

2 A Statistical Portrait of the Workers at the Boundaries of Employment and Self-employment in Europe

Who Are They and What Do They Do?

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2.1 Introduction

During the 20th century, analyses of labour markets in the European context show that parallel to the rise of dependent work, there was a concomitant decline in self-employment largely attributable to the decline of employment in agriculture and the development of mass production and capital-intensive industries (Conen and Schippers, 2019; Supiot, 1999). The historical decline of self-employment experienced a slight recovery from the 1980s onwards, mainly thanks to small enterprises. The reasons for the ‘renaissance’ (Arum and Mueller, 2004) of small businesses and self-employment in Europe can broadly be traced back to the processes of globalisation of contemporary economies, the ICT revolution, and the increased role of knowledge in the production process (Bögenhold, 2019; Bögenhold and Staber, 1991).

Although the impact of these changes on business development and job conditions is contentious, there is a broad consensus on the increasing heterogeneity of situations within self-employment that oscillate between genuine or innovative forms of enterprise and ambiguous and weak autonomous conditions, whose working circumstances are close to those of employees (Bozzon and Murgia, 2022; Kautonen and Kibler, 2016; Williams and Horodnic, 2019). The representation of the self-employed as small entrepreneurs, employers, and owners of the means of production has progressively been undermined by economic and technological changes and by the deregulation of labour relations. Such transformations have shifted the focus on categories such as ‘involuntary’ (or ‘necessity-based’ or ‘forced’) self-employed, ‘dependent’ self-employed (or ‘dependent contractors’), and ‘hybrid entrepreneur’. In terms of work statuses, all these labels, which are the result of emerging labour circumstances, began to challenge the traditional dependent versus independent dichotomy, delineating new ‘grey zones’ between the two poles that for decades, in the European context, have characterised capitalist production relations: employers and employees (Bögenhold, 2019; Bureau and

Corsani, 2017; Dvoutelý, 2020; Kautonen and Kibler, 2016; Murgia et al., 2020; Williams and Horodnic, 2019).

This chapter aims to provide a descriptive overview of the main trends in self-employment over the last 15 years in Europe by focusing on the information available in the European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) in an attempt to delineate the heterogeneous job conditions that characterise the blurred boundaries between self-employment and salaried employment, focusing on three main categories discussed in the current academic debate: involuntary self-employment, dependent self-employment, and hybrid entrepreneurship.

2.2 Data and Sample Selection

The analyses are based on data from the EU-LFS and the EU-LFS ad hoc module on self-employment 2017. The sample considers employed individuals aged 15–74 in 20 European countries.

Countries are selected and grouped according to four distinct types of institutional regulatory systems related to labour markets, education and training, and finance and inter-firm relations, derived from debates on the varieties of European capitalisms (Hall and Soskice, 2001) and varieties of entrepreneurship (Dilli et al., 2018): Conservative Market Economies (CMEs), Liberal Market Economies (LMEs), Mediterranean Market Economies (MMEs), and Eastern Market Economies (EMEs). The CMEs (including continental and northern European countries) are characterised by well-regulated labour markets and fairly permissive financial markets, vocational education systems that teach specific skills targeted to the workforce, and reliable legal systems that support inter-firm collaborations. The LMEs include Anglo-Saxon economies (Ireland, the UK) characterised by permissive financial markets and deregulated labour markets, education systems that teach the workforce general skills, and reliable legal systems that regulate business collaborations. MMEs (including France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) are characterised by rather constraining financial institutions and constrained labour markets, education systems that teach mostly basic skills to the workforce, and unreliable legal systems that make business-to-business collaborations difficult. Finally, EMEs are distinguished by constraining financial markets and well-regulated labour markets, education systems that teach mostly basic skills, and unreliable legal systems (Dilli et al., 2018).

Within this framework, what follows is a comparison of the profiles of SSE workers across different European countries, taking into account economic sector, type of occupation, and socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, and migrant status).

2.3 General Trends

Although, from a long-term perspective, there has been a revival of self-employment, an observation of trends over the last 15 years in Europe reveals that the average incidence of self-employed workers among the total number of employed persons 15–74 has slightly decreased from 14.4% in 2007 to 13.7% in 2022. However, the incidence of self-employment in relation to total employment varies

substantially between countries. While in the CMEs countries, primarily Norway, Denmark, and Germany, the incidence of self-employed workers ranges between 5.0% and 8.0%, countries in the MMEs constellation (Italy and Portugal) and EMEs (Poland, Czech Republic) show an incidence of self-employment against total employment at well above the European average of 14%.

The trend over time is irregular across different countries. Countries in the CMEs and LMEs show a consistent increase of self-employment on total employment between 2007 and 2022, including in the Netherlands (+2.4 pp), the UK (+2.0 pp), and France (+2.4 pp). Other countries have seen a consistent decline, including Germany (-2.6 pp), Norway (-4.4 pp), Italy (-3.8pp), and Portugal (-8.4pp) (Table 2.1). These uneven trends are partly attributable to changes in the volumes of those employed in the different employment statuses between 2007 and 2022 (Table 2.1). While in the Netherlands, France, and the UK there was a steady growth in the total number of self-employed workers exceeding the overall growth in total employment, Portugal, Italy, and Spain registered a loss in their volumes of SSE workers and entrepreneurs against a relatively stable volume of employed persons. Norway and Germany showed a decrease in the number of self-employed workers against an increase in the volume of total employment (Figure 2.1).

The majority of the growth of self-employment is associated with the category of micro-firms, own account workers, or SSE (Table 2.1). The category of SSE workers constitutes the majority of the self-employed, and their weight

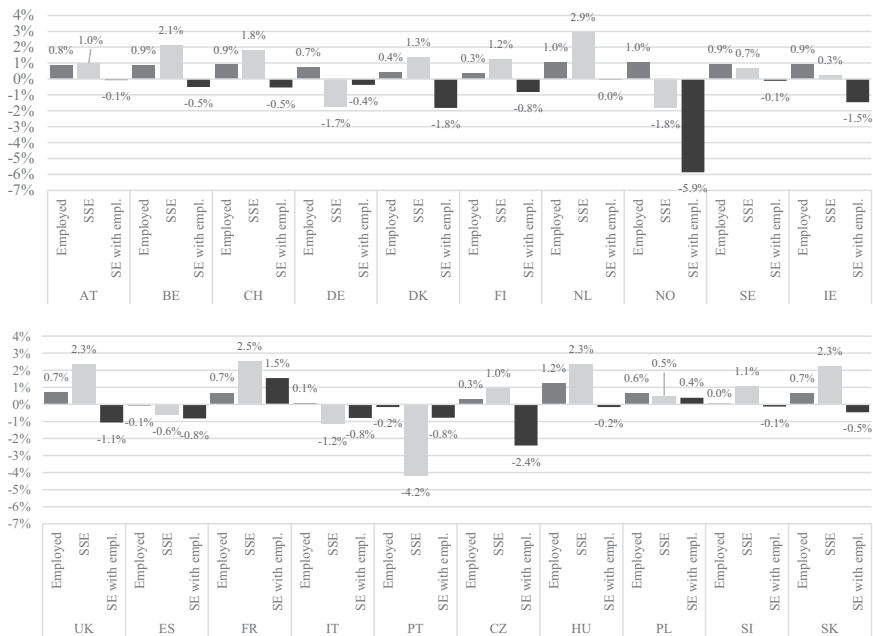


Figure 2.1 Employed, solo self-employed, and self-employment with employee – average growth rate 2007–2022.

