

Towards New Work Paradigms: Inclusion, Digital, Sustainability, Hybrid Organisations

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This study analyses the impact of pandemic on new work organisation with a focus on digital platforms and infrastructures in companies and organisations. In this context, the relationship between technological change and work is central, to be observed from various points of view and not only in terms of quantity and quality of employment but also in terms of skills, training, industrial relations, collective bargaining, and newly-organising work. The impact on the labour market is important. The company of the future moves in the wake of a new economic model in which there is a newfound responsibility towards the environment and people, both of whom are once again central to the production process. On this point, the role of national and decentralised collective bargaining is central, and can affect the assessment of workers' skills in a twofold direction: On the one hand, the introduction and implementation of remuneration systems, in terms of rewards and incentives, based on a certification of skills and related to the professionalism expressed by the individual employee; On the other, the agreement of direct and structural interventions on the personnel classification system. In this context, the issue of valorising talent is becoming increasingly central also for companies. The organisational change of processes and "era", as illustrated in this work, which redesigns relationships within the company with a view to greater involvement and empowerment of the worker, requires companies to review and rethink well-being as well as corporate benefits. The changes that organisations must prepare, in light of innovation, however, require investments to deal with the reforms envisaged by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan which impact on the economic and social system of Italy. The measures envisaged by the PNRR are urgent and structural and will have to guarantee the implementation and maximise the impact of the planned investments, to encourage the restart of the Italian system, noting that the impacts deriving from the implementation of the measures contained in the Plan have been assessed in terms of GDP up to +3.6% in 2026. In this process, the Competence Centres will always assume a crucial role, becoming protagonists at European level. These are benchmarks of excellence created to carry out guidance, training and innovative projects that can be of help to Italian companies.

Keywords: *Labour market; Collective bargaining and industrial relations; Gender equality; Inclusion and welfare; Development plans; Transition.*

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Introduction

Scenario and Problem Location

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an important impact on national economies both in economic-financial, social and employment terms, and in health. If on the one hand, in the first instance, it has been a destructive factor for businesses - which have had to turn towards new organisational models - on the other hand it has also represented an element that has accelerated organisational and cultural change by stimulating innovation and generating opportunities.

There have undoubtedly been some organisational difficulties (for companies) in approaching the new work organisation. However, the potential linked to the combination of work and technology has also come to light, both in the direction of creating new market sectors and in implementing hybrid models of work organisation, considering the pervasiveness of new technologies even in conventional ways of working.

The confinement and lockdown measures introduced during the pandemic have accelerated the digitisation of processes.

Digital transformation in itself has had a significant influence on the global economy. In fact, over the years even before the pandemic, the spread of the internet, the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the use of Big Data have progressively transformed working models, business organisation and production processes, in both the industrial and service sectors.

However, there remains the need to create an agile and resilient organisation through digital transformation, which can accompany the processes and strategies for building and sharing value and success, noting that this (digital) transformation represents the greatest social and corporate change since the days of the industrial revolution.

The impact is significant both on business models, which allow products and services to be generated, and on the structure of organisations, which must move from a rigid and fixed set of services and infrastructures to much leaner and more flexible ones. Connectivity is made precisely with the characteristic of being extensible, providing concrete and true flexibility of processes.

In this scenario, the use of digital platforms and infrastructures in companies allows organisations to evolve towards "cloud-like" models (which, according to the dominant doctrine, are fundamental for a successful "digital-first" strategy), the only ones capable of managing the heterogeneity of hybrid environments.

The world of business and work is part of this process. Their dynamics are intertwined not only with the digital transition, but also with other phenomena of change, such as inclusion, sustainability, hybridisation of organisations, which all drive us to rethink work models and review the skills needed to remain part of the production process.

We are in the transition phase called Industry 4.0 which is characterised by two conflicting aspects: the creation of opportunities associated with the generation of new wealth, the satisfaction of new needs, together with the greater

efficiency of production processes, which pass through process innovations; a challenge to sustainability of our social and economic systems.

On this point, already in 2014 when we were facing the "transition", the economists Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee¹ stated that "[...] the rapid and growing digitisation risks producing a profound destabilisation of the economies and this will depend on the fact that, as computers become more powerful, businesses will have less and less need for large categories of workers. The technological transformations underway risk leaving behind a large number of people. As we highlight, there has never been a better time to be workers equipped with high skills and adapted to the changes taking place, since these workers will be able to take advantage of the opportunities inherent in new technologies. However, there has never been a worse time for those with traditional skills as computers, robots and other digital technologies are acquiring these skills with extraordinary rapidity [...]"

