

Smart working and the organisation of labour: smart working and internal labour markets in Italy

Case study – Smart working in Emilia-Romagna

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Introduction

The case-study is based on desk-research and interviews with both management and union representatives: a representative of the Emilia-Romagna Regional Administration, the Head of the Organisational and Digital Transformation Activities under the HR General Direction of the Region; and from the union perspective, a representative of the unitary union workplace representative structure¹ of the Emilia-Romagna Region and a representative of the regional union federation of public service employees (FP-Cgil Emilia-Romagna). The interviews with both sides guarantee a balanced perspective when exploring a radical transformation of work organisation, such as that represented by smart working. The interviews are aimed at identifying the possible critical aspects in designing the forms of smart working from an organisational point of view and in its implementation at the workplace-level in terms of working conditions. Furthermore, thanks to the direct involvement of the actors who politically and operationally turned smart working into practice in the Emilia-Romagna Region, the researchers were able to access most of the legislative and contractual documents produced so far.

The Italian Constitution defines the Regions as "autonomous entities", i.e. institutions, endowed with the capacity of self-government within the order and rules of coexistence of the Republic. The Region has freedom of initiative in the administration of its territory and has the right to legislate in some sectors: organization of social services, health care, right to study (education), professional training, protection of cultural heritage, promotion of tourism, development of trade and crafts, agricultural development, urban planning and transportation infrastructure, environmental protection, management of water resources.

The Emilia-Romagna Region is a complex organisation, divided into many services and offices mainly located in Bologna, but with some offices also in all the main cities of the region. At the end of 2022, the Emilia-Romagna Region counts about 3,700 employees including about 140 managers, 600 middle-managers (the so-called organisation positions PO) and the remaining quota of employment divided into 3 professional profiles (cat. B, Cat. C and Cat. B)

Remote work in Italy: a brief regulative framework

What generally falls under the definition of remote work² in Italy is currently regulated under three different sets of provisions³. The first refers to the notion of "telework", as established in the European Framework Agreement signed on 16 July 2002, transposed in Italy by a cross-industry agreement for the private sector signed on 9 June 2004⁴. The second corresponds to the category of "agile work" (smart work), as designed and conceived in Law no. 81/2017. The third scheme consists of a "derogated" version of the existing legal scheme of agile work, as designed by the aforesaid 2017 Act. Whereas the first two set of provisions were

¹ Company-level combined trade union body created by the **CGIL-CISL-UIL** framework agreement of 1 March 1991 and given express recognition as a combined workplace-level union structure under the Agreement of 23 July 1993 and subsequent national multi-industry agreements. These agreements confirm the preference of the Italian trade union movement for the single channel of representation system, since the RSU is simultaneously both the rank-and-file body of the various unions and the body representing all those employed in an individual work/production unit or in a particular geographical area. The RSU possesses all the rights granted by law and collective bargaining to the worker representative at the company level. In particular, RSUs possess the rights conferred on worker representatives by the Workers' Statute (to hold **mass meetings, ballots**, etc.) and they exercise the information and consultation rights provided for by law and collective agreement.

² A general definition of remote work in Italy has been elaborated among others by *Iacopo Senatori and Carla Spinelli: (Re-)Regulating Remote Work in the Post-pandemic scenario: Lessons from the Italian experience. Italian Labour Law E-Journal, vol. 14, no. 1 (2021) 209–260.*

³ Iacopo Senatori (2021), Italian Industrial Relations and the Challenges of Digitalisation in Hungarian Labour Law E-Journal 2021/2 <http://www.hlj.hu>

⁴ https://www.cliclavoro.gov.it/aziende/documents/accordo_interconfederale_telelavoro_9_6_2004.pdf

introduced before the pandemic, the latter represents a first attempt to simplify the adoption of remote working solutions as a general health and safety measure during the pandemic.

In Italy, telework has a distinct regulation in the public and in private sectors. Law 191/1998 and then DPR (Decree of President of Republic) n.70/1999 regulate teleworking in the **public sector** and were originally aimed at modernising public administrations⁵. The legislator intervened again with article 14 of Law no. 124/2015, entitled "Promotion of work-life balance in public administrations" (the so-called Madia Reform of the Public Administration). The reform establishes that public administrations must adopt organisational measures such as new spatial-temporal forms of work in order to support work-life balance and that at least 10% of public employees should make use of this organisational solutions within three years on a voluntary basis.