Table 2.1 Share of self-employed and SSE on employed 15–74, and share of SSE on self-employed 15–74.

| | | % Self-employed/employed 15/74 | | | | | % SSE/employed 15–74 | | | | | % SSE on self-employed 15–74 | | | | |
|------|-----------------|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------------------------------|------|------|------|-------|
| | | 2007 | 2012 | 2017 | 2022 | | 2007 | 2012 | 2017 | 2022 | | 2007 | 2012 | 2017 | 2022 | |
| CMEs | AT | 11.3 | 11.1 | 10.9 | 10.8 | -0.5 | 6.4 | 6.5 | 6.2 | 6.6 | 0.1 | 56.8 | 58.5 | 57.3 | 60.7 | 3.8 |
| | BE | 13.4 | 13.4 | 13.5 | 14.3 | 0.9 | 8.9 | 9.3 | 9.4 | 10.7 | 1.8 | 66.5 | 69.6 | 69.6 | 74.5 | 8.0 |
| | CH | 13.6 | 13.1 | 12.6 | 13.6 | -0.1 | 7.6 | 6.9 | 6.8 | 8.7 | 1.1 | 56.0 | 52.9 | 54.2 | 64.3 | 8.3 |
| | DE | 10.9 | 10.9 | 9.7 | 8.3 | -2.6 | 6.1 | 6.2 | 5.4 | 4.2 | -1.9 | 55.8 | 56.8 | 55.5 | 50.6 | -5.2 |
| | DK | 8.4 | 9.0 | 8.0 | 8.0 | -0.4 | 4.6 | 5.3 | 4.8 | 5.3 | 0.7 | 54.3 | 59.3 | 59.8 | 65.7 | 11.4 |
| | FI | 12.0 | 13.1 | 12.8 | 12.5 | 0.5 | 8.0 | 9.1 | 8.8 | 9.1 | 1.1 | 66.7 | 69.2 | 69.2 | 73.0 | 6.4 |
| | NL | 13.4 | 14.7 | 16.3 | 15.8 | 2.4 | 9.3 | 10.9 | 12.3 | 12.3 | 3.0 | 69.6 | 73.8 | 75.5 | 78.0 | 8.5 |
| | NO | 7.7 | 6.8 | 6.4 | 4.4 | -3.3 | 5.6 | 5.0 | 4.6 | 3.6 | -1.9 | 72.3 | 73.7 | 72.3 | 83.1 | 10.8 |
| LMEs | SE | 10.3 | 10.2 | 9.6 | 9.5 | -0.8 | 6.4 | 6.4 | 6.0 | 6.2 | -0.2 | 62.1 | 63.1 | 62.5 | 64.7 | 2.7 |
| | IE | 15.3 | 15.7 | 14.6 | 12.8 | -2.5 | 9.8 | 11.0 | 10.0 | 8.9 | -0.9 | 64.0 | 69.9 | 69.0 | 69.7 | 5.7 |
| MMEs | UK ^a | 13.0 | 14.1 | 14.8 | 15.0 | 2.0 | 10.1 | 11.6 | 12.5 | 12.8 | 2.7 | 77.9 | 82.3 | 84.1 | 85.4 | 7.5 |
| | ES | 16.4 | 16.6 | 16.0 | 14.9 | -1.5 | 11.0 | 11.4 | 10.9 | 10.1 | -0.9 | 67.0 | 68.9 | 68.2 | 67.7 | 0.7 |
| EMEs | FR | 10.3 | 10.9 | 11.2 | 12.7 | 2.4 | 5.9 | 6.6 | 7.0 | 7.7 | 1.8 | 57.1 | 60.3 | 62.8 | 60.6 | 3.5 |
| | IT | 24.2 | 23.3 | 21.7 | 20.4 | -3.7 | 17.2 | 16.7 | 15.6 | 14.3 | -2.9 | 71.1 | 71.8 | 72.0 | 69.9 | -1.2 |
| | PT | 22.4 | 19.9 | 15.5 | 14.2 | -8.2 | 16.8 | 14.9 | 10.7 | 9.1 | -7.7 | 75.1 | 74.7 | 69.4 | 64.2 | -10.9 |
| | CZ | 15.5 | 17.8 | 16.6 | 15.5 | -0.1 | 11.8 | 14.4 | 13.4 | 13.0 | 1.2 | 75.9 | 81.0 | 81.1 | 84.0 | 8.1 |
| | HU | 12.0 | 11.3 | 10.1 | 12.2 | 0.2 | 6.8 | 6.1 | 5.4 | 8.0 | 1.2 | 56.3 | 53.6 | 53.9 | 65.1 | 8.8 |
| | PL | 19.1 | 18.8 | 17.8 | 18.7 | -0.4 | 15.1 | 14.6 | 13.7 | 14.8 | -0.3 | 78.9 | 77.8 | 77.3 | 79.2 | 0.3 |
| EMEs | SI | 10.8 | 12.0 | 11.7 | 12.0 | 1.2 | 7.5 | 8.6 | 7.9 | 8.7 | 1.2 | 69.3 | 71.5 | 67.2 | 72.9 | 3.6 |
| | SK | 12.8 | 15.4 | 15.2 | 14.9 | 2.1 | 9.7 | 12.4 | 12.0 | 12.2 | 2.6 | 75.6 | 80.3 | 78.9 | 82.3 | 6.7 |
| | Total | 14.4 | 14.5 | 14.0 | 13.7 | -0.7 | 9.8 | 10.1 | 9.8 | 9.6 | -0.6 | 67.9 | 69.7 | 70.1 | 70.3 | 2.4 |

Source: Own calculations on Eurostat online database 'Employment and unemployment (LFS)' [lfsa_espais] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>.

Note: For UK data refers to 2007, 2012, 2017, 2019.

has increased over time in most countries. On average, the SSE account for about 70% of the self-employed. However, while in Germany, Austria, and France the proportion of SSE did not exceed 60% of self-employment in the 15 years under consideration, in Norway, the UK, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, the proportion of SSE workers increased over time and exceeded 80% in 2022.

With respect to socio-demographic profile (Table 2.2), the main change can be seen in the ageing of the employed population over the last 15 years, with a more pronounced impact among the self-employed. Almost one in two self-employed were aged 50–74 in 2022. Moreover, among the SSE, an increase in the incidence of women, foreigners, and individuals with high educational qualifications can be observed, but these trends are in line with the average trends of the total employed population.

2.4 Trends of Solo Self-Employment by Sector and Occupation: iPros, High-Skilled, and Low-Skilled

As shown in the previous section, recent trends in levels of self-employment are largely due to the growth of SSE workers. The development of micro-enterprises and own account workers is often portrayed as a consequence of the processes of globalisation and technological change. To describe the magnitude of this transformation, the sectors and occupational domains in which SSE are most prominent need to be considered. Along this line of analysis, a fundamental distinction is made between the development of occupations and forms of self-employment in the knowledge-based as well as in the traditional sectors and occupations.

Table 2.3 compares how the composition of the SSE and total employed population has changed by economic sector and type of occupation over the last 15 years. Specifically, sectors are classified into five categories: Agriculture; Construction; Knowledge-based intensive Sectors (KBS); Non-Knowledge Based intensive Sectors (Non-KBS); and Other Tertiary (Knapp, 2020; Knapp et al., 2021).

Table 2.4 confirms that the relevance of the employed in the service sector and in the KBS particularly has grown markedly in the last 15 years. While one in four employed persons worked in KBS were SSE in 2008, this ratio rose to one in three in 2022. This change is also reflected in the sector profile of the SSE: while 27.5% of the SSE worked in KBS in 2008, this percentage rose to 37.2% in 2022 (Table 2.3). Within the KBS, the share of the SSE on total employed grew from 8.8% to 10.3% between 2008 and 2022, with an average annual growth in the volume of the SSE of 2.7% against an average growth of overall employment in the sector of 1.6%. Thus, the development of work and professions in KBS is a key driver of the growth of (solo) self-employment. The increase of labour demand in KBS is of particular interest because the SSE workers employed in this industry are often classified as independent professionals – the so-called ‘iPros’ – and freelancers

Table 2.2 Employed (SSE, SE with employees, employees) by sex, age, country of birth and level of education, and share of SSE and SE with employees on employed, 15–74. EU 2007 and 2022.

