right political divide.

While some aspects of the report focus specifically on the Italian situation, the methodology used by the IRES (Istituto di Ricerche Economiche e Sociali) researchers and the policy issues raised chime perfectly with the European analyses and debates.

Younger workers across Europe are worst affected by casualisation. The European Working Conditions Survey found that in 2010 only 50% of employees aged under 25 were on permanent contracts (versus 80% for all employees). Ten percent of workers aged under 25 had no contract at all (compared to 5.6% for all employees), 25% were on temporary contracts (as opposed to 12% of all employees) and nearly 4% were agency workers (1.5% of all employees).

Other aspects of casualisation may be at least as material: the spectre of unemployment, taking a first job – or any job after a spell of unemployment – for which they are over-qualified, lack of effective collective rights, etc. The current crisis has added to the pressure of mass unemployment. In April 2013, the unemployment rate of under-25s in the euro area topped 24% – double the all-labour force average – and peaked above 60% in Greece and 55% in Spain. Insecurity at work has an impact on general living conditions beyond the material consequences of an inadequate or sporadic income.

Casualisation fuels the social inequalities to which all European countries are prey. First thoughts might suggest that insecurity is a generational phenomenon. That would be too simplistic. The long-term implications of casualisation vary widely with social class. Looking at the longer-term employment picture, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds may be more permanently casualised than young people from more affluent backgrounds. So casualisation is handed on down the generations. It also plays into perpetuating male dominance in both the family and paid work spheres.

This has led various authors to posit the development of a “precariat” – a class now stripped of the protections that the labour movement managed to win for workers almost throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The wave of social and political struggles that erupted in winter 2010 in the countries on both sides of the Mediterranean were an outpouring of anguish by urban youth against growing job insecurity compounded by widening social divides. This shared experience is a potential focal point even if work was not a major feature of the demands. And herein lies an illuminating paradox: while casualised work is undeniably a formative element of social and political identity, its very impermanence means that it is not explicitly seen as such.

These direct militant actions put big challenges before the trade union movement. They can reinvigorate it only if it profoundly changes its own style. Not just the way it is organized and communicates, but also its vision of a blueprint for society and the alliances it builds. The final section of this report usefully applies the survey findings to elicit key considerations for framing a trade union policy in 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe.

## 1. The research project

This report presents the findings of research done by the Italian Institute of Social and Economic Research (Istituto di Ricerche Economiche e Sociali-IRES Nazionale) in collaboration with the IRES Emilia-Romagna. This project received financial support from the Italian Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies<sup>1</sup>.

The research aimed to analyse young people's<sup>2</sup> working conditions to see how changes in production processes were affecting their health and to identify risk factors. Health protection for young workers is one of the main challenges brought by particular big changes that affect all workers. The plight of Italy's beleaguered youth (Livi Bacci 2008; Istat 2011) reflects certain general ills plaguing the global development model. It will be seen that production systems worldwide are distinguished by fragmented production chains, centralised decision-making powers and individualisation of risks, and these processes are exacerbated in Italy by competition through cost-cutting rather than innovation and quality. This hits the most vulnerable stakeholders hardest, foremost among whom are young workers entering a labour market where rights and protections are steadily being eroded by declining individual and collective bargaining power against employers and weakening power to control market forces. This makes for more difficult working conditions, an increase in risks and depleted prospects for improved wellness for young people and a growing share of workers alike.

The research was done between 2009 and 2011 by a research group<sup>3</sup> which reviewed the literature, analysed statistical data, set up two focus groups and conducted a questionnaire survey of 1 000 workers under the age of 35.

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1. For a comprehensive analysis of the research findings, see Di Nunzio (2011). The views in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policy.
  2. The research focuses on workers aged 15 to 34. This report uses the term "young" in a broad sense to include the entire sample, bearing in mind that official statistics use the term to refer to a person under 25 years of age. This was done to make interpretation of the findings easier. But it is also a fact that the young generation of Italians, including those well above the age of 25, is experiencing significant difficulties in being able to access independence.
  3. The research was a cooperative group endeavour. Particular thanks are due to Diego Alhaique, Francesca Cuppone and Giuliano Ferrucci for their scientific input.

In *Chapter 2*, Daniele Di Nunzio describes major changes in production processes and their impact on working conditions and health.

In *Chapter 3*, Davide Dazzi presents data from secondary sources on work accidents and diseases affecting young workers to analyse their risk culture.

In *Chapter 4*, Francesca Dota analyses the statistical data on young people's working conditions to show how they contribute to occupational instability.

In *Chapter 5*, Daniele Di Nunzio reviews the findings of the empirical survey: *Section 5.1* outlines the theoretical model. *Section 5.2* presents the results of the empirical research done in Italy through a telephone questionnaire administered to approximately 1 000 workers aged 15 to 34. *Section 5.3* identifies those young workers with the highest risk profiles.

In *Chapter 6*, Daniele Di Nunzio sets forth conclusions and broad guidelines for achieving a new worker-centred development model.

The preface by Laurent Vogel sets the research findings in the broader context of European challenges and trade union action.



## 2. Working conditions and changes in production processes

Daniele Di Nunzio

This chapter describes changes in production processes and their impact on working conditions. The distinguishing feature of production processes is the increased demand for functional flexibility from firms seeking to compete more keenly on the globalised market. That flexibility is achieved through increased fragmentation of supply chains, together with centralised decision-making and a penchant for standardisation. As a result, risks become individualised and unevenly distributed among workers, which pushes working conditions down, especially for those most marginalised in production networks and social contexts.

### 2.1 Flexibility and fragmentation of production processes

Over the past three decades, profound economic and social changes in the advanced capitalist economies have translated into increased flexibility in the production processes of goods and services, mainly due to: a) the need for businesses to adapt to an increasingly competitive globalised market, b) the need to meet new consumer and market demands, preferably through on demand and just in time production processes; c) the need to introduce ever more fast-paced technology and process innovations (Accornero 2005; Gallino 2007; Huws *et al.* 2009).

A new “lean” production model (Schonberger 1986; Chandler *et al.* 1986; Coriat 1991) has become entrenched whose work organisation system requires a commitment of resources under constant pressure. New, flexibility-based “modular” business models have developed, understood as an organised space in which multiple societal realities can coexist (Piotto 2010) within networked organisations where the boundaries between firms are blurred (Castells 1996; Sennett 1998).

Flexibilisation has developed at four levels: a) between firms, b) between the company and workers; in work organisation, including working time (c) as well as methods and jobs (d) (Flecker *et al.* 2009)<sup>4</sup>.

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4. For a more detailed analysis of restructuring in Europe, see the results of the WORKS – Work Organisation and Restructuring in the Knowledge Society – research project, <http://worksproject.be>

- a. Inter-firm relations have become increasingly irregular and dynamic; outsourcing is on the rise, and the link between the company and a highly specific geographical and production context has weakened.
- b. Relations between the company and its workers have become more fragmented and flexible, materialised in the development of fixed-term contracts and “non-standard” employment relations, and frequent downsizing (job shedding) processes implemented with the onset of the current crisis. Fundamental rights as enshrined in collective agreements have been circumvented by the increased use of contract types that enable individual workers to be easily isolated and placed in a subordinate position in the power relationship with their employer. There is a proliferating variety of working relationships, internships, profit-sharing partnerships, and VAT-able self-employment, in most of which cases the occupational status is a poorly-protected form of employment, including for higher-level knowledge workers<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, the bargaining power of permanent employees is diminished by the threat of layoffs, offshoring and outsourcing.
- c. At company level, work organisation is itself in the throes of radical change, characterised by destructive shift work and faster work paces.
- d. Methods of work change frequently, as do the skills needed to perform it.

## 2.2 Centralisation and concentration of decision-making

Flexible production processes are going together with a move towards centralisation of decision-making, risk outsourcing and individualisation which are giving rise to new forms of exploitation along the value chain<sup>6</sup>. The general trend is for firms to focus on the *core business* of their production or service processes and to outsource other activities to specialised providers (Huws *et al.* 2009; Flecker *et al.* 2009). In this way, a chain develops where at the highest level (businesses constituting the central nodes of the process) highly skilled workers are employed on knowledge-rich tasks and enjoy a high level of security, while at the lowest level in the secondary nodes, employees perform more physical or lower-skilled work and have fewer rights. As a result, businesses occupying a central position in value chains seek to exercise control and decision-making power: a) over firms in the chain to optimise management of the entire work process, b) over individual workers and the workforce as a whole, c) over work organisation, in terms of both working hours and methods. In this scenario, the most powerful actors – in economic, political and/or quantitative terms – seek to control an increasingly fragmented production chain. Thus for many workers (especially the lowest-skilled and most in need of an income) and many firms (especially the smaller and less innovative ones), the

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5. For a more detailed examination of the difficult conditions of self-employed workers, see Di Nunzio, Leonardi, Ferrucci (2011); Allegri & Ciccarelli (2011).

6. Porter (1985) identifies the business functions of the value chain as: research and development; design of products, services and processes; production; marketing and sales; distribution; customer service.

scope for governing work processes and their own business objectives narrow along with their degree of autonomy (Di Nunzio *et al.* 2009).

So, the centralisation of decision-making is accompanied by a decentralisation of work-performance activities (Castells 2002), creating new forms of concentration (Sennett 1999) of power in the entrepreneurial centres that frame binding strategies for all nodes while control becomes increasingly less visible and more anonymous.

This process is part of the wider scenario of the dematerialisation of production which Gallino (2011) defines as *finanzcapitalism* (finance capitalism) comprising the imposition of a “social megamachine” able to maximise the value abstracted from individuals and ecosystems through its financial power.

A growing disconnect is therefore occurring between economic activities, organised globally, and political and social institutions operating in a more limited local, national, or macro-regional setting (Beck 2006; Castells 1996; Giddens 1984; Sassen 2007; Touraine 2005). Globalisation can thus be considered as a form of capitalism in which the economy is increasingly more driven by impersonal market forces than by political and social choices, such that many people feel they have lost control of both their own lives and the processes of community life (Touraine 2005).

### **2.3 Centralised standardisation vs democratic regulation**

Increasing fragmentation and growing centralisation are being accompanied by a parallel process of standardisation (additional to the rationalisation process specific to the modern era (Weber 1922; Touraine 1992) that is intrinsic to management of the increasing flexibility of the value chain and the growing complexity of work processes (Di Nunzio 2012).

Standardising work processes requires organisational models and uniform risk management procedures to be extended throughout the workflow, which can – and should – promote the extension of protections and participation throughout the value chain, making national and international legal regulation even more essential and appropriate.

This, for example, makes it more relevant than ever to understand how to manage the distribution of the rational organisation of work. This is characterised by a high degree of procedural standardisation which purports to offer workers and managers benefits in the form of efficiency, predictability and control but often results in new forms of subordination and alienation (Ritzer 1997).

So, company managements seek to self-produce rules aimed at defining their organisational arrangements, leaving public regulation behind in order to centralise the rationalisation process. Where the relationship between organisational models and health and safety management models is concerned, the

clear trend is for them to become embedded in a formalised and regulated way not just in each business site but also in the Italian and international legal systems. This raises the question of the relation between Total Quality Management<sup>7</sup> systems and statutory risk management models such as those introduced in Italy by the Legislative Decree on health and safety at work (D. Lgs. 81/08, Article 30). The goal is to combine business efficiency requirements with the protection of working conditions, respect for workers' rights and public regulations<sup>8</sup>.

## **2.4 Individualisation and unequal risk distribution: marginalisation, exclusion and new forms of exploitation**

Their reduced individual and collective bargaining power with business decision-making centres leads to an increased exploitation of workers who are subjected to the permanent blackmail of unemployment and devoid of control over the complex latticework of production processes. Trade union action and democratic public regulation are losing ground to the determination of key entrepreneurial nodes to arrogate most of the profit and control to themselves.

An unequal distribution of risk is therefore creeping in through the creation of different levels of inclusion and exclusion from the protection system along the value chains, with the share of *outsiders* steadily increasing relative to that of *insiders*<sup>9</sup>. The impact of increased outsourcing and risk individualisation – more apt to affect the employee or company in isolation – is intensified for the more marginal and isolated actors.

The cause of this unequal risk distribution can be found in the differential allocation of rights and protections between workers since, as Ulrich Beck argues, the ability to cope with, avoid or compensate for risk situations is probably unevenly distributed within the economic and cultural stratification of society.

As a recent study funded by the European Commission (Di Nunzio *et al.*, 2009) of 58 case studies of international companies shows, the corporate restructuring strategies underway in Europe are geared precisely to centralisation of decision-making, process rationalisation and risk outsourcing along an increasingly fragmented “value chain” with negative consequences

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7. Total Quality Management is an approach designed to maximise the quality of production processes and products that originated in Japan and spread thereafter to the United States and the rest of the world especially during the 1980s. Its ultimate goal is to optimise customer satisfaction efforts through employee involvement and motivation, and reduce waste (see Deming 1993).

8. The magnitude of these challenges – to achieve an integrated organisational model able to combine high quality work processes and good working conditions – is well illustrated by Fiat's implementation of the World Class Manufacturing system in recent years. See: Schonberger 2006; Todd 1994.

9. On the concept of risk individualisation and uneven risk distribution, see Beck, Giddens, Lash (1994) and Beck (1986).

for workers: a) a reduction of each worker's influence over the work process, b) an intensified workload c) increased uncertainty from lesser predictability of both the workload and the job; d) individualisation of the employment relationship and a lack of union support. The general trend is therefore towards worsening working conditions and increased exploitation of workers, especially the most vulnerable: those on the margins of work and society, working in the "peripheral areas" of the value chain.

Table 2.1 **Impact of restructuring on worker's health: main changes in working processes and their impact on the Kristensen's six dimensions model**

Changes during restructuring	Six dimensions					
	Demands in work	Influence over work	Social support	Recognition and rewards	Predictability	Meaning
Market and customer orientation		-			-	- & +
Standardisation, formalisation and centralisation	-	-	- & +		+	-
Increase in surveillance		-				
Intensification in work	-					
Specialisation and increase in skills	-	+	-	- & +		- & +
Team work			- & +			
Increase in flexibility			-		-	
Restructuring of working time	- & +				- & +	
Change in work force consistency	-				-	
High frequency of organisational changes	-	-	-		-	-
Changes in industrial relations		-	-			

- = new problems; + = new possibilities

Source: Di Nunzio D., *et al.* (2009) p. 71

A large number of international surveys now evidence the link between "atypical" (non-standard) forms of work and worsening health, either through increased exposure to work accident risks or the increased likelihood of developing diseases<sup>10</sup>.

According to Gallino (2009) and Standing (2011), non-standard work violates a host of fundamental rights and guarantees which the ILO says define "decent work": a) job security (protection during hiring and firing); b) security at work (valuing occupations and skills); c) safety in the workplace (protection of health against work accidents and occupational diseases); d) income security (creating and maintaining adequate resources); e) welfare benefit security (the ability to maintain an appropriate level of income even after exiting the

<sup>10</sup>. Beck (1986), p. 46.

labour market); f) guarantees of representation (trade union membership and the right to strike).

