

**BUONE PRASSI E PERCORSI SPERIMENTALI
PER LA SALUTE E SICUREZZA DEI GIOVANI
E DELLE DONNE NELLE PICCOLE IMPRESE ARTIGIANE:
UN NUOVO MODELLO DI FORMAZIONE
E INFORMAZIONE DEI LAVORATORI,
ALLA LUCE DEI NUOVI RISCHI
E DEL NUOVO MERCATO DEL LAVORO**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aim and Structure of the report

Youth and women experience increasing difficulties at time of entering and exiting the labour market. This situation is direct consequence of a series of factors including employment, job (activity and economic sector) and employability.

Health and safety of young people and women have been at the center of the debate for some time now. With the recent global economic crisis, the debate has become increasingly heated, since the crisis had a significant impact on labour and employment, especially on vulnerable groups.

Youth and female employment, influenced by regulatory, economic and technological developments of the last decades, is now characterised by so-called *job insecurity* in its strict sense, i.e. the actual risk of losing a job, and *job insecurity* as an individual perception, that is the feeling of a potential threat to lose a job or some important benefits deriving from it.

In this context, the progressive improvement of working conditions in the career of employees is a necessary condition to ensure they continue to work as long as possible. Some studies show that, to this purpose, reducing physical work and stress caused by excessive intensity in the organization of work and the search for a balance between work and private life could have positive effects in that respect. In addition, because of sudden and repeated changes within organisations, employees are required to make an additional effort in learning, thus making work increasingly, especially at psychological level, making them more susceptible and therefore more at risk of injury.

As pointed out above, the groups affected the most by these issues are primarily young people and women who are particularly exposed to a number of risks leading to occupational diseases and accidents at work, however, weaker groups include also older workers, disabled workers, and even foreigners.

An important tool to ensure decent jobs is education and information on health and safety in the workplace. The prevention of accidents at work requires, in fact, risks knowledge and awareness, data dissemination and dialogue between all the actors involved. In this perspective, continuous training, which can take place in a variety of ways, is therefore one of the key components to improve competitiveness, employment and social inclusion of workers.

In this context, the research proposal is to identify good practices in the field of health and safety, in order to provide businesses and workers with practical solutions to eliminate or reduce work-related risks, which have already proved successful in their practical application.

In this context, it is also important to establish a selection system to prevent access to the market for non-compliant businesses, through parameters measuring compliance with a series of elements that characterize the work organization in the company, the development of educational processes for skill enhancement as well as the implementation of contractual and organizational standards whose quality is certified through certification processes.

This report consists of four parts. First, we provide a framework with a focus on employment, employability and contracts for young people and women which contribute to the emergence of new risks to health and safety at work.

The second part focuses on the analysis of the legal framework, practices and case law regarding training in the field of health and safety in the workplace, with particular reference to young people and women.

Then the third part is dedicated to training and information, with particular attention to the analysis of learning and training methodologies, as well as requirements and skills of trainers.

The fourth and final part provides guidelines and best practices in training, for the purpose of promoting health and safety at work, which can be achieved through the reduction of risks and the improvement of working conditions. These processes have been applied in the testing carried out at 4 corporate pilot companies associated with the Confederation of small- and medium-sized companies (CONFAPI).

Issues raised and prospects

The current economic downturn in Europe led to a significant increase in the rate of youth unemployment in Italy in recent years, accounting for over 40%. In addition, future prospects in the medium term (2012-2016) are also poor, as only little improvement is expected in the near future in the labour market.

This uncertainty in the Italian system is demonstrated by the significant difference in employment rates between young people and adults, a signal of excessive protection against those who already have a job, at the expense of those who are still looking for it. The ratio between youth and adult unemployment is 4 to 1 in Italy (i.e., for every unemployed adult there are 4 unemployed young people), compared to 2.4 in the Euro area.

Youth employment has undergone a major change as compared to prior to Legislative Decree No. 368/2001 and then Legislative Decree No. 276/2003 (so-called Biagi Law). There has been an increase in hiring of youth through fixed-term contracts, accounting for 42.2% of all employment arrangements, a high percentage certainly not comparable to the levels achieved in other EU countries. Even part-time work has significantly increased among youth. Full-time permanent employment continues to decline (-105 thousand) whereas part-time has increased (+63 thousand). With regard to the underlying reasons, 51.4% of young people between 15-24 go for part-time work to continue in education, but the number of people forced to take up part-time employment as the only choice is on the increase.

The differences in youth employment rates between countries is also influenced by the gender gap: northern European countries where female employment is very high fare differently from countries, such as Italy, where women are significantly disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts (-10 percentage points compared to the European average), although the economic crisis has reduced this differential. In Italy, female employment rate has increased steadily between 1995 and 2007, partially rebalancing the gender gap: about 3 million jobs were created and almost two-thirds were taken up by women. A constant increase, yet unsatisfactory as it is still far away from the goals set out in the European strategy and still below the levels achieved by other European countries.

It should be noted that, in the context of subordinate employment, reduction in working time is mostly a preserve of women, with 20% of them who work less

than 20 hours per week. This is justified by the possibility of women (especially with young children) to reconcile work and family life. In Italy, the increase in women employment had an inverse relationship with fertility, significantly reduced. This is due, in part, by the lack of family support policies, resulting in the decision to have a child only upon achievement of some degree of security and economic stability.