| | Descriptives | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|-------|-------------------|-------|---------------|-------|-----------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-----------------------------|------|
| | SSE | | SE with employees | | Self-Employed | | Employees | | Tot Employed 15–74 | | %SSE/ Employed | | %SE with employees/employed | |
| | 2007 | 2022 | 2007 | 2022 | 2007 | 2022 | 2007 | 2022 | 2007 | 2022 | 2007 | 2022 | 2007 | 2022 |
| Sex | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 67.1 | 63.9 | 75.8 | 72.2 | 69.9 | 66.4 | 52.9 | 51.3 | 55.4 | 53.4 | 11.8% | 11.5% | 6.3% | 5.5% |
| Female | 32.9 | 36.1 | 24.2 | 27.8 | 30.1 | 33.6 | 47.1 | 48.7 | 44.6 | 46.6 | 7.2% | 7.4% | 2.5% | 2.4% |
| Age classes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15–34 | 22.4 | 19.3 | 15.1 | 11.2 | 20.1 | 17.0 | 36.9 | 31.9 | 34.5 | 29.9 | 6.3% | 6.2% | 2.0% | 1.5% |
| 35–49 | 42.9 | 36.7 | 48.6 | 39.0 | 44.7 | 37.4 | 40.3 | 36.1 | 40.9 | 36.3 | 10.3% | 9.7% | 5.5% | 4.4% |
| 50–74 | 34.8 | 44.1 | 36.3 | 49.8 | 35.2 | 45.6 | 22.8 | 32.0 | 24.6 | 33.9 | 13.8% | 12.5% | 6.8% | 5.9% |
| Country of birth | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Foreign | 5.5 | 8.8 | 4.6 | 7.6 | 5.2 | 8.5 | 7.0 | 10.1 | 6.7 | 9.9 | 8.0% | 8.6% | 3.2% | 3.1% |
| Native | 94.5 | 91.1 | 95.3 | 92.3 | 94.7 | 91.5 | 92.9 | 89.9 | 93.2 | 90.1 | 9.9% | 9.7% | 4.7% | 4.1% |
| Level of education | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Low | 29.4 | 17.5 | 23.8 | 17.3 | 27.6 | 17.4 | 24.0 | 16.6 | 24.5 | 16.7 | 11.7% | 10.0% | 4.5% | 4.2% |
| Medium | 45.0 | 42.9 | 43.5 | 41.4 | 44.5 | 42.5 | 49.2 | 44.5 | 48.5 | 44.2 | 9.1% | 9.3% | 4.1% | 3.8% |
| High | 25.5 | 39.4 | 32.5 | 41.1 | 27.7 | 39.9 | 26.6 | 38.7 | 26.8 | 38.9 | 9.7% | 9.6% | 4.8% | 4.1% |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 9.8% | 9.6% | 4.6% | 4.1% |

Source: Own calculations on Eurostat online database 'Employment and unemployment (LFS)' [lfsa_espais] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>.

Table 2.3 SSE and employed (15–74). Descriptives by sector and occupation, 2008 and 2022.

| | SSE 15–74 | | | Employed 15–74 | | |
|---|-----------|------|-------------------------|----------------|------|-------------------------|
| | 2008 | 2022 | Δ (2022–2008) | 2008 | 2022 | Δ (2022–2008) |
| Primary | 17.8 | 11.2 | –6.6pp | 14.0 | 10.1 | –3.9pp |
| Constructions | 13.6 | 12.9 | –0.7pp | 14.1 | 13.2 | –0.9pp |
| Secondary | 6.3 | 5.5 | –0.8pp | 8.3 | 6.8 | –1.6pp |
| KBS | 27.5 | 37.2 | +9.7pp | 25.7 | 33.8 | +8.1pp |
| NoKBS | 32.5 | 31.3 | –1.2pp | 36.2 | 34.5 | –1.7pp |
| Other tertiary | 2.1 | 1.3 | –0.7pp | 1.6 | 1.2 | –0.4pp |
| Managers | 5.1 | 5.8 | +0.7pp | 6.2 | 6.3 | +0.1pp |
| Professionals | 22.2 | 26.9 | +4.7pp | 18.6 | 22.9 | +4.3pp |
| Technicians and associate professionals | 13.4 | 14.4 | +1.0pp | 16.5 | 16.2 | –0.3pp |
| Clerical support workers | 2.2 | 1.9 | –0.3pp | 10.5 | 10.3 | –0.3pp |
| Service and sales workers | 16.3 | 15.0 | –1.3pp | 17.2 | 16.1 | –1.1pp |
| Skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers | 15.8 | 11.6 | –4.1pp | 3.0 | 2.3 | –0.7pp |
| Craft and related trades workers | 17.4 | 16.5 | –0.9pp | 11.9 | 10.8 | –1.1pp |
| Plant and machine operators and assemblers | 4.6 | 4.6 | +0.0pp | 7.1 | 6.8 | –0.2pp |
| Elementary occupations | 3.1 | 3.4 | +0.3pp | 9.0 | 8.3 | –0.8pp |
| | 100 | 100 | | 100 | 100 | |

Source: Own calculations on Eurostat online database ‘Employment and unemployment (LFS) [lfsa_espais] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>.

(Rapelli, 2012; Knapp et al., 2021; McKeown, 2015), a central category in the debate on the precarisation of high-skilled workers employed in the grey areas between employment and self-employment. A large proportion of the employed in KBS are represented by high-skilled professions, namely managers, professionals and technicians, and associate professionals.

The relevance of SSE workers among the employed in KBS varies significantly across countries regardless of the institutional context (Figure 2.2). While in Italy the share of the SSE on the total employment in KBS is about 20% and remained relatively stable over time, in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic it grew rapidly between 2008 and 2022, reaching 15% of the employed in the industry in 2022. On the contrary, there are contexts with a low incidence of the SSE in KBS and a concomitant decrease; this is the case in Germany and Norway, where respectively only 6.2% and 3.2% were employed as SSE in KBS in 2022.

Table 2.4 Share of SSE on employed (15–74), and average growth rate SSE and employed by sector (2008, 2012, 2017, and 2022) and occupation (2012, 2017, 2022).

| | % SSE/TOT employed | | | | | Average growth rate 2022/2008 | |
|--|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|
| | 2008 | 2012 | 2017 | 2022 | Δ (2022–2012) | SSE | Employed |
| Primary | 46.0% | 44.7% | 41.2% | 39.8% | –6.2 pp | –2.8% | –1.7% |
| Constructions | 15.9% | 18.6% | 18.9% | 18.5% | +2.6 pp | +0.2% | –0.2% |
| Secondary | 3.2% | 3.4% | 3.3% | 3.2% | 0.0 pp | –0.4% | –1.3% |
| KBS | 8.8% | 9.9% | 10.2% | 10.3% | +1.4 pp | +2.7% | +1.6% |
| NoKBS | 10.2% | 10.6% | 10.0% | 9.8% | –0.4 pp | +0.2% | +0.5% |
| Total | 9.6% | 10.1% | 9.8% | 9.6% | 0.0 pp | +0.5% | +0.5% |
| Managers | | 8.4% | 8.2% | 8.9% | +0.5 pp | 1.7% | 1.1% |
| Professionals | | 12.2% | 12.2% | 11.3% | –0.9 pp | 2.3% | 3.0% |
| Technicians and associate professionals | | 8.3% | 8.0% | 8.6% | –0.8 pp | 1.1% | 0.7% |
| Clerical support workers | | 2.1% | 1.9% | 1.8% | –0.4 pp | –1.3% | 0.6% |
| Service and sales workers | | 9.7% | 9.5% | 9.0% | –0.7 pp | –0.5% | 0.2% |
| Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers | | 53.9% | 50.4% | 48.6% | –5.3 pp | –2.6% | –1.6% |
| Craft and related trades workers | | 14.9% | 14.7% | 14.8% | –0.1 pp | –0.2% | –0.1% |
| Plant and machine operators and assemblers | | 6.6% | 6.2% | 6.5% | –0.1 pp | 0.4% | 0.6% |
| Elementary occupations | | 3.4% | 3.6% | 3.9% | 0.5 pp | 1.3% | 0.0% |

Source: Own calculations on Eurostat online database ‘Employment and unemployment (LFS)’ [lfsa_espais] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

The analysis by sector also highlights some dynamics concerning SSE workers in low-skilled occupations. First, there has been a consistent decline of the SSE in agriculture – from 46% to 39.8% – also mirrored by the decline of skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers. Second, in the construction sector, the incidence of the SSE grew by 2.6 pp, reaching 18.5% of total employment in the sector in 2022. In this case,

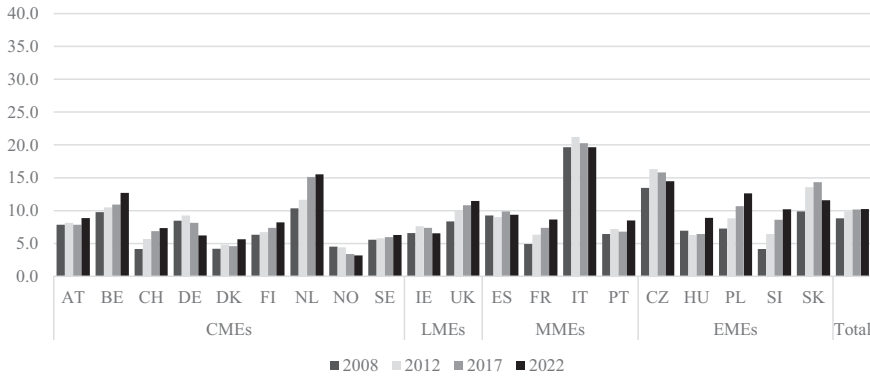


Figure 2.2 Percentage of solo self-employed on employed in knowledge-based sectors (KBS) (15–74) in 2007, 2012, 2017, 2022.

the occupational profiles developed were mainly related to craft and other trade workers and low-skilled jobs in the elementary occupations. In the construction sector, there were significant differences between countries in the relevance of SSE workers. In Slovakia, Czech Republic, and the UK, two out of five employed in the construction sector were SSE, while this condition applied to less than one in ten workers in Norway and Sweden and less than one in twenty in Austria.

