Eurofound

Italy: Wage guarantee fund, solidarity agreements, bilateral bodies and wage guarantee fund in derogation

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Background and objectives of the report

The global economic crisis hit Europe in mid 2008 and also had a considerable impact on the region's labour markets. Although almost all Member States have seen a decrease in gross domestic product (GDP) in the wake of the crisis, measures to protect labour markets from the effects of this have had varying success.

The reduction of working time has played a major role in lessening the impact of lowered production output on employment levels, and this project aims to investigate short-time working and temporary layoff schemes which have been used as a means of avoiding redundancies by many Member States during the recession.

To do this, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) conducted an in-depth analysis of public short-time working and temporary layoff support schemes available in nine Member States (**Austria**, **Belgium**, **France**, **Germany**, Italy, **Luxembourg**, **the Netherlands**, **Poland** and **Slovenia**) during the recent economic crisis, supplemented by an analysis of **ProAct**, a regional support scheme in Wales (Eurofound, 2010). An emphasis was placed on those Member States offering public income support instruments for for two types of reduced working time: those linked to a social security element, such as publicly supported social security contributions or dismissal protection during or after a period of short-time working or a temporary layoff; and those linked to a training element, such as a requirement to undertake training during non-worked hours in order to receive income support, or to receive an enhanced level of public financial support. The analysis encompassed a wide geographical mix and covered both short-time working and temporary layoff schemes.

This is one of the individual country reports describing its national public support scheme. It is based on a literature and document review, as well as on qualitative semi-standardised interviews with national stakeholders conducted in the spring and summer of 2010. The main objective is to provide as detailed a description as possible of the characteristics and working methods of the scheme, and to assess its short-term effectiveness.

A comparative analysis of the individual schemes forms the thematic part of the ERM Annual 2010 – **Extending flexicurity – The potential of short-time working schemes**. This is supplemented by a secondary analysis of European data on short-time working and temporary layoff schemes, and an assessment of the relationship between short-time working and flexicurity.

General information on the schemes

After the Second World War, an articulated system of 'social shock absorbers' was developed in Italy to avoid dismissals and to retain jobs in economically difficult times.

The main instrument is a system based on a wage guarantee fund (*Cassa Integrazione Guadagni*, CIG), which is managed by the National Social Security Institute (INPS) and used mainly by medium and large enterprises (in Italian terms, those with more than 15 employees) in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Within the system there are two different schemes: the ordinary wage supplement (*Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Ordinaria*, CIGO) and the extraordinary wage supplement (*Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Straordinaria*, CIGS), with the alternative of a solidarity contract (*Contratto di Solidarietà*, CS).

A second system aims to maintain jobs in small businesses and the craft sectors that do not have access to the CIG system. These bilateral bodies (*enti bilaterali*), which are managed jointly by the social partners, pay specific subsidies (integrated with unemployment benefit) to workers in the event of a reduction or suspension in their working hours, with the contribution of the Employment Fund managed by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (EMCO, 2009).

Characteristics of the schemes

Cassa Integrazione Guadagni

Cassa Integrazione Guadagni (CIG) is the primary intervention designed to support workers affected by reduced working time and temporary suspension of work. Established in 1947, CIG plays a key role in the Italian 'social shock absorber' system and has so far proved vital in the process of restructuring Italian companies.

CIG was created after the Second World War to protect the income of industrial workers whose jobs had been destroyed during the war. Thus, its origin lies in the safeguarding of workers' income from events for which their employer has no control. The measure was used in times of a temporary shrinkage in the market when it was intended as a means of temporary income protection for employees and in the expectation that the company and its employees would soon resume normal activity. Today, it is known as the ordinary wage supplement (*Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Ordinaria*, CIGO).

CIGO's aim is to provide income support to workers in industry in order to avoid dismissals when production is suspended or reduced because of transitory events. CIG's first application was through the collective labour contracts of 1941, which provided income support measures for workers in the event of a crisis in the industrial sector. CIG was established for industrial workers in northern Italy in 1947 and extended to the whole country in 1947. During the intense industrial restructuring and reorganisation process in the 1970s and 1980s, which also resulted in workers' unrest, CIG was established as a tool for avoiding general unemployment (Tavella, 2002).

In 1968, the extraordinary wage supplement (*Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Straordinaria*, CIGS) was introduced for workers in industrial companies employing more than 15 people and whose working time is reduced due to restructuring, reorganisation or change in activity. The aim of this measure is to allow medium and large enterprises in Italy to make production and organisational adjustments while avoiding dismissals (Vesan, 2009).

CIGO is not compatible with CIGS for the same production unit; in coinciding causes, CIGS prevails. The two measures are compatible for the same period only when they refer to independent events such as bad weather and a crisis at the enterprise. Financial support from CIGO and CIGS together cannot last more than 36 months in total over a reference period of five years.

Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Ordinaria

The ordinary wage supplement (*Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Ordinaria*, CIGO[1]) was created by Decree 869/1947 and it is used when a company reduces or suspends its activity due to temporary events that are not the responsibility of the employer, due to temporary market difficulties or due to seasonal weather conditions.[2]

Who benefits

CIGO can be used for blue-collar and white-collar workers (full-time and part-time) in the industrial sector (covering manufacturing, transport, mining and quarrying, electricity gas and water supply) regardless of the number of employees (the crafts sector is excluded), as well as in the construction and building supply sectors (subject to seasonal working time reduction due to meteorological reasons) even for workers on fixed-term contracts, but not for senior executives, temporary agency workers, home workers or apprentices.

[1] **http://www.inps.it/newportal/default.aspx?sID=%3b0%3b5673%3b5679%3b&lastMenu=5679&iMenu=1&iNodo=5679&p4=2**.

[2] L. Forlani (EMCO delegate for Italy), *The priority is maintaining the existing jobs: Outline of Italian tools*, EMCO group meeting, 3 March 2009.

When can it be used

CIGO can be used when the enterprise reduces or suspends the activity of all or parts of its workforce due to temporary events beyond its control, temporary market difficulties, or seasonal weather conditions.

Duration and level of benefits

CIGO pays a wage supplement for non-worked hours equal to 80% of the salary the worker would have earned for full-time employment. Working time may be reduced by a maximum of 40 hours per week.[3]

The wage supplement cannot be higher than a monthly ceiling established annually by the Italian Statistics Institute (Istat) based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). For 2010, this ceiling is equal to €892.96 per month; it increases to €1,073.25 for those workers whose monthly salary is greater than €1,931.86 (INPS, 2010b).

The measure can last for a maximum of 13 consecutive weeks, with a possible and exceptional extension to 12 months (52 weeks, not necessarily consecutive). In the construction and building supply sectors, it can be exceptionally extended to 12 months (52 weeks) only in the event of a reduction in working time and not for 100% working time reduction. At the end of treatment equal to 52 consecutive weeks, the same production unit can apply for a second treatment only after production has resumed for at least 52 weeks. If the enterprise benefits from the measure for non-consecutive periods, the maximum length of the treatment is of 52 weeks in two years.