Youth and female employment influenced by regulatory, economic and technological developments of the last decades, is characterised by objective and subjective job insecurity, i.e. a real possibility of losing a job, as well as the perception of a potential threat to lose employment or benefits.

Precarious work is often associated with the concept of job insecurity. The lack of training for some groups of workers, the activities carried out, which are often dangerous at irregular hours with excessive workload and with no union protection are often contributing factors altering health and safety in the workplace. In addition to well-known risks, there are also some less known risks related to the “psychological stress” caused by job insecurity. The expectation of a negative event, such as the potential loss of a job or major changes occurring at the workplace (so-called quantitative and qualitative insecurity) is in itself a source of stress.

Second, the change from a safe working environment to one perceived as unsafe can result in a change in attitudes towards work. Hence, the link between job insecurity and reduced job satisfaction. In addition, the short duration of the relationship and the reduced ability to control work mean that atypical workers do not have the time and the means to enhance their skills and abilities, nor to fit perfectly in the organizational context in which they operate, with obvious impacts on intra-company relationships, considering that atypical workers, more frequently than others, are victim of bullying at work and marginalization that keep them out of those informal information networks, useful in accident prevention.

The effects of job insecurity are not equal for all workers. Some studies link the difference between quantitative or qualitative insecurity, with the first producing, essentially, a change in the attitude towards work, and the second leading to physical complaints. Others envisage a “gender issue”: men being more sensitive to economic threats, suffering negative effects on organizational involvement, resistance to change, producing the intention to leave the workplace; in the case of women, repercussions mainly affect their performance.

In terms of job insecurity, precarious work has highlighted two major problems in Italy: first, the lack of protection and guarantees, already at the regulatory level, as young workers are most affected by the risks related to fixed-term employment contracts, second, there is an increasing risk among young people of not finding a stable job. Since flexibility in Italy was mainly characterized by the increase of “atypical contracts”, the main issue now relates to welfare, given the reduced possibility to access social security benefits provided to those who are hired under “typical” contracts of employment. To overcome this limit, it is necessary to modify the existing imbalance directed to protect workers from “old” social risks (such as old age) rather than focusing on “new” risks (unemployment, social exclusion, family responsibilities). Other problems are related to excessively long periods spent in education and the fact that information about employment opportunities takes place mostly through informal channels.

In this context, age and gender are two variables to be taken into account in classifying and identifying the effects that job insecurity can have on individuals. The research shows that younger employees with limited seniority in an organization suffer less the effect of job insecurity than their older colleagues with higher seniority. This is because the latter are generally more committed, identify themselves in their organizations and more likely to invest in their jobs and as a result are inclined to have more negative reactions to job insecurity. Regarding the effect of gender on job insecurity, conflicting studies can be found in the literature failing to clarify whether there is a significant difference in effects between women and men.

Some studies report that instability has more negative effects on women than on men, as the latter have a greater chance of finding employment as compared to women. In contrast, other studies have indicated that male workers are more sensitive to job insecurity, as they believe to be solely responsible for the economic fortunes of the family. However, a recent meta-analysis found that gender differences plays no role in determining the effects of job insecurity, the proof is the increased risk propension of women with permanent contracts, compared to those with different types of contracts.

The improvement of working conditions throughout the working life of employees is necessary to make it possible for them to continue to work as long as possible. Some studies show that a reduction in workload and stress caused by excessive intensity of work and the search for a balance between work and private life could have positive effects in that respect. In addition, because of sudden and

repeated changes within organisations employees are required to put an additional effort in learning increasing difficulties, especially at psychological level, making them more susceptible and therefore more at risk of injury.

The time series of the number of accidents in Italy follows a downward trend, in 2012 there was a reduction of about 9% compared to 2011 and of 23% compared to 2008. In a gender perspective, the decline in the number of accidents has affected men (-7%) and women (5.6%) almost equally, unlike the fatalities which have decreased mainly among men, also due to the fact that women are generally more often employed in low risk sectors, notably health and education.

Occupational hazards can be divided into three main categories. The first category includes risks to safety, that is all those risks that could lead to an accident or injury such as the impairment of an employee due to an accident with a machine. The second category is that of health risks, that is risks of a potential alteration of the biological and physical balance of workers, also known as environmental and hygiene risks. The last category includes risks associated with physical fatigue.

Particularly relevant is the concept of psychosocial risk, which, over time, has gradually expanded, extending beyond the single individual and embracing aspects related to the organizational and social context, in close relation with the broader concept of health and quality of life of the entire working community. Consequently, this concept covers all risks generated by the dynamics of a network of social relationships that may affect safety, health and well-being of the individual. These risks arise from an interaction with the environment, that is the psychosocial phenomena that exist when a group of people interact with each other. The International Labour Office (ILO) identifies psychosocial risks in terms of interaction between work environment, work organization and management with the needs and skills of workers.

Adverse events, reconnected to psychosocial risks, are all manifestations of distress that are often wrongly associated with these risks, such as stress, mobbing and burnout. In reality, psychosocial risks can be considered the cause of stress, mobbing, and burnout, rather than the effect.