It follows, therefore, that technological innovation also brings with it profound changes in the world of work, which necessarily traverse reskilling and upskilling paths to avoid an increase in unemployment.

Alongside the digital transition, the issue of sustainability of the environment, businesses and production processes is central to the international debate.

The first objective of sustainable development is to preserve the planet and humanity, safeguarding well-being also for the benefit of future generations. In fact, society is showing the limits of both the economic system and the social and inclusion arrangements. To overcome them, transitions are needed (and are underway), in the direction of ever greater economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

As reiterated by the UN we are in an important decade called the "Decade of Action" in which it is essential to outline a sustainability scenario valid for over nine and a half billion people by 2050²; all in a context of continuous and rapid evolution of scientific and technological research in which innovations require not only political support but also suitable and effective governance and financial instrumentation.

The Council of the European Union of 22 June 2021 stated in "A comprehensive approach to accelerate the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - Building back better after the COVID-19 crisis", as well as highlighting the need for an innovative and decisive common action in order to align investments towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, approved the definition of structural reforms. The Council also recalled the fundamental importance of other instruments adopted by the Commission such as the European Agenda for skills and the related Pact for Skills³.

¹Brynjolfsson & McAfee (2014).

²ASviS (2021).

³See European Parliament and of the Council, 2014, Directive MiFID II; European Parliament and of the Council, 2016, Directive IDD; European Parliament and of the Council, 2014, Directive UCITS; European Parliament and of the Council, 2011, Directive AIFMD; European Parliament and of the Council, 2009, Solvency II.

The theme of sustainability and sustainable development were introduced in 1987 in the Brundtland Report (Our Common Future), after the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) established the World Commission on the Environment and Development, and the Report stated that: The environment and development are not separate challenges; they are inexorably linked. Development cannot exist based on deteriorated environmental resources; the environment cannot be protected when growth does not take into account the costs of environmental destruction. These problems cannot be addressed in isolation from fragmented institutions and policies. They are connected in a complex system of cause and effect.⁴ The result was a concept of sustainable development understood as satisfying the needs of present generations without compromising those of future generations, articulated in the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

It is on these three pillars that the UN has based the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, an action program for sustainable development signed in 2015 by 193 countries. In this scenario, industrial organisations, as essential stakeholders for global sustainable development, must move towards a new paradigm that emphasises the creation of sustainable value;⁵ which is why they must focus not only on the economic-financial impacts but also on the social and environmental ones.

The model developed by John Elkington in 1994 is called the Triple Bottom Line (TBL or 3BL) and is divided into three keywords "people, profit and planet" which must represent points of reference for companies to promote sustainable development.

Furthermore, in the documentary "The Third Industrial Revolution: A Radical New Sharing Economy" (February 2018), Rifkin analyses precisely the aspects related to sustainability and the role of the new generations, which are central to the future of country systems; a new economic model which, starting from tackling the problems related to poverty and fair work to climate change, aims to create a new pillar called the Pact for the Third Economy, in a general scenario in which technology dominates.

Findings/Results

Business Transformations: Inclusion and the Driving Force of the European Commission

The transformations of the economic system together with the digitisation and innovation of production processes today are keeping inclusion in mind.

Becchetti speaks of a civil economy «which breaks with the paradigms of the so-called shareholder model, i.e. the one where the company pursues profit for itself and its shareholders, in favor of a stakeholder model, where the benefits must

⁴See Our Common Future, 1987, at 32.

⁵Stock, Obenaus, Kunz & Kohl (2018).

be extended to all bearers of interest. It is precisely these stakeholders (citizens, businesses and the State) who take on a more active role in this new economic model, centred on the issues of sustainability and inclusion»⁶.

While on the sustainability front the advent of these models brings with it the need to streamline the reporting and certification mechanisms (of sustainability) of companies, on the inclusion front many steps forward have been made so far with more to come.

A great impetus over the years has been given by the European Commission which has adopted various policies to strengthen Europe's commitment to equality, starting with the Gender Equality Strategy up to a Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁷, an Action Plan against racism, an EU Strategic Framework for Roma and the Strategy for the rights of LGBTIQ people.

The European Pillar of Social Rights⁸ establishes 20 fundamental principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets, structured around the three chapters: equal opportunities and access to the market; fair working conditions; social protection and inclusion.