The most recent form of regulation of remote work is so-called "agile work", both in the public and private sectors (Law n. 81/2017). The definition of agile work does not only refer to remote work performance but implies a results-oriented organisational flexibility in a dynamic work environment in which "*spaces, hours and work tools are reshaped in the face of greater freedom and empowerment granted to workers*"⁶. As with telework, agile work shall be voluntary and the determination of organisational and operational issues (working and resting time, place of the working performance, control and surveillance methods, disconnection, use of ICT and digital devices) is left to the individual agile work pact among the parties, and so the employer and the single employee.

Smart work in Emilia-Romagna: a timeline

In 2018, a year after the Law regulating Agile Work in the private and public sectors (Law no. 81/2017), the Emilia-Romagna Region introduced, on an experimental basis, an early form of smart work by opening up for a small number of regional employees (81) the possibility to work without constraints of place and time ("anytime, anywhere") and with a certain grade of autonomy. After six months, the experimentation phase was extended again for another six months, enlarging the number of smart workers (145 employees) in order to collect, process and assess a larger volume of data and experiences. In 2019, acknowledging the positive results of the first experimentation, the Region approved the first formal implementation of this new work approach, with a fourfold increase of smart workers.

In 2020, because of Covid-19 emergency, extraordinary smart working was extended to up to 68% of the regional workforce with a great impact in terms of change management and performance management. In 2021 with the approval of Pola (Piano Organizzativo del lavoro Agile, Organisational Plan of Agile Work) that defines the objectives and processes of smart work for public administrations, the number of regional employees involved in a smart work plan quadrupled again in less than 3 years for a total number of more than 400 active smart-working projects: smart work can be activated in Emilia-Romagna only presenting a project involving a team of workers in order to trigger an organisational change. Today about 85% of the regional employment is involved in a smart work project.

This brief timeline of the development of smart working in the Emilia-Romagna Region identifies four different phases:

⁵ The Presidential Decree No. 70 of 8 March 1999 defines the organisational measures for implementing telework and gives a specific definition of it: (art. 2, c. 1, lett. b), teleworking is characterised by "performing work in any place deemed suitable, placed outside the public administration's premises, where the work activity is technically possible, with the prevailing support of information and communication technologies, allowing connection with the public administration where the work is expected".

⁶ G. Chiaro, G. Prati, M. Zocca, Smart Working: dal lavoro flessibile al lavoro agile, in Soc. lav., 2015, p. 72

- the pilot period, 2018-2019
- the implementation of smart working on a regular basis 2019-2020
- extraordinary smart work during the pandemic, 2020
- smart work after the pandemic, 2020-2022

The pilot period

In line with a solid social dialogue approach, in May 2018 the Administration of the Emilia-Romagna Region and the representatives of the local trade unions, the unitary workplace union structure and the Safety Reps concluded an agreement as a follow up to the memorandum of understanding reached in March 2017 for the start-up of an experimentation phase in the field of smart working. As explicitly stated in the agreement, the regional smart worker of tomorrow is a self-motivated and results-oriented professional and not certainly an bureaucratic public employee that needs to be controlled to avoid abuses.

The same agreement provides for the constitution of a bilateral project group made up by management representatives and union representatives with the aim of monitoring and evaluating the different “smart” activities and gathering information useful for its following implementation. In specific, the bilateral project group is aimed at observing and constantly evaluating the impact of smart working upon the relationships between management and employees and among employees (smart workers and no smart workers), the planning and controlling of working activities and some contractual issues: transfer (business travel), meal vouchers and the right to disconnect.

As emerged in the interviews, the idea of organisation change behind the 2017 memorandum of understanding on smart working is certainly influenced by a general legislative climate with the goal of transforming work organisation (the same Law 81/2017 and also the so called Madia Reform) and supported by a more general digital and organisational transformation that the Emilia-Romagna Region had developed since 2016.

The general digital and organisational transformation was lead mainly by the HR Direction that also heads the Corporate Assets Department and IT services, with a view to coordinating the organisational change from more perspectives, and was mainly aimed at:

- dematerializing office activities and regional services (cloud office 365 and web application accessible remotely),
- enhancing new collaborative forms of working (Social Collaboration project),
- carrying out a common and regional new intranet through which all employees can access the needed documents,
- strengthening Wi-Fi infrastructure,
- hiring new digital profiles (data scientist) and a higher empowerment of the middle management.