When analysing the effects of psychosocial risks on workers' health and on the organisation as a whole, we need to start from the assumption that these are the cause of potential dysfunctions and not their direct effect. With a view to limit the negative consequences of work-related stress, the action should be geared

towards psychosocial risks, which constitute the source of this stress. On the other hand, to detect adverse effects on individuals, it should be considered the effects that work-related stress has on them.

In this view, psychosocial risks can also be defined as those potential social and organizational features that prevent or reduce improvements in health, safety and welfare of the people. That is why the debate on the negative effects of psychosocial risk usually refers to long term conditions, which can produce diseases or behaviours which could have a negative impact on the individual or the organizational system. Like more “traditional” risks of biological, chemical and physical nature, the effect of psychosocial factors is that of increasing the levels of stress affecting workers’ health. These effects can be of three types: the first refers to the emergence of disorders and diseases, the second relates to behavioural impact and the third refers to the psychological impact.

The negative effects of psychosocial risks concern not only the health of workers as demonstrated by previous studies, but may also affect organizational health. The same impact can be found not only on the performance of individual workers, but also on organizational performance resulting in a total cost that affects the entire organization. At the organizational level, the adverse effects reported in the literature are mainly absenteeism, high staff turnover, reduced productivity.

The literature identifies the groups of most vulnerable to psychosocial risks: older workers, migrant workers, disabled workers, female workers and young workers.

As for younger workers, it should be noted that these have a greater exposure than older workers to physical risk factors, while it was found that they are more exposed to risk factors related to the content of the work, such as working hours. As for psychological conditions in the different age groups, younger and older workers reported lower levels of stress than middle-age workers. This inverted U-shaped curvilinear relationship is interpreted as the result of higher working, financial and family pressures affecting workers between 40 and 50 years.

As for women, it was found that occupational groups have different roles or jobs compared to male colleagues. This may already lead to different psychosocial risks effects. According to the literature women generally report higher values than men in self-report measures investigating stress, anxiety and depression.

There are three possible explanations that the literature gives us to clarify this fact: a biological, a dispositional and another that refers to external factors.

The first analyses, which, however, have a low explanatory power, focus on differences between genders in hormonal and genetic levels. Second analyses, of dispositional nature, argue that women are more empathetic, have a tendency to invest more in interpersonal relationships. As for external factors, empirical evidence report that different risk profiles typically are due to the tendency for men and women to be engaged in different occupations. Finally, women, regardless of employment sector, are more vulnerable to certain psychosocial factors as work overload resulting from the increasingly frequent combination of home and work activities, from the lower power in social relations and greater experience of ill-treatment and abuse.

At the international level, the ILO has long attempted to protect and improve the health and safety of young people by adopting a number of measures, such as the 1948 Convention concerning Night Work of Women Employed in Industry, Recommendation of 1965 concerning Conditions of Employment of Young Persons Underground in Mines, Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment of 1973, which establishes the minimum age (18 years) for admission to any employment or work which by its nature could damage health, safety or morals of young workers; Recommendation concerning the protection of young seafarers in 1976, the 1999 Convention concerning the elimination of worst forms of child labour, a goal that has also been established at Community level.

With Directive No. 94/33/EC, which applies “to any person under 18 years of age having an employment contract or an employment relationship”, the EU provides that Member States shall take steps to protect young people from economic exploitation and any work likely to harm their health, physical, mental, moral safety or social development or that could jeopardize their education. At the EU level, in addition to the above mentioned Directive, but with a scope limited to child workers, in 2000 it was adopted the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, with Article 32 that reaffirms the prohibition of child labour and highlights the need for protection of young people at work. This law specifically provides also for the protection of young people against types of work likely to harm their health and safety.

With regard to women, the ILO has tackled the issue of motherhood with Convention No. 183 of 2000 on maternity protection, which indicates a wide

range of potential reproductive hazards in the workplace and which provides information on how to prevent damage and improve maternal health. Occupational health is a social issue at the heart of Community policies. Article No. 136 of the EC Treaty , now Article No. 151 of the Lisbon Treaty provides that: «The Union and the Member States, [...] have as their objectives the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions».

These policies on the regulation of the work of young people and women are among the decisive actions that, starting from the late 80s and then '90s, have been adopted in the field of health and safety. Of particular importance was the adoption of Framework Directive 89/391/EEC, providing for «the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work», that is basic provisions relating to the organization of health and safety in the workplace, the responsibilities of employers and workers, supplemented by 18 further directives.

In the light of Directive No. 89/391/EEC, the Council adopted Directive 92/85/EEC, aimed at implementing measures to improve health and safety of pregnant workers or workers who recently have given birth or are breastfeeding. With regard to the above mentioned Directives, legislative decree of 13 March 2013, No. 32, through Letter i-bis under Art. 6, paragraph 8 of Legislative Decree No. 81/2008, assigned to the Standing Consultative Commission the additional task of drawing every five years a report on their practical implementation.