2.5 Exploring the Grey Areas of Work: Involuntary and Dependent Self-Employment

In political and public debates, the promotion and support of self-employment and small businesses are often portrayed as ways of working that enable processes of economic innovation and the creation of new jobs that offer, compared to subordinate work, more space for self-fulfilment and the reconciliation between work and private spheres through greater control and autonomy in deciding when, where, and how to work. At the same time, the debate on the grey areas of work pointed out that self-employment is not always configured as a free choice motivated by a genuine entrepreneurial vocation but rather as a necessity related to marginalisation processes connected to macro-insecure economic conditions or processes of reorganisation of work that force workers to accept subcontracting or freelancing given the unwillingness of labour demand to create dependent employment positions (Aguilar et al., 2013; Kautonen et al., 2010; Millán et al., 2019; Smeaton, 2003). This second dynamic favours the development of marginal and weak self-employment positions such as involuntary (Carrasco and Hernanz, 2021; de Vries et al., 2020; Ferrín, 2023; Kautonen et al., 2010) and dependent self-employed workers (Böheim and Mühlberger, 2009; Bozzon and Murgia, 2022; Williams and Horodnic, 2019).

The category of involuntary self-employed refers to the motivations that led to starting an entrepreneurial or self-employed activity. The main distinction is between those who are pulled into self-employment on a voluntary basis and those who are pushed into self-employment because of economic or labour market pressures, out of necessity, or because they were forced to do so by their previous employers. Involuntary self-employed workers usually lack the intrinsic motivation necessary to support a genuine business activity and are more exposed to risk of business unsuccess and low subjective well-being (Block and Koellinger, 2009; de Vries et al., 2020).

Dependent self-employment refers instead to SSE workers who, in principle, should organise their work autonomously, but in practice are characterised by economic and/or operational dependencies that make their job conditions close to those of employees. Economic dependency is defined by job situations in which a self-employed person has a dominant client or a specific firm (employer) that defines their access to the market, price setting, and access to raw materials or capital items. Operational dependency refers to the lack of authority in deciding work organisation (Bozzon and Murgia, 2022; Williams and Horodnic, 2019).

Although there is a lack of data that would allow for a systematic longitudinal analysis, the ad hoc module on self-employment of the 2017 EU-LFS allows for a cross-country comparison on the quality of the working conditions of the SSE by taking into account the motivations for starting a self-employed activity, which characterised involuntary self-employment, and (some) forms of economic and operational dependency that define dependent self-employment conditions.

2.5.1 *Involuntary Self-Employment*

For the purposes of this analysis, the identification of involuntary status is based on the main reason that led to the start of the business activity. Involuntary SSE workers are self-employed people who either could not find a job as employees or were requested to become self-employed by a former employer or did not want (or plan) to be self-employed but entered self-employment for other reasons. Figure 2.3 compares the incidence of involuntary SSE workers with the total number of SSE across countries. On average, 16.8% of SSE workers in the selected European countries started their independent work because they were forced into it or out of necessity. For almost one in two involuntary SSE workers, involuntariness is due to an inability to find a salaried job.

There are substantial differences across countries in the incidence of involuntary self-employment. On average, in the countries of the MME and EME constellations, the incidence of involuntary SSE workers is higher and largely above the EU average than in the CMEs and LMEs. In Slovakia, almost two out of five SSE declared that they started their business on an involuntary basis. Alongside those who started self-employment because they were not

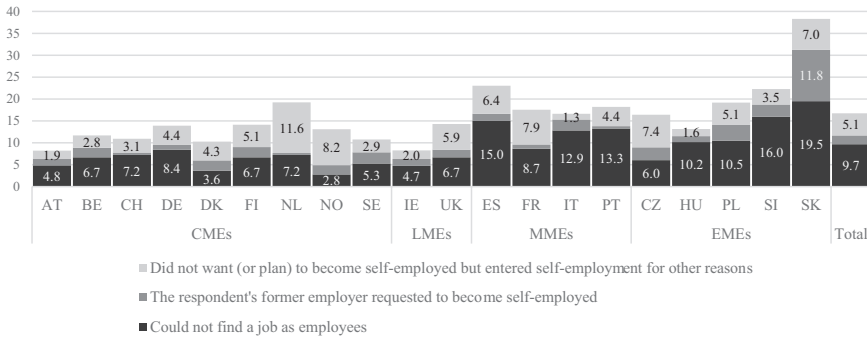


Figure 2.3 Involuntary self-employed. Percentage of solo self-employed (15–74) by country.

able to access paid employment, there is a large proportion who declared that they were forced into this choice by their previous employer. Slovakia is the only country where a consistent prevalence of this option is visible. In the other countries, this option is found in around 2% of the self-employed. These high levels of involuntariness in Slovakia can partly be attributed to labour regulations, the conditions of which are so strict that they facilitate exclusion from employee status (Digennaro, 2020). Moreover, in Austria and Ireland too, the percentage of involuntary SSE workers is approximately 7%, a quite uncommon condition with respect to the other countries. These differences between contexts in the incidence of involuntariness of self-employment are connected to institutional differences in levels of support for entrepreneurial activity and employment creation. Favourable legal and institutional support for the labour market and entrepreneurship are indeed usually positively related to the creation of genuine enterprises (Gevaert et al., 2018). In particular, Scandinavian, conservative, and liberal countries are institutional contexts that offer the most support for entrepreneurship, while Eastern and Mediterranean economies represent less supportive environments for both the growth of entrepreneurship and employment protection. In these contexts, low social protection and high unemployment are often conditions that push people into self-employment out of necessity, favouring the diffusion of weak self-employment positions (Dilli et al., 2018; Fritsch et al., 2019).

Focusing on the differences between sectors and occupations, Figure 2.4 suggests that the highest levels of involuntariness are found among SSE workers in low-skilled occupations and in the construction, secondary, and Non-KBS sectors (mainly craft workers). In these cases, involuntariness affects one in five SSE workers and just slightly less than one in three in elementary occupations. In contrast, in agriculture, KBS, and high-skilled occupations, the involuntariness rate does not exceed 15% of the SSE. While, on the one hand, in agriculture, the main motivation for becoming an SSE is inheriting or continuing a family business, on the other hand, SSE in KBS and

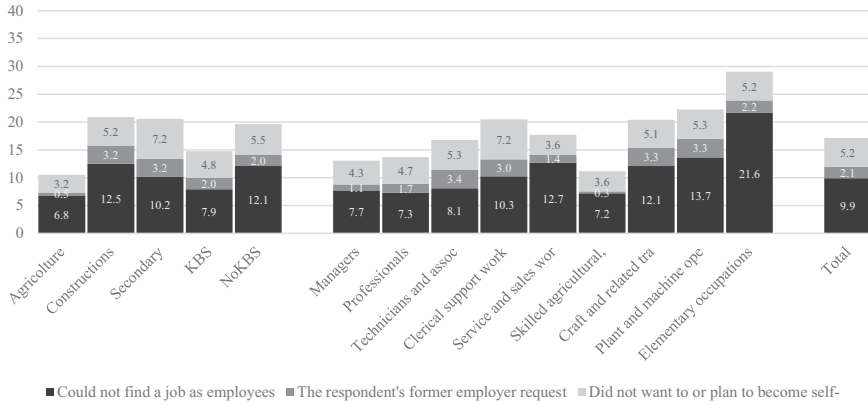


Figure 2.4 Involuntary self-employed. Percentage on solo self-employed (15–74) by sector and type of occupation.

those employed in high-skilled professions tend to consider self-employment more frequently as the usual practice in their professional sphere or as an opportunity for professional growth.