The process of experimentation on smart working undertaken in Emilia-Romagna was shared together with other Public Administrations (Piemonte, Lazio, Trento, Bologna and also the Polytechnic of Milan) in a common project [VeLA](#) (Veloce, Leggero, Agile – Smart working for Public Administrations, PON Governance 2014-2020) whose outputs have been taken as a reference for the Guideline for the Organisation Plan of Agile Work issued by the Public Function Department of the national Council of Ministries in 2020. The objective of the VeLa project is to provide an online [toolbox and guideline](#) for those Public Administrations that are willing to introduce smart working in their organisation.

The introduction of smart working in the Emilia-Romagna region was combined, without overlapping, with a 20-year experience of telework (about 400 teleworkers in 2018). As the interviewees stressed, telework is much more rigid than smart work in terms of working time (punching in and out) and workplace (that is often

the workers' home, whose safety needs to be certified by the employer). From the management perspective, the main limitation of telework is not so much in its formal obligations, but in the different use from the one for which it was conceived. Telework was mainly designed to guarantee a higher workers' flexibility but was exclusively used as a measure of work-life balance for commuters or employees with family responsibilities. In its implementation, telework was not used and perceived as an opportunity to produce an organisation change but only as a work-life balance measure with the risk of marginalising those workers. Differently, smart working has been introduced since its very beginning as a form of organizational change for increasing productivity, rationalizing space and technological devices, and improving work organisation. In this view, work-life balance could be seen as a side effect of smart working but not the main intent.

With this purpose, the selection of the candidates for smart working was not left to individual spontaneity, to avoid that it could be perceived as an individual right, but to the collective choice of the upper management and the employees. From the leadership perspective, this approach has two goals. First, involving right from the start also the upper managers so as to mitigate the cultural resistance to changes in command-and-control procedures and, secondly, making smart work feel like a shared decision and not a top-down decision. All smart workers that entered the pilot period received a fashionable backpack with digital equipment for working remotely (laptop, headphones, mouse, Office 365 license, smartphone...). Also in this case, the "fashionable backpack" has a double goal: to engage smart workers in a wider sense of corporate change and to symbolize the transformation from the old-fashioned public servant to the modern self-managed professional. In line with the national law, smart work is voluntary for both sides (employer and employees) and is not a new work contract, but a form of work arrangement regulated by individual agreements between the Emilia-Romagna management and smart workers. The individual agreement regulates:

- working time and the number of remote working days,
- how to carry out remote working activities,
- what devices that smart workers can or must use,
- in which places the remote work must be carried out (mainly public coworking spaces available in the Emilia-Romagna Region or other Public Administrations or private spaces, mainly the workers' home but not only)
- what forms of management control are allowed,
- and what measures need to be taken for guaranteeing the right to disconnect.

Given the positive evaluation in terms of worker satisfaction and performance standards, the pilot period was extended for another 6 months in November 2018, involving a higher number of employees according to the availability of technological equipment. Anyway, the evaluation of smart working brought to light some strengths and weaknesses:

- *strengths*: work flexibility and a better work-life balance, strengthening self-discipline and work autonomy, developing results-oriented and collaborative forms of work organisation and reducing commute time;
- *weaknesses*: when smart working is combined with a part-time work contract conciliation of work and social life appears to be more difficult, lack of homogeneity in filling out smart-work project, discord between the new result-oriented attitude related to smart-working and old forms of control, still based on attendance at work and intermittent communication among smart-workers and in-office workers.

The implementation of smart working in Emilia-Romagna

In June 2019 after the second pilot and given the positive evaluation of the bilateral monitoring group, smart working was formally implemented in the Emilia-Romagna Region: first the Region and trade unions signed an agreement regulating the specific issue and afterwards the Region issued a formal deliberation adopting the contents of the agreement and provided specific procedural guidance on smart work.

In this phase, the number of smart workers increased to 350-400 in 2019, in line with to the availability of the technological equipment with the general commitment to set up a corporate technical commission for the evaluation of further candidates. Furthermore, the Emilia-Romagna Region is committed to continuing the cooperation with INAIL (the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work) on monitoring and identifying possible health and safety risks of smart working, to activate on smart-work related issues the bilateral innovation committee provided for by the National Collective Agreement for Local Functions (art.6 CCNL Funzioni Locali 2018/2020) and to extend smart working up to 15% of total workforce and up to 5% for each Regional-Directorate in 2020-2021.