Overall, from an in-depth analysis of the literature on the subject, Haigh and Mekel (2004) identify the following differences between the security of 'non-standard' workers and workers on permanent contracts: a) agency workers often work in high-risk environments (even in service settings where, for example, they are employed in the noisiest environments), and perform their tasks in the most awkward and tiring positions, with repetitive movements and a higher workload; b) these workers are less well covered by the health surveillance system and the health and safety regulations; c) they have the unhealthiest conditions and are more at risk of work accidents; d) they have less control over working hours and work organisation than permanent workers; e) they have less access to information and training, whether job- or health and safety-related; f) they are less well-integrated into the work setting, both in terms of individual relations (relations with superiors and co-workers) and collective relations (lower unionisation rates); g) they have fewer career prospects; h) they have less job satisfaction and greater uncertainty about their future.

The worker's very acquisition of an effective health and safety culture – characterised by a set of beliefs, norms, attitudes, social practices and techniques that the individual assimilates through his experience of living and working (Douglas 1992; Turner 1992) – seems to be under strain from flexibilisation processes. Broadly, research shows that the central roles in the value chain involve a high level of risk awareness and a fuller awareness of health and safety consciousness, while those in more marginal roles demonstrate a lesser ability to identify and confront the risks.

Accordingly, the greater a worker's centrality to the work process, the greater his knowledge and risk consciousness, whereas the more marginal workers (e.g., those employed by outside companies, in ancillary and unskilled jobs, or on temporary contracts) conversely have lower knowledge and risk consciousness. Their lesser integration into work processes and work groups, lesser involvement in union activities and fragmented careers cause non-standard and temporary workers, as well as those working in secondary firms in the sector, to have a lower awareness of work-related hazards and more difficulty in dealing with them appropriately (Di Nunzio 2009a and 2009b).

Also, the most marginalised workers are less safety-conscious because their most pressing needs stem from the need to earn more (their pay tends to be significantly below-average) and the fear of unemployment (because of the temporary nature of the contract and need for it to be extended), making their own health a secondary concern. Arguably, this reveals a process at work which in Foucault's terms can be defined as a self-discipline process (Foucault 1975). For most casualised workers, the fear of unemployment or career disruption is so strong as to become the main regulator of their attitudes and behaviours towards their job in the company, creating a high level of dependency on the employer, even in very harsh conditions.

The result is a propensity of non-standard workers to seek to be demonstrably tireless, flexible, motivated, and willing to meet the employer's demands even where they go beyond agreements. They fit in with working hour and workload changes, do not join unions so as not to create problems for the company, even when their rights are violated (Pedaci 2008). Flexibility also has significant corrosive effects on the worker's personality from the impact of career fragmentation on his permanent character traits. Flexibility, especially with the erosion of time perception, seems to impede the formation of a coherent narrative of self which is the basis of self-identity formation, mainly through work and recognition from others (Sennett 1998).

A 2003 survey showed that non-standard workers in Italy (freelancers, agency workers, fixed-term and part-time employees, apprentices and young people in vocational training) have mortality and accident rates at least double those of workers in stable and permanent employment, due to a general tendency to give non-standard workers the most dangerous or unhealthy work that the company's regular workers would refuse (Eurispes Ispesl-2003). This is why the European Commission had already (European Commission 2002) singled out non-standard and casualised workers as a vulnerable group in the fight against work accidents, since the type of contract and level of experience in the workplace were negatively correlated with health and safety at work.

Taking all the risk factors specific to industry sector fragmentation together, the analysis of work accident data reveals a clear trend towards an unequal distribution of risk not only by occupation and sector (with some occupations and sectors, mainly in agriculture and manufacturing, presenting a higher accident rate), but also that some work contexts were more hazardous than others (small businesses, parts of southern Italy), just as some workers are more exposed than others (women, young people, workers from outside the EU, temporary agency workers, undocumented workers) (Di Nunzio 2010).





### **3. Accident and sickness risks among young workers**

**Davide Dazzi**

In a rapidly changing work world (Accornero 2003; Polanyi 1974) where competitiveness depends on the ability to respond quickly to changing market needs, companies face demands to be ever more flexible. The industrial production structure is becoming less vertical through the use of outsourcing, while increased flexibility is leading to labour market disintegration, and work organisation is being deregulated by the proliferation of exemptions. Health and safety at work have not escaped these big changes unscathed (Rubini 2001; Dazzi & Felicioni 2008). Organisational and legislative changes have also changed the risk spectrum: a resurgence in “traditional risks” is compounded by the appearance of new risks. Today’s workers have to fall in with market changes with no real hope of a long-term, safe job, upsetting the qualitative balance between work life and social life, and flouting the Fordist and Keynesian compromise between subordination and security (Accornero 2005).

Young workers are the first to pay the price of this uncertainty, being inexorably drawn into an ongoing process of individualisation (Paci 2007; Chicchi 2009) devoid of capacity-building (Borghi 2010). The increasing fragmentation of work and widening ambit of non-stable employment (Altieri, Dota & Ferrucci 2009) are not only damaging the work side of things, but also the worker’s ability to exercise real “social citizenship” (Leonardi 2008).

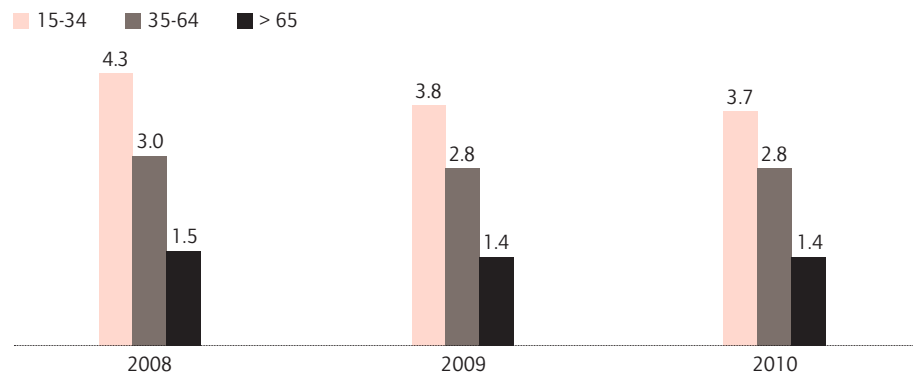
A methodological approach is proposed here that compares objective data (collected by the National Work Accidents Insurance Institute – Inail) with subjective data of how workers themselves perceive their living and working conditions. The difference between these two approaches (objective-perceptual) stems from the different kinds of information provided: the objective data give a view of working conditions “from the outside” and the perceptual data “from the inside”.

#### **3.1 Young workers: accident rates and technopathologies**

Work accident rates are the quantitative data on which any attempt to explore health and safety issues must be based to give the empirical analysis a scientific foundation. While the absolute numbers show a preponderance of work accidents in the 35-49 age group (2010: 44.2% of all work accidents in industry and services), the ratio of the number of work accidents to the number of

workers employed by age group tells a different story<sup>11</sup>. As the figure below shows, the under-35s display a consistently higher accident rate than other age groups: in 2010, the work accident incidence rate for workers aged under 35 was 3.7% against 2.8% for the 35-64 age group, and 1.4% for the over-65s.

Figure 3.1 Accident rate per 100 workers by age group, 2008-2010



Source: author's processing of Istat and Inail data

This brief statistical review of work accidents shows an objectively high level of risk for workers aged under 34 which is even more pronounced for workers aged under 25. As always, the explanations are complex, but casualisation has played a part (Vogel, 2006). The high number of work accidents among so-called parasubordinate<sup>12</sup> workers and agency workers in younger age groups where such contractual arrangements are the most common (Altieri, Dota & Ferrucci 2009) is not by happenstance. The preponderance of work accidents among the younger age groups is therefore both probabilistic and suggests a correlation between non-standard employment contracts and work accident risks (European Agency for Health and Safety at Work 2006).

11. The decision to use the Istat figures for employed workers and Inail figures for unemployed workers as the denominator stems from the need for comparability with the results of the Istat *Salute e sicurezza* II quarter 2007 survey published on 29 December 2008 and the preference for sampling data (Istat) over administrative data (Inail).

12. A relatively new form of employment possessing characteristics of both wage employment and self-employment. It is work done as an independent contractor under a contract for the execution of a specific project on conditions of individual responsibility and extreme individualisation of salaries, bonuses and working time.

## 3.2 Young workers' risk perceptions

Analysis of a survey put out in December 2008<sup>13</sup> by the National Statistical Institute (Istat) shows that perception of physical risks (exposure to dust, gases, emissions, fumes and chemicals, among others) in the workplace is greater from the age of 35, declining after the age of 55. Younger workers therefore demonstrate a lower level of physical risk perception than their elders in the 35-55 age bracket. This low risk perception is not to be taken as reflecting objective working conditions: rather, it reflects the level of acquisition of cognitive and behavioural abilities to interpret the individual's relationship with his work environment. However that may be, it is interesting to note that workers in the lowest age bracket have a level of perception consistently lower than that of workers in the 35-54 age group, and the gap is even wider for the specific "work accident risk" factor.

Table 3.1 Workers reporting exposure to risk factors, by age group (%)

Age	Dust, gases, fumes	Noise, vibration	Positions, loads, movements	Work accident risks	Total physical risk factors	Overwork	Abuse of authority, discrimination	Threats or physical violence	Total psychological risk factors
15-24	14.9	13.9	18.5	19.8	33.6	8.01	2.9	0.7	10.0
25-34	15.2	13.5	19.5	19.7	35.1	12.01	3.9	1.3	14.7
35-44	16.7	15.7	21.8	22.7	39.4	15.04	4.9	1.8	18.6
45-54	17.1	15.9	21.8	22.4	40.1	17.06	5.7	1.9	20.9
55-64	14.3	12.7	17.6	18.0	34.0	14.07	4.5	1.9	17.8
65 et +	11.0	6.7	13.3	15.1	26.3	8.08	1.3	1.7	10.9
Total	16.0	14.6	20.4	21.1	37.4	14.05	4.6	1.6	17.4

Source: Istat, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2007

In addition to physical risks, the Istat survey also enables an analysis of psychological factors. Among the various factors that may affect the psychological health of individuals, the Istat survey singles out overwork, abuse of authority and discrimination, threats or physical violence. For psychological factors also, the data show a lower level of perception among younger workers: only 10 in 100 workers aged 15 to 24 reported being exposed to psychological risk factors compared to 20.9% of workers aged 45-54.

A review of the various risk factors for psychological health reveals that "overwork" is the single factor perceived by the largest number of workers as a whole. The age group distribution portrays young workers as not perceiving their own workload as a significant risk factor (8%), which is well below the

13. In line with the objectives of the European Health and Safety at Work strategy (2002-2006), Istat introduced a specific section into the existing labour survey to collect workers' perceptions on their exposure to risk factors for health in the second quarter 2007.

general average (14%). This result could be due either to a genuinely lighter workload for the youngest workers or a distorted reality stemming from a gradual acceptance of poor working conditions.

The first assumption is inconsistent with data from the different working conditions surveys done by the Dublin Foundation<sup>14</sup>, which report that the under-30s have consistently less autonomy in the choice of hours, methods and pace of work in Italy compared to other age groups over the various surveys (from 1990 to 2010), while it is precisely among younger workers that the highest work intensity demands – fast-paced work and tight deadlines<sup>15</sup> – are recorded. Lack of control over their own work and involvement in task organisation reduces worker satisfaction levels especially among young workers: again according to the Dublin Foundation, only 20.1% of under-30s can “always” or “almost always” “influence decisions that are important for work” against an average of 32.2%.

The Dublin Foundation survey also clearly shows that psychological risk factors are less often perceived by workers as endangering their health than physical factors, highlighting the failure of recent awareness campaigns for a broader understanding of wellness at work.

Internal and external labour flexibilisation creates fragmentation not only in production structures but also relational and social networks. Work loses its collective dimension and centrality to social life and hence its explanatoriness of society (IRES Emilia-Romagna, 2010). This gradual disintegration results in individualised career paths and life trajectories where risk is experienced as something personal and a matter of individual responsibility. Even the oft-misused concept of “safety culture” could well become a means for companies to offload their responsibility onto the individual unless the balance of power relations is first redressed. Not everyone has the same individual or contractual means of enforcing their right to health at work: here, young workers are relatively vulnerable. Any realistic analysis of working conditions must start from this assumption and so adopt a broader investigative approach.

The vulnerability of young workers can be seen from a comparison of the objective and perceptual data on working and employment conditions. The work accident rate is higher among younger workers, something usually attributed to lack of work experience or behavioural dispositions to work safely and a greater risk propensity. These arguments do not wholly convince (Vogel 2006).

Analysis of employment conditions clearly shows that contractual and financial insecurity are most prevalent among workers aged under 34 (Altieri, Dota & Ferrucci 2009). As well as creating a permanent climate of uncertainty and

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14. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, which is headquartered in Dublin, has been running five-yearly surveys of working conditions in the EU states since 1990.

15. Not until 2010 did the under-30s get overtaken by the 30-49 age bracket.

insecurity about future prospects, job insecurity stunts the accumulation of knowledge and behavioural experiences needed to work safely. It is beyond question that fragmentation of types of employment undermines the ability to develop work awareness, including in terms of health and safety, something further compounded when attempting to change sectors or jobs with a wide range of risk components.

Job insecurity is not just a matter of fragmentation of work performances: it is bound up with difficult and non-stable financial conditions. Disrupted continuity in employment combined with uncertain incomes prevents young workers planning for the future and forces them to put off or forego long-term plans (family formation or leaving home). This is borne out by national research done by IRES (Altieri 2008) which found that only 35% of women agency workers aged 30-39 have children against 54% of same-age women with standard employment contracts. The inability to live one's life as one wishes in an employment situation characterised by increasing overwork and declining autonomy in work is putting the psychological balance of young workers under strain by increasing their sense of ill-being at work.

Furthermore, the mismatch between the objective and perceptual data on working conditions prompt various considerations about the process of gradual acceptance. A comparison of different available statistical resources shows that a higher work accident rate among younger workers does not mean they have a greater perception of risks. Even in objectively worse conditions, young people perceive the work environment as less risky than their adult colleagues. The gap between the objective and subjective-perceptual aspects goes together for most young workers with a sort of acceptance of the inevitability of ill-being at work. Protracted instability and job insecurity seem to have an impact on younger workers' perceptions, whereby they see ill-being as part and parcel of work. In pure labour market terms, they could be described as "discouraged workers" in whom the process of discouragement results in lowered expectations of health and safety, regarded as secondary considerations or a necessary part of keeping their job.