2.5.2 Economic Dependency

Regarding the working conditions that make the SSE closer to the status of employees, dependent self-employment is usually defined by the presence of two main forms of dependency: economic and operational.

Economic dependency is defined by job situations in which a self-employed person has a dominant client or a specific firm (employer). A client is defined as dominant if it provided at least 75% of income in the last 12 months. Economic dependency affects the overall potential profits and prospects of business development, exposing these SSE workers to high income uncertainty and vulnerability. More specifically, economic dependency affects about one in four SSE workers in the sample (Figure 2.5), but the prevalence of this condition varies considerably between countries. In the Nordic countries and in most of the Eastern European countries considered, the single-client condition is widespread, and, in some cases, such as Norway, Sweden, and Slovakia, it characterises almost two out of five SSE workers. In contrast, in the Mediterranean countries (excluding France), the single-client condition is less common than the European average with incidences ranging from 16.5% in Spain to 20.7% in Italy.

Rates by sector and type of occupation show that economic dependency is prevalent among SSE workers in agriculture (40%) and among those in less qualified clerical jobs. The lowest prevalence of this type of dependency is found in the Non-KBS tertiary sector, mainly in care activities, sales workers, and manual jobs such as craft and related trades workers activities (Figure 2.6).

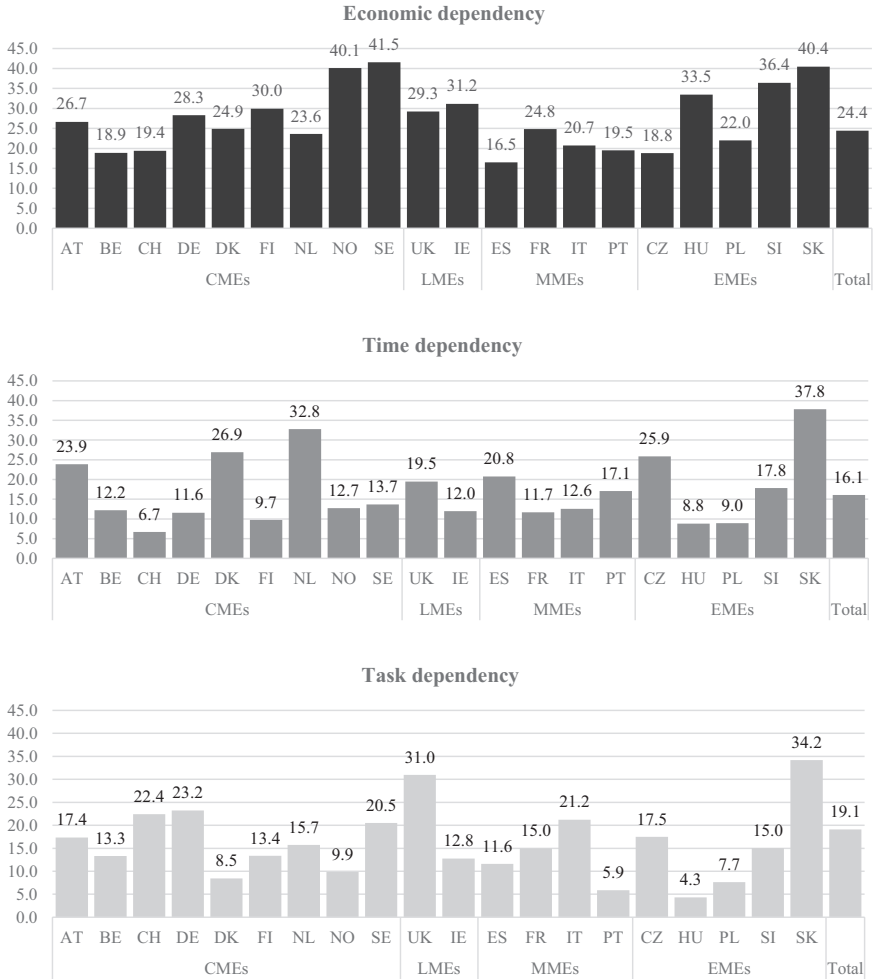


Figure 2.5 Forms of dependency: economic time and task dependency by country. Percentage on SSE (15–74).

2.5.3 Operational Dependency

The second form of dependency that characterises dependent self-employment is operational dependency, which is related to the level of decision-making, autonomy, and control over the organisation of the business and the daily work. The EU-LFS ad hoc module on self-employment identifies two types of operational dependency: ‘time’ and ‘task dependency’ (Bozzon and Murgia, 2022). Time dependency is a situation where working time is decided by clients or by any other party. Task dependency is a situation where the respondents are not able to influence the content or the order of the tasks in the main job.

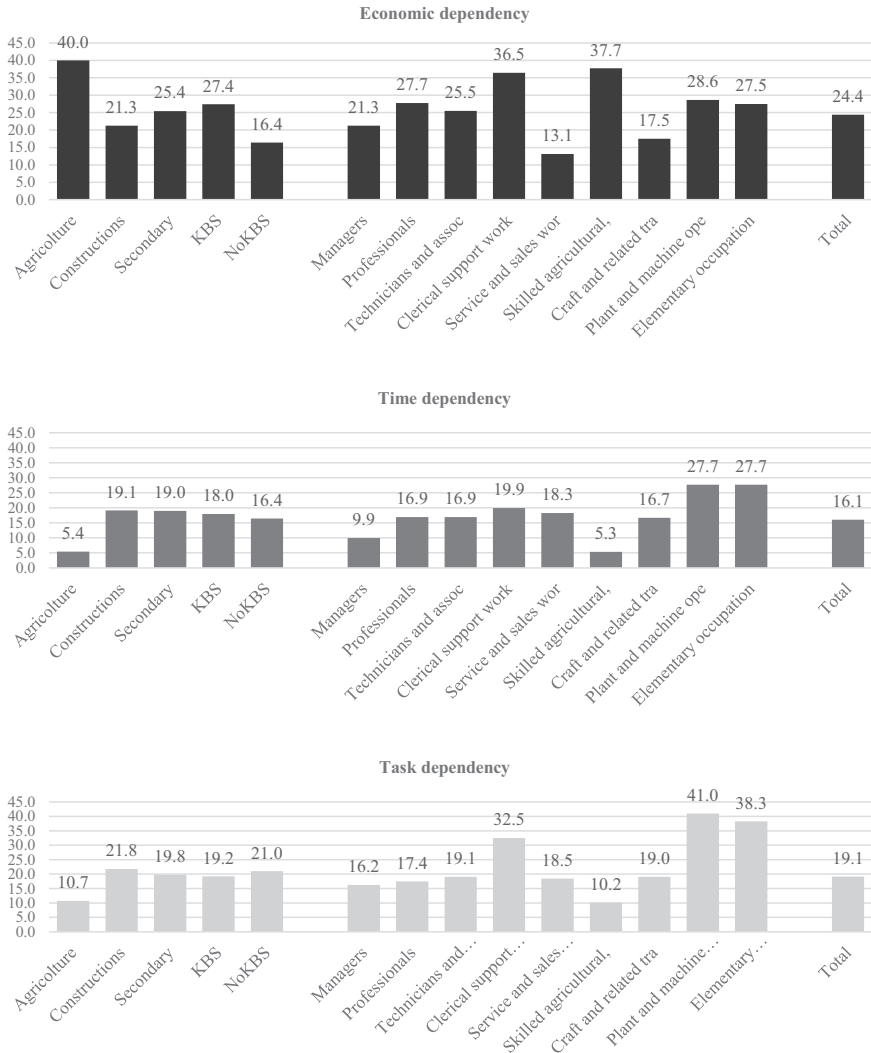


Figure 2.6 Forms of dependency (economic, time, and task) by sector and type of occupation. Percentage on SSE (15–74).

Time dependency affects, on average, 16% of the SSE considered, while task dependency affects 19% (Figure 2.5). Again, considerable variation is visible between countries, but, differently from involuntary self-employment and economic dependency, there is no systematic pattern across institutional contexts. Slovakia shows incidences of both time and task dependency – 37.8% and 34.2%, respectively – that are double the European average. Considering the high prevalence of economic dependency and involuntariness, in Slovakia, the SSE seem the most exposed to experiencing forms of weakness and vulnerability in the European context. Hungary and Poland show a very

limited spread of both forms of task dependency, with incidences of less than 10%. In the Netherlands, time dependency affects one out of three SSE workers, but levels of task dependency are slightly below the average. By contrast, in the UK, task dependency affects about one in three SSE workers, but the levels of time dependency are slightly above average.

