

# Working Conditions in Ireland Project

## Employment in the Irish hospitality sector:

### A preliminary background report

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The Working Conditions in Ireland Project investigates how jobs have been changing in Ireland from the boom through the crisis and into a possible recovery. Central to the project is a study of employment in four sectors: construction, financial services, hospitality and ICT/software. A background report for each sector summarises publicly available material and gives a preliminary indication of the questions that should be tackled in the fieldwork. The reports were originally intended as internal briefing papers. They are made publicly available because they may be of some use to the research community. Comments and corrections are most welcome and should be sent to the authors ([abobek@tasc.ie](mailto:abobek@tasc.ie); [jwickham@tasc.ie](mailto:jwickham@tasc.ie)).

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## Employment in the Irish hospitality sector

### Introduction

This report summarises publicly available material on jobs, employment and working conditions in the Irish hospitality sector. It provides an overview of the structure of the sector (Section 1) and of employment (Section 2). Section 3 describes employment regulations and collective representation. Section 4 identifies the key elements of working conditions in the sector: working time, wages, non-standard employment, skills and career development, job security and finally job autonomy. The final Section 5 highlights issues for the fieldwork research with some reference to international research.

### 1. Structure of the sector

The majority of organizations in the Irish hospitality sector are rather small as almost 75 per cent of workplaces employ less than 50 people (Watson et al, 2010). It has been estimated that by 2010 the number of tourism and hospitality enterprises in Ireland was around 16,500. The majority of these enterprises are indigenously owned (ICIT, 2008), however the importance of multinational companies has been rising (Schweiger and Wickham, 2005). The bar-subsector is the largest in the Irish hospitality sector and accounts for around 34 per cent of the turnover and for 43 per cent of all hospitality establishments in the country (Ernst and Young, 2013). Restaurants accounted for 30 per cent of total sector turnover in 2010; followed by the hotels sub-sector which accounted for 27 per cent of the whole hospitality sector (ibid). It needs to be emphasised, however, that while the hotel sub-sector plays an important role in the tourist industry, Irish accommodation businesses are still dominated by medium and small establishments such as B&Bs, guest houses and self-catering accommodation (Failte Ireland, 2011).

Multinational companies are especially present in the hotels sub-sector which is characterised by the growing significance of hotel groups and chains. While smaller hotels, especially outside of the capital city, are usually family owned, larger hotels in Dublin are often part of an international chain. This division is especially important from the HR point of view as it could be argued that the management style would differ significantly depending on the ownership. This division between Irish family-owned and large internationally owned hotels,

however, does not fully represent the real situation.

Firstly, the Irish individual hotels, in order to raise their competitiveness, have started to either join multinational chains or form groups themselves (Failte Ireland, 2011). In such cases they are Irish-owned but no longer operate as small or medium size businesses. With different levels of involvement in the organization, the ownership-management matrix can be even more complex, with different possible business models currently in place. These would include the following ‘ideal types’:

- a) Property fully owned and operated by the hotel brand
- b) Property leased by a hotel brand, which pays rent for the ‘walls’
- c) Property owned by a third party and managed by a hotel chain
- d) Property owned by a third party and managed by a ‘non-branded’ specialist management company
- e) Property owned by a third party, with a franchise agreement with a hotel chain.

(McKenny, 2014)

The last type is one of the most popular amongst the international chain hotel groups. A large proportion of them tends to operate on the basis of a franchise basis whereby they offer the brand but often leave the everyday management to the local owners. Hilton Group, for example, owns or leases directly only 4 per cent of their businesses (Hilton Group Website). Such a model is frequently preferred by the international chains as it releases them from such concerns as real estate fluctuation or building development and maintenance. The franchising agreement then ensures the brand consistency and may impose certain elements of corporate culture associated with their brand. Depending on the brand, the multinational owner has either no involvement in the management of individual franchisees or, at the other end of the spectrum, has a large influence on day-to-day operations.

