

Quality of employment in the Catalan industry

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training

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QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE CATALAN INDUSTRY

REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years there has been a certain recovery of employment coinciding with the economic growth. However, there are doubts about the quality of employment that is being created. Historically, quality of employment in Spain and, by extension, in Catalonia has been low in comparison with other European countries, although quality of employment in industry is higher with respect to other sectors. Therefore, the motivation of this study lies in studying one of the economic driving sectors as regards quality of employment, which, at the same time, has been one of the most affected ones by the economic crisis.

Quality of employment is multidimensional, which complicates its measurement and forces us to study different aspects which are not easily gauged. Likewise, the sources of information to analyze it at the State level are scarce and even more when one tries to bring near the quality of employment of certain branches of activity for Catalonia. As a result, the sample problems of the different studied databases have been a constant of the study and they have conditioned the chosen approach to the quality of employment in industry. In these circumstances, the choice has been to study salaries, temporality, work time, conciliation, training, representation and participation of workers, physical factors, psychosocial and organizational conditions and risks in safety. Some of these aspects have also been studied from the statistical sheets of twenty-two sectoral agreements. Even so, in many cases, the little sample available, both in databases and collective agreements, makes it advisable to treat the results with caution.

One of the main problems regarding quality of employment in Spain is labour instability, which results in a high unemployment rate and can cause long periods of workers' unemployment. Thus, the loss of working population during the recession which begun in 2008 was more intense in industry than in the whole of the economy. In contrast, during the subsequent recovery started in 2014, job creation has been more moderate in industry than in other activities. This evolution has meant that the registered unemployment rate in Catalonia is similar in industry and in the economy as a whole.

In proportion, the industrial sector has destroyed a greater number of jobs during the crisis. On the other hand, it has kept better the wages per worked hour and the number of worked hours of the population that has remained occupied. This means that, in these two items, industry stays above the average. The maintenance of the number of worked hours per week is a consequence of the largest population percentage that does a 40-hour week. In this sense, the rate of part-time work has historically been low in industry, in comparison with the whole of economic activities. Likewise, it has increased less in industrial activities than in the aggregate of the economy in recent years.

The temporality rate has always been lower in industry than in the set of economic activity sectors, although differences have been slightly reduced since 2008. However, the weight of temporary contracts signed in industry exceeds that of the whole economy, which could indicate a high turnover. In the same way, a more customary hiring of workers through temporary employment agencies in industry is observed. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the number of necessary contracts to create a job is higher in industry than in the whole of economy.

Regarding training, on the one hand there is a mismatch between workers training and the demand for qualifications in industry. On the other hand, among the industry staff there is a percentage of people with studies of first stage secondary education or lower over the average; there is also an apparent self-perceived overqualification for the development of tasks in the workplace. Likewise, the percentage of working population that is having training has been reduced in recent years, both in industry and in the aggregate of sectors. This last fact contrasts with the evolution in most European countries, where the percentage of workers that are trained has grown over the last decade.

One of the problems with regard to the quality of employment in Spain is the mismatch between workplace demands and resources to carry them out, which derives in stress. The industry results in Catalonia regarding this dimension are ambiguous. For example, in industry there seems to be a greater capacity to stop and pause, and the emotional demands that the workplace require are smaller. Anyway, sector

workers perceive that they are working at a high speed, with tight deadlines, with insufficient time, little autonomy, and that social support is lower than in other activities.

Self-perception of the risks for health and occupational safety in industry is higher than in the aggregate of sectors, especially with regard to physical, chemical and biological risks. In the same way, the industrial sector presents figures of accidents and occupational diseases (especially those derived from physical agents) above the average.

The composition of the working population in each branch of activity is important to better understand the differences in the quality of employment, since the problems of each group vary. Thus, the weight of women in industry is low and so is, to a lesser extent, the weight of young people and people of foreign nationality. In this regard, the singularity of food and textiles is remarkable in relation to the composition of the working population, where women's weight is close to the average of the economy, that of the foreign nationality population exceeds it and the weight of the population with first stage secondary education or lower is high.

The study shows that there are industrial branches that stand out to have, apparently, a better quality of employment. It would be the case of energy, chemistry and rubber, and machinery and electrical equipment. Instead, there may be industrial branches with a lower quality of employment. This is the case of food and textiles, graphic arts, water and waste. These are at the bottom of industry in some, or many, of the treated aspects: lower wages per worked hour, higher rates of temporality, part-time work, etc.

Both industrial branches with a high quality of employment and those having a seemingly low quality in this study coincide with what other reports point to regarding quality of employment from a sectorial point of view in Europe . That is to say, the problem does not seem exclusively Catalan, but rather sectorial at European level.