Another important issue that is addressed at both Community and international level relates to *decent work*, understood as the set of aspirations that guide people in their working lives, and which include productive work and fair remuneration, safety at work, social protection for families, the prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom to organize and participate in decisions that affect their lives, and equal opportunity and equal treatment of women and men.

One of the tools used to ensure decent work is provided by training in workplace health and safety. The Framework Directive of the Council of the European Union No. 89/391/EEC covers the general principles concerning the prevention of occupational risks, the protection of safety and health, the elimination of risk and accident factors, information, consultation, participation in accordance with national laws and/or practices, training of workers and their representatives.

Since the mid -90s, the EU started to put some emphasis on the system of education and training. The European Union has continued to consider education policies a priority in its agenda, in particular the development of the education and training system in the various Member States. In addition, the efforts of Member States, as called for in the Council decision of 2010, on guidelines for employment policies, should be wide-ranging and aimed at supporting both workers with low or obsolete skills, as well as highly skilled workers, such as researchers in the further improvement of their skills and experience.

The provisions regulating information and training are not only directed towards employers, but to wide audience of recipients, including workers, managers, and supervisors. Inevitably, prevention requires knowledge and risk awareness, dissemination of data, discussion and dialogue between all the actors involved. In particular, training on workplace safety is essential to prevent and reduce occupational accidents and diseases at work. First of all, it is necessary to identify the people involved in the protection health and safety providing a clear definition of the role of the trainer.

Interministerial Decree of March 6, 2013 introduces «qualification criteria defining the role of trainers for health and safety at work». The requirements for trainers were established by the Standing Advisory Commission April 18, 2012 and will replace those established by the State-Regions Conference of 21 December 2011. According to Article 1 of the Decree of 6 March 2013, trainers qualifies if they have obtained a high-school Diploma (a safeguard clause is provided for those who already serve as trainers) and meet one of the six requirements identified in the annex to the Decree, regarding previous education, training and training experience at regulatory/ legal/organizational level in addressing technical risks as well as risks related to hygiene and sanitation, as well as experience in communication.

Trainers who do not meet the above mentioned requirements can continue their activities only if they can show that, as of March 18 2013 – the day of publication in the Official Gazette of these provisions – they met at least one of these requirements, and if they abide by the obligation to update their skills every three years as required by the decree. In addition, these requirements are not binding with regard to training courses that have already been formally approved and scheduled on the date of publication of the decree (on 18 March).

The decree will come into force twelve months after the date of publication of the notice in the Official Gazette, i.e. March 18, 2014. Article 4, paragraph 2,

specifies that for a period of twenty four months from the entry into force of the decree “employers may provide training to their workers within the framework of direct prevention and protection referred to in Article 34 of Legislative Decree No. 81/2008, in compliance with the provisions set out in Agreement of 21 December 2011. At the end of this period, employers willing to directly provide training should prove compliance with the criteria set out in the annex to the Decree of 6 March 2013.

In addition to the scarce effectiveness of training programs, one should consider that companies also have to pay for them. Most likely, this situation could be improved if more attention was devoted to the role of the trainer who is essential in the learning process. As a result, it is extremely important to assess the performance of the trainer, for training purposes.

Finally, mention should be made of the so called “information booklet”. It is a personal document that records the skills acquired during apprenticeships, access-to-work-contracts, specialized and continuous learning that took place at work and the skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. It gathers information, data and certificates relating to the experiences made in education / training, employment, social, recreational or family environment. The booklet is issued by the regions, which may delegate this task to other entities, and the worker has to update it on a regular basis.

The law provides that the Training Booklet serves as a tool to keep record, in accordance with the strategies and actions of the European Union, of the skills and mobility of people, as a sort of Italian Europass. Moreover, it implements the concept of transferability of training and serves to record all the skills, however acquired, in one place, described and/or certified in accordance with regional laws, and based on community concepts such as lifelong and lifewide learning, which emphasize the need for individuals to learn, enhance their experiences exercising their rights and professional development.

The training booklet is one of the most significant innovations of Legislative Decree No. 81/2008, and was introduced with a view to creating a system to ensure easy recording of training activities as well as of the skills acquired by workers in the field of health and safety at work. This tool, originally introduced through the State-Regions Agreement of 18 February 2000 and regulated by Ministerial decree No. 174/2001, was actually enforced only with Legislative Decree No. 276/2003 although still today it is not used at its full potential due to, above all, a complex implementation mechanism.

With regard to content, it makes it possible to point out the role of formal, non-formal or informal learning that in this way is duly valued and made clear. On a technical level, the new version prepared by the Regions can be on paper or in electronic form. It is then attached to personal and professional records of employees within the framework of the *Borsa continua nazionale del lavoro* (“National employment exchange”). It consists of two sections, one with personal details, the other providing basic, technical - professional and As mentioned, regions play a critical role as they are responsible to issue the booklet, or they can delegate third parties to do that, and may decide to organize the booklet at their own discretion, and to provide support to workers in filling it out.

Another important tool to ensure and implement proper training and information of persons exposed to risk and to safeguard their health and safety is risk assessment. Specifically, it consists in the analysis of the risks to which workers may be exposed, with a view to quantifying the probability of occurrence of a harmful event, and assessing potential severity.