In the reverse situation, when the property is owned locally but managed by a company or chain, the local brand may remain unchanged, while the everyday management is outside of the owners’ control. In such cases the international chain is responsible for all the HR operations and decisions within the hotel. Furthermore, other complex ownership-management models may include a situation in which the hotel operates under a chain brand, has a foreign-based owner and is managed by an Irish-based management company. What requires further scrutiny is how widespread this model is and to what extent different ownership patterns effect the working conditions.

Restaurants, on the other hand, are mainly Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs). In 2008 there was an estimated 2,500 licenced restaurants in Ireland with an average capacity of 82 covers and an average of 15 full and part time year round employees (Failte, 2009). According to Failte Ireland (2011) there were also over 1,300 non-licenced restaurants across the country, employing 10 people on average. With the exception of fast-food chains, this sub-sector consists mainly of micro-enterprises that are often owner-managed (ibid.). Unlike restaurants (including non-licenced take-aways), coffee shops and larger fast food points are often part of international brands. In this case, further investigation is required in order to establish to what extent they operate on a franchise basis and thus would be exposed to similar issues as many hotels.

The Irish hospitality and tourism sector has been significantly affected by the recent recession as international tourism declined following the global economic downturn (ICIT, 2009). As Ireland was particularly hit by this recession, domestic sales were also on the decline up until recently (Power, 2015). These trends resulted in falling employment rates in the hospitality sector, but job losses were less severe than in other sectors such as construction or retail (CSO, StatBank). The largest proportion of jobs lost were in the hotel sub-sector (Ernst and Young, 2013). Furthermore, during the past few years, employment in hotels and restaurants across the country has been rising and the number of those employed in Accommodation and Food services rose from 119,000 in 2008 to over 137,000 at the end of 2014 (CSO, StatBank). This is partially explained by the reduction of VAT rates for this sector in 2013 (Foley, 2013) which it is claimed allowed many employers to increase their staff levels. Even during the downturn the hospitality sector as a whole remained crucial for the Irish economy and now is claimed to provide one in ten jobs across the country (Failte Ireland, 2011). While the rest of the country still continues to attract international tourists, the expansion in Dublin has also been driven by non-leisure tourism. This is especially the case since the opening of the Convention Centre in Dublin in 2010. This launch was followed by the establishment of two large, high-standard international hotels in its close proximity.

As will be further discussed below, employers within this sector often prefer flexible labour practices which have several implications for those working in this sector. First of all, there is a relatively high proportion of employees working on a part-time basis with relatively low hourly wages. Furthermore there is evidence of employers often using different forms of outsourcing and flexible arrangements, including zero-hours contracts. These are usually related to the flexible firm model, constructed on a dual tier of core and periphery (Atkinson, 1984). The former consists of relatively small number of primary sector workers employed

directly with the firm with secure contracts. Those in the latter, on the other hand, have little security and are either part of the firm or are employed by an external organization which provides their services to the firm; such strategies can be characterised as ‘distancing flexibility’ (Lai et al, 2008). These practices are especially relevant to the hotel sector and ensure that many of those working in the hospitality sector in highly developed countries are in low-paid employment and have temporary contracts with little career prospects within the sector.

## 2. Workforce characteristics

As previously noted, the Irish hospitality sector has been affected by the recent recession because of the decline in national and international tourism. As a result, employment in this sector fell between 2007 and 2012. This trend reversed in 2012 as the number of employees in the accommodation and food services started to rise. Employment in this sector, as recorded by the CSO seems to fluctuate, and the changes are not seasonal. The following table illustrate both patterns:

**Table 1: Employment in Accommodation and food service activities 2006-2015 (000s)**

2006Q1	2007Q1	2008Q1	2009Q1	2010Q1	2011Q1	2012Q1	2013Q1	2014Q1	2015Q1
117.2	133.8	132.3	123.1	131.1	110.7	117.6	120.3	133.8	132.3

(CSO: QHNS, 2015)

After the economic downturn the most drastic employment fall occurred amongst bar staff (19 per cent decline) and waiters/waitresses (13 per cent decline) (CSO, 2012b: 12). With the emerging recovery of the Irish economy, employment in the hospitality sector started to rise accordingly. It needs to be emphasised, however, that the growth in employment in this sector is facilitated by other factors. The strong increase in jobs between 2012 and 2013 can be explained by a reduction (as part of government measures to promote job creation) in VAT from 13.5 per cent to 9 per cent in the Food, Tourism and Hospitality Sectors. This incentive was initially planned to cease by the end of 2013, but it was retained in 2014 (RAI, 2014). As a result, by 2013, Accommodation and Food Services accounted for just over 7 per cent of national employment (Solas, 2014: 30). Furthermore, between 2008 and 2013 employment for hotel and accommodation managers grew by 9.3 per cent on average annually (ibid.)

