

FREELANCER

Fostering future and current entrepreneurs' soft skills and self-employability through market adapted training

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Task 2 of Work Package 2:

Mapping and stock taking of Entrepreneurship challenges for aspiring freelancers

Preliminary findings from EU By IHF

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Key takeaways from preliminary assessment (to be further refined)

Europeans are ready to go independent. The prospect of a freelancing career is very much predominant among the age bracket from 25 to 34 y/o, and it's also very much higher among younger working-age population (16-24 y/o).

Digital economy played most definitely a very important role in the emergence of professions and occupations that evolved from "odd" jobs to established and very reputable (and well-paid) professions. It is not by chance that the vast majority of freelancers – not only in Italy, but all over industrialised economies – provides for some kind of IT and digital services

In fact, compared to large organisations, most of times MSMEs do not detain internally the technical know how and expertise to offer certain services (for clients or themselves). The relying on freelancers is also a cost-effective alternative for two reasons:

- The competitive race among freelancers pushes down the price of their services
- The engagement of a freelancer is way cheaper, and way more convenient than developing internally a new internal set of know how

Typically, 'hard' IT-related freelancing jobs (i.e., cybersecurity, software engineering, etc.) are also the most sought after and best paid, followed immediately after by 'soft' IT-related and creative digital services (i.e., copywriting, graphic and design, etc.).

Every day, new startups are born, and job offers for various categories of professionals and different fields are posted. In truth, this professional possibility makes every collaboration more agile. When the word "flexibility" is associated with the freelance world, it is not by chance. A company can choose an external freelance consultant and enjoy several benefits:

- At the end of the job, it can evaluate whether to continue collaborating with them or choose another freelancer.
- It can assign the work to a competent professional in that field, with specific qualifications and skills.
- Collaboration is smoother in every process: from contacts during the briefing phase to project implementation.
- It brings innovation and new stimuli to the company. Freelancers tend to have enthusiasm to spare, to make themselves known and to expand their online reputation.

Nevertheless, freelancers are everywhere, and they provide for all kind of services and offers, from dog-sitting to yoga teaching. Indeed, one factor that contributed to boost the rising number of solo-workers is the never-seen-before booming of gig-economy. The vast majority of traditional gig-jobs are indifferent to the education background and previous experience of the worker, do not discriminate on the base of age, and are open and accessible to a very large portion of working population. Young students and seniors are those categories that capitalised the most from employment opportunities coming from gig-economy.

The growing popularity of online platforms has made it easier than ever for freelancers to find work. There are now several online marketplaces where companies can post projects, and freelancers can offer their services, not exclusively in the Italian market. Anyone can now present themselves as a service provider globally, with a particular focus on the most flourishing and talent-hungry markets: the more this platform become popular, the more new people will join in, the more these platform gain popularity, the even more people will join in. In a sense, the phenomenon of freelancing opened new markets and new business ideas that capitalises on this effect of network economies of scale

Generally speaking, the growing phenomenon of freelancing is evident globally, where achieving a balance between professional and personal life has become a priority for many workers. Smart working and flexibility play a central role in occupational choices.

An interesting finding pertains to the personal satisfaction of freelance workers compared to employees. A survey conducted in the United States highlights that 62% of freelancers declare themselves extremely or very satisfied with their work, contrasting with 51% of employees. The latter also perceive their work as more stressful and oppressive, emphasizing a significant gap in professional gratification.