In the Italian system, risk assessment must be recorded in the Risk Assessment Document (DVR), by the employer. Article No. 28 of Legislative Decree No. 81/2008, since its original version, confirmed the need to evaluate “all risks”, including those regarding “groups of workers exposed to particular risks”. The new legislation introduced by Legislative Decree No. 81/2008 conforms to the principle of equal opportunities in having predicted that the risk assessment should be required to take into account the specificities linked to gender differences, especially for issues related to fertility.

In the context of this paper, the focus is on atypical workers and young people. It is clear at the outset that the obsolete wording of the Article under examination did not automatically include workers with atypical and temporary contracts. Article 28, par. 1, added to the list of special risks, «those related to the specific type of contract concluded for the purpose of the job». As pointed out by some studies conducted by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, the recourse to these contracts may have specific implications on health and safety in the workplace. To this end, the Consolidated Law on Health and Safety shows the need to protect *work* as such, regardless of contractual arrangements, even if it is carried out only for training purposes, both paid or unpaid, except for personal service workers only.

As for young workers, according to Article 28, par. 1, of Legislative Decree No. 81 of 2008, the employer has the duty to assess all the risks related to age, drawing a distinction between adults and minors, to put in place measures to prevent them. Some restrictions, aimed at protecting them, relate to the type of work and to potential repercussion at physical and mental level, deriving from exposure to carcinogenic or radioactive substances, excessive heat or noise, other serious factors easy to detect.

The risk assessment should include also so-called “emerging risks”, i.e. those factors that are potentially harmful to health, with the following characteristics: “new” risks, that did not exist before and generated by new processes, technologies, organizational, social changes which, although already known, are perceived in a different way, “increasing” risks, in the case there is an increase in danger or in exposure or in the number of people potentially affected. In particular, emerging risks are those “related to technical innovation” and to “the interaction between chemical, physical and biological agents” and those “related to social evolutions” or to the “working environment” in general, such as ergonomic risks as well as psychological and social risks. Behind the transformation of risks there is a “change of work organization, the globalization of markets, the use of new technologies and the increase in outsourcing”.

In this context, Legislative Decree No. 81 of 2008, Consolidated Law on Health and Safety at Work, refers to the notions of “health and safety” and “prevention” at the national level which is no longer “neutral”, but which rather takes due account of the gender differences. Art. 28 is particularly meaningful in this respect, as it expressly provides that «in assessing risks, it is necessary to take into account any risks to the health and safety of workers, including those affecting specific groups of workers, such as those arising from work-related stress and those involving pregnant workers, as well as those related to gender, age, origin, type of contract under which the work is performed».

A gender approach in risk assessment is aimed at ensuring effective prevention, through a comprehensive evaluation of the risks at work, considered in the light of the characteristics of the population and without a priori generalizations.

In the risk assessment a “risk matrix” approach, the so-called intersectionality is considered to be most effective. This means that rather than focusing on individual risks, an integrated approach is adopted with the aim of developing an increasingly targeted action, tailored to the actual needs of each worker.

Differences are undeniably difficult to manage, but also a fundamental resource, if valued and managed appropriately.

The risk assessment is an effective method to increase knowledge and improve management of business processes: if the assessment takes into account also individual characteristics as well as roles and functions to which workers are best suited also in the light of gender differences, the result could be healthier and more functional, which ultimately means more efficient organizations.

Guidance, best practices and effective training methods

Health and safety at work, being by its very nature a complex multidisciplinary issue, requires not only a legal but also a pragmatic approach, with a view to proposing companies and workers easily enforceable solutions to eliminate or reduce work-related risks, bringing good results when applied in the workplace. Guidance and best practices are a very important tool for the promotion of health and safety at work, and could contribute to the reduction of risks and the improvement of working conditions.

Workplaces have changed significantly in Europe and work processes are under constant evolution. In this context, attention should be devoted to the development of specific training courses and tools to control the impact of changes and limit work-related accidents. Specifically, as mentioned earlier, new technologies, new business organizations and managing, can produce new risks linked to the increase of stress, with possible consequences on the health of workers, as well as job insecurity that often pushes people to work more, or work at a faster pace with an increase in risk potential. All these phenomena make it clear how necessary a strategy is to identify training programs and effective preventive measures for workers, which take into account to some extent of specific categories of workers, such as vulnerable workers. Among the measures to be put in place, a particular role should be played by non-binding rules such as, best practices, codes of conduct, awareness raising campaigns, information and training, also identified by the European Union as the appropriate tools to achieve the required safety standards.

The European Strategy for the 2007-2012 period aims at reducing the number of accidents in all Member States by 25%, also by adopting the above mentioned non-binding tools. Good practices, therefore, are extremely important in promoting health and safety at work through risk management and by improving

working conditions. At Community level, particularly relevant is the case of the United Kingdom at the forefront when it comes to good practices. Specifically, from April 2008, the HSE, a permanent body in charge of health and safety, has become the only body at national level responsible for the promotion of health and safety in the workplace, and has developed a procedure, in five steps, involving businesses and workers for the drafting of a risk assessment document that is adopted within the company, in addition to general rules, taking into account the specific needs of every production site.