In addition to those classified as working in the Accommodation and Food Services NACE Sector, there are other individuals employed in tourism related activities. According to

various sources there are approximately 180,000 people in Ireland employed in tourism related occupations (AIB, 2013). Finally, Failte Ireland (2011) claims that by 2010 hospitality sector accounted for 13% of the Irish workforce with approximately 230,000 employees. These discrepancies in the numbers employed in the hospitality sector derive from different interpretation and definitions. Regardless of the absolute numbers and exact definitions of ‘hospitality sector’ worker, all sources agree that employment in the sector has been rising since 2012. Hotels and bars employ the largest proportion of individuals in this sector (more than 46,000 and around 51,000 respectively). Licenced restaurants are the third most important employment sub-sector with over 38,000 people employed in 2010 (Failte Ireland, 2011).

In relation to gender balance, this sector is the most ‘equal’ amongst of our four case study sectors with a workforce of approximately 49 percent males and 51 percent females in 2010. The B&B and guest house sub-sectors were the most feminised with workforces of 67-68 percent female in each (ibid). The most popular occupations in the hospitality sector were food service (almost 40,000 individuals), bar service (almost 35,000) and culinary (approximately 21,700). The largest proportion of employees held elementary occupations (almost 48 per cent). Around 20 per cent are employed in skilled trades while the managers account only for 13 per cent of the workforce. An analysis of QNHS micro-data suggests that during the boom the occupational structure of the sector shifted downwards, with ‘managers and administrators’ comprising a falling proportion of overall employment in the sector from 2001 to 2008 (Wickham et al, 2011). More recently this trend may have been reversed as suggested by the table below showing more recent changes in the occupational composition of the hospitality sector:

**Table 2: Occupational Structure in Hotels and Restaurants (2009-2015)**

	2009		2015	
<b>1. Managers, directors and senior officials</b>	17.1	13.89%	18.0	13.61%
<b>2. Professional</b>	*		*	
<b>3. Associate professional and technical</b>	[3.0]	[2.44%]	[3.8]	[2.87%]
<b>4. Administrative and secretarial</b>	5.9	4.79%	7.2	5.44%
<b>5. Skilled trades</b>	22.6	18.36%	26.9	20.33%
<b>6. Caring, leisure and other services</b>	[3.8]	[3.09%]	[4.6]	[3.48%]
<b>7. Sales and customer service</b>	5.8	4.71%	5.8	4.38%
<b>8. Process, plant and machine operatives</b>	*		*	
<b>9. Elementary</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>50.93%</b>	<b>63.3</b>	<b>47.85%</b>
<b>Other/Not stated</b>	*		*	
<b>Total</b>	<b>123.1</b>		<b>132.3</b>	

(Source: CSO, 2015)

The hospitality sector in Ireland can also be characterised by a relatively young workforce. Those employed in this sector are relatively young as 87.63 per cent are below the age of 50 (compared to 74.74 per cent of total workforce) (O'Farrell, 2014: 5). The following table provides detailed breakdown of the age structure in this sector:

**Table 3: Accommodation and Food Services: age structure (000s)**

Age groups	Accommodation and food services		Total at work	
15 - 19 years	1,722	1.66%	14,261	0.79%
<b>20 - 24 years</b>	<b>12,804</b>	<b>12.37%</b>	<b>116,025</b>	<b>6.42%</b>
<b>25 - 34 years</b>	<b>38,839</b>	<b>37.51%</b>	<b>530,104</b>	<b>29.33%</b>
35 - 44 years	24,237	23.41%	484,636	26.81%
45 - 54 years	15,563	15.03%	390,373	21.60%
55 - 64 years	8,694	8.40%	226,643	12.54%
65 years and over	1,690	1.63%	45,318	2.51%