## 4. Young people's work difficulties

Francesca Dota

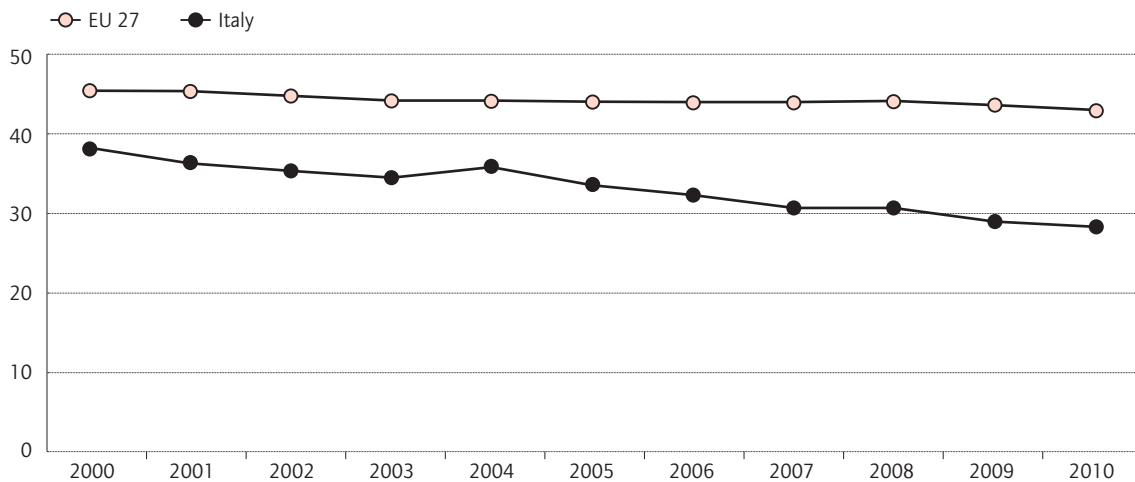
### 4.1 The youth labour market: recent developments

Young Italians remain marginalised on the labour market, with a low level of labour force participation and a higher risk of unemployment than their other European counterparts.

The labour market participation rate of 15-24-year-olds in Italy fell from 38.4% in 2000 to 28.4% in 2010. Much of the steady decline in the youth labour supply is due to the steady increase in time spent in education, itself stemming from the secondary and tertiary education reforms introduced in the last decade (Cnel 2010). Whatever else, the propensity to stay in education is often associated with the scarcity of employment opportunities for young people.

The youth participation rate dropped from 38.4% to 34.6% between 2000 and 2003, rising back up to 36.1 % after the passing of the Biagi Act (Legislative Decree 276/2003) which took the labour market flexibility initiated by the 1997 "Treu package" forwards to promote labour market accession for many young people through a range of new forms of temporary work.

Figure 4.1 Participation rate, 15-24-year-olds, Italy - EU27, 2000-2010



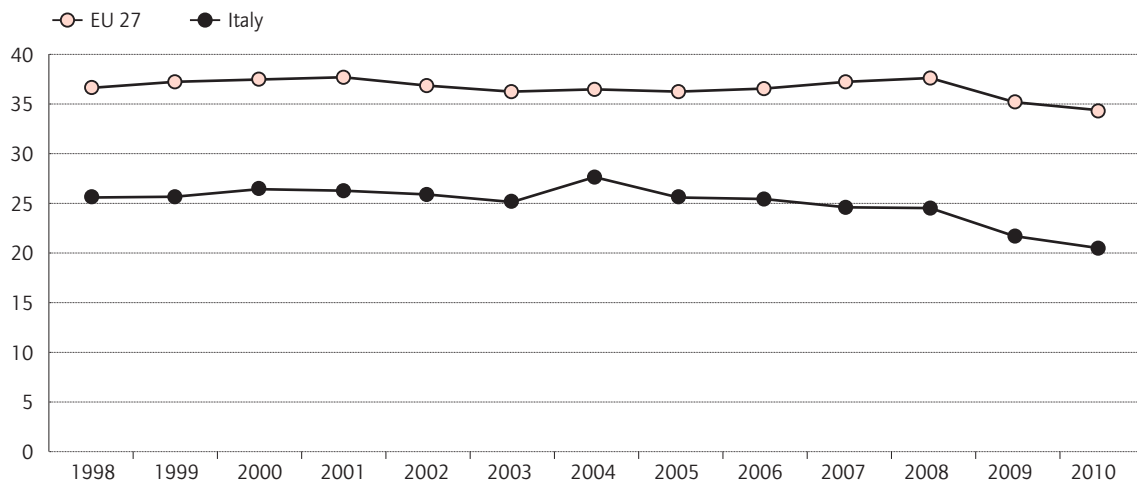
Source: Eurostat 2011

The declining youth participation rate is a positive trend if due to the longer time spent in education: raising the average education level of workers is a factor likely to enhance productivity and competitiveness in the broader economy and production system (Cnel 2010). However, many young people remain not in education, employment or training (NEETs). In 2009, just over 2 million young Italians (21.2% of the population aged 15-29) were not in work, education or training (Istat 2010). About a quarter of young people aged 20-24 are classified as NEETs (versus an average 16% in the OECD countries). There is no hope of finding a permanent job in such conditions: the longer it lasts, the harder it becomes to get into the labour market or back into education/training. In this respect, Italy cuts a sad lone figure, since the share of young people in 1997 classed as NEETs for five years running was close to 30% compared to around 10% in most European countries (Cnel 2010).

In recent years, this inactivity rate has continued to rise rapidly due to the crisis. It stood at 71.6% among the under-24s in 2010, compared to 25.7% among young adults aged 25-34 the same year (Istat 2011).

The trend analysis of young people's labour force participation also highlights the particularly vulnerable situation of young Italians compared to their counterparts elsewhere in Europe. Italy's youth are distinguished by a low employment rate that is well below the European average. Only in 2004 was there a partial recovery when the Biagi reform and resulting growth in temporary employment pushed youth employment up to 27.6%. This relative peak in 2004, however, was followed by a gradual decline in youth employment with the slackening business cycle, culminating in the slump between 2008 and 2010 when youth employment dropped from 24.4% to 20.5%.

Figure 4.2 **Employment rate, 15-24-year-olds, Italy - EU27, 1998-2010**



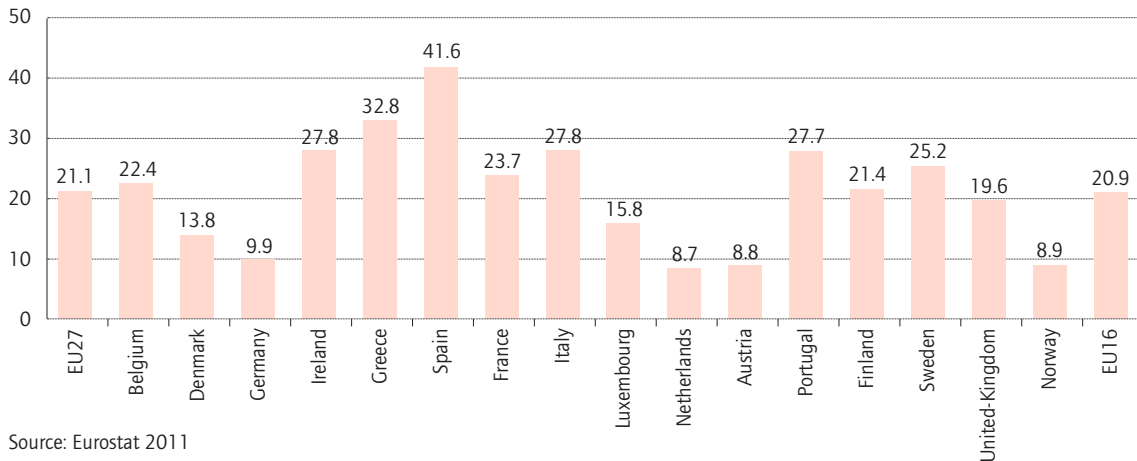
Source: Eurostat 2011



The gradual labour market deregulation promoted higher youth employment but left them more vulnerable since the first jobs shed when the crisis onset were mainly temporary jobs held chiefly by young people.

Young people's labour market disadvantage is even more glaring in respect of the unemployment rate. Among all EU states, Italy remained outstanding in 2010 for its high level of youth unemployment – only Spain (41.6%) and Greece (32.8%) fared worse. Young Italians have triple the general population risk of remaining outside the labour force, and a higher risk than their European contemporaries for whom the probability of unemployment is only double that of the rest of the workforce (Cnel 2010).

Figure 4.3 Youth unemployment rate (EU 16), 2010

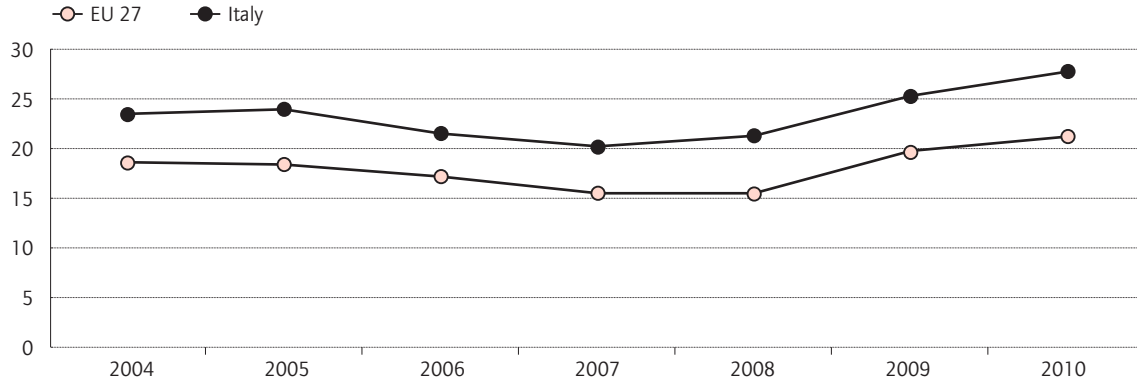


Source: Eurostat 2011

Over the past 15 years, labour market flexibilisation and longer times spent in education/training have cut the youth unemployment rate, which declined steadily until 2007, partly due to the economic upturn, before starting to rise again. Between 2004 and 2007, youth unemployment fell by more than 3%, from 23.5% to 20.3%, before rapidly rising back to levels close to the previous decade, namely 27.8% in 2010 (versus the EU27 average of 21.1%).

Italy's current recession has therefore narrowed young people's prospects of entering the labour market, but also increased the probability of their exiting it by being made unemployed.

Figure 4.4 Unemployment rate, 15-24-year-olds, Italy - EU27, 2004-2010



Source: Eurostat 2011

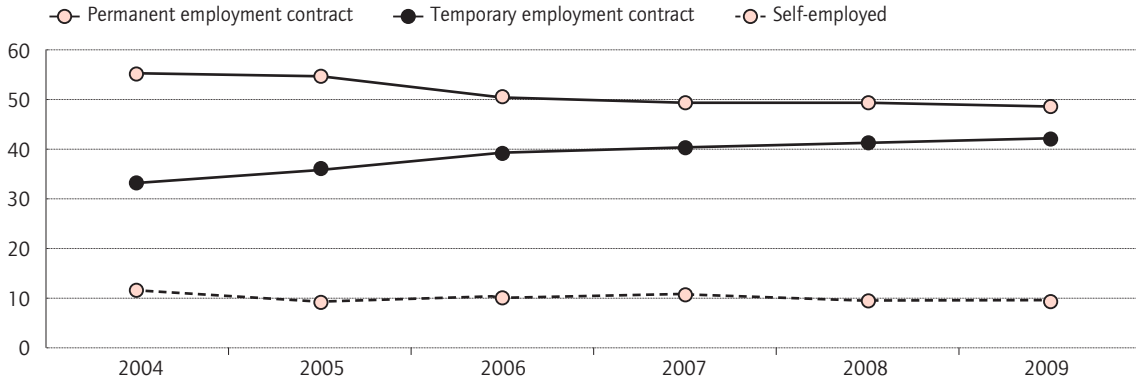
## 4.2 A generation of "non-stable" workers

Over the years, the use of fixed-term employment has risen in Italy while permanent jobs have contracted: between 2001 and 2008, the share of fixed-term hirings rose from 30.8% to 42.6%, while that of new permanent jobs declined from 60% to 47.4% (Unioncamere-Excelsior 2009).

The main increase in temporary work has been among young people for whom the flexibility required for labour market accession has turned into a systemic flexibility putting them at risk of economic and social marginalisation and the erosion of skills and know-how acquired during their careers.

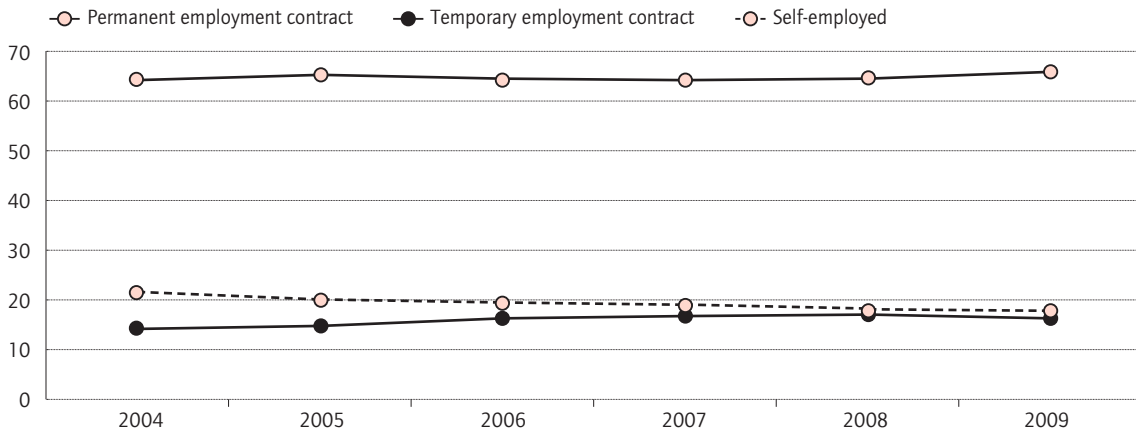
In 2004, at least one in three (33.1%) young people was working under a fixed-term contract or freelance, which had risen to more than four in 10 (41.2%) by 2008. The share of temporary agency workers among workers aged 25-34 rose from 14% in 2004 to 17% in 2008. The probability of temporary contract employment is higher among young people aged under 25, where the proportion of agency workers is five times higher than for adults over 35 years of age and more than double that of the 25-34 age group.