The procedure implies a series of practical actions to protect workers from injuries, rather than being mere formal compliance and was used to develop a database of documents risk assessment, as a framework for some non-conventional productions, such as grocery stores/newsagent, hairdressers and so on. The principle that informs the activities of HSE is that each activity has its own characteristics and is different from the others, and no one better than the ones directly involved is able, if properly trained, to identify the best prevention strategies.

Even the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work monitors, collects and analyzes scientific results, statistical information and preventive measures in use in Europe to make them accessible to all the interested parties, including health and safety representatives and management staff, employers and workers, social partners and policy makers. Dissemination of good practices is a key task of the Agency with a view to developing prevention in Europe.

Good practices that have been successfully implemented at a workplace can be adapted and used elsewhere. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work identifies and collects cases of good practices according to three different approaches: a holistic approach, an approach based on models, an approach based on workplaces. The Agency, in recent years, through several calls has financed loans to promote the development of good practices, provide information, and to develop and manage training projects in the field of health and safety.

In particular, with regard to small- and medium-sized enterprises, the Agency has funded and promoted tenders and projects for the development of guidelines and best practices to prevent occupational accidents and improve training and skills development. Measures were aimed at overcoming organizational barriers and obstacles to training by providing financial support to develop forward-looking policies, by developing methods and techniques of sustainable training, that is training methods based on the specific needs of micro- and small-sized

enterprises to meet today's challenges and improve skills, if one considers that competition for qualified workers is increasing, especially as a result of demographic change. SMEs employing almost two thirds of the workforce in the private sector in the European Union, are the backbone of the European economy.

Unfortunately, the performance of small- and medium-sized enterprises in terms of safety in the workplace are not comparable to those of larger companies. Compared to these businesses with fewer than 50 employees have almost twice as much the percentage of accidents with fatalities. Since SMEs have more limited resources compared to larger enterprises, it is more difficult to give staff time off to engage in training activities, therefore, often the safety and health at work are not considered a priority, despite it is shown that safe, healthy and pleasant working conditions, not only allow to reduce the number of working days lost due to illnesses and injury, but also contribute to increase productivity.

The Agency identifies good practices and specifies the sectors, the types of risks and the categories of the workers involved. With regard to the work of women, who constitute about 58.2% of the working population in the EU, the differences from the working conditions of men are partly due to the need to reconcile work and private life.

Good practices identified by EU-OSHA are:

- Guidance provided by inspectors and others;
- Examples of case studies, in particular those assessed by a credible organization or by a different credible procedure, demonstrating a real (rather than hypothetical) intervention identified to prevent hazards in the workplace;
 - Product information (including information on physical, chemical and biological factors, for workers' protection equipment and tools used at work);
 - Standards provided by national or international organizations;
 - Checklists (e.g., recurring tasks at the workplace level);
 - Datasets (such as hazardous substances and noisy equipment);
 - Memos or notes;
 - Information on workplace training (for example, a training video for workers on manual handling of loads).

At the national level, it is well-established the importance of good practices that can influence the behavior of employers, employees and all stakeholders to ensure effective prevention and safety in the workplace through improved levels of protection in accordance with the law. Best practices can be defined as examples of successful innovation, procedures, solutions, services and processes

that are able to improve the management of health and safety in the workplace in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Good practices should be an examples of possible methods that can be developed within a workplace or organization to reduce the risks to workers' health. Legislative Decree of 9 April 2008, No. 81 has defined good practices as “technically good organizational or procedural solutions consistent with applicable law” that are adopted voluntarily and whose purpose is to promote health and safety in the workplace, through risk reduction and the improvement of working conditions.

Following an integrated approach to risk management and assessment, it is essential to improve collaboration between the various institutional actors of job security for the development of a system of prevention, aimed at reducing accidents, with particular attention to those sectors where accidents are still very frequent, as mentioned at the letter n) of the Enabling Act No. 123 of 2007. In this context, the Regions, together with INAIL, ISPEL and joint bodies, are called to play an important role in processing, collecting and disseminating of good practice, because these are consistent with current laws and meet valid and innovative criteria. The aim is to meet the real needs of businesses, especially of small and medium size, through the provision of an integrated prevention system beneficial for all those involved in the management of health and safety in the workplace.

The dissemination of good practices has positive effects on prevention measures as implemented by companies through a reduction of occupational accidents, diseases and related social costs, increasing awareness on safety issues. The organization and circulation of best practices, useful to encourage the promotion and protection of health and safety at work, can and must be done through the national IT system for the prevention (SINP). With regard to the validation of good practices relating in whole or in part to gender differences, it is important to consider the document of the Permanent Advisory Commission for Health and Safety at Work on 21 September 2011, which provides guidance on how to fill in the validation document, pursuant to art. 6, paragraph 8, letter d) of the Legislative Decree No. 81/08. From a gender perspective, attention is now devoted to the heavy workload on women in terms family responsibilities, the greatest number of injuries to women, ie those that occur while going to work, as well as work-related stress.

Several companies have adopted measures, which, although not closely related to health and safety at work, affect anyway the “well-being” of workers, and then their health. These measures are specifically aimed at the protection of

women's work and of special needs of working women. The basic strategy of each business intervention is based on the recognition of the competitive advantage lying in investment in work-life balance, starting from the assumption that work-life balance is not only a necessity, but above all an opportunity for workers and companies.