In the face of the financial crisis, INPS Notice No. 58 of 20 April 2009 modified the criteria for calculating the periods during which benefits are paid by CIGO. Previously, each week in which there had been even a partial reduction in working hours was counted as a whole week of CIGO. Now, this calculation is based on the number of days for which CIGO applied (that is, the number of days when working hours had been reduced). In practice, this results in a longer period of CIGO availability (Ricciardi et al, 2009).

Funding

CIGO is based on an assurance mechanism and it is entirely financed by contributions paid by employers, who pay a contribution on all wages to INPS in order to provide for CIGO. In periods when CIGO is used, the employer pays the wage support to the employees and then recoups the amount from INPS. The CIGO budget has always had a surplus, and even during the current financial crisis, its budget remains in balance.

Procedure

When an enterprise plans to apply for CIGO, it must first contact the trade union(s) to inform them of the reasons for the suspension and the number of employees affected by the suspension. Nonetheless, the enterprise does not have to conclude a collective agreement with the trade union in order to apply for CIGO; the application must be made within 25 days of the beginning of reduced working hours.

Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Straordinaria

Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Straordinaria (CIGS[4]) was introduced in 1968 to enable enterprises to restructure and make organisational adjustments while avoiding dismissals.

[3] Under Italian labour law, the maximum working week is 40 hours. This implies that, under CIG, an employee can work reduced hours up to no hours worked per week (that is, 100% working time reduction – this is known as CIG zero hours).

[4] **http://www.inps.it/newportal/default.aspx?sID=%3b0%3b5673%3b5681%3b&lastMenu=5681&iMenu=1&iNodo=5681&p4=2**.

Who benefits

CIGS can be used for blue-collar and white-collar workers (full-time and part-time) but not for senior executives, temporary agency workers, home workers or apprentices employed for at least 90 days in the following types of enterprises:

- enterprises in the industrial sector with more than 15 employees;
- enterprises in the construction and building supply sector with more than 15 employees;
- enterprises in the commerce sector with more than 200 employees, reduced to 50 employees with provisions renewed every year since 1993;
- publishing companies with any number of employees;
- enterprises in the craft sector with more than 15 employees and complying with Law 223/91;
- enterprises in the restaurant and catering sector with more than 15 employees, only for canteens where the contracting enterprise is using CIG;
- service enterprises with more than 15 employees;
- cooperatives with more than 15 employees.

When it can be used

GICS can be used when the enterprise has to reduce or suspend activity due to:

- restructuring, reorganisation or change of activity;
- a crisis situation within the company;
- becoming bankrupt.

Level of benefits

CIGS pays a wage supplement for non-worked hours equal to 80% of the salary the worker would have earned for full-time employment. Working time can be reduced by a maximum of 40 hours per week.

The wage supplement cannot be higher than a monthly ceiling established annually by Istat based on the CPI. For 2010, this ceiling is equal to €892.96 per month; it increases to €1,073.25 for those workers whose monthly salary is greater than €1,931.86.

Duration

- In the event of restructuring, reorganisation or change of activity, the measure can last for 24 months, with a possible extension of 12 months which can be granted twice (after two separate applications).
- In the event of a crisis, the measure can last for 12 months. This can be extended only once for a maximum of 12 months.
- In the event of bankruptcy, the measure can be used for 12 months and can be extended for an additional six months.

CIGS cannot be used by each production unit for more than 36 months in any five-year period, including periods of CIGO due to temporary market difficulties (periods of CIGO for bad weather conditions, a natural disaster or other reasons are not included in this limit). This means that the full possible duration of receiving benefits from CIGS (as listed above) for some events is only possible if several units within the company are concerned.

Funding

Like CIGO, CIGS is based on an assurance mechanism and it is financed by contributions paid by employers. However, CIGS is also financed by contributions paid by employees. In addition, the principle of 'bonus-malus' (reward–penalise) applies. Enterprises using CIGS have to pay an additional contribution equal to 5% of the wage supplement given to the employees (3% for enterprises with up to 50 employees). This additional contribution is doubled from the 25th month of wage supplement.

As for CIGO, in periods when CIGS is used, the employer pays the wage support to the employees and then recoups the amount from INPS.

Since its introduction, the CIGS budget has in general always been in balance. Even though CIGS is very reactive to economic cycles (the crisis had a huge impact on its use over the last two years), historical trends show that on average there is a condition of budget balance. This underlines the fact that CIGS is a self-financing system that works well.

Procedure

Before applying for CIGS, the enterprise must organise a period of consultation leading to collective agreements with the trade unions. During this period, the employer must inform the trade unions of:

- the reasons for the suspension or reduction of activity;
- the criteria used to select those workers to be placed in CIGS;
- the modalities of rotation of the workers.

Within 25 days of the introduction of reduced working hours, the employer must apply for CIGS to the Directorate of Income Support Measures of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (LPS). The employer must attach to the application a plan providing for the resumption of the activity and protection of jobs (even partially). This plan is examined and approved with a decree from LPS after a period of 30 or 90 days.

The employees to be placed in CIGS must be selected according to specific criteria in compliance with the principle of direct and indirect discrimination. Italian law also provides for mandatory rotations of workers working in the same production unit and with the same duties. If the enterprise fails to comply with this provision without reasonable organisational and technical reasons, the enterprise is obliged to double its additional contribution, and after the 25th month of treatment, to pay a further additional contribution equal to 150%.

Contratti di Solidarietà

Solidarity contracts (*Contratti di Solidarietà*, CS[5]) are an alternative route to CIG and, within the INPS budget, are calculated under CIGS. Introduced in 1984, solidarity contracts are company-level agreements based on the principle of solidarity among all employees of a productive unit in an enterprise who reduce, all at the same extent, their working hours in order to avoid dismissals (*difensivi*) or to allow the recruitment of new employees (*espansivi*).

[5] http://www.inps.it/newportal/default.aspx?sID=%3b0%3b5673%3b6543%3b&lastMenu=6543&iMenu=1&iNodo=6543&p4=2.

Who benefits

CS is open to enterprises having access to CIGS but excluding senior executives, temporary agency workers, home workers, apprentices, and those employed by the company for less than 90 days. Part-time workers are eligible only if the company shows that, before CS, the part-time job was a structural aspect of its work organisation.

Duration and level of benefits

The agreement provides for a reduction in working hours by a maximum of 60% and corresponding to a reduction in pay. In this case, INPS pays a wage supplement equal to 60% of the wage reduction. With the financial crisis, and only for the period 2009–2010, the wage supplement has been raised to 80% of the wage reduction.

The treatment can last for a maximum of 24 months, which can be extended for 24 further months (36 months for southern Italy). Once the maximum extension has been reached, a new CS for the same units can be agreed only after production has been resumed for at least 12 months from the end of the last agreement.

Funding

CS is funded by the same contribution paid for CIG. This contribution is administered by INPS.

Incentives

- Employers deciding to use CS can benefit from a reduction of the amount of social security contributions paid for those workers affected. If the working time is reduced by more than 20%, employers' contributions are reduced by 25%; if the working time is reduced by more than 30%, employers' contributions are reduced by 35%.
- Unlike CIG, there is no maximum ceiling for the wage support received per month under CS.