With the aim of overcoming the critical aspects related to the communication process (among smart workers, in-office workers, middle and upper management) and teamworking as emerged in the evaluation process after the pilot period, the Emilia-Romagna Region established that the smart-work project is not referred only to a single worker but it involves a team of persons made up at least of the single employee and his/her corresponding middle and upper manager. By doing so, the Region confirms its purpose to use smart work as leverage to change work organisation and not as an individual right regarding work-life balance. For this reason, no specific eligibility criteria were introduced, with the only exception of workers with children up to 3 years old or children with disabilities (in accordance with the national law on agile work - law 81/2017). As stated in all implementation documents, the smart work project proposal must refer to a team or to employees belonging to the same professional area with a view to strengthening the organisational impact of smart work. Furthermore, the smart-work project proposal must include what concrete and measurable improvement objectives can be achieved thanks to smart working (i.e. increased quantity and quality of services provided, increase of digitalization and dematerialization of services, reaction to work-life balance needs that could reduce work-load or rationalise workplaces).

Finally, the procedural guidance on smart work pointed out some possible consequences of smart working. On the one hand, the need to couple a smart concept of work with a smart concept of work-space. In line with a dematerialization process, the Region invites smart workers to work in regional co-working spaces or open-space offices when they are on the company's premises with a view to going progressively beyond the idea of having a personal desk or workstation. On the other hand, the opportunity to use remote work for testing new forms of monitoring of work activities. As reported in the Regional guidance, the activities of smart workers will be monitored more intensively than for other employees in order to collect specific information with respect to the relationships and communication between management and employees and the impact in terms of results achieved, networking and cooperation, digital skills, work organisation and working climate, HR performance and planning and controlling of working activities. Regarding monitoring, furthermore, the bilateral innovation committee is in charge of evaluating whether smart work is homogeneously spread among all the regional Directorates and for activating the regional competent corporate body (the Centre of Digital Transformation) for removing any obstacle impeding a balanced diffusion of smart work within the Region.

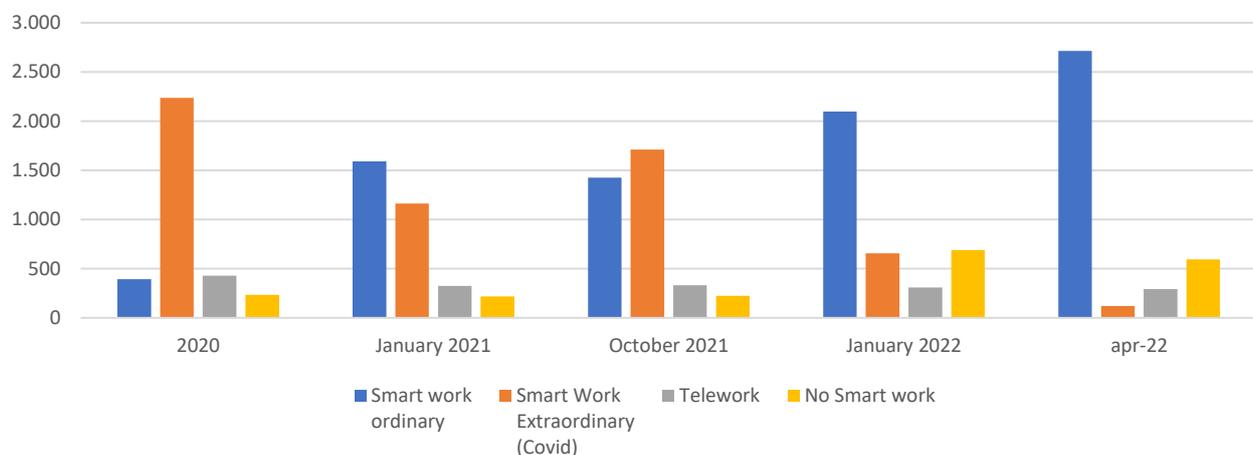
Smart work during the pandemic

Before the Covid-19 outbreak, about one-third of the whole labour force in the Emilia-Romagna Region worked remotely: a small part still in teleworking and a larger part in smart working. Starting from the first

lock-down (February-May 2020) and throughout 2020, the whole regional labour force, with only some marginal exceptions, was forced to work remotely from home, applying the derogated form of agile work as provided for by the national law (extraordinary SWers). In 2020, the Emilia-Romagna Region counted more than 2,200 extraordinary SWers (68% of the regional labour force), more than 400 teleworkers (13%) and almost 400 ordinary SWers (12%) (see Figure 1).

