



EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

Progetto “Employee involvement in decision-making in times of crisis as a key to the effective organization of the company's work”

National Report

In the Italian legal system, information and consultation procedures are not specifically regulated by law but substantially left to collective bargaining, which has the task of intervening to regulate these aspects relating to the relationship between employees and the company.

Despite, therefore, there is a double level of guarantee (legislative and contractual) of the correct use of information and consultation mechanisms, these aspects are not fully developed within all sectors and all company contexts.

This is because in various production areas, the employer tends to frame information and consultation of workers as unimportant or even negative moments due to the effects they can have on productivity.

This problem was sensibly felt during the pandemic, in which information and consultation were necessary tools for the management of the crisis and for the remote coordination of production realities, as well as for a more effective general alignment to the prevention measures for the spread of the contagion. .

In this context, this report, by comparing the points of view of employers and employees on the issue, aims to provide an overall picture of the current state of the mechanisms for involving personnel within the company.

Part 1: Questionnaire addressed to employees.

This report refers to a sample of 39 employees of Italian companies, interviewed on various aspects related to the issue of employee involvement in company processes during the crisis linked to the spread of Covid-19.

The workers interviewed represent a homogeneous sample whose age is mainly between 35/54 years (over 50%) and is mostly male (over 75% compared to 25% women).

The production sector of reference of the interviewees is mostly that of transport (both by road, air and sea) and to a lesser extent that of trade and services.





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As far as the position in the company of the interviewees is concerned, it is extremely varied, being present both managerial figures, managerial staff and clerical figures; within the clerical area, the duties mainly carried out by the workers are those of machinist, worker, skilled worker, administrative employee and transporter.

First, respondents were asked to what extent they felt informed (directly or through its unions) of the changes that took place in the company during the pandemic. To this question, the majority of workers replied by stating that they consider themselves sufficiently informed and, among these, ten workers showed a high level of information.

On the other hand, the percentage of positive responses regarding the degree of consultation in relation to the changes that occurred in the company during the pandemic was different.

Regarding this aspect, the answers were heterogeneous: ten workers consider themselves to be poorly consulted (some note that they have not been consulted at all), sixteen workers say they have been consulted on average, while twelve workers have shown that the consultation by the company has had a high degree.

The interviewees were then asked to what extent they had participated in the decisions in the company that led to changes in the organization during the pandemic; the majority of workers replied that they were not involved in decision-making processes, while a small part (about six workers) said the opposite.

As regards the atmosphere in the company following the changes adopted, the majority of respondents (about twenty) replied that the climate was difficult and not very serene.

The attitude towards these changes on the part of the workers was classified as on average active and participatory, while only four workers showed an indifferent attitude.

The interviewees were then asked if they were aware of their rights regarding information and consultation within the company, even in times of crisis such as the pandemic. More than 75% gave an affirmative answer, proving that they were informed about their sphere of information and consultation rights; on the contrary, 25% replied to the contrary.

Another question posed to employees concerned the possible request by the company to present ideas and opinions regarding the organizational changes introduced during the pandemic. On this point, the majority (about twenty-two workers) gave evidence that they had not been solicited by the employer to provide their own contribution in terms of ideas and projects on the changes to be made at the company level during the pandemic period.





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As for the impact of gender on the changes that have been envisaged due to the organizational changes introduced in the company during the pandemic, the answers have been varied and heterogeneous.

In fact, about thirteen respondents represented the absence of such incidence with regard to the changes dictated by the pandemic; fourteen workers felt that gender had an average impact; eleven workers, on the other hand, spoke of a strong and decisive impact.

Regarding forms of remote or agile work, workers were asked if they had been able to work from home during the pandemic; 63% gave a negative answer, highlighting a low propensity on the part of the company to organize remote work, while about 37% answered yes.

Those who performed the service from home were then asked how they could organize the work while maintaining the same working conditions as in the regular workplace.

The majority (about ten workers) of those who answered gave evidence of an easy approach to this way of working and the absence of particular impediments.

It was then asked to what extent support was received from the company to adapt to the new working conditions caused by the pandemic.

To this question, about twelve workers stated that they received little or no support; about seventeen provided placed in a mid-range, claiming to have received mid-range support; while ten workers highlighted relevant and adequate company support during the pandemic.

Going on, respondents were asked how safe they felt in terms of health in the company after the introduction of organizational changes due to the pandemic.

Also in this case the answers were heterogeneous.

Eleven workers showed that they experienced an extremely low level of safety tending to zero; thirteen workers reported a low to medium level of safety, while fourteen workers said they felt quite safe from a health point of view. Note that none of the respondents stated that they felt absolutely safe performing the performance during the pandemic period.

Finally, the interviewees were asked how important they consider, in the hypothesis of another crisis such as that determined by the spread of Covid-19, the following aspects:

- information: most workers consider information a central element; in fact, over eighteen workers frame this aspect as absolutely necessary, while about eight workers as on average important. It should be noted that none of the interviewees replied that employee information is of little importance or, in an absolute sense, unnecessary;





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- consultation: with regard to consultation, the employees highlighted how to a large extent they also consider this aspect to be important in the context of crisis situations. In fact, over 80% replied considering the consultation as a central element. Only one worker pointed out that this element is not considered important;
- participation in the decision-making process: also with regard to participation in the decision-making process there are similar percentages. Indeed, twenty-one workers place this aspect among the fundamental ones with reference to the phases of corporate crisis, while fourteen workers report that participation is an element that is on average important. Two workers, on the other hand, consider it scarcely relevant;
- attitude towards participation: workers gave homogeneous answers. Twenty-six respondents stated that this aspect is absolutely relevant. Ten workers, on the other hand, show that this element is on average important.