Figure 4.5 Workers aged 15-24 by type of employment contract, 2004-2009 (%)



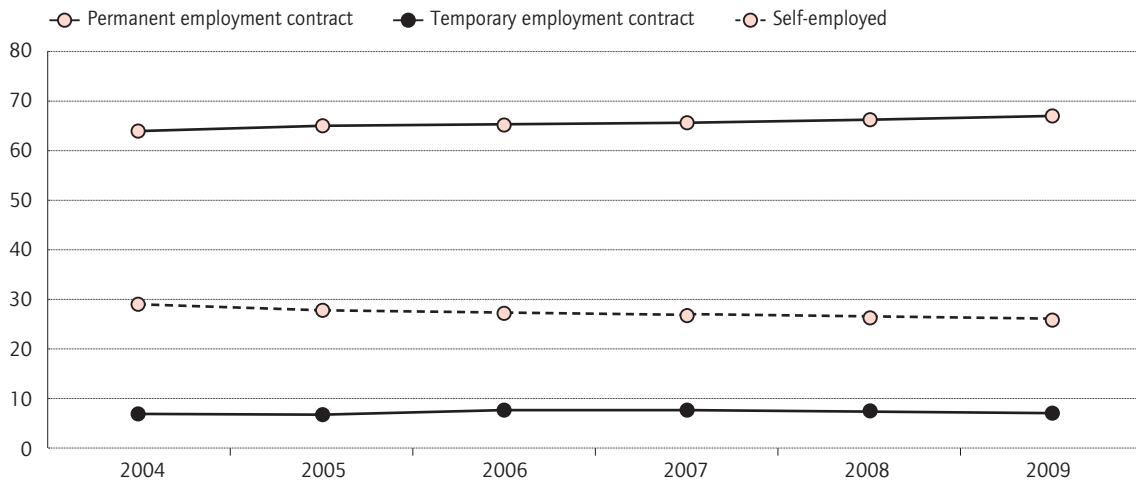
Source: IRES calculations from Istat Rcfl data

Figure 4.6 Workers aged 25-34 by type of employment contract, 2004-2009 (%)



Source: IRES calculations from Istat Rcfl data

Figure 4.7 Workers aged over 35 by type of employment contract, 2004-2009 (%)



Source: IRES calculations from Istat Rcfl data

The greater share of temporary employment among young people also puts them more at risk of remaining outside the labour force. The crisis caused a fall in the employment rate of 8.7% (representing the loss of 53 000 jobs) between 2008 and 2009 among temporary agency workers aged under 25. For workers aged 25-34, the reduction is close to 11% (a loss of 106 000 jobs), but only 6.8% among the over-35s.

The youngest workers have borne more of the brunt of the crisis even when in stable employment, which evidences their vulnerability relative to adult workers: employment among stable workers aged under 25 declined by 12.6% (91 000 jobs), very much more than among young adults aged 25 to 34 (-3.8%), and diametrically opposed to the rising trend among the over-35s (+2.2%).

Table 4.1 **Employed workers by type of contract. 2008-2009 (no. and %)**

	Absolute change			% change		
	15-24	25-34	>=35	15-24	25-34	>=35
Permanent	-91	-139	232	-12.6	-3.8	2.2
Temporary	-53	-106	-82	-8.7	-10.9	-6.8
Self-employed	-15	-81	-44	-10.8	-7.9	-1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>-160</b>	<b>-326</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>-10.8</b>	<b>-5.8</b>	<b>0.6</b>

Source: IRES calculations from Istat Rcfl data

In 2009, 14.2% of Italian workers were employed in non-stable jobs, and this figure was higher in the youngest segment of the labour force. The instability rate<sup>16</sup> stood at 48.3% among the youngest group and 20.4% among young adults (against 9% for the over-35s). While for young people aged under 25 job instability is traditionally linked to the labour market entry phase, for young adults and especially women protracted job instability could become a “normal” means of positioning themselves on the market. Job instability is more widespread among women, affecting at least one in two young female workers (aged 15-24) compared to approximately 45% among male workers in that age group, and one in four young adult female workers (aged 25-34) against 16.3% of male workers.

**16.** The instability rate is the ratio between the number of non-stable workers (employed or unemployed for less than 12 months after the end of their contract) and the total number of employed and non-stable workers unemployed for less than 12 months after the end of their contract (Altieri 2009).

Table 4.2 **Stable and non-stable workers by age group and sex (no. and %)**

	Stable workers						Non-stable workers						Total					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
15-24	496	54.8	268	46.8	763	51.7	409	45.2	304	53.2	713	48.3	905	100.0	572	100.0	1 476	100.0
25-34	2 671	83.7	1 768	74.2	4 440	79.6	522	16.3	616	25.8	1 138	20.4	3 193	100.0	2 384	100.0	5 578	100.0
35-64	9 130	93.0	5 796	88.0	14 926	91.0	689	7.0	790	12.0	1 478	9.0	9 818	100.0	6 586	100.0	16 404	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 297</b>	<b>88.4</b>	<b>7 832</b>	<b>82.1</b>	<b>20 129</b>	<b>85.8</b>	<b>1 619</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>1 710</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>3 329</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>13 916</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9 542</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>23 458</b>	<b>100.0</b>

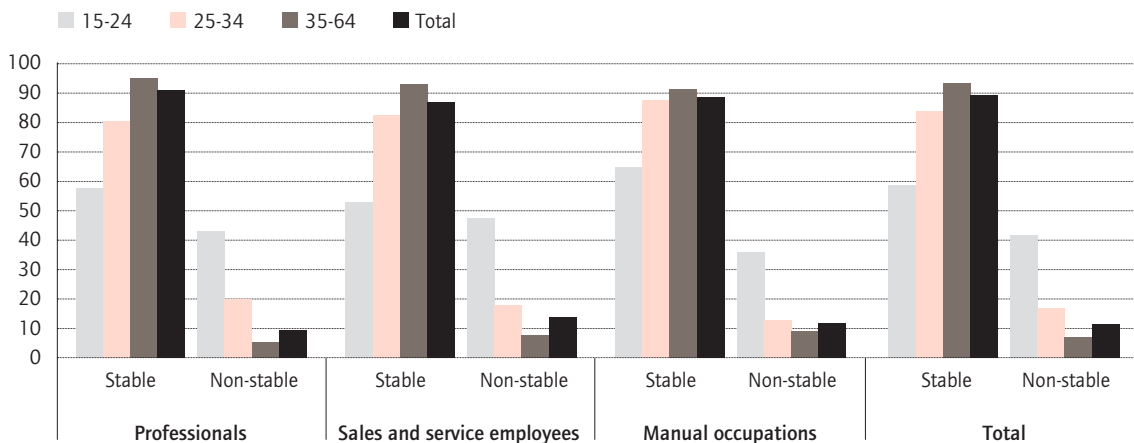
Source: IRES calculations from Istat Rcfl data, average 2009

The job instability rate is more pronounced overall in the Mezzogiorno (19.7% against 11.4% in the North), and significantly higher if the analysis is restricted to workers aged under 34 (31.2% versus 28.2% in the Central region and 22.7% in the North).

Also, instability rates are higher among the higher skilled workers: 33% among graduates aged under 35 compared to 25.5% for upper secondary education completers and 23.6% among workers with a lower secondary education diploma.

Looking at occupation types, the most non-stable working lives are found mainly in sales and service occupations among young people (aged under 24), but mostly among professionals among young adults (aged 25-34). That indicates that a greater investment in training and human capital development is not finding an appropriate response in the labour market, where work is predominantly non-stable, even for the over-35s with a high level of education.

Figure 4.8 **Stable and non-stable workers by occupation type and age**



Source: IRES calculations from Istat Rcfl data, average 2009

As well as temporary employment, there is also a higher rate of part-time employment among young workers, rising to 33.2% among young non-standard workers aged under 35 (fixed-term employees and freelancers) (versus 20.9% for the workforce as a whole).

Table 4.3 **Employed workers by age, hours and employment relationships (no. and %)**

	Full time			Part-time		
	≤ 34	≥ 35	Total	≤ 34	≥ 35	Total
Permanent employee	62.5	67.5	66.1	55.7	66.9	63.1
Fixed-term employee	17.1	4.9	8.4	25.8	10.8	15.8
Freelancer	2.0	0.7	1.0	7.4	4.0	5.1
Self-employed in the strict sense, family helper, partner in cooperative	18.4	26.9	24.5	11.1	18.3	15.9
<b>Total %</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total number</b>	<b>5 560.0</b>	<b>13 903.0</b>	<b>19 463.0</b>	<b>1 065.0</b>	<b>2 123.0</b>	<b>3 188.0</b>

Source: IRES calculations from Istat Rcfl data, average 2009

Reduced working hours means lower income, which is another negative factor compounding the persistent disruption of continuity in contracts and careers.

An analysis of Istat data on the net monthly pay of workers (2009) shows that fixed-term workers earn less than permanent workers, having an average income of 939 euros against 1,280 euros for stable workers (i.e., a differential of 26%). Fixed-term workers aged 25-35 earn up to 14% less than same-age workers with an ordinary employment contract (968 euros against 1 126 euros).

Job instability therefore, which per se implies disruption of continuity in contracts, employment and earnings, is also disadvantageous in terms of earning power which inevitably impacts on the lives of young workers, reducing their immediate ability to save and the scope for living an independent life away from their parents. To this extent, job insecurity may have significant social repercussions in that the strong intergenerational segmentation of the labour market poses a serious risk to the cohesion between the different segments of the social system and the very existence of the typically Italian family welfare model.

## 5. The empirical survey

Daniele Di Nunzio

### 5.1 Risk factors and wellness at work: theory and method of the empirical research.

The modern era is characterised by two differing interpretations of the concept of work, and hence of the concept of health at work, pulling in opposite directions:

- the idea that work is something intrinsically in the “collective” interest (of a business, subnational area, state) to which individual health can be made an adjunct, including through an economic exchange defined by power relations; and
- the idea that work is a characteristic human activity through which the individual achieves self-actualisation contributing to self-improvement and the improvement of production and social structures: individual health is seen as an inalienable good that cannot be subordinated, which is materialised in the pursuit of individual wellness.

This clash and the synthesis between these two paradigms – constantly in tension and constantly redefined – underlie employment relations and the social structures within which individuals find varying scope to protect their health, achieve self-actualisation, the ability to determine their own lives, or conversely be subjected to forms of subordination.

The gradual assertion of health as a universal human right has played into the affirmation of the worker, making people central to production processes and social contexts. At the same time, medical studies, socio-economic approaches, political and legislative action have given increasing importance to the guarantees and rights of the individual who, in order to be “well”, must be protected and have scope for self-actualisation in all aspects of his physical, economic, social, cultural, psychological and emotional life<sup>17</sup>.

An awareness has gradually developed that health is not a measurable good and is not merely the absence of disease, but “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellness” according to the historical definition of the World Health Organisation (WHO)<sup>18</sup>. Over time, scientific research has shown that

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17. For a thorough analysis of the history of health and safety: Di Nunzio (2011), Grieco, Iavicoli & Berlinguer (1998); Carnevale & Baldasseroni (1999); Alhaique (2010).

18. WHO, *Preamble to the Constitution of the WHO*, 22 July 1947.

a worker's health is indissolubly linked to all spheres of life: work, family, social, etc. Therefore, "wellness" can only be assured through self-affirmation, i.e., through "expressing his potentials and fulfilling his expectations", in the WHO's words<sup>19</sup>.

This research attempts to elicit the most comprehensive and current possible interpretation of wellness at work and what determines it, looking at all the studies on health and safety with a particular focus on the most recent research into psychological and physical integrity and self-enhancement<sup>20</sup>.

This research suggests the following definition of potentials and expectations:

- **potentials** are: the individual's attitudes, inclinations and predispositions, together with his physical, psychological, social, spiritual and economic abilities, talents, skills and qualities;
- **expectations** are: the individual's needs and desires in relation to his own life plan, as influenced also by society's expectations of him.

The individual's prospects for being "healthy" – i.e., expressing their potentials and fulfilling their expectations – have been analysed in relation to their experience of work in light of the different aspects that determine its quality.

The quality of working life was therefore studied by looking at the impact on the worker's physical and psychological health – as materialised in diseases and the degree of wellness – as determined by the following factors:

- **workload**: the quantity and quality of work to be done in the time available. This is both the volume of work to be done and its operational and cognitive complexity;
- **influence on work**: the ability to have an influence, either personally or collectively (e.g., through union representation) on the work, its complexity, business activity, the events of one's own work life;
- **social relations**: the quality of both formal and informal social relations, i.e., the relations between the individual worker and others involved in the work process (co-workers, subordinates or superiors, trade union, doctors, etc.). The relation between the worker and actors external to the company (as well as work/family life balance);
- **recognition of his own work**: the prospect of receiving fair recognition of the work done and his own merits, in financial (e.g., pay and bonuses), contractual and professional (e.g., consistency between contract type and career) or social (recognition by society) terms;

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19. The WHO defines wellness as "the optimal state of health of individuals and groups" in respect of which "there are two focal concerns: the realisation of the fullest potential of an individual physically, psychologically, socially, spiritually and economically, and the fulfilment of one's role expectations in the family, community, place of worship, workplace and other settings" (Smith *et al.* 2006).

20. The review of the literature on health and safety as groundwork for the empirical survey focused particularly on the most recent research into psychological and physical integrity and self-enhancement. Specifically, we refer to analyses of the link between the worker's health and work organisation, including some of the most internationally relevant models, those of Karasek (1979), Siegrist (1996) and Kristensen (1999).



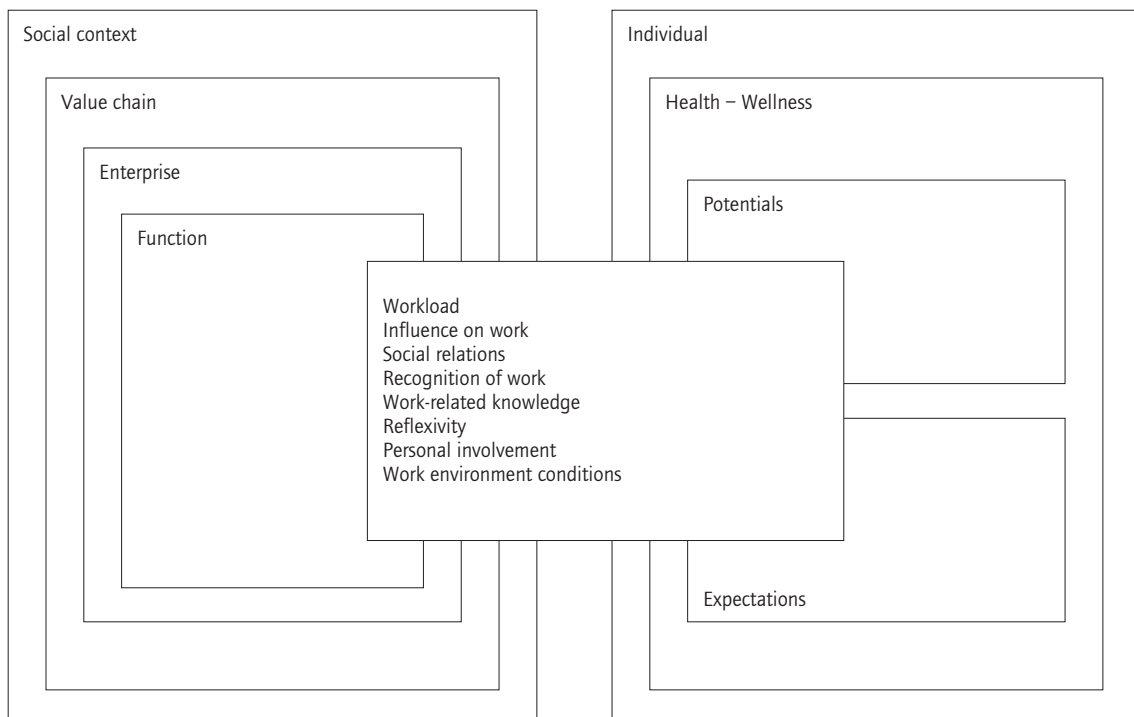
- **work skills:** the opportunity to turn his own skills to account in the job done, his advancement, and theoretical and practical feedback from the current experience;
- **reflexivity:** the worker's ability to critically analyse his work condition to be able to act with awareness and predictability on his current situation (e.g., information on his rights and duties or on the company), his future position (predictive ability), as regards, e.g., work organisation, shift rostering, workload, holidays, future at work and as a recipient of social security;
- **personal involvement:** prospects for personal involvement, looking at the factors that imbue the work with more or less meaning for the individual: interests, desires and needs;
- **work environment conditions:** presence or absence of physical, chemical, biological risk factors.