Due to the health emergency related to the Covid-19 outbreak, the normative framework on remote work was drastically simplified and amended both in the private and in the public sectors. In the public sectors, the national legislation first declared agile work as the ordinary form of work (Ministry Public Administration Directive No. 2/2020) and then defined in-office work as the prevailing form of work in public sectors (Decree of the Ministry of Public Administration 8 September 2021). Nevertheless, during the pandemic agile work has been strongly deregulated from its ordinary structure. Deregulated in its nature, as it was mainly conceived as a health measure and, furthermore, oriented to guarantee public service continuity. Deregulated also in its form, as it was mainly working from home and it could be activated unilaterally by Public Administrations (Art. 87, DL n. 18/2020, conv. by Law No. 27/2020).

Figure 1 – The number of employees for type of remote work



Source: elaboration of Ires Emilia-Romagna on data available on data of the Emilia-Romagna Region

During the pandemic all the efforts of the Emilia-Romagna Region were immediately made to guarantee at least a digital device to all home-workers, to activate about 150 digital facilitators to support home-working and solve technical problems and to offer an immediate training response to mitigate the risk of loneliness and strengthen the sense of corporate identity. In this regard, during the first lock down (February-May 2020) the Emilia-Romagna Region arranged a meeting with all employees every ten 10 days and re-oriented all training around smart working for being accessed through digital devices. With this regard, the interviews recognized that the experience gained before Covid in the field of smart working was very useful for dealing with the challenges posed by the pandemic:

- a large part of the regional applications and software could also be accessed remotely by web;
- all the digital instruments developed within the VELA project were useful to react to the digital challenges posed by the pandemic not only for the Emilia-Romagna Region but also for other Public Administrations;
- employees and middle and upper management were more confident in approaching remote working activities and the general investment on the pivotal role of middle management (the so called PO, Organisational Positions) in boosting smart work projects permitted a regional organisation more prepared to accept such a radical change caused by the pandemic.

On one side, the pandemic managed to persuade even the most sceptical on how remote work can be easily applied to most of the working tasks but, on the other side, turned smart-work from an organisational leverage to a welfare measure, or even to a health measure, distorting the idea of how smart work was initially conceived in the Emilia-Romagna Region. The Covid-19 outbreak suspended for a while all the efforts of the Emilia-Romagna Region to use smart work as leverage for an organisation transformation. The same national legislation pushed towards a welfare-based approach to smart working in which team-based work loses importance. Because of the social distancing imposed as a measure to combat the contagion, the process of re-organising the working spaces was necessarily interrupted as well.

Smart work after the pandemic

The Organisation Plan on Agile work

In February 2021 in application of a national legislation (DL. 34/2020 that modifies art.14 of the Law 7 August 2015, n.124, the Reform on Public Administration), Emilia-Romagna launched its POLA 2021-2023 (Organisation Plan on Agile work) informing and consulting trade unions and worker representatives. The POLA constitutes the planning instrument to integrate the different regional policies together with smart working objectives and defines organisational modalities, technological requirements, training measures, monitoring and controlling tools: specific attention has been paid to the creation of a conceptual model for the definition of indicators coherent with the regional performance management system. At the date of approval of the POLA, the Emilia-Romagna Region reached a degree of diffusion of remote work (telework and agile work) equal to 65.3%, a percentage which is therefore already higher than what is prescribed as a minimum measure by the standard (60%), even though with a distribution that is not yet homogeneous in all the top organizational structures of the Region.

Within the POLA planning and accounting, different surveys were conducted in 2021 in order to constantly monitor the impact on smart work and smart attitude on job quality, work organization, work performance and working conditions. The largest one involved about 2,800 employees and middle management, of whom 79% were SWers. The survey results contributed to clarify some weaknesses and strengths:

- smart working is still not homogeneously spread among the different Regionl-Directorates;
- SWers perceive a higher satisfaction on work-life balance and organisational well being compared to non SWers: 7 SWers out of 10 are satisfied with their smart work experience;
- Among the positive aspects of smart working, the majority of employees stress the reduction in commuting (about 300 km less per person every year with a consequent reduced environmental impact) and increased work autonomy. On the contrary, what is more criticized is the loss of the sense of belonging, the risk of isolation and a fragmented communication and coordination among team members for both employees and upper and middle management. Furthermore, middle and upper management perceives as a critical aspect the higher responsibility in distributing work-loads among team members;
- For SWers digital skills are much more developed, compared to non SWers and, in general, SWers are more satisfied with corporate training measures.