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There are many types of funded actions, also laid down in the Budget Law for 2007 (Law of 27 December 2006, No. 296), such as temporary part-time, teleworking, working at home, the bank of hours, flexitime, shift work and changes in location and so on. It is clear that good practices in this field, though initially introduced with a view to promoting and facilitating female employment, are now intended for both women and men and they can also have a positive impact on young people, as they imply a greater well-being at work (giving them the possibility to finish university or getting a family), effectively reducing exposure to certain work-related risks, such as those related to stress.

Generally, work-life balance cannot be solved only through regulatory action, as it needs continuous experimentation, studies and monitoring activities with a view to adopting a whole series of positive actions and best practices on the part of public and private companies, social partners and labor market operators. In Italy, the cornerstone legislation in this area is Law of 8 March 2000, No. 53, which, in addition to introducing parental leave encouraging greater involvement of fathers in child care, has attracted the attention of regions and local authorities on the importance of reorganizing time schedules in cities.

The purpose of legislative intervention was to focus on forms of flexibility to strike a balance between private life and working life to enable parents a better distribution of childcare responsibilities with the aim to introduce new ways to

organize and manage working time. Family-friendly companies have also increasingly provided services to support parents in this respect. The law addresses the issue of work-life balance, promoting a threefold action: cultural policies to reorganize time schedules in cities (by calling upon local institutions that have to play an essential role in contributing to improving time management for individuals and families), policies at company level, as well as the mobilization of social partners directed at promoting the introduction of positive actions to improve work-life balance.

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The development and promotion of good practices in the prevention of risks for young workers is becoming increasingly widespread.

At the European level, in addition to the regulatory measures aimed at improving work and workplaces, Member States are defining and implementing new policies in the field of education and vocational training. The report presents successful actions carried out to prevent risks for young workers. Many of these cases involve training and mentoring and it is important to emphasize the fact that training took place within organizations that have an effective OSH management system to prevent the exposure of young workers to hazards. Training is only a part of their OSH management system.

Participation in the project on the part of other workers is fundamental, couple with cooperation with stakeholders such as educational institutions, labor inspectors and trade unions. Case studies in the workplace also indicate the potential benefits of an investment in young workers: training in OSH not only helps develop the skills of young workers themselves, but can also increase the perception of risks related to OSH for all workers. Several good practices aim at raising awareness in students while still in education in order to ensure that each student is informed and trained about risks, so that every young person entering the labour market is informed on safety and health in the workplace.

Education on OSH, along with training, aim at preparing young people for work. It is important that before starting working, young people receive effective training in the field of OSH, devoting to it the right amount of time to gather

information on common and specific work-related hazards. Workers need to know protection measures, the procedure to follow when they operate in an unsafe environment, the people they can contact when they need advice, what to do in case of an emergency, accident, or in cases where first aid is required, as well as their responsibilities in working with the employer on safety issues.

Labor relations and collective bargaining, in the field of health and safety at work, are more participatory rather than conflictual than in the past, performing monitoring functions regarding the application of protection standards, becoming the ones promoting prevention from a practical point of view. The consolidated law on Health and Safety explicitly rely (also) on collective bargaining to identify effective health and safety procedures, including the development and dissemination of good practices. In recent years some agreements have been concluded in this respect, also with the participation of local institutions, especially in production sites where health and safety risks are very high.

Effective training on health and safety for workers: company cases

In recent years work-related accident prevention in Italy has had a considerable media coverage for its great impact at ethical and economic level, as well as for the consequences it can have on the image and social reputation of companies. However, the issue is not always dealt with appropriately when it comes to putting in place projects and activities in the field of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and sustainable development. Drawing on an educational initiative developed in Italy by a large company, some conclusions can be taken on the role of corporate social responsibility policies in the field of education, information and risk prevention. So far, in our system, references to so-called good practices, frequent in European countries, were contained only in some regional laws. However good practices were not defined nor a special procedure for their validation was provided until the introduction of Legislative Decree No. 81 of 2008 which provides a definition of the notion of good practices.

The principles contained in collective bargaining on the prevention measures to be taken at the workplace are weak, being for the most part mere repetitions of the provisions of law, making no reference to good practices. This does not mean, however, that collective bargaining does not play a “decisive role”. Even though, collective bargaining does not directly deal with the protection of health and safety, but rather with issues related to the organization of work (such as working

time), safety is a value in itself, rather than a technical matter, and therefore a cross-cutting issue.

In our system, it is very difficult at the local level to find examples of good practices or corporate conduct. Some regional laws, however, contain references to good practices among the measures for health and safety at the workplace. In this connection, mention should be made of the Liguria Regional Law of 13 August 2007, No. 30, where it is clear that the region will promote and support initiatives for risk prevention and improvement of working conditions and, in addition, provides for the identification and dissemination of good practices transferable to the national level (Art. 8). Good practices, voluntarily adopted by employers should strive “to achieve a level of protection higher than the one required by law”; the purpose of these practices can be the regularity and stability of labor relations, equal opportunities between men and women, vocational skills of workers and employees, as well as “physical and mental health”, integration of workers, particularly with regard to those who are disadvantaged (Art. 12). Also information actions and advertising campaigns are required, with a view to promoting the adoption of best practices by companies, organizations, public and private institutions.