These factors were considered in relation to the structural variables specific to the social and production context (job done; business context; value chain; social context) and the personal trajectory.

The quality of working life was therefore analysed in terms of the health impact of all these aspects (see descriptive model).

These eight risk and wellness factors were used in the research to gain insights into young people's lives and work and their opportunities for self-actualisation.

Figure 5.1 The wellness of workers: analysis and intervention



The model was operationalised through an empirical survey done using a standardised questionnaire. In order to reach a sufficiently significant number of workers for descriptive, explanatory and comparative analyses to be done of the quality of work, a questionnaire was administered by telephone (using the CATI<sup>21</sup> method) to a sample of 1 000 workers (ultimately yielding 964 valid interviews) aged 15 to 34 with standard or non-standard contracts, working in SMEs and big firms in the manufacturing and service sectors.

The survey covered a representative sample of the young Italian working community<sup>22</sup>, extrapolated on the basis of the following representativeness criteria: sex, age group, contract type and industry.

The sample was composed as follows:

- 53.9% males and 46.1% females;
- a small percentage (3.7%) of respondents were aged 15-19, 24.8% were aged 20-24, and 31.1% aged 25-29; the 30-34 age group was the largest, accounting for 40.4% of the sample;
- 21% worked in manufacturing, 8.1% in construction, 70.1% in services;
- 50.2% had a permanent contract, 39.3% a fixed-term contract (including apprentices and posted workers), and 10.4% other non-standard contracts (including casual employees and those employed on a specific project);
- the occupational distribution in the sample broadly mirrors that of the total population represented, apart from elementary occupations which are overrepresented in the sample. 53% of the sample comprises technical occupations, skilled service and sales workers, skilled manual workers and other manual workers. Craft and skilled occupations account for 36.2% of the sample; only 7.4% of respondents were highly-specialised professionals, and barely 3.4% hold a managerial position;
- as to educational levels: 20.2% are low (not beyond lower secondary education), 55.6% medium (upper secondary education), and 24% high (undergraduate, graduate or postgraduate).

The interview results are commented on below under themes that run through the risk factors proposed in the model. At the end, the highest-risk profiles are identified through an examination of the main individual and contextual variables.

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**21.** CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing) is a form of direct statistical data collection done through telephone interviews where the interviewer reads the questions to the respondent and records the responses on computer using a specific software application.

**22.** The data used to estimate the population distributions were developed from the RCFL Istat data, averages for 2008.

## 5.2 Young people's working conditions: key findings

### 5.2.1 Workload

Workload was analysed in terms of working hours and intensity. The European Working Conditions Survey (“Eurofound” survey) evidences an increase in work intensity for workers in the EU combined with a higher frequency of physical and psychological risks. For most European workers, the pace of work is contingent on consumer and customer demands, and hence driven by external market demand. The share of workers on flexible working hours is rising steadily: approximately 50% of European workers do not work the same number of hours every day; about 40% have no fixed starting and stopping times; and about 30% do not work the same number of days each week. Average European working hours have decreased steadily over the past 15 years as a result of the increase in part-time and the real decrease in the number of people working long hours. However, 17% of European workers still work particularly long hours (approximately 48 hours per week) (Parent-Thirion *et al.* 2007).

Our survey shows an unobtrusive destructuring of working hours: 11% of the sample work more than 40 hours per week, 37% are on shift work, 54% work weekends, 42% work on public holidays and 20% sometimes work nights.

Table 5.1 **Typology of non-standard working hours (%)**

	Shift work	Weekend work	Work public holidays	Night work
Never	62.6	45.9	58.2	80.0
Sometimes	22.0	32.1	26.8	12.4
Often	15.1	21.9	14.9	7.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>99.7</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Company restructuring processes often involve an intensification of work, which is often an objective that prompts companies to engage organisational change to increase productivity levels (Di Nunzio *et al.* 2009). Conversely, a good work organisation, including in terms of technology innovation and the equipment used is arguably a key factor in minimising workload and improving health conditions.

Our research analysed workload by reference to ergonomic risks and specific time and organisational difficulties.

The respondents work in relatively high physical risk conditions: nearly half work in uncomfortable positions; more than one in three lifts heavy loads or does physically strenuous work; more than one in 10 claims to work in hazardous conditions.

Table 5.2 **Exposure to ergonomic risk factors (%)**

	Never	Sometimes	Often
Work in awkward positions	57.4	33.3	9.2
Heavy lifting or major physical effort	64.7	26.1	9.1
Work in hazardous conditions	82.0	13.9	3.9

Looking at organisational arrangements, half the sample (48%) work to rigid and short deadlines, and do not have enough time to do their job (47.5%); nearly two in three have to work excessively fast (60.5%) and have to solve unforeseen problems or situations (62.8%); considerably more than one in three workers does work that should be done by others (41.7%), which points to a high degree of control in employment relations.

Table 5.3 **Risk factors inherent in work intensity (%)**

	Never	Sometimes	Often
Have to meet rigid and short deadlines	52.0	38.4	9.4
Have to work excessively fast	39.5	47.0	13.2
Do not have enough time to finish their work	52.5	40.0	7.0
Solve unforeseen problems and/or situations	37.2	51.5	11.3
Perform repetitive and boring tasks	45.3	40.7	13.6
Do work that should be done by others	57.7	37.5	4.2

Aggregating all these factors, we created two cumulative indices: “exposure to ergonomic risk factors”<sup>23</sup> and “work intensity”<sup>24</sup>.

Heavy physical work entails high exposure to ergonomic risk factors, while work intensity is higher among professionals. Note that where work intensity is concerned, there are very few differences between professionals, service and sales workers, and manual work occupations. This is a sign of the general intensification of work that typifies the Italian production system.

- 
- 23.** The exposure to ergonomic and safety risk factors index is a cumulative index of the scores assigned to the answers (never = 0, sometimes = 1, often = 2) given by respondents on the following points: a) work in awkward positions, b) lifting heavy loads or making major physical effort, c) work in hazardous conditions. The numerical index ranges from 0 to 6.
- 24.** The index of exposure to excessive work intensity is a cumulative index of the scores assigned to the answers (never = 0, sometimes = 1, often = 2) given by respondents on the following points: a) meet rigid and short deadlines b) have to work excessively fast c) not enough time to finish their work d) solve unforeseen problems and/or situations. The numerical index ranges from 0 to 8. The Eurofound survey of work intensity looks only at three issues, whether the worker has: a) rigid and short deadlines b) has to work excessively fast c) does not have enough time to finish their work (Parent-Thirion *et al.*, 2007, p.57).

Table 5.4 **Work intensity by occupation type (average score)**

Respondent's occupation	Exposure to ergonomic and safety risk factors	Exposure to excessive work intensity	Work intensity - Eurofound
Executives, business owners/armed forces	0.7	3.4	2.5
Professionals, scientific and highly skilled occupations	0.7	3.5	2.5
Technicians and associate professionals	0.6	2.2	1.4
Clerical support workers	0.5	2.6	1.8
Skilled service and sales workers	1.2	2.6	1.9
Skilled manual workers, craft workers, small farmers	2.8	2.9	2.2
Unskilled manual workers	2.5	2.5	2.0
Elementary occupations	2.2	2.5	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>1.8</b>

## 5.2.2 Autonomy and influence on work

Our survey looked at the autonomy workers have in terms of the ability to control the work process and freedom to manage their working time.

The respondents seem to have little autonomy at work. Specifically, two out of three workers can neither choose nor change their methods of work (63.8%) or order of tasks (68.9%); more than half of the sample cannot change the speed at which work is done (53.1%), or decide their own holiday dates (57%); and only one in three has any discretion to decide whether to do shift work (35.2%). One in four (24.8%) could not take a break when needed – a high stress and injury risk factor.

Table 5.5 **Autonomy at work (%)**

Can take a break when needed	75.2
Can choose to change the speed at which work is done	46.9
Has some freedom to decide own holiday dates	43.0
Can choose or change the methods of work	36.2
Has some discretion to decide whether to do shift work	35.2
Can choose or change the order of tasks	31.1
Has some choice of working partners	21.9

To better understand the variables that determine the degree of autonomy, two indices were devised: a) autonomy in work organisation (freedom to choose working partners, to choose or change the speed at which work is done,

methods of work and the order of tasks)<sup>25</sup>; b) discretion as to working hours (freedom to take a break, choose own holiday dates and decide whether to do shift work)<sup>26</sup>. Our aim was to produce a more structured interpretation than that of the Eurofound survey which synthesises the aspects related to discretion as to working hours and those relating to influence over work processes into a single index<sup>27</sup>.

Considered by contract type, it can be seen that permanent workers enjoy greater autonomy both in working hours and processes, while non-standard workers and especially fixed-term workers have less autonomy.

Table 5.6 **Autonomy by contract type (average score)**

	Average	
Working hours autonomy index	Permanent	1.8
	Fixed-term	1.3
	Non-standard	1.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1.6</b>
Process autonomy index	Permanent	1.7
	Fixed-term	0.9
	Non-standard	1.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1.3</b>
"Eurofound" autonomy index	Permanent	2.5
	Fixed-term	1.6
	Non-standard	2.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.1</b>

25. The "process autonomy" index is a cumulative index of the scores assigned to the answers (yes = 1, no = 0) to the items in the question "in your job, can you" a) choose or change the order of tasks, b) choose or change your methods of work c) choose or change the speed at which work is done d) have some choice of your working partners. The numerical index ranges from 0 to 4.

26. The "discretion in working hours" index is a cumulative index of the scores assigned to the answers (yes = 1, no = 0) to the items in question "in your job, can you" a) take a break when needed b) decide whether to do shift work, c) choose your own holiday dates. The numerical index ranges from 0 to 3.

27. Eurofound considered the degree of autonomy of workers by reference to whether the worker can: a) choose or change the order of tasks, b) choose or change the methods of work c) choose or change the speed at which work is done d) choose his working partners, e) take a break when needed (Parent-Thirion *et al.* 2007, p.51). In our research, the "Eurofound autonomy" index is a cumulative index of the scores assigned to the answers (yes = 1, no = 0) given to the items mentioned above. The numerical index ranges from 0 to 5.

Non-standard workers therefore have less autonomy than permanent workers, showing that flexibility often conceals a high level of worker subordination to the company rather than providing him with opportunities to control his own work.

Closer analysis reveals that more than half of non-standard workers cannot change the speed at which work is done, choose whether to do shift work, or even decide their own holiday dates; 70.7% cannot change the order of tasks, and 35.6% the methods of work.

The pace specific to fixed-term contracts also exposes workers to a high level of subordination by significantly limiting their discretion.

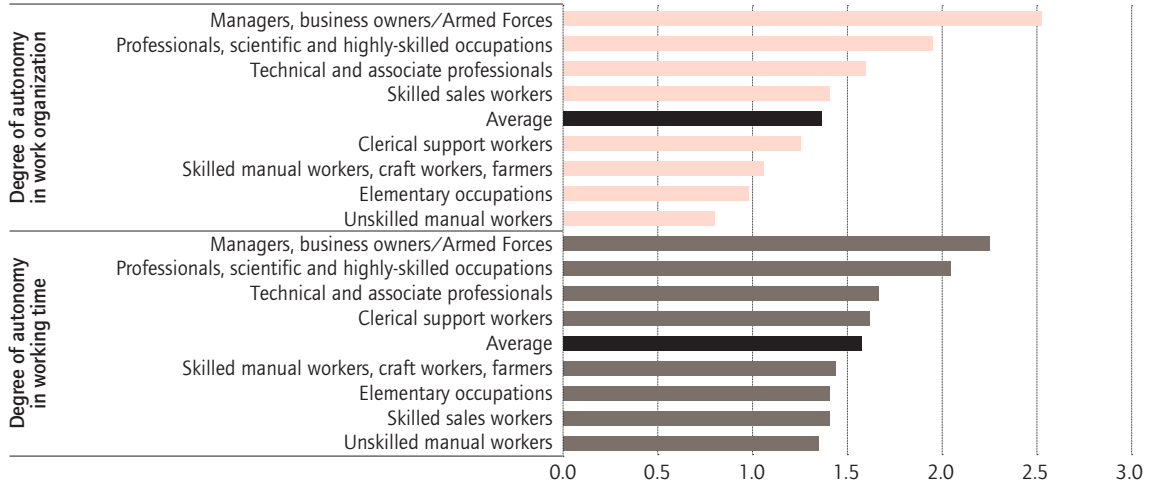
That young people should aspire to a permanent contract is therefore unsurprising. The majority reply to the question “what matters most when choosing a job” is “having a permanent contract” (71.4%). Just over one-fifth of workers, however, would rather have a job they enjoy regardless of the type of contract (22%); the share who would accept high pay for a temporary employment contract is negligible (6.4%).

Table 5.7 **Autonomy at work by contract type (%)**

	Permanent	Fixed-term	Non-standard	Total
Can take a break when needed	77.1	71.7	79.4	75.2
Can decide to some extent whether to do shift work	43.2	31.3	45.3	38.7
Can to some extent decide own holiday dates	57.3	25.2	43.3	43.2
Can choose or change the order of tasks	41.4	17.6	29.3	30.7
Can choose or change the methods of work	44.6	24.9	34.3	35.8
Can change the speed at which work is done	57.5	33.8	44.4	46.8
Can choose working partners to some extent	27.9	14.1	20.4	21.6

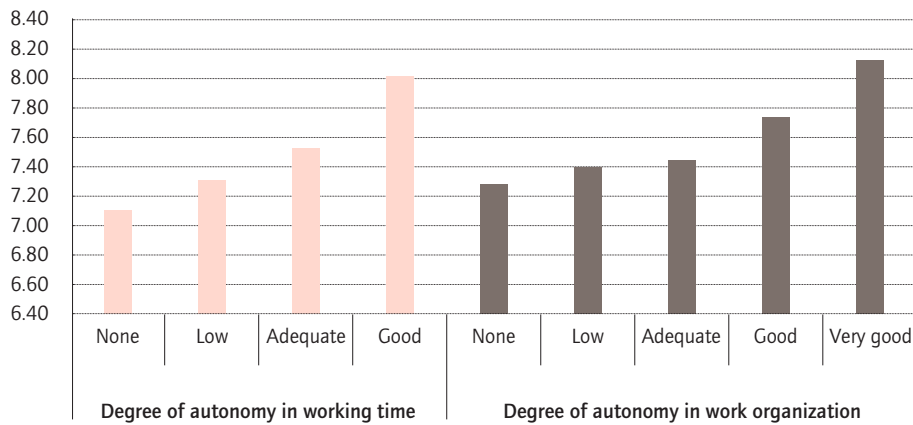
Looked at by occupational category, managers and executives, professionals and technicians and associate professionals enjoy most autonomy. Conversely, clerical support workers, elementary occupations, unskilled and skilled manual workers have least autonomy. It is clear that the most highly-qualified occupations – including by reason of being higher up the company ladder – enjoy more autonomy. By contrast, those in elementary occupations hold more operative functions, usually on the lower rungs of the company ladder,; as a result, they work within a more inflexible work organisation characterised by more strictly regulated procedures which impedes their being more proactive.