(Source: CSO, Census 2011)

This sector also employs relatively large proportion of migrants. According to different sources, migrants account for 33-40 per cent of total employment in the Irish hospitality

industry. (Failte Ireland, 2011; CSO, 2012b). Most of them come from the New Member State countries (EU15 to EU28). The number of non-EU migrants working in the sector, however, has been on the rise since 2011, which may suggest a return to the cheap labour policies deployed by employers in this sector in the 1990s. This rise also coincides with a sharp increase of visas issued to non-EU students coming to Ireland. These visas allow individuals to undertake up to 20 hours per week part-time work, but there is considerable evidence that this is routinely exceeded, sometimes with the connivance of the language schools. Employers in the hospitality sector may be using the opportunity to draw from this new pool of flexible, part-time workers from outside of the EU as they are already in the country. The following table provides detailed breakdown as well as change over time to include pre and post-recession workforce composition:

**Table 4: Employment and Nationality in Accommodation and Food Service, 2006-2014**

	2006Q4	2007Q4	2008Q4	2009Q4	2010Q4	2011Q4	2012Q4	2013Q4	2014Q4
<b>EU15 excluding Irish and UK</b>	3.58%	2.95%	2.85%	3.07%	3.01%	3.25%	0.00%	2.21%	2.04%
<b>Irish</b>	63.40%	63.46%	64.71%	63.34%	69.48%	67.72%	67.88%	66.03%	67.78%
<b>Other Nationalities</b>	15.12%	13.54%	14.08%	12.82%	8.95%	9.17%	11.41%	14.66%	13.67%
<b>EU15 to EU28 states</b>	17.90%	20.05%	18.36%	20.77%	18.56%	19.85%	20.71%	17.10%	16.51%

(Source: CSO, Statbank)

As previously mentioned the highest proportion of migrants in this sector still come from the New Member States. Currently 16.5 per cent of the total Accommodation and Food Services workforce consists of NMS nationals, followed by 13.7 per cent from outside the EU. While the number of non-Irish working in this sector declined slightly over the last decade, the recession seemed to have an effect on Irish nationals working in hospitality. The Irish accounted for 63.4 per cent of workforce in this sector in 2006, but by 2010 this proportion had risen to 69.5 per cent. The Irish currently account for 67.8 per cent of overall employment in Accommodation and Food Service (CSO, StatBank)

The bar sector has the highest proportion of Irish nationals (90 per cent) while the share of non-Irish nationals was highest in non-licenced restaurants (48 per cent), followed by licenced restaurants (40 per cent) and hotels (37 per cent) (Failte Ireland, 2011). Of those employed in hotels 6 percent stated they spoke English ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’ and were nearly all employed as cleaners and as kitchen and catering assistants (CSO, 2012b). A lack of knowledge of English often results in a high vulnerability for exploitation. We expect that these



occupations would be characterised by a number of factors associated with ‘bad jobs’, in addition to the generally poor working conditions experienced by many within this sector.

### **3. Employers’ organizations, employment regulations and collective representation**

IBEC is the largest organization representing employers in the Irish hospitality sector. Other smaller and more sub-sector specific organizations include: Irish Hotel Federation, Restaurant Association of Ireland, Quick Service Food Alliance, Irish Small and Medium Enterprises and Small Firms Association.

This sector is regulated by the Joint Labour Committees (JLCs), which cover Catering and Hotel sector. The JLCs set up Employment Regulation Orders (EROs) in order to fix minimum pay and conditions for those working in catering and hotels. In 2011 the Quick Service Food Association filed a case against EROs in the High Court. They were supported by the Irish Hotel Federation and the Irish Restaurant Association who argued that enforcing minimum wages in the sector above the national minimum wage levels negatively affected already struggling businesses. Later that year the High Court ruled the EROs as unconstitutional and the system is currently undergoing reforms ([citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie)).