The proposals and actions put in place by the European Commission imply the support of both the States and the social partners and civil society to fully achieve, by 2030, the objectives set in the sectors of employment, skills and social protection.

Companies are an active part of this process. Indeed, the connection between engagement, diversity and inclusion is one of the imperatives of large companies.

Inclusion takes the form of all those strategies that envisage including collaborators within the company workforce, enhancing them with training courses dedicated to professional development.

Corporate inclusion policies that represent opportunities to bring out individual value, are otherwise also a way to attract and retain talent as part of recruiting strategies.

In the international scenario, therefore, inclusion becomes a real organisational lever, acknowledging that in the era of globalisation, managing diversity is not only a theme linked to sustainability or equal opportunities. Managing diversity also represents a strategic theme for companies to pay close attention to, especially by stakeholder management.

⁶ESG WORLD (2021).

⁷European Commission 2021. *Union of equality: Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030*.

⁸European Commission 2021. *The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. The Action Plan sets out concrete initiatives to turn the European Pillar of Social Rights into reality. It proposes headline targets for the EU by 2030*.

Discussion

The New Paradigm of Work in the "Transition" of Organisations

As previously stated, the digital transition, which is the matrix of all transitions, has had a strong impact on the work world and its organisation. However, the social costs of both the digital and energy transitions in terms of professionals who need to be re-trained to build new professional skills are important to bear in mind.

In this context, the relationship between technological change and work is central, to be observed from various points of view and not only in terms of quantity and quality of employment but also in terms of skills, training, industrial relations, collective bargaining, and new organisation of work.

It follows that over time «The perimeter of production processes will tend to widen, making the distinction between the parent company and suppliers, between manufacturing and ancillary services, between the performance of codified and programmed operations over time and the supply of spot and on-demand services increasingly rarefied, between tasks carried out by contractual workers and recognisable within a specific production context and self-contractors who relate to multiple organisations at the same time. In other words, it is an unprecedented expansion of the concept of flexibility whose implications on the economic and social organisation and, in particular, on working conditions it is not yet possible to fully foresee»⁹.

On the one hand, the enabling Industry 4.0 technologies, as defined by the European Community, of Advanced Manufacturing and the Internet of Things¹⁰ tend towards process optimisation and just-in-time production, considerably increasing the possibility "to customise" the products. On the other hand, the combination of technologies such as Big Data and innovations in the robotics sector make it possible to replace highly complex human tasks in a process of change/adaptation of tasks in what is known as the "economy of digital platforms", those that Farrell and Greig¹¹ distinguish between capital platforms and labour platforms, according to the model shown below.

⁹Guarascio & Sacchi (2017).

¹⁰It means the application of components and technological devices inserted inside physical objects in order to make them "intelligent" and able to communicate and interact with each other and with the surrounding world, through the Internet and thanks to a standardised language.

¹¹Farrell & Greig (2016).

The Platform Economy



Source: D. FARRELL, F. GREIG, *Paychecks, Paydays, and the Online Platform Economy*. *Big Data on Income Volatility*, JP Morgan Chase & Co, 2016

The process described, in which it is necessary and fundamental to activate training courses to re-qualify skills, notes that the platforms expose us to competitive pressure which pose problems regarding the safeguarding of employment and the income levels of the employees.

From other points of view, however, the opportunities that emerge from the platform economy should also be highlighted, such as the possibility of carrying out tasks freely, thus being able to benefit from additional income quotas - for individuals employed in other occupations ¹² - as well as the opportunities deriving from the diffusion of self-entrepreneurship.

The Impact on the Labour Market: The Company of the Future within a New Economic Model and the Centrality of the Person

The adoption of technologies represents a part of the transition projects which, however, must be accompanied by a reorganisation of production and decision-making processes. Therefore, the digital transition must be supported by specific policies that allow the utilization of the potential that the new systems can offer. Industrial policies must encourage companies to develop enabling technologies for the transition, while they must also allow the application and integration of such within one's own production system with the aim of maximizing.¹³

The company of the future is shifting in the wake of a new economic model in which there is a newfound responsibility towards the environment and people, who are once again central to the production process.

One aspect to be carefully evaluated is the need to ensure that the algorithms, often used for the management of companies and personnel in the company, are person-centred in order to promote a sustainable and inclusive society, as also reaffirmed in the G20 of Ministers of Research of the Countries of 6 August 2021, in which international organisations such as the OECD and UNESCO also took

¹²Berg (2016) at 74.

