

## 1. SLOVENIA<sup>1</sup>

The research looks at all those who work on a self-employed basis in the sectors of the professions and the arts. In Slovenia, only 29 professionals responded to the questionnaire. With the minimum threshold of 100 not having been reached, we drew up a report that summarises the following considerations for Slovenia: the socio-demographic characteristics, the economic-professional condition, the expectations and perceived needs of these workers.

### The socio-demographic profile

The gender distribution among the respondents is balanced (60% women).

In terms of their age, almost 1/3 of the sample group is concentrated in the 30-40 year-old bracket; there are only a few under-30's.

The majority of the respondents work in the sector of translating and interpreting. As was observed in other countries involved in the I-Wire research, a noteworthy number of the professionals work at more than one activity (average of 2.8 activities).

For the most part, they hold university degrees in the humanities and they live in small population centres with a partner and children.

### The economic-professional profile

Looking at the primary type of contractual relationship, approximately half are lone entrepreneurs; 9 respondents earn copyright royalties. A number work under more than one type of arrangement, and 3 of those interviewed declare that they have employees.

Questioned as to their path of professional development, 9 of the respondents became freelancers after completing their studies and another 9 after working as salaried employees, while 8 had only occasional employment. Only 10 had past experience with a more traditional job. Over half the respondents have been independent for more than 3 years, and 6 have been so for more than 10 years.

Among the underlying reasons for working independently, a desire for professional fulfilment and the possibility of organising work activities flexibly were observed. At the same time, it should be noted that roughly half the sample group was obliged by clients to be independent and/or had no other choice. In keeping with this situation of "obligatory" independence, 11 of those interviewed, given the choice, would rather work at standard salaried jobs, but only 4 of the respondents saw themselves as having little independence.

In terms of modes of working, the majority work from home, occasionally using other places of work as well (including their clients' offices). Approximately half of those interviewed are subject to close supervision by their clients. As a rule, the workloads are rather high, and the work is fairly continuous:

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over the last 2 years, 22 of the respondents have worked without interruption for more than 9 months of the year; the average weekly hours of work number 42, and only 5 respondents stated that they never work at night or on the weekends. The length of contractual relationships is extremely variable, with lengthy contracts alternating with very brief ones. The professionals are frequently involved in large-scale projects, in which cases they share the assignment with other colleagues.

An analysis of income levels shows that the majority has pre-tax earnings of between 10,000 and 30,000 euro a year, though 1/3 of the respondents earns less than 10,000 euro a year. In the eyes of 11 of those interviewed, they make a good living, while 7 others hold that their income is not enough to live on. To supplement their incomes, the respondents rely on family/partners or savings. Roughly 1/3 of them also work at salaried jobs (in most cases for set periods), and a number supplement their income by working off the books. Half the sample group negotiates the price of their assignments directly with the client, though for a significant number of the professionals (8), opportunities for negotiation are decidedly limited.

Given the characteristics of the reference market, the respondents have an average of 15 clients, consisting of domestic or foreign companies. The primary channels for obtaining new clients are existing clients and word-of-mouth, though networks of acquaintances and colleagues also play an important role. Few of those interviewed take part in tenders, and they rarely use social media.

Looking at the tool of IT marketplaces, half the respondents use them. Of this group, half feel that such tools can be used to obtain additional income, though it is also feared that they may reduce pay rates and lower the quality of work.

#### Problems and expectations

In terms of the problems perceived as being most worrisome, the respondents point to unfair competition, a shortage of orders, few clients and low pay. In contrast to the situation in other countries (such as Italy), clients who do not pay and high taxes are not major concerns. Half the respondents, for that matter, benefit from favourable tax situations.

The professionals involved in the I-Wire research feel they are protected in the event of illness, maternity or accidents, and many also pay to have supplementary health insurance.

#### Representation

It was very rare for those interviewed to belong to professional associations and/or unions. Questioned on what they consider to be the most important factors when it comes to selecting an organisation of representation, they indicated: a focus on freelancers, the organisation's independence from the political sphere and the fact that it offers services custom-tailored to meet the needs of freelancers. The services considered to be most helpful are: information, tax consulting and training. The type of organisation best able to represent the interests of the professional group would be a horizontally structured type of association that promotes the interests of all professions, regardless of the sector of activity. It is widely thought that politicians and institutional figures pay very little attention freelancers, and that the situation has not changed in recent years.