The Irish hospitality sector is characterised by low trade union density. In 2009 only 6 per cent of those employed in Accommodation and food service activities had trade union membership, compared to 34 per cent across all sectors (CSO, 2010b). Trade union recognition is also low in this sector and ranges from 25 to 27 per cent (Watson, 2010: 44). Of all the different enterprises in the whole sector, the larger catering companies are most likely to recognize unions and restaurants are the least likely to do so (Eurofund, 2012: 27). The low levels of union density can be also explained by high staff turnover, the relatively young workforce and the small size of establishments in the restaurant sub-sector making large scale representation difficult (MRCI, 2008). Combined with employers’ attempts to cut labour costs, such low levels of union density can contribute to further deterioration of working conditions. This is an issue that would require further study.

Finally, hotels and catering companies have also been subject to inspection by the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA). Early inspections revealed a relatively low levels of compliance with regulations as in 2009 compliance rates were only 21 per cent for catering companies and 27 per cent for hotels. The main areas of non-compliance concerned payments below the minimum wage and incorrectly recorded payslips (NERA, 2009). The situation seemed to be gradually improving as by 2012 37 per cent hotels and 61 per cent

complied with the regulations (NERA, 2012).

Given the closure of the NERA as a distinct body the effectiveness of regulation going forward is another issue for further research.

#### 4. Working conditions – ‘objective factors’

- Working time

The average weekly hours worked in hospitality sector has fallen over the last few decades. In 1992 those employed in Hotels and Restaurants worked for 42.3 hours per week on average, which means that some employed in this sector worked long hours. This has radically changed with a growing number of part time jobs in hotels and restaurants and employers applying different employment strategies. As it illustrated by the following table, the hours dropped at the turn of century:

**Table 5: Hotels and Restaurants working hours 1992-2008**

	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008
<b>Working hours in hospitality (per week)</b>	42.3	40.4	35.2	33.6	32.9

(Source: O’Farrell, 2013:13)

What needs to be emphasised is that the recession did not have a major impact on the working hours in the Irish hospitality sector. The relatively shorter weekly hours in this sector need to be explained by other longer term factors. Quite strikingly, more than 40 per cent of those working in hospitality are employed on part-time basis, compared to 23 per cent in the total workforce (CSO, 2015). This form of employment has also been rising recently: in 2009 part time workers constituted 37 per cent of all employed in hospitality. Furthermore, this sector has the highest share of part time employment amongst all sectors of the economy. It is argued that this change is related to the American influences on the Irish management model and that employers often prefer to have ‘pool of part-time workers on which to draw on at short notice’ (O’Farrell, 2014:25). Some scholars argue that longer working hours are either associated with jobs of higher recruitment costs and higher wages (Kudoh and Sasaki, 2011) or with sectors with greater capital intensity (Parmentier, 2010). As it will be further discussed, part time work, combined with relatively low hourly rates, results in a situation where a high proportion of those employed in this sector effectively work below the level of the living wage. In such case we may assume that large proportion of such part time work is not voluntary and thus there has

been a spread of underemployment in this sector.

All the above factors can be associated with ‘bad jobs’ and result in unfavourable working conditions experienced by those working in the Irish hospitality sector.

- **Wages**

This sector is also characterised by relatively low pay rates due to (a) the lower number of hours worked and (b) the relatively low hourly pay. The average hourly rate in hospitality was €12.69 in 2010 which was the lowest average of all the sectors. Managers, professionals and associated professionals were paid €18.88 per hour on average while Clerical, sales and service employees earned €11.46 Euro per hour, followed by Production, transport, craft and other manual workers with an average of €11.36 Euros per hour. The last two categories were the lowest average hourly rates amongst all the industries (O’Farrell, 2013: 11). The following table illustrates wages and working time by occupational category in the Accommodation and Food Services Activities sector:

**Table 6: Accommodation and food services activities earnings and working hours**

	<b>All employees</b>	<b>Managers, professionals and associated professionals</b>	<b>Clerical, sales and service</b>	<b>Production, transport, craft and other manual workers</b>
<b>Average hourly earnings</b>	€12.69	€18.88	€11.46	€11.39
<b>Average weekly earnings</b>	€316.07	€656.35	€268.56	€271.29
<b>Average weekly paid hours</b>	24.9	34.8	23.4	23.8

(Source: O’Farrell, 2013)

As a result of low hourly pay and low working hours, employees in the hospitality sector also had the lowest weekly average pay at €316.07 per week. The lowest average pay applied to clerical, sales and service employees who were paid on average €286.56 per week in 2010 (ibid: 12). In general, mean and median hourly rates as well as the weekly working hours were lower than the national averages:

**Table 7: Accommodation and Food Services****Earnings**

	<b>Accommodation and Food Services</b>	<b>All NACE Economic Sectors</b>
<b>Mean Hourly Rate (Euro)</b>	13.83	22.05
<b>Median Hourly Rate (Euro)</b>	11.51	17.82
<b>Average Weekly Working Hours</b>	26.3	32.0
<b>Average Weekly Earnings (Euro)</b>	363.7	705.6

(Source: CSO, National Employment Survey 2009 and QNHS)

Finally, 57 per cent of those working in Accommodation and Food Services earned less than 400 Euros per week, which was the highest share amongst all sectors. Less than 10 per cent were paid 800 Euros per week or more. 30 per cent earned less than 10 Euros per hour and 1 per cent earned more than 50 Euros per hour (CSO, 2012c). With most employees in this sector being paid low wages, hospitality is the sector where we would expect to find many ‘bad jobs’. Other factors, such as career prospects or non-standard forms of work are also of a major importance in determining job quality. As it will be further discussed, these aspects of working conditions have also been deteriorating in this sector.

- **Skills and career development**

According to a national survey, of all employees those working in the hotels and restaurant sector were the least likely to receive training (O’Connell et al., 2010). Only 6 per cent of employees in this sector declared formal training received in the last twelve months, however this percentage is exactly the same as the national average. A further 18 per cent had informal training in 2008, below the national average of 28 per cent (CSO, 2010a).

The unskilled nature of a large proportion of jobs in this sector combined with the relatively high education levels of those working there also suggests cases of employment below the qualification level. The following table provides a detailed breakdown of education in the Irish hospitality sector:

**Table 8: Accommodation and Food Services****Education Level Completed (000s)**

	<b>Accommodation and food services</b>		<b>Total in labour force</b>	
<b>Primary (incl. no formal education)</b>	5,677	5.48%	153,568	6.88%
<b>Lower secondary</b>	13,185	12.73%	317,691	14.23%
<b>Upper secondary</b>	45,583	44.02%	777,852	34.85%
<b>Third level non-degree</b>	6,255	6.04%	110,180	4.94%
<b>Third level degree or higher</b>	17,642	17.04%	635,022	28.45%
<b>Not sated</b>	2,607	2.52%	74,797	3.35%
<b>Those whose full time education has not ceased</b>	12,600	12.17%	163,093	7.31%

(Source: CSO, StatBank)

These relatively high levels of education might be explained by the high proportion of non-Irish nationals working in hospitality: migrants are more likely to accept lower positions in the host country labour market. Such employment is either a necessity due to the lack of language skills, or a choice providing a stepping stone to other jobs (e.g. Krings et al, 2013). In addition, this sector also has a higher than average employment of those still in education. This group is probably represented by third-level students working part time in a variety of service jobs.

Finally, 24 per cent of those who had completed third level education had a degree in Services, which suggest that they might be working in a job related to their qualifications. However, 34.7 per cent, however, graduated from Social Sciences, Business and Law while 9.7 per cent had a degree in Humanities and Arts (CSO, StatsBank).