Focusing on sectors and types of occupation, the prevalence of time dependency is particularly high among the SSE in secretarial and administrative support, blue-collar, and elementary occupations. In these cases, the incidence of time dependency affects about 40% of the SSE. The incidence of task dependency seems instead to be more prevalent in low-skilled occupations. The other sectors and occupations are settled on time and task dependency rates close to the average. An exception is self-employment in agriculture, where very low levels of time and task dependency are found (Figure 2.6).

2.5.4 Dependent Self-Employment

The definition adopted by Eurostat in the context of the ad hoc module on self-employment defines economically dependent SSE workers (DSSE) as those who have worked in the last 12 months for a single or a dominant client, and this client has decided their working hours (Eurostat, 2018; Kösters and Smits, 2022). This is a fairly restrictive definition, which considers the simultaneous presence of only two forms of dependency: economic and time. On the basis of this definition, about 4.9% of SSE workers are considered DSSE workers (Figure 2.7). An alternative operative definition of DSSE workers – based on the available information in the 2017 EU-LFS ad-hoc module that also considers the presence of task dependency – defines this group of workers as SSE who experience at least two out of three forms of dependency: economic, time, and task dependency (Bozzon and Murgia, 2022). On the basis of this ‘loose’ definition, the rate of DSSE is 12.9% among selected

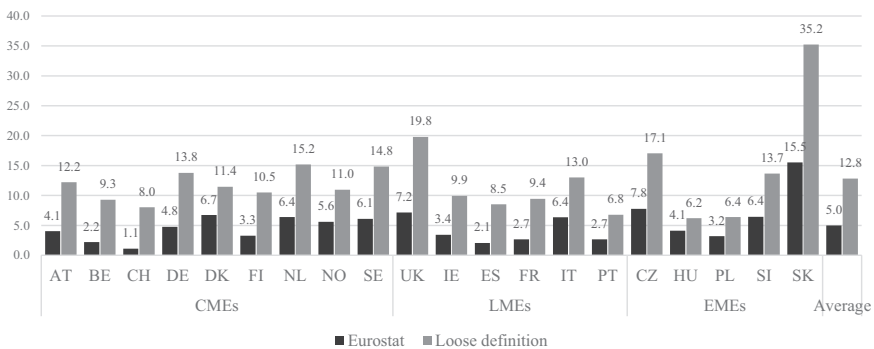


Figure 2.7 Dependent self-employment by country. Percentage of SSE (15–74).

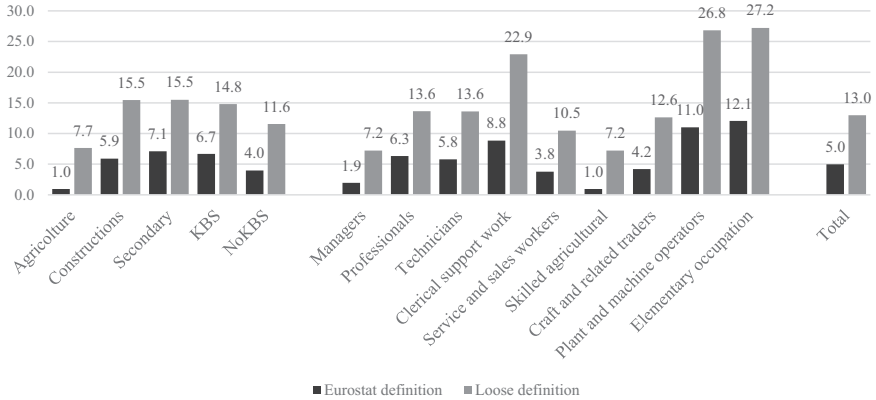


Figure 2.8 Dependent self-employment by sector and type of occupation. Percentage of SSE (15–74).

cases. There is therefore little overlap between the considered economic and operational dependency.

The incidence of DSSE (according to both operative ‘strict’ and ‘loose’ definitions employed in this chapter) is particularly high among the SSE in Slovakia (35.28%) and the UK (19.8%). In some countries, where the share of self-employment is particularly high, the incidence of the DSSE is instead below the sample average. This is the case in MMEs, mainly Portugal and Spain.

The analysis of the incidence of DSSEs on total solo self-employment by sector and type of occupation confirms what has already been described for the individual forms of dependency: those working in low-skilled occupations are most at risk of being dependent self-employed. In the case of workers in agriculture, the high incidence of economic dependency rarely combines with the two forms of operational dependency considered, time and task, resulting in the lowest levels of DSSE workers (Figure 2.8).

2.5.5 *Relations between Involuntary Self-Employment and Dependent Self-Employment*

At the country level, it is documented that dependent and involuntary self-employment rates are not correlated (Kösters and Smits, 2022) (Figure 2.9). Apart from Slovakia, where there are high rates of both involuntary SSE and DSSE, there is no systematic cross-country variation between involuntary self-employment and DSSE rates.

Nevertheless, it cannot definitively be forgotten that these disparate conditions may mutually affect each other. Table 2.5 indicates that individuals who enter self-employment involuntarily are at a significantly higher risk

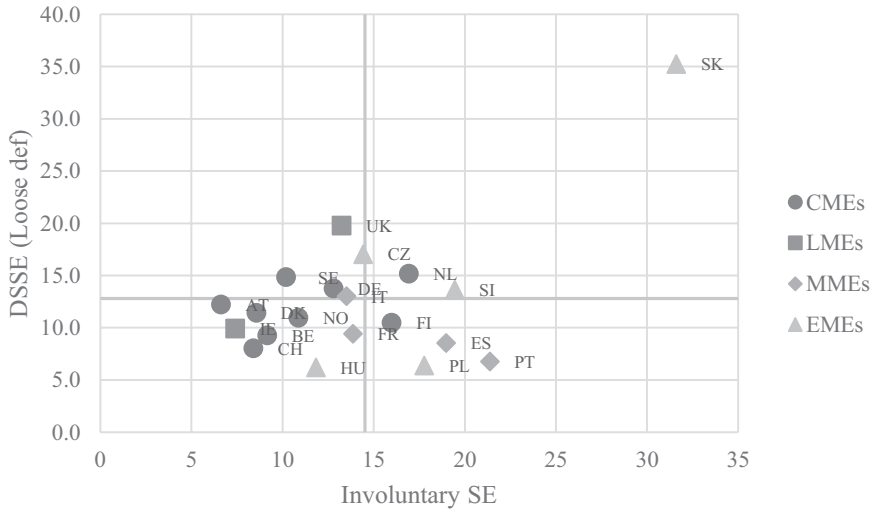


Figure 2.9 Share of involuntary and DSSE on SSE. Cross-country correlation.

of experiencing economic, operational, and task dependency, with respective values of +9.9 pp, +7.8 pp, and +7.7 pp compared to those who enter self-employment voluntarily. Furthermore, economic dependency is also positively associated with the risk of experiencing time and task dependency, with respective values of +11.6 pp and +10.7 pp.

Considering other attributes characterising business activity, such as the time of entry into self-employment and the presence of business partners, estimated parameters indicate that these two conditions influence the risk of experiencing economic dependency and involuntariness. However, they have no effect on time or task dependency. In particular, having been self-employed for less than a year significantly increases the propensity to be in a condition of economic dependency (+9.3 pp) as well as to be classified as an involuntary SSE (+7.6 pp). In contrast, having a co-owner seems to limit the risk of experiencing economic dependency and being an involuntary SSE worker. Moreover, the analyses of socio-demographic characteristics suggest that foreigners are more exposed than natives to the risk of having started an entrepreneurial activity on an involuntary basis and being DSSE, mainly based on economic or task dependency. Moreover, the SSE aged 15–34 face a higher risk of being DSSE than older SSE. On the contrary, age is not related to the risk of being involuntary SE. Regarding educational qualifications, higher levels of education protect against experiencing task dependency but have no effect on preventing economic and time dependency and involuntary self-employment. Finally, there are no significant differences in the risks of being DSSE or involuntary SSE by sex.