¹³Labartino et al. (2019).

part. It concluded by adopting a "Joint declaration on the enhancement of research, higher education and digitisation for a strong, sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery."¹⁴ On this point, and on the subject of skills, the States have undertaken to "promote technological development centred on the person, increasing access to research and higher education for all," addressing the "digital divide" and mitigating "the safety risks in digital environments in an inclusive and fair way." Hence the need to have neutral and transparent algorithms in order to avoid discrimination (direct or indirect) of workers.

Pope Francis has also spoken several times on the centrality of the person in the workplace and in the economic system, for whom it is "important to work together to build the common good and a new humanism of work, to promote work that respects the dignity of the person who does not only look at the profit or production needs but promotes a dignified life knowing that the good of people and the good of the company go hand in hand"¹⁵ in a more inclusive economy marked by ethics.

A concept taken up by the Holy Father also, more recently, on the occasion of the international conference "Development Lines of the Global Educational Pact" on 1 June 2022: "Above all, the centrality of the person. Leaving from Troy, Aeneas does not bring goods, things with him - apart from the Penate idols - but only the father and the son. The roots and the future, the promises. This reminds us that in every educational process we must always put people at the centre and focus on the essentials, everything else is secondary. But never leave your roots and hope for the future."¹⁶

In the wake of an economy based on sustainability and on the individual, the doctrinal thread of the aforementioned Third Economy is placed in a path that aims at the "humanisation" of the economy and of the different and sustainable development models. This is also widely taken up by Catholic social doctrine both in Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium" of 2013 and in the encyclical "Laudato Si on the care of the common home" of 2015. That does not neglect the relationship between ethics and social responsibility of the entrepreneur and places the person at the centre¹⁷.

It follows that the starting point is precisely the centrality of the person and his/her care, in this case that of young people, who will have to live and manage the evolution of society oriented towards a model of sustainability of the economic system, in the light of themes of the 2030 Agenda. "The central role of the person as an engine of innovation and development, both in the valorisation of human resources in production areas, and in the attention to the needs of citizens, whether they are workers, consumers, users of services, savers or taxpayers, a central theme of the current debate as well as the warning that also comes from the encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI." The key word is "human capital."¹⁸

¹⁴Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca (2021).

¹⁵Gentili (2018).

¹⁶Saluto del Santo Padre Francesco (2022).

¹⁷Caragnano & Di Piazza (2020).

¹⁸Caragnano (2011).

Human Resource Evaluation and Development Plans: Outline of the Role of Collective Bargaining and Industrial Relations

In the enterprise of the future based on the outlined new economic model, the first question that must be asked is how to set up the evaluation, development and training plans of the enterprises in a manner consistent with the organisational strategy, putting people at the centre in a process of transformation, in compliance with the contractual prerogatives. It is important to consider and analyse the issue of skills assessment and certification ¹⁹ which cannot be separated from that of personnel classification systems.

On this point, the role of national and decentralised collective bargaining is central. It is capable of affecting the assessment of workers' skills in a twofold direction: The introduction and implementation of remuneration systems, in terms of rewards and incentives, based on a certification of skills and related to the professionalism expressed by the individual employee; The agreement of direct and structural interventions on the personnel classification system.

To give some concrete examples, management and trade union representatives could implement promotional remuneration systems linked to the assessment of the skills expressed by the workers, thus allowing company bargaining to enhance not only employee duties but also the quality of work performance, in a path that would unite the certification processes with the economic valorisation of professionalism with a red thread.

As far as more direct interventions are concerned, however, collective bargaining can intervene with adaptive interventions on personnel qualification systems through the creation of new professional levels and profiles. This would contribute to enriching the job description of the national collective agreement, as well as providing greater proceduralisation of level passages.

From this follows the centrality of personnel training which represents the piece of an organisational model towards which we tend. This is oriented towards accountability, enhancement and retention.

In this direction, during the pandemic, the New Skills Fund was envisaged and activated at a national level, introduced by the Relaunch Decree (law decree 34/2020) - and refinanced with resources more than doubled by the August Decree (n.104/2020) and from the European Social Fund which financed the training hours to which the company, in agreement with the trade union representatives, allocates its workers for some portions of their working hours. Overall, the Fund represented the link between reorganisation processes and the development of workers' skills.