- **Non-standard work**

The relatively low average working hours suggest the significance of part time work. According to Failte Ireland, amongst those working in hospitality sector, 40 per cent were employed on a part-time but full year round basis in 2009. The highest share of part-time workers could be found in Bars (47 per cent); Restaurants (44 per cent) and Hotels (37 per cent). While there is no available data indicating how many of these are underemployed, the overall part-time underemployment in Ireland was at the level of 30.9 per cent in 2013 (CSO, 2013). The low-paid nature of hospitality jobs may suggest that large proportion of the part-time underemployment is expected to be found in this sector. In addition, there is evidence of zero-hours contracts being used in hospitality (O'Brien, 2015). Such contracts indicate that the

employees have low job stability as they have no guaranteed paid work from their employer. With no security and low hourly pay these jobs can often be characterised by bad working conditions.

Using agencies, on the other hand, does not seem to be a common practice in this sector (Watson et al., 2010). Research suggests that the employers do not need to use such form of employment as the pay rates are already very low (Bergene et al, 2014). There is, however, evidence of agency work in event catering. Here employees will not only often be offered zero-hour contracts but will also be required to travel to different locations. Considering the quality of public transport in Dublin, it could be challenging to commute between home and multiple and changing workplaces. This situation often creates a vicious cycle: an individual cannot afford their own car as the wages are very low, yet the daily commute has a negative impact on their quality of life. This issue requires further exploration.

Furthermore, due to the nature of this sector and its close dependence on tourism, a relatively large proportion of jobs are also offered seasonally. According to Failte Ireland (2011) 14 per cent of those working in hospitality were in either part-time or full-time seasonal employment. Most of these jobs were in the accommodation sub-sector where seasonal employment ranged from 20 per cent in hotels to 31 per cent in self-catering accommodation (ibid). Finally, the B&B sector of the hotel industry is also characterised by a large number of workers who are unpaid family members accounting for 40 per cent of B&B workforce in 2009 (ibid).

- **Job security**

According to O'Connell (2010: 36), 29 per cent of the total sample of the Employees' Survey either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their jobs were secure. Furthermore, this sector was characterised by rather high staff turnover during the boom period (Wickham et al, 2008). It has been argued that this has changed and that turnover is now reduced (Roche et al., 2011). Some hotels also tried to avoid lay-offs of their core staff as they adopted a business model in which it is important for the customers to recognize the staff (ibid: 119). Furthermore, while the location and services offered by a hotel are important for the business, customer service plays a crucial role on a competitive market, especially during the economic downturn (Melia, 2010). Nevertheless, the issue of temporary character of many of jobs in this sector could be an issue. Even if the contract is permanent, people often leave due to the bad working conditions. (Krings et al, 2013). With the lack of proper training, those who stay employed

can be affected by the high turnover. We can assume that such people would be often involved in on-the-job training and frequent supervision, but not receive additional pay for such duties.

- **Job autonomy**

According to the National Workplace Survey the hospitality sector is characterised by relatively low job autonomy (O'Connell et al., 2010). In addition, 28.9 per cent of those working in Hotels and Restaurants reported that their organization had direct participation arrangements in place and 26.6 per cent declared personal participation. Direct involvement in the organisation of work was thus relatively low in this sector: across all sectors organisational participation was in place for 44.5 per cent of respondents across all sectors, with 35.3 per cent reporting personal participation (ibid: 52).

It could also be argued that job autonomy for most employed in this sector will be low due to the nature of the work. As many employees perform front of house roles, they would be subject to constant indirect control by customers. There is anecdotal evidence of people 'trying to find something to do' even if all the work is done as the image of the business would suffer if they appeared not to be working. A high volume of customer service also involves emotional labour and may result in physiological exhaustion.

### **The Irish hospitality sector: 'good jobs', 'bad jobs' and workplace conditions**

Considering the nature of the sector and its workplaces, the combination of low hourly rates and low number of hours per week, it could be argued that there are very few 'good jobs' within the hospitality industry. These would probably include those with high managerial grades as well as some working in skilled trades. Nevertheless, even those 'good' jobs are still paid relatively lower wages than most other skilled professions and, especially in case of skilled trade employees, often have less pleasant working conditions.

