



## Employer membership and collective bargaining in Italy: empirical evidence from an INAPP survey

SUMMARY: 1. Preamble. – 2. Fragmentation of employer associations and the tendency to sectoral bargaining. – 3. The scarce appeal of second-level bargaining: a first analysis. – 4. Conclusions.

### 1. Preamble

The Italian collective bargaining system has for some time been at the centre of attempts to encourage its greater decentralisation, since negative effects on the national macroeconomic *performance* are attributed to its excessive centralisation, or in any case to the two-level structure.

The push for greater decentralisation has been pursued diachronically, and often separately, by the main participants in the industrial relations system.

On the one hand, the social partners, starting from 2009, have autonomously entered into a series of intersectoral agreements to regulate the relations between the different collective bargaining levels, progressively expanding the skills of the second level; on the other hand, the same motivation is exercised by the public participant, both through *hard* legislative measures on the hierarchy of collective bargaining levels (Treu, 2018), and through *soft* policies of economic incentive of the same second-level bargaining.

From the other point of view, decentralisation is a consolidated and global trend, which began in the 1980s,

intensified in the 1990s, then stabilising in the decade before the great recession, and now that the same crisis has rekindled (Visser, 2016). According to the OECD (OECD, 2017), in fact, in a global panorama that sees company bargaining (*single-employer bargaining*) prevailing in two-thirds of its member countries, national and/or sectoral bargaining (*multi-employer bargaining*) still plays a significant role only in continental Europe.

To this already consolidated process, an exogenous factor has recently been added: the so-called New European Economic Governance, which considers sector-level bargaining to be a "labour market rigidity" (Marginson, 2015), as it slows down the process of aligning wages to productivity. It is moreover a strategic indication of a general nature, postponed since the Euro-Plus Pact of 2011.