Special case of companies not having access to CIGS

Law 236/93 article 5[6] (modified by Law 33/2009[7]) allows enterprises without access to CIGS to use CS for their workforce with the exception of senior executives. In this case, both the employees and employer receive a wage support for the non-worked hours equal to 25% of the lost wage. The treatment can last for up to two years.

Ammortizzatori sociali in deroga

Because the only universal 'social shock absorber' in the Italian system is unemployment benefit and because CIG and CS cannot be used by all companies, in 2004 the Italian government introduced special measures to extend the coverage to those workers in sectors not covered by the standard measures. These special 'shock absorbers' are called '*ammortizzatori sociali in deroga*' and are put in place on an annual basis if state budget is available (Ricciardi et al, 2009).

Cassa Integrazione Guadagni in deroga

For those enterprises that cannot use CIG or have exhausted all their treatments, the special 'social shock absorber' is called 'CIG in derogation' (*Cassa Integrazione Guadagni in deroga*, CIGD[8]).

[6] http://www.lavoro.gov.it/NR/rdonlyres/26773255-D31D-47F7-90A5-19DE78317001/0/008_Legge_236_93.pdf.

[7] http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/09033l.htm.

[8] http://www.inps.it/newportal/default.aspx?sID=%3b0%3b5673%3b5680%3b&lastMenu=5680&iMenu=1&iNodo=5680&p4=2.

Since the second half of 2008, '*ammortizzatori sociali in deroga*' have represented the only feasible tool to face the financial crisis in a timely manner. Thus, with Law 2/2009,[9] the Italian government extended the use of CIG to any category of worker of any company through CIGD.

In order to establish this special measure, the state and the regions signed an agreement in February 2009 to share the cost. For 2009–2010, this was equal to €8 billion, of which around 70% was paid by the state (€5.35 billion) and around 30% by the regions (€2.65 billion). The state contribution finances the income support provided by CIGD, while the regional funds finance the actions set out in the active labour market policies linked to CIGD (Regione Emilia Romagna, 2009).

Regions are responsible for the management of the measure. Each region held separate negotiations with all the social partners to establish its criteria and modalities. Basically, Italian law extended the application of CIGD to any category of worker of any company, but the technicalities (duration) have been decided by each region in consultation with the social partners. This implies that there have been 20 different negotiations in Italy, one in each region.

When it can be used

CIGD can be accessed:

- when ordinary treatments (unemployment benefit for suspended workers with a 20% integration by bilateral bodies) have been used up;
- directly when bilateral bodies do not exist.

Who benefits

All workers (including temporary agency workers, home workers and apprentices) employed for at least 90 days in enterprises operating in sectors or areas specified in ad hoc government agreements can benefit. The 90-day requirement implies that, given the short-term duration of agency worker contracts, some agency workers might have been left out. In fact, the Bank of Italy has estimated that 1.6 million workers do not qualify for any wage support measure, representing 11% of the total Italian workforce in short-time working (Bank of Italy, 2009).

Level of benefits

Like CIG, CIGD pays a wage supplement for non-worked hours equal to 80% of the salary the worker would have earned for full-time employment. Working time may be reduced by a maximum of 40 hours per week.

The wage supplement cannot be higher than a monthly ceiling established annually by Istat based on the CPI. For 2010, this ceiling is equal to €892.96 per month; it increases to €1,073.25 for those workers whose monthly salary is greater than €1,931.86.

Duration

Duration of the treatment is decided in the regional agreements and varies for each region. Periods of CIGD do not account for the limit of 36 months of CIG per unit.

[9] **http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/09002l.htm**.

The wage support is conditional on a declaration of immediate availability (*Dichiarazione immediata di disponibilità*, DID) for a job or training course. If a worker refuses to sign this declaration, or once signed, they refuse the offer of a suitable training course or job (each region decides the criteria of suitability for each job offer and training course), the wage support is withdrawn from the worker.

Funding

Unlike CIG which is financed by the employers (and for CIGS also by employees), CIGD is financed by the state and regions. The regional funds used to finance the measure come from the European Social Fund (ESF), and as ESF funds need to comply with specific criteria for their utilisation, this required the creation of a connection with active labour market policies.

Law 33/2009 provided that, only for 2009–2010, once the application for CIGD had been lodged and before the treatment was approved, INPS would pay the employees directly. If once the measure is approved it provides for less reduction of hours than that applied for, INPS will recoup the extra wage support paid to the employees from the employer (INPS, 2010a).

Enti bilaterali

Given the sectoral characteristics of CIG and the fact that many types of enterprises are excluded from its use, some sectors (such as crafts, services, credit) established bilateral bodies (*enti bilaterali*) based on collective agreements with the social partners (Ferri and Moretti, 2009).

The first bilateral body was for the craft sector, which was created in 1988 to complement the activity of the unemployment benefit (the only universal 'social shock absorber'). The system of bilateral bodies operates at a regional level and there is high variation in the number of members within each region; while bilateral bodies appear very active and have a large membership in northern Italy, they seem to have fewer members in the south.

Membership is voluntary and each enterprise can join the respective bilateral body by paying a contribution which differs for each region and each bilateral body. The funds are managed jointly by the social partners and are used to pay specific subsidies to workers in the event of a reduction or suspension of their working time.

With the financial crisis and in order to extend social shock absorbers to those sectors that cannot use CIG, article 19 of Law 2/2009 provided that temporarily suspended employees of companies not benefiting from CIG could benefit from unemployment benefit. This was conditional on a 20% integration of the amount of support under the unemployment benefit paid by the bilateral bodies. As unemployment benefit in Italy equals 60% of the lost wage, this means that the bilateral body would pay an integration of 20% of the support received through unemployment benefit, that is, the temporarily suspended employee would receive wage support equal to 72% of their lost wage.[10]

This latter provision encountered reservation due to the condition that the payment was linked to a bilateral body; if bilateral bodies do not exist for a specific sector or have no funds to provide for the integration, the suspended worker

[10] A suspended employee of a company without access to CIG would receive 60% of their previous wage from unemployment benefit and 12% (20% of 60%) from the bilateral body (**http://www.inps.it/newportal/default.aspx?sID=%3b0%3b5673%3b5685%3b&lastMenu=5685&iMenu=1&iNodo=5685&p4=2**).

has no right to benefit from the unemployment benefit. In order to solve this problem, article 7 of Law 33/2009 provided that the affected employees can benefit directly from CIGD if:

- there is no bilateral body for a specific sector;
- there is a bilateral body for the sector but the enterprise is not a member of it;
- the bilateral body has no funds to integrate into the unemployment benefit by 20%.