From the extraordinary to the ordinary form of smart work

The period from January to October 2021 was dedicated to the activation, by groups, of the smart working projects approved at the end of 2020. As we can see (Figure 1), during these ten months the distribution and the number of remote workers within the Emilia-Romagna still registers a prevalence of extraordinary SWers over the other forms of remote work. After October 2021, a new season of regional smart working began, characterized by two organisational key-strategies:

- the strengthening of the role of smart-work projects. In this perspective, the format for the presentation of smart-work projects was put under revision with a view to improving the capacity of identifying more measurable and higher-quality indicators coherent with the regional long and short-term objectives. By doing so, the Emilia-Romagna Region aimed at developing a more results-oriented approach among SWers and a common sense of belonging to the Regional mission;
- the launch of an application dedicated to coordinating and evaluating the various organizational processes related to the setting up and management of smart working projects and the related individual agreements.

The new season of regional smart work was mainly originated by a legislative provision on agile work in Public Administrations (Decree of the Ministry of Public Administration 8 September 2021): in-office work must prevail on remote work for each employee. While for most of the Public Administrations this change in the legislative perspective meant a full return back to in-office work, the consolidated experience on smart working permitted the Emilia-Romagna Region to be prepared in terms of digital competences and infrastructure, work organisation and working attitudes so as to maintain the existing smart working schemes. The only needed adjustment to the new legislative requirements was referred to the balance between remote and in-office working days: while before no limits were defined, now the number of in-office working days must be 51% of the total working days a semester. Smart work in Emilia-Romagna has never been conceived as fully remote but as hybrid solution: even before the Covid-19 outbreak, the average of remote work was about 1,5-1,8 days a week. After the end of state of emergency due to Covid-19, employees were asked to move from extraordinary to ordinary smart work and this switch can be seen in the data (Figure 1): from October 2021 the number of ordinary SWers increased from about 1,400 to more than 2,000 in January 2022 and 2,700 in April 2022 while the extraordinary SWers decreased in the same period from 1,700 to about 120.

The rapid and unexpected growth of SWers forced the Emilia-Romagna Region to introduce some organisational constraints and rules of conduct to reduce the gaps in the use of smart working among the different regional departments. The Region has always pushed for the development of a spontaneous behavioural etiquette regarding smart working, in line with the principle that cultural revolutions need time to settle down. In front of about 85% of labour force involved in smart work projects, the Region has partially revised this approach and introduced some specific rules: those intending to smart work must give formal communication by 9 am of the same day (or within 48 hours if authorised). Differently, the decision on how to distribute the smart working days within a time frame is still up to the team: the only constraint remains the prevalence of in-office work in a semester. From the union point of view, smart work is a work arrangement based on trust and any organisational constraint risks to weaken the trust bond and makes team working more difficult to be coordinated.

The 2022 agreement on smart work

Finally, in June 2022 the Emilia-Romagna Region and sectoral trade unions concluded a new agreement regulating smart work in the wake of the first renewals of the national collective agreements in the Public Administrations (and more precisely in the Public Central Function). The new agreement introduces and confirms some important aspects:

- in coherence with its organisational perspective, the Region has partially rejected the union proposal of replacing the sentence *“the Region promotes smart work as an opportunity for all employees”* with *“the Region promotes smart work as a right for all employees”* reaching a compromise solution *“the region recognizes and promotes foremost smart working as an ordinary work arrangement for all employees”*;

- it is confirmed the role of the bilateral innovation committee in monitoring and verifying the homogeneous presence of smart working among the regional departments. Furthermore, in order to break the resistance to change of a minority of the regional management and to hinder personal preferences on the management side, it established that all employees are entitled the same number of smart working days;
- the Region provides a specific task force for supporting teams in preparing smart work projects;
- two forms of smart working are foreseen. On one side, the ordinary agile work and, on the other side, the “protected” agile work that takes over all the existing teleworkers and all those employees with specific family responsibilities or certified special needs: “protected agile workers” do not have any limitation in the use of smart working. That means that both ordinary agile workers and protected agile workers need to be activated by presenting a smart-work project. Because of that, telework will stop to exist in March 2023 in the Emilia-Romagna Region. While providing two forms of agile work, the regional social partners take a different position from the last national collective agreement in the Public Administration that makes a distinction between agile work and remote work (telework).