¹⁹The issue of skills and their certification - which saw the first organic provision in 2013 with the legislative decree 16 January 2013, n. 13, "Definition of the general rules and essential performance levels for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and of the minimum service standards of the national skills certification system" up to the Guidelines that make the national system operational certification of skills (Decree of 5 January 2021, published in the Official Gazette No. 13 of 18 January 2021) - returns to being central in the light of the new scenario induced by COVID with the increase in digital skills, as key skills in the new global scenario.

The art. 24 of the Law Decree n. 17/2022, known as the Energy Decree (converted into Law No. 34 of 27 April 2022) extended the possibilities of using the New Skills Fund intended to support employers for the retraining of employees²⁰. On 14 September 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies signed the implementing decree, which is now awaiting approval of the Ministry of the Economy, with an expected investment of one billion.

Above all, the theme of industrial relations and the role of the social partners within the dynamics of the labour market in the companies of the future remain in the background. It follows that we are witnessing a renewal of industrial relations models called upon to accompany the transitions we are experiencing (digital and economic). This is also a topic of discussion that requires attention through an expansion of the perimeter of action and tools of labour representation.

If skills are expanded, then new social and health risks also emerge. These impact on the discipline of the employment relationship by intervening directly or indirectly on the regulation of work.

As has been highlighted in some recent international studies,²¹ the integration of labour law in the discourse on "sustainability" implies the enhancement of a relational approach to labour law. In this innovative vision, the worker is the bearer of interests that go beyond those traditionally protected and that are also placed in the ecological and social sphere. This implies going beyond a vision of the worker as an individual (which is also expressed in the collective dimension where the collective interest is restricted to the sphere of relations between the worker and the company) to embrace the perspective of protecting the worker as a person involved in relations.

In this case we are witnessing a paradigm shift that has effects on the organisation and regulation of the labour markets, in the dynamics of meeting supply and demand (of work), on the industrial relations system and, moreover, on collective bargaining and on the regulation of contractual frameworks.

The Challenges of the Future of Organisations

The business transformation process both internal and external to the company - strongly accelerated by the global pandemic and which is placed in the sphere of stakeholder management - and the new sustainability policies offer great opportunities. However, unknown factors that impact corporate organisations at every level and require new management models are arising.

This level of organisational complexity poses a challenge - above all - of new skills in a constantly evolving social context.

²⁰In detail, not only companies damaged by the consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic and those interested in the ecological and digital transition (DL 146 2021) can apply, but also employers who: a) have signed development agreements for strategic investment projects, pursuant to art. 43 of Legislative Decree 25.6.2008 n. 112, conv. Law 6.8.2008 n. 133; b) have recourse to the Fund to support industrial transition pursuant to art. 1 co. 478 of Law 30.12.2021 n. 234 (2022 budget law).

²¹Novitz (2020).

Fully aware of what theorists and scholars call “transitional labour markets” according to the definition given by Schmid in 2011²² and in a context in which the paradigm of labour market law is changing, from the theory of capabilities to that of transitional labour markets, these pose reflections and open up new scenarios and perspectives also in the context of legal reflection on the transformation of work.

In such a changing scenario, the winning organisation, as mentioned, is the one that is based on the enhancement of human capital. Following are the central issues of how to retain talent and rethink the concept of corporate wellbeing while also solving the gender gap in open innovation companies.

Retaining Talent in the Company: Some Good Practices

The post-pandemic period is considered worldwide as an era of Great Resignation - or Big Quit or Great Reshuffle or, according to some, Great Attrition.

The term defines a global phenomenon that sees young workers - especially Millennials and Gen Z - with medium-high skills abandon stable occupations to take up new professions with innovative, more flexible and fluid ways of working in line with their needs of private life, in search of a different personal fulfilment and with the aim of seeking more satisfactory economic conditions.

Since the beginning of 2022, the Big Quit has hit the United States where one in four Americans has decided to leave their careers to start independent businesses. In China, on the other hand, the youngest are withdrawing from working arenas in which the individuality of the worker is nullified, while in Australia every other worker is considering giving up their jobs.

The repercussions of this phenomenon, however, also affect the Italian panorama. According to recent research conducted by the Italian Personnel Management Association (AIDP), on the basis of the sample taken into consideration, the resignations of young workers involve 60% of companies, of which 32% in the IT and digital sector, 28% in the production sector and 27% in the world of marketing and sales. Generally speaking, these are subjects between 26 and 35 years of age, placed in companies in northern Italy.

Therefore, the issue of valorising talent is becoming increasingly central for companies.