Wage support from the bilateral body for temporary agency workers

A wage support measure for temporary agency workers is financed by the bilateral body for temporary agency workers, ebitemp. Temporary agency workers unemployed for more than 45 days receive a lump-sum payment of €700 (€539 after tax) provided they have worked for at least six months (132 paid working days) in the last year for a temporary work agency that is a member of ebitemp.[11]

Security aspects of the schemes

During periods of CIG, CS and CIGD, social security contributions are paid only on worked hours. This does not affect employees' social security contributions as the Italian system provides for 'figurative contributions', which can cover periods during which the employee did not work at all (CIG and CIGD at zero hours worked, *contributi figurativi a copertura*) or they can integrate the contributions paid by employees during periods when working hours were not reduced by 100% (*contributi figurativi a integrazione*). This means that:

- workers on CIG and CS are entirely covered for their social security contributions;
- periods of CIG and CS do not have any effect in either the short term (sickness insurance, unemployment benefit) or the long term (pension).

Employees do not need to apply for figurative contributions as they are paid automatically by INPS once the wage support measure has been approved.[12]

Although workers benefiting from CIG and CS do not have any protection against dismissal, workers placed in CIG and CS are very rarely dismissed. When periods of CIG and CS have been exhausted, and if conditions have not improved, an enterprise can dismiss those workers who were on CIG and CS through a collective dismissals procedure. Such workers are placed on mobility lists.[13]

[11] **http://ebitemp.it/lavoratori/servizi/sostegno-al-reddito**.

[12] Contributi Figurativi per Cassa Integrazione Guadagni: **http://www.inps.it/newportal/default.aspx?sID=%3b0%3b5666%3b&lastMenu=5668&iMenu=1&itemDir=6292**.

[13] Dismissed workers are placed on mobility lists (*liste di mobilità*), which are basically availability lists, and receive income support (*indennità di mobilità*). Italian law provides for several incentives for enterprises willing to recruit workers on mobility lists.

Training element of the schemes

The Italian system has always been characterised by extensive reliance on passive labour market policies and by low investment and expenditure on activation policies. Therefore, the need to strengthen the link between active and passive labour market policies is a recurrent theme in the Italian debate. Almost all the actors believe this action to be the key to meeting current and future labour market adjustments, and also ensuring employment protection rather than job protection.

Unfortunately, the Italian system of active labour market policies is very complicated and there is a lack of communication between the many actors involved. Until the 1990s, the state had a monopoly over job placement services, which resulted in ineffective services for matching labour demand and supply. In 1997, the *Law Treu* (which among other things introduced atypical contracts) ended the public monopoly on placement services, allowing private recruitment agencies to operate fully. Furthermore, activation and education competencies have been transferred to the regions, giving them autonomy to design their own training policies and to set up their own public employment services through the establishment of job centres at province level (Graziano et al, 2010). However, the Italian public employment services seem not to be particularly effective in the job matching process as the majority of recruitment still goes through direct examination of curriculum vitae (CVs) and vacancy announcements posted on company websites, leaving recruitment through the public employment services only for low-paid public sector jobs. Despite having a mandate for job matching, recruitment agencies tend to operate only in the more profitable sector of supplying agency workers.

As far as the link between social shock absorbers and training is concerned, Italian legislation allows for the wage supplement to be revoked if the worker benefiting from the measure refuses a job offer or a place on a training course. In practice, this means that training is a precondition for obtaining wage support. The problem lies in the fact that, due to difficulties in the Italian public employment service system, relevant training and alternative job offers are rarely offered and even when offered there is often a lack of follow-up or monitoring. As signalled by Graziano et al (2010), the Italian LPS emphasised in its 2008 annual monitoring report on employment and employment policies that the effectiveness of the public employment services differed significantly over the country; even if 80% offered individual counselling services to provide tailored assistance to unemployed people, only four out of 10 monitored progress and verified compliance.

In an attempt to reduce this problem, Law 2/2009 article19 c.10 tried to strengthen the link between active and passive labour market policies. The law prescribes that any income support measure, including those in derogation, must be conditional on a declaration of immediate availability (DID) for a job or for a training course. If workers refuse to sign this declaration, or having signed it, they refuse the offer of a suitable training course or job, the wage support is withdrawn. Each region decides the criteria of suitability for each job offer and training course, but in general, an offer is considered suitable if:[14]

- it is consistent with the employee's skills and professional competences;
- its location is a maximum of 50 kilometres from where the employee resides;
- it can be reached by public transport within 80 minutes;
- in case of a job offer, the salary is not less than 20% of the previous wage.

[14] Law 291/2004: **http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/04291l.htm**.

The declaration generally has to be signed at the local INPS office when applying for the wage support measure. As part of the implementation of these welfare-to-work policies, the law requires INPS to communicate the names of employees benefiting from wage support schemes to the relevant job centres so that they can organise job counselling and appropriate training. Job centres therefore have a crucial role in ensuring that the declaration of availability results in suitable job offers and meaningful training courses (Ricciardi et al, 2009).

A further action to improve the link between active and passive labour market policies is found in article 1 of Law 102/2009[15] which provides that, for 2009–2010, employees benefiting from a social shock absorber that still implies an employment relationship (CIG, CS and CIGD) can be trained by their employer. As this training might result in productive work, the employer has to pay the difference between the wage support and the full wage. The project has to be negotiated with the social partners and approved by the regional office of the LPS. Following some reservations by the social partners, the LPS has stated that projects must be examined carefully as there is a risk that this provision could be misused by companies wishing to continue their normal activities without having to pay the full wage (employees benefit from the wage support measure and the employer pays only the difference between the wage support and the full wage).

The provision set out in Law 102/2009 article 1 was included in the general agreement *Linee Guida per la Formazione nel 2010* (LPS, 2010a) signed by the state, regions and all the social partners in February 2010, which provides the guidelines for training in 2010. This agreement highlights the need for a better link between active and passive labour market policies, with a focus on effective and relevant training of those benefiting from a social shock absorber. The agreement, which is organised in five guidelines, aims to achieve more efficient use of training funds, which for 2010 amount to around €2.5 billion. The objective is to enhance the competences and skills of those workers who are unemployed, out of the labour force, in mobility or in CIG (LPS, 2010b).

Training is still a regional competence, so each region has the power to decide which actions to implement in order to improve the link between training and income support measures. It is too early to evaluate the different actions implemented at regional level, but a recent report on the measures implemented by regions to combat the effects of the financial crisis on the labour market indicates that the level of implementation of actions varies between regions (Isfol, 2010).

- Some regions such as Lombardy, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna and Lazio, as well as the province of Trento, began implementing training activities for workers benefiting from wage support measures in the second half of 2009.
- Some regions such as Piedmont and Molise had started implementing actions by March 2010.
- Other regions started to publish calls for tenders for training activities only during the first months of 2010.

The agreement also provides for a strengthened role for bilateral bodies (in those sectors where they exist) and for the provision (within the bilateral system and public and private actors) of information points and education/career guidance to provide for better advice during the job-to-job transition period. This process will be monitored at national level with the establishment of a national task force responsible for identifying the demand and competences needed at local and sectoral levels. The regions and social partners (also bilateral bodies where they exist) will be responsible for gathering information on the professions required by the labour market. This information will be used to design appropriate training and to allocate available funds.

[15] http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/09102l.htm.