Table 2.5 Economic dependency, time dependency, task dependency, dependent SSE and involuntary SSE by socio-demographic characteristics. Average marginal effects (15–74).

| | <i>Forms of dependency</i> | | | | | | <i>DSSE</i> | | <i>Involuntary</i> | | | |
|---|----------------------------|-----|--------------|-----|--------------|-----|-----------------|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| | <i>Economic</i> | | <i>Time</i> | | <i>Task</i> | | <i>Eurostat</i> | | <i>(Loose def)</i> | | <i>SSE</i> | |
| | <i>dy/dx</i> | | <i>dy/dx</i> | | <i>dy/dx</i> | | <i>dy/dx</i> | | <i>dy/dx</i> | | <i>dy/dx</i> | |
| Involuntary SSE | 0.097 | *** | 0.074 | *** | 0.064 | *** | 0.055 | *** | 0.104 | *** | | |
| Economic dependency | | | 0.116 | *** | 0.106 | *** | | | | | | |
| Entered the position one year or less ago | 0.093 | *** | 0.006 | | 0.005 | | 0.018 | | 0.033 | * | 0.076 | *** |
| Having a business partner: | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| - Works together with a co-owner | -0.062 | *** | 0.004 | | -0.012 | | -0.020 | *** | -0.023 | * | -0.049 | *** |
| Works with other SE in a network | 0.006 | | 0.026 | * | -0.007 | | -0.002 | | 0.012 | | -0.012 | |
| - Both | -0.056 | *** | 0.027 | | -0.012 | | -0.024 | ** | -0.013 | | -0.031 | *** |
| Female | -0.021 | | 0.002 | | 0.005 | | -0.004 | | -0.007 | | 0.018 | |
| Foreign | 0.037 | *** | 0.021 | | 0.041 | *** | 0.012 | * | 0.034 | *** | 0.075 | *** |
| Age (ref: 15–34) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15–34 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 35–49 | -0.026 | * | -0.036 | ** | -0.020 | * | -0.021 | *** | -0.036 | *** | -0.003 | |
| 50–64 | -0.024 | * | -0.057 | *** | -0.025 | * | -0.027 | *** | -0.049 | *** | 0.001 | |
| Education (Ref: Low) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Medium | 0.007 | | -0.003 | | -0.024 | *** | 0.004 | | -0.008 | | 0.006 | |
| High | 0.007 | | -0.016 | | -0.040 | *** | 0.002 | | -0.012 | | -0.002 | |
| N. | 44,265 | | 44,265 | | 44,265 | | 44,265 | | 44,265 | | 44,265 | |

Source: Own calculations on Eu-LFS, 2017.

Note: Predictions based on logit models which control for country, sector and isco08.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$.

2.6 Holding Multiple Jobs and Hybrid Self-Employment

A further condition in the grey areas between self-employment and employment concerns holding multiple jobs and hybrid entrepreneurship. Holding multiple jobs refers to situations in which people do more than one job at the same time. *Hybrid entrepreneurship* is defined in this debate as a specific form of holding multiple jobs where one job is an occupational activity in self-employment (Folta et al., 2010).

The phenomenon of holding multiple jobs and hybrid entrepreneurship may be motivated by a push-and-pull dynamic (Bögenhold, 2019; Mori et al., 2022) that is analogous to the distinction between voluntary and involuntary self-employment. On the one hand, some workers (employees and self-employed) are pushed to have a second job to meet family needs, maintain their living standards, and limit the risk of unemployment or the consequences of economic instability and job insecurity. On the other hand, there may be pull factors motivated by the desire to achieve greater autonomy and spaces for self-fulfilment and enhancement of one's human capital. The first scenario posits that holding multiple jobs and hybrid entrepreneurship represent further means of work precariousness. Conversely, the second scenario views such practices as a transitional phase towards autonomy and career advancement (Bögenhold and Klinglmair, 2016). The data considered in this study do not allow for a distinction between push and pull dynamics in holding multiple jobs. However, other studies suggest that both dynamics seem to be at work in the European context (Conen and Stein, 2021).

In 2022, the status of holding multiple jobs affected 4% of the self-employed (with and without employees) and 4% of employees (Figure 2.10). It was therefore still a marginal phenomenon (Bögenhold, 2019). However, it should be noted that this phenomenon tends to be underestimated by the EU-LFS due to problems intrinsic to the way second jobs are recorded, which does not allow for the capture of short-term, irregular, and off-the-books work episodes (Conen and Stein, 2021; Mori et al., 2022) (cfr Chapter 7).

The cross-country comparison shows that in continental and northern European countries, holding multiple jobs is much more widespread than in other institutional contexts, especially among the SSE (Figure 2.10). In 2022, in the Netherlands and Finland, respectively, 14% and 12% of self-employed workers and 9.4% and 7.2% of employees held a second job. The Scandinavian countries follow, where holding multiple jobs involved about 10% of the self-employed and 6% of employees. On the opposite side are Italy and Hungary, where multiple jobs affect less than 2% of self-employed workers and employees. Only 1.4% of employees hold a second job as self-employed, thus falling into the category of hybrid entrepreneurs (Bögenhold, 2019). The same is true for self-employed workers, for whom half of the multiple job holders have a second job as employees.

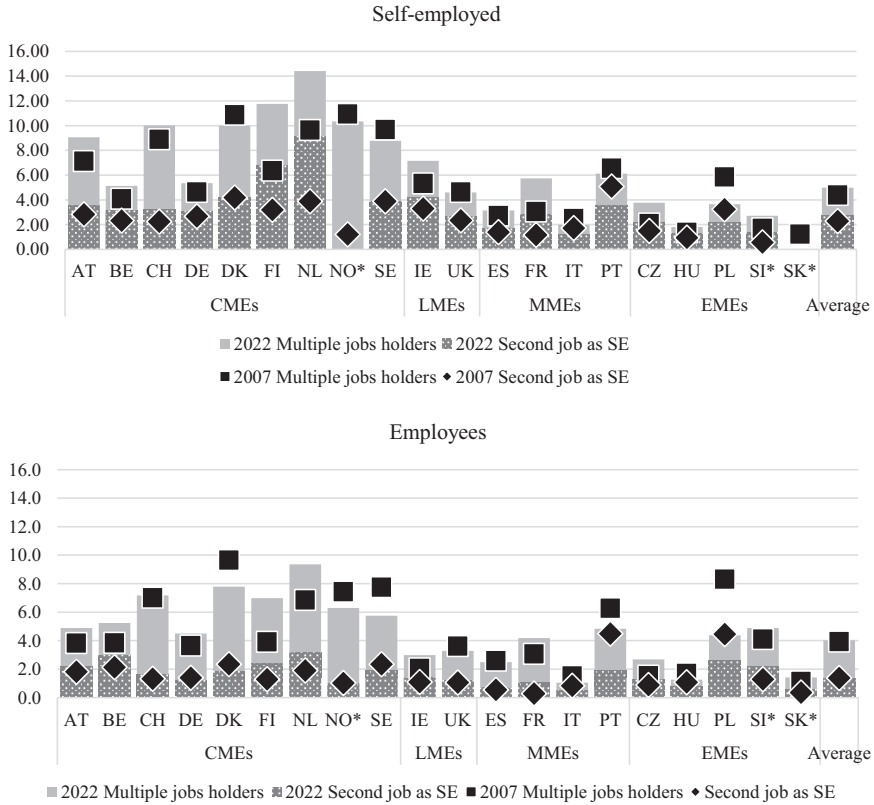


Figure 2.10 Multiple jobs holding. Percentage of self-employed and employees with a second job (15–74) by country.

Focusing on socio-demographic differences (Table 2.6), women are less likely than men to have a second job as an employee (-1.1 pp), regardless of employment status in their main job. Only among employees are women more likely than men to be self-employed in their second job, but the strength of this effect is very small (+0.4 pp). Regarding age, younger people are less likely to have a second job as self-employed but are more likely to have two dependent jobs. This outcome may be indicative of the prevalence of non-standard contracts in the early stages of careers, particularly among younger demographics. Moreover, considering the level of education, the analyses indicate that the propensity to have a second job is higher among those with a high level of education. In particular, they are more likely than those with low levels of education to be hybrid self-employed (+1.2 pp) independently from the main job position.