Over the years, the role of Europe has been important, particularly that of the European Commission (The European Business Network for Corporate Social Responsibility) for which in 2015 it undertook to promote the European Pact for Youth. The objective of the Pact was to strengthen training, stimulating the establishment of partnerships between schools and businesses to support young people in their employment transitions, with a systemic approach. This is a project in which companies, training and research institutions (schools, universities), established associations that work in favour of young people together with all the stakeholders who share and support the same objective, namely the creation of a

²²Schmid (2011).

fair and equitable culture of partnership between businesses, educational institutions and young people in Europe.

The organisations that had adhered to the Pact undertook “to contribute to the achievement of at least one of the objectives identified by it, namely: i) to promote the number and quality of partnerships for dual training for the social inclusion and employability of young people; ii) reduce the skills gap; iii) contribute to EU and national policies on skills and employability; iv) promote the inclusion and participation in dual training courses of young people of both genders and above all of those under-represented in the reference sectors, belonging to ethnic minorities, or with disabilities.”²³

Consequently, initiatives born of a European stimulus have entered the company and have joined corporate programs and strategies. Among the first companies that joined were Microsoft, Nestlè, Solvay, Google, Huawei, Samsung, Randstad, Engie, IBM Bridgestone Europe, McCain Continental Europe, Bracco Group, Antea Cement, Telefonica, Titan Cement, Deloitte, Enel, BASF, Pirelli and GAN. In the last decade, all have directly experienced and shared the importance of initiatives aimed at young people to design and make training a lever not only of placement, but also of good business practice for the companies themselves.

Cariparma Crédit Agricole, for example, inaugurated in 2009 the Piacenza Campus that has become a new training model toward setting up a real Corporate University. The objective of the project was to launch training activities and encourage integration, growth, and professional development through training courses of a regulatory, technical/specialist, behavioural and managerial nature aimed at the entire company population and based on the needs of the role, key roles and development areas. Alongside Training, the Group has also designed a program for the permanent development of the skills and potential of its members, with specific talent management projects, created on the basis of the characteristics of the various professional communities present in the Group and in synergy with the parent company Crédit Agricole such as new recruits, young people, potential talents, specialists, managers.

Similarly, HERA HerAcademy founded in 2011 with the support of CRISP and the Bicocca University of Milan, which also certified the qualitative and quantitative standards of the training activities, also compared itself with the best successful experiences and with the involvement of the stakeholders. Paths have been launched for the valorisation and development of workers' experiences and skills. The development of training plans and activities articulated along six main axes (such as ethical values and corporate culture; managerial, commercial and market training; quality; safety and the environment; technical-professional; information systems), also envisaged specific programs promoted with universities for the promotion of Masters Degrees and training courses to encourage the entry of young talents into the company.

COVID has inevitably also affected these company policies. Talent Trends Report by Randstad Sourceright (a Randstad company) has identified the ten main trends in personnel management for 2022. In this regard, a survey was conducted

²³Rosolen & Seghezzi (2016).

on 900 top managers and human capital leaders of international and regional organisations operating in 18 countries of the world (in the most diverse sectors, from manufacturing to banking, from biosciences to the pharmaceutical industry, up to IT) and several trends have emerged. Among these: the needs of employees at the centre of corporate strategy; the protection of diversity; equity and inclusion; fostering responsiveness and collaboration in the era of hybrid work; adaptation to the digital economy. On the talent enhancement front, 84% of human capital leaders and top managers interviewed said they were interested in talent experiences. Therefore, companies are investing in technologies and practices that encourage creativity and enterprise, while fostering solidity of a distinctive, coherent, authentic and engaging employer branding.

In the same vein, the HR Observatory of the Milan Polytechnic for 2022 has highlighted that HR Departments are having to face, among other challenges, the need to recover the ability to attract talent and the level of employer branding in a work market diverging from that of the past²⁴.

The Rethinking of Wellbeing: Some Food for thought

The organisational change of processes and era, as illustrated, redesigns relationships within the company with a view to greater involvement and empowerment of the worker. It requires companies to review and rethink corporate wellbeing as well.

Indeed, the fragmentary nature of the current landscape of the labour market and the connected emerging problems would not allow for a univocal answer. The regulation of the facets of transitions has had an impact on the labour law models of welfare and corporate organisation.

Businesses increasingly consider wellbeing a strategic tool for the working and organisational climate, as also emerges from the 5th Censis-Eudaimon Report²⁵.