Fondi interprofessionali (or fondi settoriali)

Fondi interprofessionali are a special example of a successful experience from the bilateral system and are the result of a collective agreement among social partners which was later translated into a law. This agreement provided that a mandatory contribution (equal to 0.3% of salaries) paid by all enterprises to INPS since 1978 to finance continuous training could instead be paid to specific sectoral funds established in 2000 to manage these contributions. These funds are entirely managed by social partners and are created on a sectoral basis; companies are not obliged to join the fund for their specific sector but can join any sectoral fund.

Membership of the sectoral fund is voluntary as each company can decide whether to pay the contribution for continuous training to INPS or to a sectoral fund. Unlike the bilateral bodies which have a very unequal membership across Italy, the membership rates of sectoral funds are fairly high and they represent a successful experience in continuous training. The training process established by these sectoral funds is agreed collectively, as the fund only finances training projects that result from agreements among social partners at company level. Thus the company agrees with the trade union on a project that underlines the skills and competencies to be improved by the training.

There are around 10 sectoral funds in Italy today.[16] Although most sectors have created their own fund, the most important fund is Fondimpresa created by Confindustria (the organisation of industrial employers) and the trade unions. During the financial crisis, the sectoral funds have also been allowed to assist companies in crisis and to provide income support, though always conditional on training activities. In the agreement on the guidelines for training in 2010, the social partners agreed to also use part of the sectoral funds to promote better synergy between public and private funding to maintain employment and to protect human capital, allocating part of the sectoral funds to the training of those workers receiving wage support or on mobility lists.

Fondimpresa

Fondimpresa[17] is the most important Italian sectoral fund established by the collective agreements between Confindustria and three of the main trade unions: the General Confederation of Italian Workers (CGIL), the Italian Confederation of Workers' Union (CISL) and the Union of Italian Workers (UIL). The fund became operational in 2004 and its aim is to finance continuous training. Each company can be financed under two different schemes: *Conto Formazione and Conto di Sistema*.

Conto Formazione is individual (that is for each member company). This fund is financed by 70% of the 0.3% contributions and it is up to the employer to decide the type of training to organise, its modalities and technicalities.

Conto di Sistema is a collective fund destined for use by the smaller member enterprises. This fund is financed by 26% of the contributions paid to Fondimpresa and is used to finance training activities in enterprises located in the same area or operating in the same sector. Alternatively, it can be used for study or research purposes connected to the management of the fund.

Fondimpresa is an effective tool that has successfully financed training courses for employed workers. During the financial crisis the fund has been allowed the option of also supporting workers in CIG and in mobility; for example, the fund made available €50 million earmarked for the training of workers placed in mobility.

[16] http://www.fondinterprofessionali.it/.

[17] http://www.fondimpresa.it/Fondimpresa/index.html.

Temporary agency workers

On 13 May 2009, the LPS and the social partners signed an agreement to finance actions to mitigate the negative effects of the financial crisis on temporary agency workers. This agreement is financed by €39 million from the LPS, and €20 million from the sectoral bilateral bodies (ebitemp, FormaTemp and ebiref).

The agreement provides that agencies would implement activation pacts entitling temporary agency workers to receive a lump-sum payment of €1,300 provided:

- they had worked at least 78 days since January 2008;
- they had been unemployed for at least 45 days;
- they were not benefiting from any other wage support measure.

Under the activation pacts, and only during May and June 2009, those workers benefiting from the measure or temporary agency workers receiving unemployment benefit could also obtain a €700 training voucher provided that:

- the training was meaningful and coherent with the activities previously engaged in with the temporary work agency;
- they resided in any of the Objective 3 regions as envisaged by the EU structural funds 2000–2006.[18]

This training was financed under Objective 3 of the ESF key policy areas for 2000–2006: promotion and improvement of vocational training, education and counselling in the context of a lifelong learning policy.

The lump-sum payment was paid by INPS but financed in equal amounts by the LPS and the bilateral bodies. This measure was only valid for 2009 and thus only applications made before 31 December 2009 are considered below.

By 31 December 2009:

- 23,605 activation pacts had been signed;
- 47 temporary work agencies had participated (1,799 local agencies);
- 20,970 temporary agency workers had applied for the lump-sum wage support;
- 17,454 workers had been declared eligible and received payment.

As far as training is concerned, 23,017 temporary agency workers received training under activation pacts:

- 44% was professional training (such as mechanical design, CAD 2D and 3D, web design);
- 28% was in languages (English, Spanish, and Italian for foreigners);
- 16% was in information technology (IT);
- 9% in job counselling;
- 3% in communication techniques.

[18] Under the EU regional policy, structural funds regulations for 2000–2006 provided for three key objectives. In particular, Objective 3 aimed to support the adaptation and modernisation of education, training and employment policies and systems in regions not eligible under Objective 1. **http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/regional_policy/provisions_and_instruments/g24207_en.htm**.

The majority of training courses lasted for 40 hours and had a maximum of 20 participants:

- 34% of participants where women and 37% were foreigners;
- 44% were aged 15–29, 44% were aged 30–45 and 12% were over 45 years old.

The majority of courses took place in the north of Italy (46% in the northwest and 29% in the northeast), 15% of the training took place in the centre region, 9% in the south and 2% in the islands.

It is estimated that 30% of the workers involved in these training courses found new employment.

Source: *Italia Lavoro (2010)*

Monitoring of the schemes

INPS is responsible for monitoring the schemes. Its monthly reports on their use contain quite extensive information on the number of hours authorised and effectively used per scheme, sector and region. Data are also publicly available online, where on a monthly and an annual basis it is possible to examine the number of hours authorised per measure: CIGO, CIGS (which includes authorised hours in CS) and CIGD.

Transparency of the scheme

Extensive information on the scheme is available on the INPS website from which all relevant forms can be downloaded.

Detailed information on the scheme is also available on the LPS website and on the websites of the social partners.

Impact of the schemes

As shown in Table 1, the Italian system of social shock absorbers based on CIG was widely used between 2005 and 2009, and at the time played a crucial role in the management of company restructuring in Italy.

During the current financial crisis, CIG proved a vital tool guaranteeing income support for those workers on reduced hours or not working at all (CIG zero hours). This can also be observed from Figures 1 and 2, which show an increase in the amount of hours authorised for CIGS (especially since September 2009, underlining the extensive use of this tool during the financial crisis).

Until the first half of 2009, CIGO was mainly used, suggesting that companies were in a more 'wait and see' situation rather than undergoing substantial restructuring (Coletto and Pedersini, 2009). CIGO reached another peak in September 2009, but started descending from October 2009. Hours of CIGS authorised instead rose around August 2009 and continued rising up until April 2010, showing that, after a phase of standstill and in order to evaluate the scope and effects of the financial crisis, Italian companies were undergoing substantial restructuring.