Figure 5.2 **Autonomy at work by occupation type (average score)**



Greater autonomy correlates to perceived greater wellness: workers with more autonomy score their wellness at work more highly.

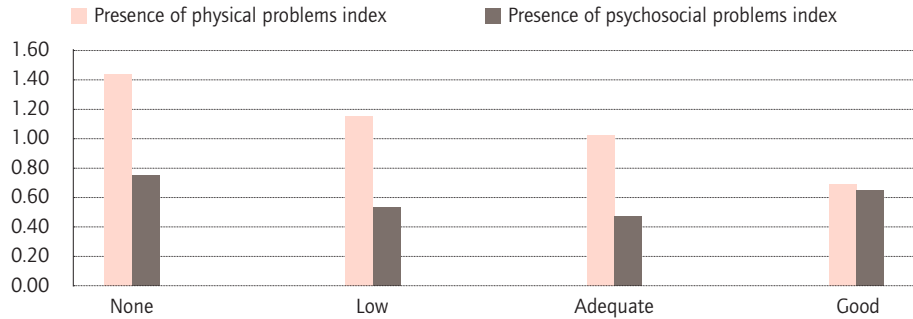
Figure 5.3 **Autonomy at work by level of wellness (average wellness score from 1 to 10)**



The actual impact on wellness of the ability to influence one's own work is also demonstrated by the better physical and psychological health associated with greater autonomy.



Figure 5.4 **Autonomy at work by physical and psychological health (average score)**



### 5.2.3 Membership of trade unions and support networks

In terms of social relations, respondents often work in conditions of very pronounced isolation and individualisation.

Relations with co-workers are judged generally satisfactory, but not in all cases; more than one in three workers complains of doing work that should be done by others (42%) and cases of abuse by co-workers or superiors are cited (13%).

Generally, marginalisation within the work organisation is particularly evident in both the risk management and industrial relations systems.

Barely 10% of respondents are union members; the number taking part in union activities is higher than this, but still small (16%).

Considered by occupational category, the unionisation rate is markedly higher among the lower-skilled occupations: 25.8% of unskilled manual workers are unionised, as are 20.4% of “elementary occupations”. Conversely, unionisation rates are lower among “professionals” (7.3%) and “skilled occupations” (5.1%).

Trade union membership clearly therefore retains its appeal in its traditional heartland (manual workers), but faces difficulties recruiting among the higher-skilled occupational categories and getting a foothold in new areas of work where the added value is increasingly created. The risk for trade unions therefore is being unable to retain a presence at the key points of the production cycle, thereby weakening its bargaining, tactical and strategic position.

Looked at by employment contract, permanent employees have the highest rate of membership (16%), while unionisation rates are much lower among workers on fixed-term (4.7%) and non-standard (2.1%) contracts.

Table 5.8 **Union membership by contract type (%)**

	Union membership		
	Yes	No	Total
Permanent	16.0	84.0	100.0
Fixed-term	4.7	95.3	100.0
Non-standard	2.1	97.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>89.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Half the sample (48.9%) said they had joined a union “because it protects rights”; a lesser share joined to use its “services” (19.6%).

The utility of “services” is a bigger consideration for women, with more than 28% claiming to have joined the union “because it provides useful services” against 13.2% of male workers.

Table 5.9 **Reasons for joining a union, by sex (%)**

Reason	Male	Female	Total
It protects rights	50.9	46.2	48.9
It provides me with useful services	13.2	28.2	19.6
It has already helped me to solve problems	15.1	5.1	10.9
I believe in what the union is fighting for	9.4	10.3	9.8
I trust the union rep	5.7	5.1	5.4
Other	5.7	5.1	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

We also sought to examine the role played by the company joint shop stewards committee (RSU) and the company and area workers’ safety reps (RLS and RLST). The replies on union representation must clearly be placed in the context of the productive fabric and prevailing law<sup>28</sup>.

Awareness of the existence of the RSU is higher in medium-sized and large companies and in manufacturing industry (47.9%) than in construction (24.2%) and services (26, 3%). One in three workers (36.2%) did not know if there was an RSU in his company.

<sup>28</sup>. The RSU is a body that represents all workers, including non-union members. An RSU may be formed in all government agencies and private companies with more than 15 employees. All companies must have an RLS.

Table 5.10 **Existence of RSUs by economic sector (%)**

Economic sector	RSU exists			Total
	Yes	No	Don't know	
Manufacturing	47.9	16.5	35.6	100.0
Construction	24.2	42.4	33.3	100.0
Services	26.3	37.0	36.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>33.1</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

There is considerable ignorance of the duties and method of appointment of the workers' safety rep: 37.1% do not know if the company has one, and 11.5% do not know how he is appointed. By company size, the survey found that RLS were present in 43.2% of companies with more than 15 employees and in 24% of companies with 15 or fewer employees.

Table 5.11 **Existence of workers' safety reps (RLS) and method of appointment by company size (%)**

Existence and method of appointment of RLS	Company size		Total
	Up to 15 employees	More than 15 employees	
Yes, elected by workers	8.5	14.4	11.3
Yes, appointed by union reps	2.2	7.1	4.5
Yes, appointed by the employer	6.2	5.4	5.8
Yes, but I do not know who chose him	7.1	16.3	11.5
No	43.0	15.1	29.7
Don't know	33.0	41.7	37.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

More than 50% of the sample considered that their working conditions would more likely to be improved by direct personal negotiations with the employer, a sign that collective action is seen by many as an unsuited means.

Table 5.12 **Best means of improving workers' working conditions (%)**

Means	%
Attend meetings and improve workplace agreements	20.5
Take part in strikes and improve national agreements	10.7
Negotiate individually with superiors	50.3
No action would be useful	17.3
Other	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Young people are not sufficiently integrated into either the company or wider national health system.

More than half of respondents (58%) had not had a medical examination by the company doctor in their working life; 16.8% had had sporadic health checks; and only one worker in five underwent a regular medical examination (25%). Health checks are more frequent in manufacturing industry and the civil service than in the construction industry and service sector.

Health protection and occupational disease prevention also feature little outside the workplace: more than half of workers say that the doctor takes no account of the patient's occupation during a medical examination (56.9% of the sample) and 23.3% feel that their GP gives perfunctory consideration to their work (11.7% feel their work is taken properly into account by doctors, 5.3% never see a doctor and 2.5% could not say).

#### 5.2.4 Financial and professional recognition

The feeling that their work is not recognised at its real worth (in terms of pay and abilities) is widespread among young workers.

Pay levels are declining: about half of respondents earn less than 1 000 euros per month (23% earn less than 800 euros, 26% between 800 and 1 000 euros); one worker in three earns between 1 000 and 1 300 euros, 14% earn between 1 301 and 1 500 euros, and only 7% earn more than 1 500 euros (1% earn more than 2 000 euros). Non-standard and fixed-term workers are most vulnerable to poverty.

Table 5.13 **Income brackets by contract type (%)**

	Permanent	Fixed-term	Non-standard	Total
Less than 800	9.0	31.0	63.0	23.0
801-1 000	19.4	35.5	22.2	26.1
1 001-1 300	39.0	22.1	9.9	29.4
1 301-1 500	20.8	8.7	4.9	14.4
1 501- 2 000	9.7	2.7	0.0	6.0
More than 2 000	2.1	0.0	0.0	1.1
<b>Total valid responses</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Only 15% reported being in a workplace that valued their personal merits and abilities properly, while one in five workers (21%) complained of little or no recognition of their merit; here, again, non-standard and fixed-term workers came off worst.

Table 5.14 **Company recognition of merits and abilities, by level of education (%)**

	Type of Contract			Level of education			Total
	Permanent	Fixed-term	Non-standard	Low	Medium	High	
Little or none	15.1	26.4	31.3	24.9	22.7	15.3	21.2
Average	64.4	64.2	60.6	63.3	66.4	57.9	63.7
Considerable	20.5	9.4	8.1	11.9	10.9	26.9	15.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 5.2.5 Knowledge and skills

Production in Italy is low-skilled work: Italy ranks with Greece and Portugal among the European countries with the lowest level of innovation in the economy (UNU-MERIT, 2010).

On-the-job training is an important issue for young people.

Where vocational training is concerned, 67% had had no paid training in the previous two years. Only a fifth of the sample (19.6%) had received specific on-the-job training. Little time is generally allowed for it – 20 hours or less a year for 10.6% of the sample.

Safety training seems more widespread: 26% of the sample had training in health and safety at work in the previous two years. Given that such training is compulsory<sup>29</sup>, however, this percentage is too low.

Non-stable workers are most disadvantaged in both vocational and safety training.

Table 5.15 **Vocational and safety training in the previous two years, by contract type (%)**

	Vocational training				Health and safety training				
	Permanent	Fixed-term	Non-standard	Total		Permanent	Fixed-term	Non-standard	Total
No	58.8	74.5	78.8	67.1	No	43.7	64.3	77.8	55.4
Yes	24.8	15.0	12.1	19.6	Yes	32.4	22.5	11.1	26.3
Do not know	16.4	10.5	9.1	13.3	Do not know	23.9	13.1	11.1	18.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Where the use and development of prior skills is concerned, the sample seems evenly divided between those who are able to use them and those who are not.

A marked decline in skills and individual abilities is reported for about one in four workers whose job does not enable them to use knowledge gained from education or previous work experience.

<sup>29</sup>. Legislative Decree 81/08, Article 36.

One worker in five neither accumulates new knowledge from their work nor is involved in sharing knowledge with other co-workers.

Table 5.16 **Manifesting knowledge (%)**

In performing your work, can you:	Yes	Yes, but only partially	No	Total
share your work knowledge with co-workers	51.9	25.3	22.1	100.0
use your education and work experiences	49.2	23.3	26.9	100.0
increase your knowledge and work skills	55.5	21.0	22.6	100.0

It is also important to bear in mind that the educational level of young Italian workers is below the European average, such that even before labour market accession, training opportunities are not assured and certified skills are low.

Paradoxically, those workers with the lowest level of education are least able to manifest the knowledge they have (29.3% against 22.3% for workers with secondary school qualifications and 9.1% of graduates), indicating the low skill level of manual labour.

## 5.2.6 Reflexivity

There is limited predictability in either the performance of daily work or future career and life.

Even whether worker will keep his job is unknown: more than a third of respondents (35%) thought it highly likely they would be unemployed in a year's time.

Nearly one in four (23%) saw no prospects for a career, stable employment, adequate pension or pay; those in the lowest-skilled occupations, fixed-term workers, the youngest workers, and those working in southern Italy were most pessimistic about their futures.

Table 5.17 **Employment and quality of life prospects (%)**

Prospect of getting an adequate pension	53.8
Prospect of a career	41.8
Prospect of stable employment	58.2
Prospect of getting the pay you would like	52.4
Ability to establish good employment relations with superiors	53.4
Ability to establish good employment relations with co-workers	58.2
Prospects for work/life balance	54.6
Live close to workplace	47.0

There is little optimism about the future: the future is seen as “full of prospects” for 32.3% of respondents, while for others it will be difficult, the same or unpredictable (uncertain and unknown for 25.5%; exactly the same as now for 23.9%; unknown and unforeseeable for 18.3%).

This makes it hard for young workers to leave home, embark on an independent life or think of starting a family; only 32% do not live with their parents.

This harsh work climate makes young workers very ready to make what may be drastic changes to their lives to improve their lot: 66% of respondents would be ready to change firms and half to change jobs; 41% are ready to move to another town to better their situation, and nearly one in three (28%) would be willing to emigrate. This latter figure clearly illustrates how stark the job situation seems to be to many.

For most respondents, a steady job is what matters most: a permanent employment contract is the main aim for 71% of young people, while only one in four (22%) would be willing to settle for any type of contract to do a job they enjoyed, an attitude that tends to decline the longer they spend in temporary work. Finally, only 6% would be willing to take a non-standard contract for higher pay.

Table 5.18 **Determinants of the choice of work, by level of education (%)**

	Low	Medium	High	Total
Steady job with a permanent contract	77.5	73.0	63.2	71.4
High pay, even on a fixed-term contract	11.2	5.3	5.4	6.4
A job I like, regardless of the type of contract	11.2	21.7	31.4	22.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 5.2.7 Personal involvement

Personal involvement in one’s job is something many young people are willing to forego in exchange for better working conditions.

Most respondents see their job as a means to an end (work is essentially a financial necessity for 44% of the sample) and only one in three (32%) as a means of self-actualisation. More of the most highly-educated workers see work as a means of self-actualisation.

Table 5.19 **Meaning of work, by level of education (%)**

	Low	Medium	High	Total
A means of self-actualisation	16.9	26.3	55.0	31.8
A financial necessity	58.2	47.9	25.0	44.1
A means of achieving independence	23.7	23.1	12.9	20.7
A means of serving society	1.1	2.6	7.1	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

While half the sample has some small scope for self-expression, about one in four does not do what is considered an interesting job, and can neither express their personality or their own ideas.

Table 5.20 **Self-expression (%)**

In your job, can you:	Yes	Yes, but only partially	No	Total
do activities that you consider interesting	48.5	28.9	22.5	100.0
express your personality	49.4	27.2	23.0	100.0
freely express your ideas	47.6	29.4	22.9	100.0

Permanent and more highly-educated employees have most scope for self-expression.

Table 5.21 **Self-expression by contract type and level of education (%)**

	Type of contract			Educational level		
	Permanent	Fixed-term	Non-standard	Low	Medium	High
No self-expression	15.0	24.5	25.3	36.7	19.5	6.6
Little self-expression	21.9	32.1	29.3	24.9	31.2	17.3
Sufficient or considerable self-expression	63.1	43.4	45.5	38.4	49.3	76.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 5.2.8 Work environment

Where the work environment is concerned, half of the sample (53%) reported not being exposed to environmental risk factors – physical, chemical or biological – while 16% are exposed to one risk factor, 14% to two factors and 18% to at least three factors. The most serious workplace issues are temperature (23% of workers), excessive noise (21%), humidity (14.8%). The limited training received by young workers and their lesser work experience may also lead them to underestimate the presence of actual risk factors, putting their health at greater risk.