For both workers and companies, corporate welfare represents a central element of the employment relationship toward an overall wellbeing of the people in the company as a factor of motivation and retention.

With the pandemic, organisations have begun to move away from client centricity in favour of employee centricity²⁶.

“This means changing the way of relating with one's collaborators, who become the main reference stakeholders. The relationship with the customer remains (and will always remain) the main interest, but today a new attention is developing towards the needs and requirements of male and female workers.”²⁷

On these bases, there is the need to evaluate a possible rethinking of the systems for assessing the social impact of corporate welfare plans not only in order to verify what the real return/impact is on the company and on the workers, but

²⁴Osservatorio HR 2022.

²⁵Censis (2022).

²⁶Milletti (2022).

²⁷Santoni (2022).

also to create wellbeing networks. It is precisely these networks which, at a regional level, can help create a "short supply chain" logic also making it possible to identify the specific skills and professionalism that a company may need, such as Wellbeing Managers.

Gender Equality in Companies and Gender Certification

Toward this aim, with an impact on organisational models, there is also the theme of gender equality and company policies aimed at encouraging tools and actions to reduce the gender gap. In recent years, in fact, the theme of gender equality and inclusion has conquered an ever-increasing space in corporate culture, to the point of becoming essential. It is also one of the cornerstones of the PNRR.

The gender gap, actions to support female empowerment, women's entrepreneurship and the fight against (gender) discrimination are central issues of the PNRR and in particular of Mission 5 "Inclusion and cohesion" (overall in the PNRR gender equality represents one of the three transversal priorities in terms of social inclusion, together with Youth and Southern Italy).

The objective is to increase the employment prospects of young people, their training and requalification of workers, as well as intervene on active policies and on territorial rebalancing and the development of the South and internal areas.

As underlined by the European Commission in the communication on the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, so far, no Member State has achieved equality between men and women: progress is slow and gender gaps persist in the work world at the level of wages, assistance and pensions as well as in managerial positions and participation in political and institutional life.

Globally, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that states have committed to achieve by 2030.

The National Gender Equality Strategy represented the first step in the direction of structural measures that remove gaps and obstacles to equality and can reverse the course for a more equitable development of the work world for all, for men and for women.

The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2026 also similarly aims to achieve a five-point increase in the ranking of the Gender Equality Index developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Italy, according to the Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum 2022, which confirms the 2021 ranking, of the EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality) is in the last places in Europe for female participation in the economy and opportunities for professional affirmation. The position of our country is in 25th place for the rate of participation and equal pay in the workforce, in 24th for income expectations and the presence of women in top positions. On this point, the mathematical model for measuring gender equality elaborated by the university start-up IDEM – Mind The Gap is interesting: It allows both to punctually evaluate how much the individual variables impact on the measurement of gender equality, and to prefigure, through sensitivity analysis, how gender equality would improve when, in a given time

horizon, action were taken on individual variables (e.g.: number of women in managerial positions) or on groups of variables (e.g.: net pay discrimination, percentage of women with variable pay, pay placement compared to the reference market)"²⁸.

An important piece of European and Italian policies is the one dedicated to the activation of a national gender equality certification system, with the aim of encouraging companies to adopt adequate policies to reduce the gender gap in all areas that present the most critical issues, such as career opportunities, equal pay for equal jobs, gender difference management policies and maternity protection.

In this approach, the law n. 162 of 2021, in addition to providing for amendments to the Code of Equal Opportunities and other provisions on equal opportunities between men and women in the workplace, also provided for the establishment, starting from 1 January 2022, of the Certification of equal type. The aim is to recognise the measures taken by employers to reduce the gender gap in relation to growth opportunities in the company, equal pay for equal jobs, policies for managing gender differences and maternity protection. Furthermore, for 2022 a partial contribution relief is foreseen - without prejudice to the calculation rate of pension benefits - for private companies in possession of the aforementioned Equal Opportunity Certification.

The criteria are contained in the UNI/PdR practice, published on 16 March 2022, relating to the "Guidelines on the management system for gender equality which provides for the adoption of specific KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) inherent to gender equality policies in organisations" for which companies that, on the basis of a specific investigation, comply with the criteria can obtain certification, by submitting an application to the accredited conformity assessment bodies pursuant to regulation (EC) 765/2008.

It follows that these provisions also have a significant impact on the contractual management of human resources in the company both for the regulatory aspects and for the purely organisational ones which pertain to the actual drafting of the gender certification models.