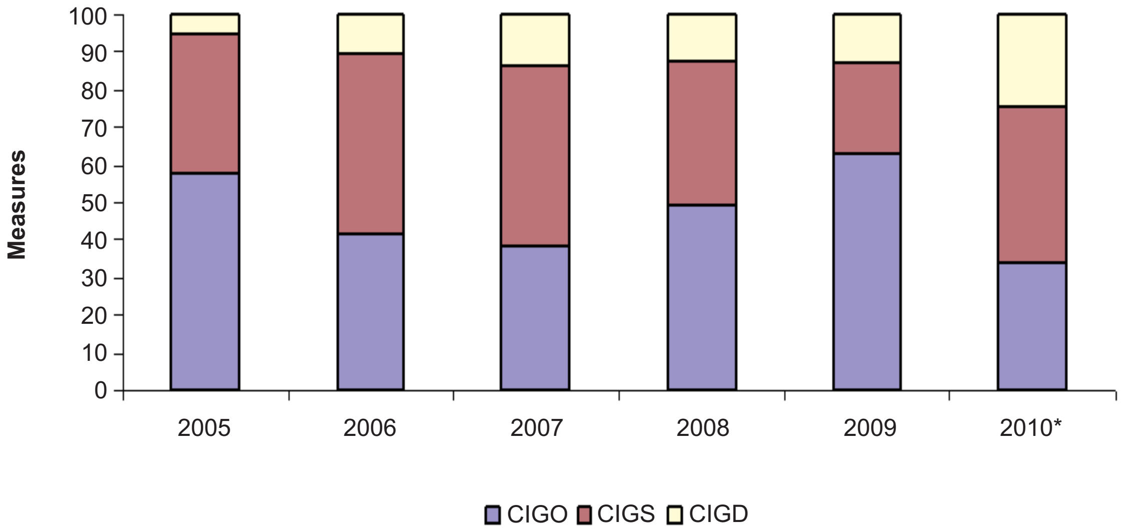
The state and regions reached agreement on the extension of CIGD in February 2009 and then ad hoc agreements had to be signed at regional level with the social partners. This meant that CIGD did not start to rise until January 2010. In particular, since May 2010 and in line with a reduction of authorised hours for CIGS, authorised hours for CIGD have started to rise sharply. This shows that many enterprises that had used up their entitlements for CIGS had applied for CIGD, implying that the need for these wage support measures is still strong.

Table 1: *Wage guarantee fund: hours and percentage change over previous period, 2005–2009*

	Year	Hours			Change (%)		
		Blue collar	White collar	Total	Blue collar	White collar	Total
Total	2005	204,671,045	40,229,567	244,900,612	-	-	-
	2006	192,751,439	37,195,823	229,947,262	-5.8	-7.5	-6.1
	2007	151,500,536	27,655,513	179,156,049	-21.4	-25.5	-22.1
	2008	191,548,581	31,612,955	223,161,536	26.4	14.3	24.6
	2009	730,302,786	184,284,636	914,587,422	281.2	482	310
By fund							
Ordinary	2005	128,061,982	15,168,809	143,230,791	-	-	-
	2006	88,167,322	8,638,329	96,805,651	-31.2	-43.1	-32.4
	2007	64,962,909	5,662,155	70,625,064	-26.3	-34.5	-27.0
	2008	103,820,957	9,459,688	113,280,645	59.8	67.1	60.4
	2009	475,899,334	100,566,025	576,465,359	358	963	409
Extraordinary	2005	76,609,063	25,060,758	101,669,821	-	-	-
	2006	104,584,117	28,557,494	133,141,611	36.5	14.0	31.0
	2007	86,537,627	21,993,358	108,530,985	-17.3	-23.0	-18.5
	2008	87,727,624	22,153,267	109,880,891	1.4	0.7	1.2
	2009	157,185,628	60,757,315	217,942,943	79.2	174.2	98.3
By sector							
Manufacturing	2005	162,628,305	38,104,504	200,732,809	-	-	-
	2006	150,553,917	34,707,678	185,261,595	-7.4	-8.9	-7.7
	2007	118,225,908	25,677,922	143,903,830	-21.5	-26.0	-22.3
	2008	153,331,805	28,411,405	181,743,210	29.7	10.6	26.3
Construction	2005	40,663,893	279,225	40,943,118	-	-	-
	2006	40,513,466	287,395	40,800,861	-0.4	2.9	-0.3
	2007	30,285,977	234,846	30,520,823	-25.2	-18.3	-25.2
	2008	34,114,587	225,242	34,339,829	12.6	-4.1	12.5
Trade	2005	1,378,847	1,845,838	3,224,685	-	-	-
	2006	1,684,056	2,200,750	3,884,806	22.1	19.2	20.5
	2007	2,988,651	1,742,745	4,731,396	77.5	-20.8	21.8
	2008	4,102,189	2,976,308	7,078,497	37.3	70.8	49.6

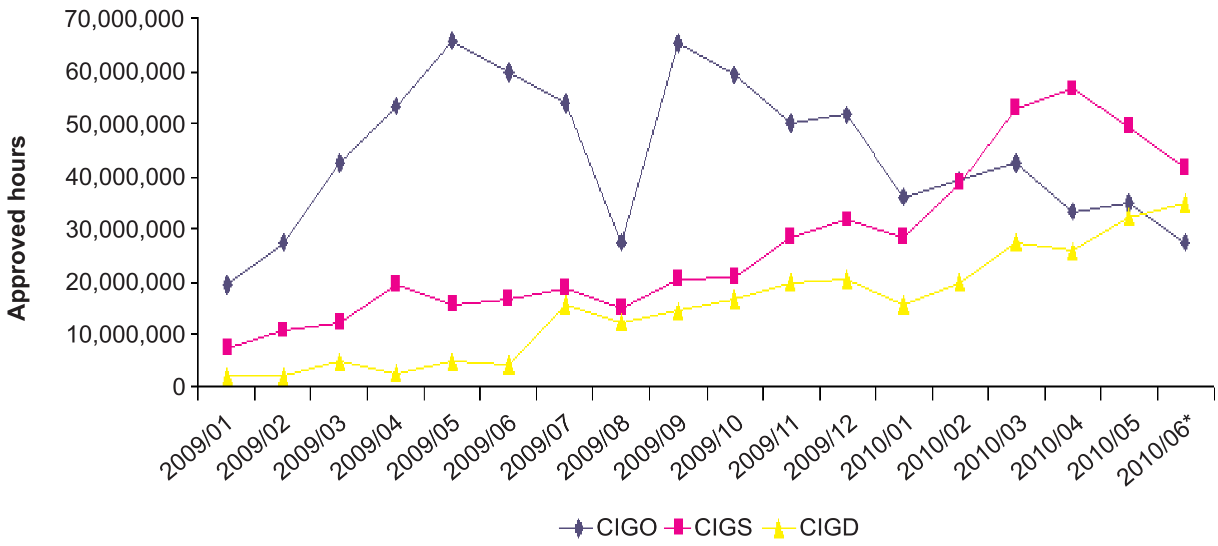
Source: *Coletto and Pedersini (2009, Table 11), updated with INPS data on June 2010*