Respondents were then asked which information and consultation mechanism they would prefer in the hypothetical case of another crisis similar to the pandemic. With regard to information, over 60% would like written information by email or letter, over 26% orally by telephone or other digital tool, while over 10% would prefer oral information in person.

Regarding the consultation procedures, 43% said they preferred the meeting in person (with the provision of adequate security measures), 29% through meetings in company places, while 27% through remote meetings or via telephone .

Part 3: Interview with employers

In the context of this report, 3 employers were interviewed, small and medium-sized companies operating on the Italian territory within different production sectors. The answers are reported in summary form.

Employer 1:

1. Can you briefly describe your company, business sector, size, number of employees, relevant organizational aspects, etc.?

The company operates in the transport sector, is a limited liability company and has less than 40 employees.





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2. In a nutshell, how would you describe how the pandemic affected your company organization and business?

We have resorted to wage supplementation and brought about an alignment with regard to security measures.

3. How did you involve your employees in decision making when you had to reorganize your company's work due to the pandemic?

We have forwarded notices relating to safety measures and informed staff of the precautions to be taken in the workplace.

4. How effective do you think was the involvement / inclusion of your employees in these decision-making processes?

From the decision-making point of view there was no real involvement.

5. How would you describe the attitude of your employees? Were they interested, willing to give their opinion, or did they not participate at all?

They frequently requested information on the processes for sanitizing the company's premises.

6. Would you like to share with us some good practices, methods or tools that you have used?

Communications by email

7. What would improve the entire employee engagement process in organizational changes in your work?

The engagement process is adequate for the type of business the company carries out

8. In the hypothetical case of another pandemic-like crisis, what would help you better involve your employees in the organizational changes you could introduce in your company and business?

A more constructive confrontation with the workers.

Employer 2:

1. Can you briefly describe your company, business sector, size, number of employees, relevant organizational aspects, etc.?

Company operating in the electrical system installation sector that applies the Metalworking National Collective Labor Agreement with about twenty employees.

2. In a nutshell, how would you describe how the pandemic affected your company organization and business?





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We had to suspend the activity for a period of a few months and subsequently, despite having resumed, we had the need to review certain processes for carrying out the work.

3. How did you involve your employees in decision making when you had to reorganize your company's work due to the pandemic?

It was necessary to hold technical meetings with our employees employed on the construction sites. With the administrative staff it was necessary to structure a complex of security measures.

4. How effective do you think was the involvement / inclusion of your employees in these decision-making processes?

The involvement was effective, all the staff felt involved and active in the restructuring phase of the activity.

5. How would you describe the attitude of your employees? Were they interested, willing to give their opinion, or did they not participate at all?

There was a fair amount of participation from the staff.

6. Would you like to share with us some good practices, methods or tools that you have used?

On the subject of safety, we have adopted prevention forms that employees were required to fill out daily to carry out constant tracking.

7. What would improve the entire employee engagement process in organizational changes in your work?

An involvement that can lead workers to provide ideas for implementing certain company processes would be desirable.

8. In the hypothetical case of another pandemic-like crisis, what would help you better involve your employees in the organizational changes you could introduce in your company and business?

I do not know.

Employer 3:

1. Can you briefly describe your company, business sector, size, number of employees, relevant organizational aspects, etc.?

Small-sized company operating in the trade. The company employs 8 resources.

2. In a nutshell, how would you describe how the pandemic affected your company organization and business?

During the lockdown we resorted to layoffs.





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3. How did you involve your employees in decision making when you had to reorganize your company's work due to the pandemic?

Through our consultants we have given news and information about access to social safety nets

4. How effective do you think was the involvement / inclusion of your employees in these decision-making processes?

It was effective.

5. How would you describe the attitude of your employees? Were they interested, willing to give their opinion, or did they not participate at all?

Employees have been interested in the aspects of work related to the pandemic-

6. Would you like to share with us some good practices, methods or tools that you have used?

I do not know how to report particular good practices

7. What would improve the entire employee engagement process in organizational changes in your work?

I do not know

8. In the hypothetical case of another pandemic-like crisis, what would help you better involve your employees in the organizational changes you could introduce in your company and business?

Employees should also be more involved in terms of practical organization and division of work, providing points of view and insights.

Part 4: Conclusions

The overall picture that emerged from the outcome of the interviews conducted with companies and employees allows us to affirm that the aspects of information and consultation of workers in the company are central and their importance during the pandemic period was particularly relevant in order the preparation of the security measures deemed most suitable.

The workers showed evidence of an overall involvement on the part of the employer, which, although perfectible, gave positive results.

On the other hand, participation in decision-making processes was lacking, a symptomatic circumstance of the tendency of the Italian labor system not to include employees in the strategic choices that are made at the management level.

The workers then reiterated the need for the future to improve and refine the involvement processes, especially as regards consultation.





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From their point of view, the companies underlined that they had implemented adequate information and consultation measures, it being understood that the employer side also gave feedback on aspects that could be improved with reference to these issues, especially through a more active involvement of staff in organizational choices. .

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