Table 5.22 **Risk factors in the work environment (%)**

Excessive heat	23.1
Excessive noise	21.0
Humidity	14.8
Inadequate ventilation	9.3
Cramped work spaces	8.8
Inadequate lighting	8.6
Disruptive vibrations	7.8
Airborne fumes, vapour or gas	7.6
Airborne dust	7.4
Contact with biological material (blood, saliva, etc.)	6.5
Frequent contact with chemicals	6.5
Inadequate hygiene conditions	3.8

## 5.2.9 Physical and psychological health

The workers were asked whether they had work-induced health problems: 37.7% of the sample reported no problems, while almost one-third suffer from headaches (30.4%), backache (28.9%) or stress (26%), and 17.7% suffer from muscle pain.

Table 5.23 **Work-induced health problems (%)**

Headaches	30.4
Backache	28.9
Stress	26.0
Muscle pain (shoulders, neck, arms, legs)	17.7
Exhaustion and weakness	13.0
Eye problems	9.5
Nerves (irritability)	9.1
Hearing problems	4.8
Anxiety or depression	4.4
Skin problems / allergies	4.0
Sleep disorders	4.0
Stomach pains	2.3
Breathing difficulties	2.1
Physical injuries	1.5
Other	0.4
None	37.7

For a clearer aggregate picture of working conditions, two synthetic indices were created, one for work-induced physical problems<sup>30</sup> the other for work-induced psychological problems<sup>31</sup>. Overall, one in three workers reported only physical problems (27.8% combining those with one and those with multiple problems), 13.2% reported having only work-induced psychological health problems (again, combining those with one and those with multiple problems) and one in five workers (21.2%) reported having a physical problem combined with a psychological problem. From this it is clear that physical and psychological problems cumulatively affect most workers (62.3% of respondents), while only one-third of the sample reported none.

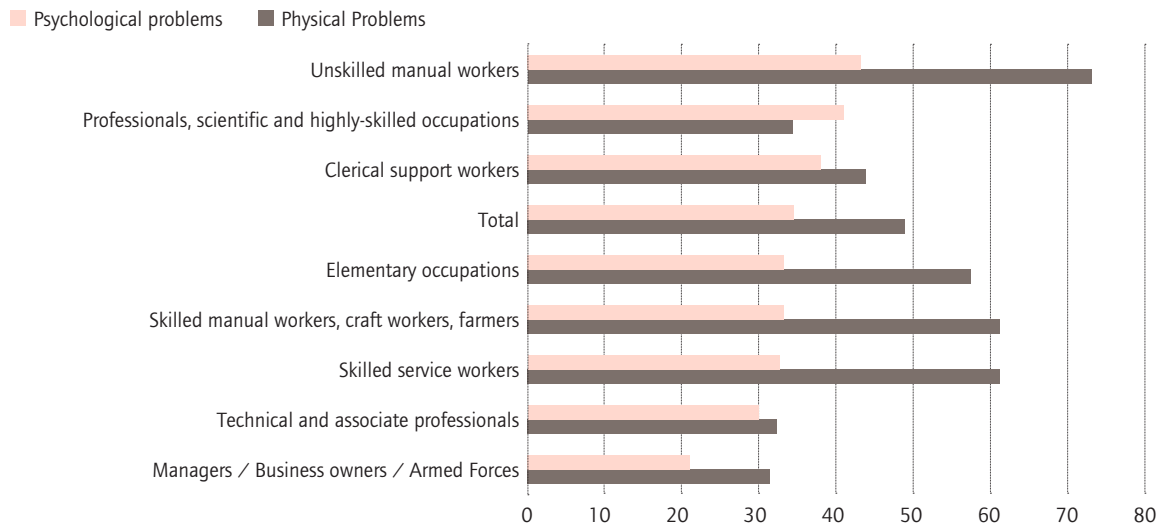
Table 5.24 **Combined presence of physical and psychological health problems (%)**

Physical problems	Psychological problems				Total
	None	1 psychological problem	2 psychological problems	3 or more	
None	37.7	8.3	3.6	1.3	51.0
1 psychological problem	13.1	5.8	0.8	0.2	19.9
2 psychological problems	8.1	4.8	1.0	1.3	15.2
3 or more	6.6	2.8	2.2	2.3	13.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>65.5</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The received wisdom that psychological health problems are more prevalent among professionals than manual workers is not borne out. The group most reporting psychological problems is the unskilled workers category (43%), followed by highly-skilled occupations (41%) and non-manual workers (38%). Psychological risks, therefore, cut across all occupations. The origin of these problems is not to be sought in the — certainly important — cognitive load of work alone, but also in the organisation of work itself.

- 30.** The presence of physical problems index is a cumulative index of the scores assigned to the answers (yes = 1, no = 0) to the items in the question on the presence of the following work-induced problems: a) hearing problems, b) eye problems c) skin / allergy problems d) backache e) headaches f) muscle pain (shoulders, neck, arms, legs); g) breathing difficulties h) stomach pains i) physical injury. The numerical index ranges from 0 to 8.
- 31.** The presence of psychological problems index is a cumulative index of the scores assigned to the answers (yes = 1, no = 0) to the items in the question on the presence of the following work-induced problems: a) stress; b) exhaustion and weakness; c) sleep disorders; d) anxiety or depression; e) nerves/irritability. The numerical index ranges from 0 to 5.

Figure 5.5 **Physical and psychological problems by occupation**



### 5.3 The highest-risk profiles

It has been seen that while the working conditions of young workers are generally difficult, there is an unequal risk distribution: some young people are more at risk than others, which makes their condition even more alarming.

In particular:

- by occupational category, it is mainly the lowest-skilled occupations and workers on fixed-term or the different types of non-standard contracts that are most at risk;
- looking at the individual variables, the most at-risk groups are: a) workers from poorer family backgrounds; b) those with the lowest educational levels; c) those who began working under the age of 24; d) women;
- looking at economic factors, those most at risk are those working in smaller firms and in southern Italy.

#### 5.3.1 The risks for the lowest-skilled occupations

The research showed that, even more than sector of employment, occupational category is one of the biggest determinants of workers' wellness.

Table 5.25 Selected risk factors by occupation (% for each occupational group)

	Highly adverse work environment	High ergonomic risk exposure	Maximum autonomy in working time	Substantial process autonomy	High work intensity*	Income > 1 000 euros	Physical problems	Psychological problems
Managers, professionals, highly specialised staff	11.3	6.3	43.5	44.0	26.6	85.7	33.8	36.3
Technical and associate professionals	12.0	7.9	30.0	35.1	10.7	58.0	32.4	30.1
Clerical support workers	8.5	6.4	22.5	22.7	13.7	47.7	44.0	38.0
Skilled service and sales workers	17.3	9.1	17.2	28.2	15.1	41.3	61.4	32.7
Skilled manual workers	33.3	48.4	26.4	18.9	17.6	57.0	61.3	33.3
Unskilled manual workers and elementary occupations	37.2	40.5	21.9	11.9	15.8	38.2	66.1	38.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>49.0</b>	<b>34.5</b>

\* Score = 0 > 4 for "work intensity" index

As has been seen, work-related risk factors are of different kinds and cross-cutting. Notwithstanding the common critical factors, it is clear that the most highly-skilled occupations afford the best level of health protection, while the picture that emerges for elementary occupations is so truly alarming as to be a priority for action.

Job type is the main determinant of the relative physical safety of a work environment: manual workers tend to work in very unhealthy environments, while those in non-manual jobs enjoy greater safety.

Closer analysis of the work done shows that occupations involving heavy physical labour have a high exposure to ergonomic risk factors, while professional occupations are distinguished by greater work intensity. Where work intensity is concerned, however, it must be stressed that the gap between clerical support and service workers on the one hand and manual occupations on the other hand is not very wide.

Where autonomy in work is concerned, managers, professionals and technicians and associate professionals enjoy greater autonomy, while elementary occupations, unskilled and skilled manual workers have less autonomy and are therefore subject to a high level of subordination in the work process.

As to income, while most fall in the average income bracket, the most highly-skilled occupations have greater earning power while the lowest-skilled occupations do not earn high salaries: 30.2% of managerial and highly-skilled occupations earn more than 1 500 euros, compared to an average of 6% for the other occupational groups.

When it comes to physical health, managers, business owners, technical and associate professionals and elementary occupations run fewer risks than those in (even skilled) service and sales occupations, and manual workers both skilled and unskilled.

By contrast, the conventional wisdom that professionals are often affected by psychological problems, while manual workers are mainly vulnerable to physical illnesses requires correcting. Psychological problems are an issue for professionals and clerical support workers, but also for unskilled manual workers who report more physical and psychological problems than other occupational groups.

In substance, unskilled manual workers are the group actually reporting the most severe physical and psychological conditions.

There is found to be a correlation between greater exposure to ergonomic risk factors and a higher incidence of physical health problems, while higher work intensity is associated with a higher incidence of psychological problems. Given that those who perform physical labour are subject to high work intensity, it is clear that psychological health conditions are worsening, including among manual workers.

Managers and professionals report greater satisfaction with their wellness.

### 5.3.2 The risks for fixed-term contract workers

Fixed-term employment of one form or another is common to all occupations. Non-stable employment is not specific to one occupational category or level. Apart from the small group of managers, business owners and members of the armed forces, non-stable employment can be found in the form of fixed-term contracts, sometimes as specific assignments or project work, in all occupational groups, and especially among technicians and associate professionals and elementary occupations. Therefore, contract type cuts across different occupational categories with the result that in any occupational category, non-stable workers have worse working conditions.

Table 5.26 Selected risk factors by type of contract (% for each contract type)

	No self-expression	Cannot demonstrate own knowledge	Little autonomy on working hours	Little autonomy on work processes	Income < 1 000 euros	Experience physical problems	Experience psychological problems
Permanent	15.0	13.1	40.2	52.1	28.4	50.8	36.8
Fixed-term	24.5	27.9	65.5	74.5	66.6	47.7	31.4
Non-standard	25.3	25.3	51.3	60.2	85.2	47.5	30.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>51.2</b>	<b>61.8</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>49.3</b>	<b>34.0</b>

Fixed-term employment for many is not an occasional experience but is becoming a form of continuing job insecurity: those in fixed-term employment today have already been so in the past, and for many, stable employment remains a remote prospect.

Where terms of employment are concerned, fixed-term workers are the most exploited and have least autonomy.

Permanent workers enjoy most autonomy in working hours and how the work is done, while non-standard workers and especially fixed-term workers have least. Non-standard workers therefore have less autonomy than permanent workers, showing that flexibility conceals at least a high degree of worker subordination to the employer rather than offering him control of his own work. Closer analysis finds that more than half of non-standard workers cannot change the speed at which work is done, choose whether to do shift work or even decide when to take their holidays. A full 70.7% cannot change the order of tasks and 35.6% cannot change their methods of work.

Furthermore, compared to fixed-term workers and non-standard workers, permanent workers have more scope for self-expression and demonstrating their knowledge. The former have fewer skills development opportunities: vocational training is rarely provided to fixed-term workers and non-standard workers.

While contract type is not the sole determinant of the degree of exposure to risk factors (occupation type is more significant), non-stable workers get limited health surveillance in all circumstances: permanent workers enjoy more regular health checks and health and safety training.

Trade union support seems to be mostly used by permanent workers. While union membership is low among young workers overall, the highest rates of membership are found among permanent workers (16%), contrasting with the very low unionisation rate among young workers on fixed-term contracts (4.7%) or other non-standard contracts (2.1%). Non-membership of a trade union goes together with a lack of involvement in union activities generally (meetings, strikes, etc.). The contract variable is arguably a determinant here: while one in four permanent workers is involved in union activities, the ratio is 1 in 12 for fixed-term workers and 1 in 16 for workers with non-standard contracts.

The high level of subordination at work also translates through into private life: fixed-term workers have more limited autonomy over living arrangements. The prospects of having their own household and children is drastically curtailed for fixed-term and non-standard workers compared to permanent employees: 39% of employees with a standard contract already live with a partner, versus just 6% of workers with non-standard contracts and 13% of workers on fixed-term contracts.

The mere fact of being a non-stable worker makes it hard to provide for oneself. Workers on fixed-term contracts earn lower incomes, and workers with non-standard contracts even more so – 63% of them earn less than 800 euros, compared to 31% of fixed-term workers, and just 9% of workers with a permanent contract. No non-standard worker and only 2% of fixed-term workers earn more than 1 500 euros, compared to 11% of permanent workers.

### 5.3.3 Individual risk variables: disadvantaged family background, educational under-achievement, very young workers, women

The review of individual risk variables shows that the greatest risk exposure is incurred by: a) workers from poorer family backgrounds; b) workers with the lowest educational levels; c) workers who started work very young; d) women.

Intergenerational cultural and occupational mobility is very low: children's educational level increases with the parents' educational level and vice-versa: 49.5% of the sample showed no upward mobility and 7.4% downward mobility.

Where occupations are concerned, openings to highly-skilled employment are greater for those whose parents are already in a higher-skilled job: 33% of workers whose father is a manual worker are also manual workers, while only 6.2% of manual workers have a father who is a highly specialised professional.

Young people receive substantial financial support (nearly one in three, even if in employment, has to turn to their parents for help) because they are on average low-paid, so young people from higher socio-economic status families can surely benefit from greater financial support. This problem is compounded by young people's difficulties in accessing credit: 18.6% of respondents were unable to get a loan when they needed it. This perpetuates the dominance of the birth family compared to individual achievement, which holds back cultural and social mobility and is a characteristic feature of Italian society (Franzini & Raitano 2008).

A higher level of educational qualifications correlates highly with a more skilled occupation, but also with working in larger companies. Therefore, higher educational attainment results in better prospects of health protection.

Educational level as such does not affect the prospect of having one type of contract rather than another.

The earlier the age at which workers enter the labour market, the more difficult a working life they face. Those who enter the labour market at an early age not only have lower educational attainments but often have irregular work patterns and a more fragmented career, holding different types of job (in at least half of cases) with several employers at once, most frequently on fixed-term or non-standard contracts.

Workers who enter the labour market at a later age are more likely to be in higher-skilled occupations, have a permanent contract, and work in larger companies. There is a correlation between age and company size: younger workers more frequently work in small firms, with the prospects of employment in large firms increasing with age (52% of workers in companies with more than 250 employees are aged over 30, against 33.6% of workers in firms with 10 to 15 employees). Consequently, very young workers – especially the under-19s – are more likely to work in unhealthy environments and the worst conditions, and are also least able to express their own potentials and to develop their own vocational skills. It is therefore unsurprising that, counter-intuitively, these very young workers do not have great expectations of the future.

Women, while no more exposed to physical hazards (presumably chiefly because manual occupations are largely male-dominated), have fewer prospects for developing their personal skills and abilities. Additionally, women are lower paid (57% earn less than EUR 1 000 per month compared to 42% of men) and are less confident than men about their future careers.