Figure 1: *Annual authorised hours per measure*



Note: *Values refer only to the first half of 2010.
Source: *INPS*

Figure 2: *Authorised hours per measure, January 2009–June 2010*



Source: *INPS*

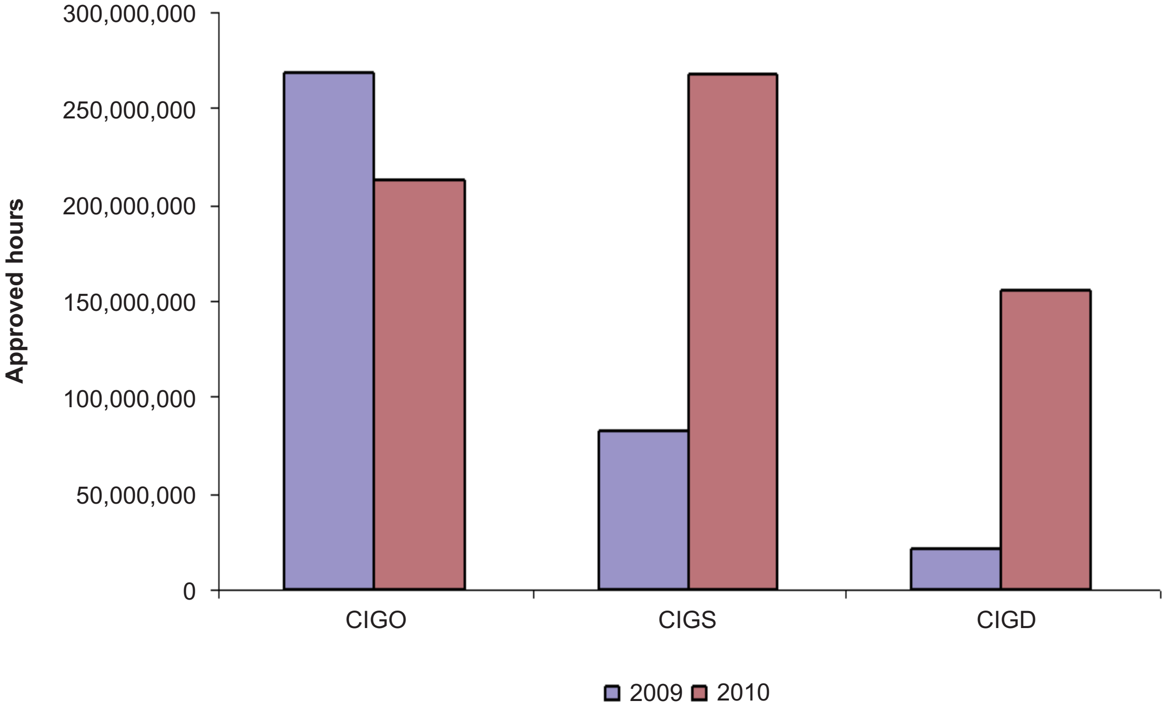
Table 2 and Figure 3 show, in detail, the difference in authorised hours between January–June 2009 and January–June 2010. The use of CIGO fell sharply in the first half of 2010 compared with the first half of 2009 (-20%), while CIGS increased by 225% and CIGD by 637%. The sectors most affected by CIGS were metallurgy (+524%), wood (+ 542%), mechanical (+412%), building and construction (+712%) and commerce (+300%).

Table 2: *Wage guarantee fund: hours and percentage change (June 2009 vs. June 2010) and cumulated values (January–June 2009 vs. January–June 2010)*

Measure	Type of worker	June			January–June cumulated values		
		2009	2010	Change (%)	2009	2010	Change (%)
CIGO	All	59,711,074	27,306,297	-54.27	268,202,984	213,036,239	-20.57
	Blue-collar	50,321,617	22,993,690	-54.31	227,173,089	173,877,563	-23.46
	White-collar	9,389,457	4,312,607	-54.07	41,029,895	39,158,676	-4.56
CIGS	All	16,578,975	41,501,570	150.33	82,271,852	267,606,924	225.27
	Blue-collar	9,322,687	28,151,930	201.97	56,190,495	203,671,031	262.47
	White-collar	7,256,288	13,349,640	83.97	26,081,357	63,935,893	145.14
CIGD	All	4,534,307	34,737,822	666.11	21,084,106	155,497,686	637.51
	Blue-collar	3,974,379	24,194,035	508.75	17,943,622	117,808,063	556.55
	White-collar	559,928	10,543,787	1783.06	3,140,484	37,689,623	1100.12
Total	All	80,824,356	103,545,689	28.11	371,558,942	636,140,849	71.21
	Blue-collar	63,618,683	75,339,655	18.42	301,307,206	495,356,657	64.40
	White-collar	17,205,673	28,206,034	63.93	70,251,736	140,784,192	100.40

Source: *INPS*

Figure 3: *Authorised hours per measure, January–June 2009 vs. January–June 2010*



Source: *INPS*

Table 3 shows the detail of the sharp increase in applications for CIGD per sector in the first half of 2010 compared with the first half of 2009. The sectors most affected by the increase in applications for CIGD were those normally excluded from CIGS. The highest increase is represented by construction and building (+6,075%), followed by commerce (+1,353%). In the industry and craft sectors there was an increase of 526%; within this figure, the small mechanical sector had the highest number of authorised hours in January–June 2010 (48,513,573), representing an increase of 880% compared with the first half of 2009 (CGIL, 2010a).

Table 3: *Authorised hours per CIGD, by sector*

	June			January–June		
Sector	**2009**	**2010**	**Change (%)**	**2009**	**2010**	**Change (%)**
Industry and crafts	3,608,718	22,363,991	519.72	18,054,720	112,973,294	525.73
Construction and building	1,274	710,625	55,679.04	31,614	1,952,240	6075.24
Commerce	912,393	11,504,467	1,160.91	2,756,731	40,048,489	1352.75
Other*	11,922	158,739	1,231.48	241,041	523,663	117.25
Total	4,534,307	34,737,822	666.11	21,084,106	155,497,686	637.51

Note: * Credit, public administration, agriculture, etc.
Source: *INPS*

In order to record how many authorised hours per measure are used, INPS cumulates hours of CIGS with hours of CIGD. Table 4 shows that the number of hours of CIGS and CIGD used is slightly more than hours of CIGO used across all the years examined. It is interesting to note that the percentage of used hours across all measures was much lower in 2010 (January–April) compared with the same periods in 2008 and 2009. In particular, 72% of the hours authorised in CIGS and CIGD were used between January and April 2009, but this percentage declined by more than 10 percentage points (to 55%) in the same period of 2010. These data must not be misinterpreted; indeed, it is too early to evaluate the relationship between authorised and used hours, and it would be better to wait for the end of year data. Furthermore, given how extensive the current crisis is, many enterprises that had used up all their entitlements to CIGO and CIGS ended up applying for CIGD, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of authorised hours for CIGD.

