6. SPAIN[1]

The research looks at all those who work on a self-employed basis in the sectors of the professions and the arts. In Spain, 91 professionals responded to the questionnaire. With the minimum threshold of 100 not met, we drew up a brief summary for Spain addressing: socio-demographic characteristics, economic-professional condition, expectations and perceived needs of these workers.

The socio-demographic profile

The respondents were evenly distributed among women (49.5%) and men (50.5%).

As for age, the bulk of the sample group is found in the central age brackets, with roughly 80% of the respondents concentrated in the 30-50 year-old group, while younger people and over-50's are few in number.

The majority of the respondents work in the fields of journalism or publishing, with the next largest group being professionals engaged in web activities and photo activities.

The sample group possesses a high level of education: almost all the respondents have a university degree (approximately 83%) or a doctorate (approximately 14%).

Slightly less than ¾ of the respondents declare that they live with a partner, or with a partner and children, while approximately 16% live alone. Practically the entire sample group lives in a city or town of at least 50,000 inhabitants.

The economic-professional profile

Looking at the types of contractual arrangements utilised, the majority work with VAT numbers and do not benefit from any system of facilitations. Professionals who work under para-subordinate contracts (economically dependent employment) account for roughly ¼ of the sample group. It should be noted that Spain is one of the European countries which have developed a specific regulatory approach to economically dependent workers, introducing the figure of the *trabajador autónomo económicamente dependiente* (TRADE). One-fifth of the respondents work as salaried employees under set-term contracts, while a slightly lower percentage holds such contracts for indeterminate periods.

Roughly 60% of the sample group has been freelance for more than 3 years. Before becoming independent workers, the absolute majority held intermittent jobs. The underlying reasons for the decision to become independent are tied to the possibility of organising the content of the work on one's own and achieving self-fulfilment. No one in the sample group was forced by a client's preferences to become an independent worker. This is consistent with the responses regarding the conditions that determine independence, in terms of both operational considerations (choice of workplace and working hours, free time) and economic factors (more than 1 client). Subjective

[1] This chapter was written by Elena Sinibaldi.

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perceptions of independence, ranked on a scale of 1 to 10, show no scores lower than 4. However these elevated levels of independence (objective and subjective) are not aligned with the characteristics normally associated with economically dependent workers: surprisingly, the TRADE in the sample group state that they are free to make their own decisions on the organisational aspects of their work (place of work, hours, organisation of the work content and free time; they also work with their own tools and have more than 1 client).

But economic difficulties arise in terms of annual pre-tax income, seeing that almost half the respondents earn between 10,000 and 30,000 euro, with approximately 10% earning less than 10,000 euro. Apart from the small number of cases considered, the TRADEs are over-represented among those who earn less than 10,000 euro, while those with the most favourable conditions (30,000-60,000 euro) account for approximately 38% of the respondents. Nobody has an income of more than 100,000 euro.

On the average, the professionals involved in the I-Wire survey work 41 hours a week. Questioned as to how continuously they had worked during the last two years, half of them had been employed for a period of more than six months, while 44% had worked without interruption.

Income supports consisted mainly of savings and loans.

Problems and expectations

In terms of the problems perceived as most pressing, the respondents highlighted two main types of obstacles:

- difficulties "of" the market: specifically, a deterioration of competitive practices and low earnings;
- difficulties "in" the market; specifically, delays in payment, loss of clients and a shortage of work; another problem is the limited availability of training for a professional group that, in order to be competitive, must constantly update its skills.

Questioned on their perceived level of social-security protection, the majority of the group stated that they do not feel protected against the risk of unemployment or in terms of future pension coverage. At the same time, half of these interviewed have not taken out private insurance plans to deal with these risks.

The majority of the respondents are members of a traditional union, and over a third belong to a professional association. These membership figures can be attributed to the self-selecting nature of the group, as the bulk of the respondents were most likely members of UPTA, one of the most active channels of distribution.

What the respondents want most from an organisation of representation are: (i) a focus placed squarely on freelancers; services able to meet the needs of the category; the ability to mobilise forces on specific issues. The services most frequently requested include: information on taxes and legal affairs, training, networking with potential clients and colleagues.

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Though they feel that the political and institutional spheres are not sufficiently attentive to their concerns, they do hold that something is changing, resulting in an increase in the attention paid to their professional category.

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