

'Bad Jobs' in 'Good Industries': The Precarious Employment of Migrant Workers in the Manufacturing Sector of the Emilia-Romagna Region

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Abstract ID: 303

Inviato: 10/04/2024

Evento: XXII Workshop Annuale SIEPI

Argomento: 5. Governance, organizzazione, capitale umano e produttività

Parole chiave: job quality, manufacturing, migrant workers, nonstandard employment

The article examines the drivers of migrant atypical employment in the manufacturing sector of the Emilia-Romagna region. By drawing on administrative data based on mandatory communications we document that, even in an industry characterized by high quality of productions and occupations, migrants have a disproportionately higher likelihood to be hired through either fixed-term or agency contracts compared to natives. We interpret this evidence through a set of alternative theories, including human capital theory, dual labour market processes, the use of precarious contracts as screening devices and institutional segmentation theories. The empirical analysis reveals that while migrant employment through fixed-term contracts is consistent with screening purposes, the hiring of migrants with agency contracts is driven by processes of institutional segmentation, through which employers shift the costs of flexibility to the most vulnerable and less organized segments within the labour force, such as migrants. Managerial and policy implications are discussed.