The questions and reflections are different: whether these models can fall within the scope of the current discipline of organisational models (called 231 models) or whether they must be considered as additional.

Conclusion

How to lead the change from the Next Generation EU to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan

The changes that organisations must prepare, in light of the innovations illustrated in this paper, however, require investments to deal with the reforms envisaged by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and which impact on the economic and social system of Italy.

²⁸Fabbri & Addabbo (2022).

In support, there are funds made available by the European Union and the Government, aimed at the recovery of the economy after the crisis generated by the pandemic and at promoting the transition to a circular and sustainable economy.

In particular, there are the resources of Next Generation EU, which makes 750 billion Euros available to promote the modernisation of the European Union through:

- policies including research and innovation, through Horizon Europe;
- gender issues;
- fair climate and digital transitions, through the Just Transition Fund and the Digital Europe programme;
- preparedness, recovery and resilience, through the rescEU recovery and resilience tool and the new EU4Health health program and also the resources of React-EU.

In fact, the European Commission has assigned 4.7 billion euros to Italy²⁹ as part of React-Eu, part of Next Generation EU. The resources of the React-EU will be directed towards supporting the resilience of the labour market, employment, small and medium-sized enterprises, and low-income households. These will lay the foundations for facilitating the double green and digital transition, in order to foster a sustainable socio-economic recovery in accordance with the specific 2020 recommendations made for each Member State in the context of the European Semester.

The measures envisaged by the PNRR are urgent and will have to guarantee the implementation and maximise the impact of the planned investments so as to encourage the restart of the Italian system. Of note, the impacts deriving from the implementation of the measures contained in the Plan have been assessed in terms of GDP up to +3.6% in 2026³⁰.

According to the managers and insiders interviewed by EY in collaboration with SWG, 92% of the sample agrees on the PNRR as a unique opportunity to modernise and revitalise the country, while 68% trust the government management with respect to implementation.

In terms of the use of the aforementioned resources, active policy interventions are also envisaged aimed at increasing the recruitment of young people and women, as well as enabling workers to participate in training, with particular attention to digital skills, and support tailor-made services for job seekers.

²⁹The financing is the result of the modification of two programs of the European Social Fund (ESF) and of the Fund for European aid to the poor (Fead). Overall React-EU, as part of the "Next Generation EU" will provide a top-up of €50.6 billion in additional funding (in current prices) to European Cohesion Policy programs during 2021 and 2022.

³⁰The National Recovery and Resilience Plan configures three scenarios with an impact on GDP which envisage growth of 2.7% for the "medium" scenario and 1.8% for the "low" scenario.

In this process, the Competence Centres will always assume a crucial role, becoming protagonists at the European level. These are poles of excellence created to carry out guidance, training and innovative projects that can be of help to Italian companies.

In Italy, these are the Competence Centres: Manufacturing 4.0, which belongs to the Turin Polytechnic; Made in Italy 4.0, whose lead institution is the Politecnico di Milano; BI-REX, the lead institution of the University of Bologna; Artes 4.0, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies in Pisa; SMOCT, University of Padua; Industry 4.0, University of Naples Federico II; Start 4.0, which sees the CNR - National Research Council as the lead body; Cyber 4.0, University of Rome "La Sapienza."

In concrete terms, the role of the Competence Centres is to put technological progress and universities in contact with companies, large and small, considering that the approach is based on the concept "from companies for companies."

In the current scenario, companies, with the Competence Centres, now have a place to meet and share experiences; the factory thus becomes an inclusive and decisive place for training the operators of the future ("teaching factory"), thus facilitating access to technologies and understanding for all professional categories.

On these bases, there is strong collaboration with the ITS (Higher Technical Education) whose system reorganisation is envisaged in the PNRR.³¹ In July 2022 the new framework law was approved to reform the Higher Technical Institutes (ITS), now renamed "ITS Academy."

The goal is to design courses that meet both the training needs of people as well as corporate modernisation in non-business sectors, in a context of building integrations with the local region.

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³¹To the ITS and the Academies, which have a central role in the education system contemplated in the PNRR, the Recovery Plan, for example, assigns non-repayable resources of 1.5 billion euros, an amount to which is added a Fund set up at the Ministry of Education with a budget of 68 million euros for 2021 and another 48 million euros in 2022. The considerable amount of investment is used to increase their number, to enhance laboratories with 4.0 technologies, to train teachers, to develop a national digital platform, to increase the number of subscribers by 100%.

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