Finally, with respect to the existence of an association between involuntary self-employment, forms of dependency, and the propensity to have a second job for the SSE, the analyses suggest that these work circumstances do not

Table 2.6 Types of multiple jobs holding and hybrid self-employment by socio-demographic characteristic and job conditions in self-employment. Average marginal effects.

| | Multiple jobs holders by working status in the main and second job | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| | SSE with a second job as SE | | SSE with a second job as employee (Hybrid SE) | | SE with employees with a second job as SE | | SE with employees with a second job as employee (Hybrid SE) | | Employees with a second job as SE (Hybrid SE) | | Employees with a second job as employee | |
| | dy/dx | | dy/dx | | dy/dx | | dy/dx | | dy/dx | | dy/dx | |
| Involuntary SSE | -0.003 | | 0.000 | | | | | | | | | |
| Forms of dependency | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Economic | -0.009 | ** | 0.002 | | | | | | | | | |
| Time | 0.001 | | 0.003 | | | | | | | | | |
| Task | -0.008 | ** | 0.000 | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | -0.010 | *** | 0.003 | | -0.010 | *** | 0.003 | | -0.011 | *** | 0.004 | * |
| Foreign | -0.007 | | -0.005 | * | -0.008 | | -0.005 | | -0.009 | *** | 0.001 | |
| Age class (Ref: 15-34) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 35-49 | 0.009 | *** | -0.006 | | 0.009 | *** | -0.006 | | 0.008 | *** | -0.006 | * |
| 50-64 | 0.010 | *** | -0.006 | | 0.010 | *** | -0.006 | | 0.007 | *** | -0.008 | *** |
| Education (Ref: Low) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Upper secondary | 0.008 | | 0.008 | *** | 0.008 | | 0.008 | *** | 0.007 | *** | 0.001 | |
| Tertiary | 0.012 | * | 0.013 | *** | 0.013 | * | 0.013 | *** | 0.011 | *** | 0.005 | * |
| N. | 44,265 | | 44,265 | | 18,640 | | 18,640 | | 345,722 | | 345,722 | |

Source: Own calculations on Eu-LFS, 2017.

Note: Average marginal effects based on multinomial models which control for sector, isco, country.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$.

influence the likelihood of having a second job as an employee. Moreover, those in a condition of economic dependency and limited autonomy in deciding how to do their work (task dependency) appear to be less likely to have a second job as the self-employed.

2.7 Prospects of Changing Working Status

This last section shifts the attention to future prospects and focuses on how the four dimensions considered to describe heterogeneous work conditions at the borders between employment and self-employment – i.e., involuntary self-employment, forms of economic and operational dependency (task and time), and holding multiple jobs – influence future career prospects, especially the desire to change employment status.

Table 2.7 analyses the wishes of employees to become self-employed and, vice versa, of entrepreneurs and SSE workers to become employees. In the case of employees, the analyses indicate that for those who have a second job and, above all, those who have a second job as self-employed, the propensity to wish to change job status and start a full-time entrepreneurial career is +16.9 pp higher than those who do not have a second job. Translated into predicted probabilities, if among those who do not have a second job only 8.6% want to become self-employed, this ratio concerns 25% of employees who have a second job as self-employed. In the case of the self-employed, the analyses are separate for entrepreneurs and SSE workers. In general, having a second job, especially among the self-employed, influences the propensity to wish to change the employment status of SSE (+5.0 pp), but not

Table 2.7 Wish to change working status. Average marginal effects.

| | <i>Is working as employee but wishes to work as SE</i> | | <i>Is self-employed but wishes to work as employee</i> | |
|---------------------------------|--|-----|--|---------------|
| | <i>dy/dx</i> | | <i>SE with employees</i> | <i>SSE</i> |
| | <i>dy/dx</i> | | <i>dy/dx</i> | <i>dy/dx</i> |
| Multiple jobs holding (Ref: No) | | | | |
| As SE | 0.169 | *** | 0.038 | 0.024 |
| As employees | 0.017 | | -0.015 | 0.050 ** |
| Involuntary SE | | | 0.116 | *** 0.214 *** |
| Economic dependency | | | 0.011 | *** 0.035 *** |
| Time dependency | | | 0.055 | ** 0.040 ** |
| Task dependency | | | 0.029 | 0.046 |
| N. | 345,722 | | 18,640 | 44,265 |

Source: Own calculations on Eu-LFS, 2017.

Note: Average marginal effects based on multinomial models which control for sector, isco, country, sex, age classes, migrant status, and education.

*** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$.

among entrepreneurs. For self-employed workers, the largest role in the wish to change job status is played by involuntariness. Having become SSE or an entrepreneur on an involuntary basis conspicuously increases the wish to become an employee for both self-employed with employees (+11.6 pp), especially for the SSE (+21.4 pp). While among ‘voluntary’ entrepreneurs 9.8% would like to change status, among involuntary entrepreneurs the risk rises to 20.8%. If among voluntary SSE workers 12.8% wish to change jobs, among involuntary SSE 1 in 3 (33%) wish to become an employee.

Differently from involuntariness, the different forms of dependency play a less consistent role in influencing job prospects. On the one hand, lack of autonomy in deciding one’s own work schedule significantly raises the propensity to wish to change the job status of both employers (+5.5 pp) and SSE workers (+4.0 pp). Task dependency, on the other hand, seems to have no influence. Finally, economic dependency elevates the desire to change jobs only for the SSE (+3.5 pp).

2.8 Conclusions

This chapter has presented a portrait of the characteristics of self-employment in Europe over the past 15 years, based on data from the EU-LFS. The main aim was to provide an overview of the evolution of self-employment and heterogeneity of working conditions in the grey areas at the boundary of independent and dependent work. In particular, the status of involuntary self-employment, dependent self-employment, and hybrid entrepreneurship were discussed.

The analyses showed heterogeneous trends across countries, job sectors, and professions in the levels of self-employment and the conditions considered. The prevailing trend in most countries is a growth in the volumes of SSE workers and a concomitant reduction in the number of entrepreneurs with employees. The expansion of the SSE is correlated with the advancement of KBS sectors (the so-called I-Pros). Conversely, a decline in self-employed workers engaged in agriculture is discernible. In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, the prevalence of the SSE is more pronounced among older workers and foreigners.

Considering the distinctions between voluntary and involuntary self-employment, as well as indicators of holding multiple jobs and economic dependency, significant differences were found between countries. The national contexts characterised by a high incidence of self-employment, namely EME and MME countries, are those most characterised by involuntary self-employment. This prevalence can be traced back to a push dynamic in self-employment related to the deficiency of regular wage employment. Conversely, the prevalence of multiple job holders and, in particular, hybrid entrepreneurship is a phenomenon that, although limited, appears to be more prevalent in CME countries, particularly Nordic ones. Finally, economic dependency seems to be more prevalent in Eastern Europe, Nordic, and liberal countries.

In contrast, forms of operational dependency – time and task dependency – seem to be independent of institutional context and more related to the type of occupation. In particular, together with involuntary self-employment and economic dependency, they prevail among SSE with low skills and executive job profiles.

The analyses confirmed a limited overlap between involuntariness and the forms of economic and operational dependency that have already been documented in the literature (Kösters and Smits, 2022). At the same time, situations of involuntariness and economic dependency are positively associated with the risk of experiencing conditions of operational dependency. Furthermore, situations of involuntariness, dependency, and multiple jobs seem to foster conditions of job dissatisfaction and instability (Bozzon, 2023), which in turn may lead to the intention to change jobs.

The picture outlined in this chapter is subject to certain limitations in the available data at a comparative level. In particular, the lack of systematic and longitudinal data on the reasons for becoming a self-employed worker or being a multiple job holder, as well as on the forms of economic and operational dependency that define dependent self-employment, limits our ability to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms at play in the grey areas of work. This prevents us from distinguishing, for example, between dynamics of job marginalisation and forms of genuine entrepreneurial development. Moreover, the definition of dependent self-employment, which is based on economics and only two forms of operational dependency – time and task – leads to a partial representation of the phenomenon and its probable under-representation (Bozzon and Murgia, 2022).

Finally, the data considered struggle to capture some transformations in technology, work organisation, and work regulations that are redefining production models and labour and industrial relations. For instance, the growth of multi-party employment relationships (see Cappelli and Keller, 2013) and the more recent advent of digital labour platforms (see Piasna, 2021) are transforming the nature of work and the relationship between employers and employees. However, the available data do not fully capture these transitions and their potential implications, for example, in terms of collective voice to claim access to citizenship and organising welfare protections (Sjöberg, 2017). These changes not only challenge the traditional dichotomy between employment and self-employment, which underlies current statistical representations of the labour market – including the portrait presented in this chapter – but also necessitate a critical redefinition of the information on the structure, conditions, and quality of labour relations to be included in available labour force surveys in order to capture the transformations taking place.

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