#### 5.3.4 Contextual risk variables: small businesses and the southern regions

Small firms are an environment that puts workers at greater physical risk than large companies; no similar division is seen for psychological risks, however, which correlate with a general trend towards the intensification of work processes.

Where work arrangements are concerned, company size seems to make little difference: young workers, whether in small firms or big companies, have limited autonomy and heavy workloads. Looking beyond company size differentials, the level of wellness is chiefly determined by the worker's role within the company, which is mainly determined by the relationship between his occupation and contract type. Whatever else, the small business environment provides less contractual protection, less health protection, less personal skills development and hence lower pay. It is not by chance that the proportion of fixed-term contracts, employment of very young workers and workers with low educational attainments are higher in such firms.

Concomitantly, service and manual occupations are found in small firms while professionals are concentrated in large companies.



Table 5.27 **Occupations by company size (%)**

	Number of employees					Total
	Max. 9	10-15	16-49	50-249	250 and more	
Managers, professionals or highly specialised workers	4.1	1.9	8.0	13.5	21.9	7.9
Technical and associate professionals	18.2	23.6	28.1	22.6	20.8	22.2
Clerical support workers	17.2	35.7	27.6	24.8	25.0	24.7
Skilled service and sales occupations	38.9	20.4	14.6	9.8	13.5	23.2
Skilled manual workers	12.7	10.8	10.1	4.5	1.0	9.3
Unskilled manual workers in elementary occupations	8.9	7.6	11.6	24.8	17.7	12.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The frequency of health checks increases with company size. Vocational training and health and safety training are less developed in smaller firms. Induction training in health and safety is seen to take place mainly in large companies: 72.9% of workers in firms with more than 250 employees received it compared to 41.4% of workers in small firms. Better health and safety protection obviously also correlates to the presence of a workers' safety rep: 43.2% of companies with more than 15 employees had such a rep against 24% of firms with fewer than 15 employees.

Financial prospects are clearly brighter for workers in large firms: 29.2% of workers in firms with fewer than nine employees earn less than 800 euros per month, against 17.1% of workers in firms with more than 250 employees; 22.4% of workers in firms with more than 250 employees earn over 1 500 euros compared to just 4.3% of workers in companies with fewer than 10 employees.

In terms of geographical distribution, southern Italy offers fewer work and quality of life prospects, resulting in a general feeling of dissatisfaction and a more pessimistic outlook on the future.

Workers in southern Italy are more afraid of being made unemployed within the next 12 months (45.5% versus 25.2% in central Italy and 34.6% in northern Italy) and even if they were to keep their job, they see few career prospects (no career prospects for 31.7%, against a national average of 22.8%). As a result, the prospects for an improved quality of life are also poorer: 33.6% of workers in the South see no such prospect, against an average of 23.9%.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, a third of young people in the South see the future as beset by risks and uncertainties (32.7% against an average of 25.5%). Interestingly, while workers in the South are more willing to move to a different town for better working conditions (half – 48.4% – would do so against an average of 41.6%), no geographical difference was observed as to the prospects of leaving to work abroad: approximately 28.5% of workers – whether in the North, Centre or South – would be willing to leave their current job and emigrate, pointing to a mistrust of the country that now goes beyond the traditional geographical breakdowns of social disadvantage.



## **6. A new development model centred on the person and health and safety protection of young workers**

**Daniele Di Nunzio**

Young people's working conditions have been analysed relative to changes in production processes with the aim of understanding the challenges not only to future generations but to the world of work as a whole.

The research shows how for young Italians – in most cases – work constrains the individual's self-affirmation at the workplace and in life: it gives rise to subordination and exploitation rather than self-determination. Work is often done in difficult conditions that cause physical and psychological ill-health which, as the results show, affect the majority of young workers.

In 2010, one in three work accidents, and one in three workplace fatalities, in Italy involved a worker under the age of 35. In the five years between 2005 and 2009, 44 478 workers under the age of 35 suffered permanent injury – i.e., a lifetime disability – from a work accident (Inail 2011). Young people have a higher work accident rate: in 2007, there were 3.7 reported work accidents per 100 workers under the age of 34 compared to 2.8 work accidents per 100 workers aged over 34.

The questionnaire survey conducted found that 38% of workers questioned reported having no work-related health problems, but nearly one in three suffer from headaches (30%), backache (29%), stress, anxiety, depression (30%) and 18% suffer muscle pain. Overall, one in three workers reported only physical problems (28%), 13% only psychological problems, and one in five (21%) a physical problem plus a psychological problem. The physical and mental health data provided by the survey are particularly significant given that all the respondents are employed workers, meaning that this portrait of a generation therefore excludes registered unemployed and undeclared workers who are exposed to higher physical and psychological risks.

A worker's health is a universal human right which includes the assertion of a wide range of rights that underpin his prospects of wellness. The difficulties faced by young people in the workplace are part of a wider problem: the difficulty of making it people-centred through a new democratic model of development. Such a new development model is needed if our collective life is not to be subjugated to uncontrolled market forces but directed towards the affirmation and universal extension of labour rights – starting with the right to health and wellness – by making it easier for each individual to achieve self-actualisation.

As has been seen, production processes have become increasingly flexible to meet the demands of global competition. Following the definition of the Lisbon strategy in 2000, the flexibility debate in the European Union focused primarily on the development of the flexicurity strategy, which seeks to combine market flexibility with protection for workers. However, that strategy illustrates the difficulty of fully protecting workers on two major counts: a) it considers only their need for income and employment while ignoring their physical and psychological safety and wellness; and b) it considers flexibility only in terms of the relation between the individual worker and the individual firm, focusing primarily on hiring and firing mechanisms<sup>32</sup>. In fact, flexibility forms part of a complex production paradigm that involves relations between multiple – individual and collective – participants locally and internationally. As has been seen, flexibility embraces: a) inter-company relations (involving all sectors and transcending traditional local and international boundaries); b) company-worker relations (through varied types of employment contract); and work organisation itself, as regards c) working hours, d) methods of performance.

Specifically, production processes are characterised by increasing flexibility to enhance companies' competitive edge in the global market. That increased flexibility goes in hand with an increasing fragmentation of industry sectors, and a trend towards centralised decision-making, increased entrepreneurial-style rationalisation and standardisation. The result is an individualisation and unequal distribution of risks along the value chain (between firms and between workers). The result is worsening working conditions, especially for the most marginalised at work and in society, with young people in the front line.

Overcoming the negative effects of flexibility, therefore, is not just a matter of the best type of contractual relationship for hiring and firing, but acting on the model of production as a whole. This needs to be done through a combination of regulatory action and voluntary incentives in the production and social processes. Collective action requires ever-closer commitment and collaboration by a widening range of stakeholders: workers and their union reps, institutions, business and professional associations, political and civil society organisations, the scientific community and the mass media. Bringing all the stakeholders face-to-face to cooperate involves challenges at every level – company, local, national, international – to come up with a common understanding of social and economic development that can reconcile production quality with assured fundamental rights for workers, with the right to health and wellness as the baseline. The recommendations below are offered as guidance for action on the matter<sup>33</sup>.

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**32.** The European flexicurity debate focuses mainly on the economic (income) and job security aspects of worker wellness, but rarely on that of their mental and physical health (Gallino 2007). This approach to flexicurity is now the main shaping force of labour market policies aimed partly at bringing about flexibility in employer/employee relations, and partly at ensuring continuity of income and employment through the extension of social schemes. The aim is to develop a vocational training-centred system and to broker the matching up supply and demand through employment agencies.

**33.** The recommendations are the outcome of the work of the research group and two focus groups conducted in 2011 with young workers, trade unionists and unemployed people aged under 35.

### **Democracy in production processes and key player responsibility**

The centralisation of economic and decision-making powers in industry sectors should be reduced by promoting democracy and participation in the production process. Rights should be developed throughout production networks by closer regulation of inter-company relations to ensure that the key players share responsibility. Participation and inclusion of subcontractors, as well as of the workers most marginalised in bargaining and protection systems, should be increased. The subjugation of peripheral players (sub-contractors and their workers) must be reduced to increase the scope for negotiating specific conditions by seeking to balance relative power positions throughout the production networks.

### **Flexibility and programming in work organisation: a permanent job as the normal form of work and upgrading autonomy in work**

The research shows that young people have very few prospects of having any control over their own careers, the organisation of their work and or the work environment, such that they are arguably more at the mercy of events than “masters of their destiny”.

Permanent workers have most autonomy in terms of working hours and work methods. A stable job therefore means greater self-determination for the worker, whereas flexible contracts mean increased exploitation.

Concomitantly, the survey found that most respondents want a permanent contract (71%); only 22% would accept a temporary employment contract in order to do a job they like and almost no-one (6.4%) would take one in exchange for higher pay. This means that in the respondents' views, a permanent job must remain the normal form of employment.

Moreover, as the research shows, permanent workers enjoy the best working conditions and greater autonomy.

The business requirement for flexibility should therefore be directed not towards greater labour flexibility but focus on work organisation (working hours and methods of work), through public regulation and social partner bargaining. Flexibility should therefore be combined with an increased ability by companies to anticipate changes in their sector in an effort to ensure prospects of continued employment for their employees.

Concomitantly, there is a need to protect and upgrade fixed-term employment, particularly through good quality induction training and upgrading autonomous work by guaranteeing self-employed workers real autonomy and freedom of choice of contracts in order to avoid “bogus self-employment”.

### **Universal respect for fundamental labour rights**

In general, segmentation of rights, which engenders inequality and social dumping, should be avoided. Workers' fundamental rights must be defended and expanded so as to be applicable to all. They must be guaranteed for all regardless of contract type, and include: a) the right to fair pay; b) the right

to participate individually and through collective representation in company decisions and social dialogue; c) the right to protection of health and safety and compensation for work-related accidents or illness; d) the right to social security; e) the right to training and professional development; f) the right to family benefits; g) the right to unemployment benefits and active labour policies in the event of dismissal or unemployment.

### **The trade union in production networks: for inclusive bargaining**

The scope for collective bargaining by trade unions on working conditions within production networks is contracting, and this is especially felt in regard to protection of the most vulnerable and marginal workers, foremost among them young people. As the research shows, young workers have very few opportunities for individual and collective bargaining, not least because of their exclusion from representation systems that they in fact see as ineffective.

The fragmentation of industry sectors means that unions ought to develop industry-wide inter-category representation and collective bargaining arrangements for production networks at plant, industry sector and national level.

The forms of representation must be inclusive, capable of involving all workers, including those with marginal production roles, with solidarity between the central and peripheral nodes in the value chain. This therefore means extending union rights to all workers, foremost among them voting rights, rights to attend meetings and have a say in decision-making, taking into account national agreements and production sectors, involving the different occupational categories and companies that are involved in the production of a good or service.

It has been seen that workers' health is contingent on multiple risk factors specific to the work organisation: a) workload; b) influence over work; c) social relations; d) recognition of work; e) work-related knowledge; f) reflexivity; g) personal involvement; h) work environment. Pay is certainly an important factor, but all these risk factors need to be included in collective bargaining for the level of workers' wellness to be increased.

Furthermore, since production networks are constantly extending geographically, trade unions must be forcefully proactive at international level, both in terms of collective agreements and for the extension of human rights.

### **Standardisation, business organisational models and public regulation**

The centralisation of power goes together with rationalisation and an accompanying standardisation of work processes, which includes extending the organisational models defined by the central companies in production networks to manage the complexity of flexibility. Specific "organisational models" to maximise production are coming into widespread use throughout Europe, including in Italy. The development and deployment of these organisational models must be regulated by rules developed with the social partners. The best fit needs to be found between "health and safety management models" and work organisation models. The level of workplace democracy

must be increased through collaboration between all the participants in the “production networks”: employers and managers, workers and their health and safety reps, production managers, heads of health and safety, expert technicians, doctors, in close association with government, the social partners and the scientific community.

#### **Upgrading production processes**

In Italy, competition based on cost-cutting rather than on innovation has generated a spiral of deskilling that has affected companies as much as workers. Production must be re-oriented towards knowledge- and innovation-rich production. Competition should be based not on cost-cutting or circumventing laws, but on the quality of work processes through rules that reward the most deserving firms.

#### **Relationship between operational work and knowledge work**

As the empirical research shows, more protection is needed especially for those who do physical labour, and in general, those engaged in unskilled work. Concomitantly, it is clear from an examination of work processes as a whole that protection for low-skilled occupations must be matched by capitalizing on highly skilled occupations, because application of knowledge and the operational phases of manual work are closely connected within the same industry. Production cycles need to be geared towards quality and innovation, starting from just those sectors that traditionally use a high proportion of low-skilled manual labour. “Green construction”, for example, could be an important testing ground for marrying technical knowledge to manual work. More generally, the “green economy” should aim to upskill all occupational groups in production networks.

#### **Programmed area development**

It has been seen that workers in southern Italy face more difficulties than others. More generally, public authorities, institutions, social partners and other stakeholders (universities, labour inspection, occupational health services, etc.) should be more closely involved in planned economic development to programme area development so as to combine employment with workers' rights.

#### **Tackle the poverty risk: protection of wages, minimum income, social schemes**

Young workers are very low-paid and wages should be lifted upwards through better protection of pay in national and company agreements. Concomitantly, Italy needs to introduce minimum income schemes to tackle poverty and also extend existing social schemes both through collective bargaining and fiscal measures. Access to credit should also be eased for young people who have little access to it.

#### **Reduce inequalities in employment opportunities and promote social and cultural mobility**

Very young, under-educated workers from poor families are most at risk. Real prospects for intergenerational cultural and occupational mobility must be guaranteed so that marginalisation in society does not automatically translate

into marginalisation in the world of work. This means getting away from the social order in which the dominance of the family comes before individual achievement.

Action is needed to give easier access to the education system by disadvantaged groups through scholarships, by raising and standardizing the quality of courses, orienting courses more towards the real prospects of employment, and strengthening job placement schemes. The low educational levels of many workers make it necessary to start teaching about health and safety in primary schools.

Concomitantly, efforts must be made to achieve a fairer distribution of wealth in Italy by tackling the segmentation of income and power which exacerbates inequities and further perpetuates inequalities.

#### **Invest in work and production processes**

The dematerialisation of production and the financialisation of the economy are problems to be tackled. The mechanism where money begets money, which encourages speculation and concentration of financial power, must be curbed by channelling financial resources into production processes.

The current challenge for work processes is therefore to balance quality in the production of a good or service with the quality of working life, to ensure that the “common good” – of the workforce, broader community and business alike – is congruent with and based on the individual’s self-expression. Looking at what the Lisbon strategy said – more than 10 years after it was written – the goal of creating “better jobs” cannot be achieved without creating “better work processes” as part of a new people-centred development paradigm. The worker must not be treated as a passive object subordinated to the interest of the company or a generic collective interest, but as a person who must be the architect and beneficiary of that interest, taking into account his unique experiences, his role as an agent of change, his potentials and expectations.



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