

Occupational welfare for workers' well-being

Massimiliano De Falco

Research Fellow in Labour Law at the University of Udine, Italy

#GreatResignation #CollectiveBargaining #OccupationalWelfare #WellBeing

Research question

The “Great Resignation” affecting the post-pandemic global labour market shows that **workers' interests and expectations have radically changed**. This phenomenon has not been characterized by a mere (albeit significant) increase in resignations, but rather by an **occupational transition**, which involved large flows of workers moving from one job to another one, looking for **more fulfilling working conditions**, not only in terms of wages. It follows that the “Great Resignation” represented the outcome of the change in workers' ways of understanding the **meaning of work**, under the banner of a **new employment exchange**, with respect to which the question arises as to **which factors** have proved **crucial**. The matter did not only concern workers, but also **employers**, who have addressed an unprecedented **crisis of attractiveness**.

Methodology

Focusing on the **Italian case**, empirical surveys have highlighted an **increasing attention of workers** to the issue of **occupational well-being**. To understand which instruments may affect this aspect of the employment relationship, the research was carried out on the **collective agreements with increasing application rates**, checking the **solutions** that were **most frequently included therein** to respond to new need of workers.

First findings

This investigation has led to the enhancement of **occupational welfare measures** designed by social partners. The reference is to the set of benefits, with a social purpose, provided through a **collective agreement**, and offered to the whole of the workers in the plant. These social benefits move from the **professional training** area to the **social security and health** one, even including **care services** for workers' relatives (with a disability or older), and **parenting support tools**. Moreover, welfare measures may concern tools which are characterized by a more economic (than social) function, such as **leisure services** or **vouchers to sustain workers' income**. In addition to this, they can even include **working flexibility** tools, oriented towards a better **work-life balance** (i.e., teleworking), and actions to implement **health and safety protection** in workplaces. By this, occupational welfare has responded to **new demands for workers' well-being**, and it has proved to be an effective employer **lever of attraction and retention** of human resources. For these reasons, even in the future, it seems to fully fit into the new labour exchange between employers and workers, enhancing the role of **collective bargaining**.

Problems and perspectives

In Italy, **occupational welfare** is linked to the activity of the **social partners** within **different sectors**. This aspect contributes to the creation of **dualisms** (both between insiders and outsiders in the labour market, and) between **workers belonging to different companies**, where second-level collective bargaining is developed. The **unifying function** of **national collective agreements** could mitigate this risk of differentiation in well-being promotion, and the **sharing of best practices** (across sectors) could reduce employment transitions. What is certain is that **the time is now**: it has become crucial to **invest in occupational welfare**, even for a **widespread well-being**.

Massimiliano De Falco
massimiliano.defalco@uniud.it



DISG
DIPARTIMENTO
DI SCIENZE
GIURIDICHE
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI
STUDI DI UDINE