An interesting example of a company, which over the years adopted measures to protect the health and safety of workers, is GD S.p.A. from Bologna. From 2003 onwards, it has introduced several initiatives which could qualify as best practices. Among these, mention should be made of the “Safety Week”, understood as an opportunity to gain greater awareness in the matter, serving as an “opportunity to raise awareness on daily behaviour that may cause risks for health”.

In order to constantly improve working conditions and ensure a safe and comfortable working environment, during the 2003 “Safety week” a series of encounters and initiatives were organized, such as classroom training, including the analysis of a company case, of solutions of technical, organizational and procedural nature to reduce the number of accidents, round tables, sweepstakes, designed to measure the knowledge in the field of safety at work in the form of competition, suggestion boxes, and, finally, the so-called “open day” giving workers and their families the opportunities to go around the workplace and get to know the company better.

New initiatives include also the setting up of quarterly meetings on health and safety, providing an analysis of accidents, taking stock of improvements,

monitoring the effectiveness of the action taken, discussing suggestions. Moreover, a number of information boards were provided displaying information on risks, most frequent accidents, as well as constant updates on accidents rates in the various departments.

Given that security depends largely on the ability to raise awareness in all workers on prevention issues, GD S.p.A continued in this campaign introducing a new campaign: the Security project which was developed over a four-year period (2007-2010). Among the initiatives undertaken within this framework, mention should be made of the development of a movie about the company focusing on health and safety management procedures produced by professional filmmakers, with the aim to raise workers' awareness on the importance of adopting appropriate behaviour to improve safety at work; the so-called "Safety Calendar", with illustrations that address various issues related to the prevention of risks; the company theater, with the direct involvements of workers as actors or directors of a play focused on the stigmatization of behavior detrimental to safety.

The main focus was on personal protective equipment, "preventive health care" (2007), hazardous substances, handling of loads (2008), ergonomics, safety in reaching the workplace (2009), first aid, work equipment, fire prevention (2010). The literature provides for several case studies that describe various on-the-job training initiatives dealing with specific sectors or specific trades.

A sector where training and continuous skills upgrading is valued considerably is aviation. The aviation industry has long recognized the incidence of human error in accidents, and has designed effective training programs that make it possible to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the flight crews and reduce errors.

The qualification of business and training as a criterion for the selection of companies and self-employed workers on the market

As anticipated, the outlined changes that have occurred in the labor market and in organizational models, the emergence of new problems related to health and safety in the workplace, have opened the way to new challenges in the field of prevention.

Regulatory developments that occurred over time, particularly in recent years, in terms of health and safety at work have imposed a review of the relationship

between health and safety and the organization of work in two directions. On the one hand, the “organization of work versus safety”, in the most traditional sense, considering work organisation as a potential risk factor, and on the other the “organization of work for safety” as an essential element in procedural terms, for the effective implementation of the policies and practices of prevention in the company.

Finally, with Legislative Decree No. 81/2008, the prevention system in the company is closely linked to the overall corporate organizational model and all the actors, skills, controls, functions, responsibilities, sanctions must be taken into account in the organizational structure, and have to respond to efficiency and effectiveness criteria.

A system for the qualification of businesses and self-employed workers was developed to this purpose

This role was attributed to the permanent advisory committee for health and safety at work, required to identify areas and criteria for the development of the qualification system referred to in Article 27 of the Consolidated Law.

The Commission, in outlining mandatory and preferential cross-sectoral requirements, to obtain the qualification, expressly includes among preferential criteria the certification of employment contracts.

The inclusion of the certification among qualification criteria is aimed at ensuring a distinctive position in the market of the companies that make use of standard and certified contractual and organizational standard, enjoying an increasing competitive advantage, as well as reduction of sanctions in the case of violations and benefits.

The adoption of certain organizational models and security management procedures becomes a parameter against which to value the practices adopted by the different companies, providing for a “natural selection” among market operators.

There is no doubt that the main goal underlying the adoption of a “qualification system” is to identify protection measures that go beyond the Consolidated Law, especially in sectors most at risk, with the goal of reducing accidents.

Field research and case studies

Drawing on the phenomenological, regulatory, contractual and organizational framework of small- and medium-sized companies, a field research was carried out and 4 “pilot companies” were identified and taken as case studies, associated with Confapi which is the Confederation of small- and medium-sized private businesses.

In particular, in these companies, the analysis was aimed investigating how accidents and occupational diseases are effectively dealt with through education and training.

These businesses represent a model in terms of both health and safety standards as well as organizational standards.

This provided an opportunity to take stock of good practices and targeted training programs - aimed at those categories of workers analysed in the present research - which have been adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of the companies concerned.

This experimentation was welcomed both by the boards of the companies involved as well as by the people who have received training. As for results, the project is still in an experimental phase and is still under assessment. However, it could already be stated that the model adopted and the training activities provided have been able to raise awareness on the topic providing an example of best practice that could be transferred to other workplaces.