Table 4: *GIG and CIGD authorised vs. used hours*

	CIGO	**CIGS+CIGD**	**Total**
2008–used hours until April 2010			
Authorised hours	113,024,867	114,638,052	227,662,919
Used hours	77,140,285	96,790,718	173,931,003
Ratio (%)	68.25	84.43	76.40
2009–used hours until April 2010			
Authorised hours	575,465,359	338,122,063	914,587,422
Used hours	347,285,157	244,706,183	591,991,340
Ratio (%)	60.24	72.37	64.73
January–March 2010, used hours until April 2010			
Authorised hours	150,933,731	264,801,808	415,735,539
Used hours	68,956,111	146,679,771	215,635,882
Ratio (%)	45.69	55.39	51.87

Source: *INPS*

Solidarity contracts (CS) offer an alternative to the general system but this tool has rarely been used. The government introduced some incentives to promote CS use, but even if their uptake increased significantly in some sectors, the incentives did not raise the use of CS as expected. In fact, it seems that companies only apply for CS once they can no longer apply for CIG. The statistics provided by CISL indicate that only 14% out of the total applications for CIGS were for CS, and out of these, only 5% have been used.

Assessment and lessons learnt

CIG has proved to be a very effective tool in terms of meeting the needs of companies facing difficulties, among other things, enabling companies to undertake restructuring while retaining jobs at least in the short run.

Extensive use was made of CIG before the 1990s as duration rules were often disregarded and enterprises were allowed to be in CIG for many years (avoiding having to dismiss employees in both the short and the long run). From the 1990s, CIG rules and monitoring were stepped up and CIG became a very effective and useful tool in helping to retain jobs. At this time, CIG was used mainly as a tool to guide employees towards retirement, as an implicit agreement with the social partners at company level permitted older workers to be placed in CIG as these were the ones closest to receiving their pension. In some cases, these workers would be placed in mobility after CIG until they became eligible for their pension. This meant not only a loss of experienced human capital for the companies but also that restructuring could be carried out without major social costs and social unrest. The current financial crisis has been too extensive to continue with this informal agreement and this is the main reason for a shift in perspective: strengthening the link between active and passive labour market policies.

Nonetheless, there has been a major debate about the scope of CIG. Its nature is sectoral, implying that many sectors and smaller enterprises are left out and do not receive any protection in the event of reduced working time. Furthermore, the Bank of Italy has reported that, notwithstanding the improvement in terms of eligibility criteria introduced during the financial crisis, more than 11% of the Italian workforce in short-time working is still excluded from wage support measures. Much debate has been devoted to the necessity of reforming the current system of social shock absorbers in order to make CIG (or a similar measure) universal. Some actors believe the CIG system could be extended to all enterprises, but given that the measure is totally financed by enterprises, this would imply a considerable and unsustainable increase in the cost of labour. So far, the CIG system has proved to be totally self-sufficient (CIGO has always had a surplus, while CIGS is on average in balance), but extending the scheme universally would not be financially feasible.

To address this issue, some trade unions have suggested introducing a different contribution quota to finance the scheme (though provided small and medium enterprises contribute a smaller quota). Other actors have suggested that the solution could be found in the system of bilateral bodies. Where these bodies exist, they have proved an interesting and effective tool created by collective agreements among social partners. But as membership is voluntary, the rate of membership and representation by sector and region are very different; thus, they cannot act as the institution providing income support for those workers not benefiting from CIG.

This issue has caused much debate since article 19 of Law 2/2009 provided for unemployment benefit treatment with compulsory integration of the bilateral body for temporary suspended workers. However, some trade unions claimed to be totally against this principle as it links a voluntary, bilateral action that varies considerably in representation across Italy to an income support measure that should be universal. One proposal is to provide incentives to encourage the enlargement and strengthening of bilateral bodies (increasing their membership rates and representation), and to allow them to be the institution providing income support for those workers who do not have access to CIG. Another idea is that the sectoral funds could take up this income support role; in fact, they are a bilateral body themselves, they are already well-established in Italy with high membership rates and they could perform activities of income support in addition to continuous training.

Solidarity contracts (CS) require the principle of solidarity among a unit's entire workforce, but so far have been used very little. To provide incentives for their use, the government made CS more flexible, allowing the calculation to be based on the mean of the amount of hours to be reduced and increasing the wage support granted under the scheme by 20%. (This latter provision can be very profitable for medium and high earner employees, given that unlike CIG, CS has no maximum ceiling on the wage support received per month.) Nonetheless, even if CS use did increase significantly in some sectors such as textiles and mechanical, these incentives did not raise the use of CS as expected. This is mainly because the requirement for an equal reduction of hours among a unit's entire workforce results in difficult and problematic management of the organisation of the workforce and production. These developments slightly increased the use of CS during the current financial crisis, but in general enterprises use it when no other tools are available.

While awaiting reform of the social shock absorbers in Italy, ad hoc measures (*ammortizzatori sociali in deroga*) have been implemented to provide effective and timely support to those workers in enterprises not benefiting from the CIG system. These '*ammortizzatori*' cover all categories of workers and all sectors excluded from the traditional system.

The number of authorised hours for CIGD has increased sharply since September 2009 (see Figure 2). But while this measure has been effective and necessary in the short term, providing protection during the current crisis to those categories and sectors excluded by CIG, all interested actors believe that this is only a transitional measure. One of the main reservations about CIGD is that it is totally financed by public funds (state and regional), implying and providing incentives for free-riding. Although the CIG system is totally financed by enterprises and for a small part by employees (CIGS), and the same applies for the bilateral bodies (where they exist), the same cannot be said for CIGD. This means that, particularly relating to the provision of article 19 regarding wage supplement integration by the bilateral bodies, there is an incentive for a company not to join a bilateral body but rather to benefit from CIGD, as the latter is free while the enterprise pays a contribution to join a bilateral body and to receive income support.

In general, all these measures have been extremely effective during the financial crisis. Data collected by Istat show that employment dropped by 0.4% in February–April 2010 compared with November–January 2010. These data include workers benefiting from CIG, CIGD and CS. Once those workers benefiting from those wage support measures are excluded, the data show that employment in February–April 2010 dropped by 0.1% compared with November–January 2010. This suggests that the 0.3% difference is due to the number of workers in CIG, CIGD and CS (Istat, 2010a). If these workers had been dismissed rather than being in CIG, CIGD or CS, the Italian unemployment rate in the last quarter of 2008 would have increased from 8.6% to 11% (Boeri, 2010) or more dramatically it would have increased in the first half of 2010 from 9.1% to 12.1% (CGIL, 2010b) .

The main problem in Italy is the feeble integration between the social shock absorbers and active labour market policies, especially relating to the Italian system of public employment services. Actions to favour the re-employment of dismissed workers are necessary, and the government and social partners have agreed the following measures.

- Enterprises are allowed to have employees benefiting from CIG, CIGD or CS in training projects requiring productive activity in the company. As projects are totally agreed by social partners and then carefully approved by LPS, the risk of misuse by enterprises is reduced, resulting in a successful experience even if with limited scope (only four cases to date to the authors' knowledge).

- A general framework (*Linee Guida per la Formazione 2010*; LPS, 2010a) linking passive labour market policies and active labour market policies was agreed in February 2010. It is too early to give an assessment on this framework. Furthermore, as education and training are a regional competence, the picture is very different in each region; so far, some regions such as Lombardy in northern Italy have been very active, others less so.

Sectoral funds represent a very successful experience and have proved to be best practice in continuous training. With the financial crisis, they have been granted the possibility of also providing training for enterprises in crisis and income support to their workers (but always conditional on training).

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