Smart work and future challenges

As emerged in the interviews, the Emilia-Romagna Region over the next few years will be committed to consolidating what has been developed around smart working in terms of work organisation and smart attitude and accompany a transition towards a new concept of smart working based on the hybrid nature of work. Furthermore, this transition is taking place during a radical change in the structure of the employment composition: in the years 2020 and 2021, the Emilia-Romagna Region hired about 1,000 employees and renewed about 1/3 of the upper management introducing professional profiles with new digital skills, smart attitudes and working expectations.

In this view and in line with the general commitments already expressed in the POLA plan, the Emilia-Romagna Region identifies four priority areas representing the basic dimensions of smart working:

- Organisation
 - o to strengthen and to guarantee a homogeneous diffusion of the task management and measurement system for individual employees and teams through a systemic use of bigdata that the digital devices continuously produce. With this regard, the main challenge is to maintain a balance between the capacity of collecting useful digital data to measure the coherence of working activities to planned objectives and the capacity not to make employees feel under control with the risk of breaking the trust-based relationship. Task management should be aimed at supporting employees to constantly self-assess their job in relation to the other team members;
 - o to consolidate the monitoring system of the impact of Smart Working on performance and progressive adaptation (by 2024) of measurement systems to those more generally defined in the Regional Performance Plan with the view to progressively abandoning the “smart project” as a formal activation procedure. As emerged in the interviews, it is of crucial importance to support work teams in defining short-term and daily measurable objectives without the constriction of filling out a smart project sheet;
 - o to strengthen social collaboration tools and to share a common definition of a corporate code of conduct for a correct and respectful web behaviour (netiquette);
 - o to constantly monitor the impact of smart work on working conditions and corporate climate by using dedicated surveys and the tools already developed in the POLA plan.
- Training

- training has always supported the process of the smart working process within the Emilia-Romagna Region. New training paths have been developed since the implementation of smart work on emotional intelligence, task management, team coaching, team working. According to the interviews, in the coming months the Region's efforts will be focused on the development of leadership skills for middle and upper management that are constantly put under pressure in the coordination of hybrid forms of work performance, empowerment, autonomy and trust in both individual and team dimensions through investments in the specific training course: smart leadership, team coaching, digital lab, well-being, digital skills and project management;
- according to unions, training measures should be aimed also at the Regional management in order to break down biases against and cultural resistance to smart working;
- to monitor the development of smart attitudes repeating the Smart Attitude Assessment already experienced in the POLA plan in order to further strengthen the actions of skills development and orientate them to the specific needs of the regional organisation;
- Technology
 - Constant development of the digital workplace that can facilitate hybrid forms of working performance.
- Spaces
 - Developing and networking among all the co-working spaces in the Emilia-Romagna region;
 - From the union perspective, a side-effect of smart working could be a general shrinking of the regional premises with a view to reducing rental cost.

Conclusions

The Emilia-Romagna has developed a structured experience of smart working even before the Covid-19 outbreak. Whilst most of the Public Administrations in Italy were forced to undergo the fluctuating legislative provisions issued at the national level, the Emilia-Romagna Region, thanks to its expertise, has succeeded in reacting to the challenges posed by the pandemic and continued in its organisational transformation path.

In our view, the Emilia-Romagna case-study represents a positive practice to be explored for at least three different reasons:

- social partners have always been informed and consulted since the very beginning. Worker representatives and local trade unions have been involved since the first pilot phase. In line with a consolidated tradition of social dialogue, each fundamental step of the smart working implementation has been taken in agreement with trade unions and worker representatives;
- from its start, smart work has been conceived of as leverage to change work organisation and the very idea itself of public service organisation. In contrast with its effective application in other sectors, smart work in Emilia-Romagna has never been thought only as a measure of work-life balance. The organisational vision of smart work has always prevailed over the welfaristic one. Even immediately after the first lock-down, all the efforts of Emilia-Romagna Region were addressed to confirm its organisational approach to smart working asking all employees to move from the extraordinary form of smart work to the ordinary one;
- coherently with an organizational vision, Emilia-Romagna regards the implementation of smart working as a systemic change that needs to be supported by a wide range of regional policies. As a matter of fact, smart work has not been thought of only as the simple remoting of work but a deeper transformation that implies massive investment in digital training, in digital infrastructure, in radical migration from on-desk to web office applications, in smart attitude and smart work spaces.



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