'Bad jobs', on the other hand, seem to be widespread in hospitality and apply to most of its sub-sectors. This is mainly related to the wages that on average are currently set below the proposed living weekly wage. There are also other negative conditions associated with various occupations within this sector and these often differ depending on the nature of the job and the sub-sector. The international literature takes the hospitality industry as exemplifying 'Hard HRM' where human resource management focuses on controlling costs (e.g. Brinkman-Staneva 2013). Relevant examples of sector-specific 'bad jobs' would include: housekeeping



in large hotels, zero-hour contract staff in catering and on-call hotel waiting personnel in hotels, lower-level jobs in restaurants and bars and below-full-time catering assistants in coffee shops.

Housekeeping positions are usually associated with low pay and can also be part-time as the service is required in the morning and early afternoon. The hard versions of HRM adopted in many contemporary Irish hotels are also focused on productivity and therefore housekeeping staff performance is measured by number of rooms completed per shift. This can become a major issue during the times of economic downturn as many firms reduce the numbers of staff and thus put more pressure on those who remain employed. These jobs are also physically demanding and can lead to occupational injuries. It should be emphasised that while ‘heavy’ jobs are often financially rewarded in such industries as manufacturing or construction, elementary positions in services are frequently on the opposite end of the salary spectrum. Similar rules apply to waiters and waitresses whose work is associated with the manual handling of heavy dishes. The latter work also requires a high volume of customer service and therefore those employed in such occupations are exposed to hard emotional labour and possible abuse which can be taken personally (Korczyński and Evans, 2013). Furthermore, waiting staff in catering and some of the hotels are also employed on zero-hours and on call basis (ICTU, 2015). Many of them are also employed by agencies, which means that they only work ‘when there is work to be done’ (Kleinknecht, Oostendorp and Pradhan, 1997). In many cases employees are informed about their shifts via text message, often with less than 24 hours’ notice (ICTU, 2015). With no security of their weekly shifts and with the employer in control of their hours, they become ‘bonded’ employees with no realistic option of additional employment (Belenberg, 2015). It has been argued that while such flexible contract arrangements often suit the employers, growing deregulation also leads to increased insecurity and precariousness of work (Golsh, 2003: 713; Dolado, Garcia-Serrano and Jimeno, 2002). Such contracts are also often related to low levels of commitment, insufficient training and low organizational morale (Baum and Lundtorp, 2000). Furthermore, while these arrangements may suit ‘transient’ employees such as students or migrants, many of those working on call face great difficulties in settling in the labour market. Similar problems can also arise for those working in coffee shops. Here there is evidence of employers utilizing a strategy of employing people on ‘almost full-time’ contracts. In such cases workers are not allowed to undertake any other additional employment even though they work for 35 instead of 39 hours per week. The minimum hourly rate then does not result in an equivalent full-time weekly wage as they would have expected (Krings et al, 2013). There is also evidence that coffee shop work can also be



associated with anti-social working times as it usually includes a weekend shift. This last element is also a major factor for those employed in elementary positions in bars. While bartending is still perceived as a profession and can be paid accordingly, basic jobs such as collecting and washing glasses are not expected to be financially rewarding despite the requirement for late night work. Finally, low level positions in restaurants, such as kitchen porters, are also associated with bad working conditions: they are physically demanding, low paid, and have antisocial hours and long shifts. Given the tasks that are involved in these positions, we might also expect a high level of minor injuries that are often not reported and thus not included in official statistics. Furthermore, bad working conditions often result in a high turnover of staff so that in many cases supervisory duties are, shifted onto the longer-term employees who do not necessarily receive additional financial reward for such supervision.

In summary all the above jobs are associated with more than one element of a ‘bad job’. Wages are low as a result of the combination of a low hourly rate and a low amount of hours per week; physical demands are not financially rewarded; there are also often emotional demands related to customer care. The levels of training are minimal and career opportunities are also limited. Job autonomy is constrained both in relations to tasks and in relation to control over working time. While these are just examples of possible ‘bad jobs’ in this sector, we can expect that other aspects of the work have deteriorated recently as employers have been reducing their costs during the economic downturn. Such reductions have often been achieved by staff lay-offs and increased productivity by those remaining. All the above issues require further exploration in the forthcoming fieldwork in this sector.

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