

# POLITECNICO DI TORINO

College of Management and Manufacturing Engineering

**Master of Science Course  
in Management Engineering**

Master of Science Thesis

**Innovative Approaches to Social Sustainability.  
Scouting of Italian startups and scale-ups offering Welfare and HR  
Management solutions.**



**Politecnico  
di Torino**

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# 1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

In recent years, businesses have been called upon to face a radical transformation, characterized by global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, rapid technological development, the covid pandemic, and increasingly specific employee needs. In this scenario, organizations are no longer evaluated solely on the basis of their economic performance, but also for their contribution to social and environmental well-being. The *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and the *Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG)* criteria, represent key guidelines to guide companies toward a sustainable development model that integrates economic growth, social sustainability and environmental protection.

With this in mind, there is an emerging need for companies to rethink their approach to corporate welfare and human resource management, with the aim of creating inclusive, motivating workplaces capable of responding to the diverse needs of an increasingly heterogeneous workforce. Adopting innovative strategies in this area not only improves employees' quality of life but also helps generate shared value for society and strengthen corporate competitiveness.

The objective of this thesis is to explore the most innovative approaches to social sustainability in the context of corporate welfare and human resource management. Specifically, the paper aims to scout Italian startups and scale-ups developing innovative solutions in this area, analysing their proposals and assessing their impact. Through an in-depth survey, it aims to highlight the crucial role of technological and social innovation in promoting sustainability models capable of responding to today's challenges. This analysis aims not only to identify emerging best practices, but also to provide a useful tool for companies and businesses interested in integrating these solutions into their strategies, thus contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda goals.

The structure of this paper includes a chapter on the **Methodology** (Chapter 2) applied to the conduct of the work, in which the rationale by which the structure of the thesis was divided into a literature review part and a scouting part was explained, and with what criteria the scouting of companies was conducted.

The next chapter (Chapter 3) deals with **the literature analysis**, in which a broad view of the Social Sustainability landscape is offered, explaining what it is and what it encompasses, with insights into Open Innovation, Open Sustainability, ESG, SDGs, and CSRD regulations.

The thesis continues in Chapter 4 by entering instead into the specifics of the **most sought-after solutions on the Italian market in the areas of welfare and HR management**, also offering a historical excursus on corporate welfare to understand the evolution of the Italian landscape over the decades.

Chapter 5 kicks off the second part of the study, concerning the **scouting of startups and scale-ups**, for which the reader will find there a list of companies for each of which a presentation "sheet" has been compiled. Within each card, there are details regarding the company's profile and the products/services offered.

Finally, **the conclusions** drawn from the course of the work, which result as a natural consequence of the path taken in this paper and the logical transitions between the various chapters.

## 2 CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

To carry out the work, it was chosen to divide the structure of the thesis into two main blocks. The first part is represented by the literature analysis, that is, an in-depth description of the whole context in which the study carried out is to be placed, taking as sources the official, Italian and global reports detailing the current challenges of companies and the consequent goals to be achieved, but also textbooks, essays or articles by academics and specialists in the field. In this way, the aim is to encapsulate in a single paper all the useful information for the reader who interfaces with the topic of innovation and sustainability from a business perspective, in order to fully understand the emerging global landscape and future scenarios for Italian companies. Therefore, the concepts of **Open Innovation**, **Open Sustainability**, Social Development Goals (SDGs), ESG goals (and the related CSRD directive) and the most important **solutions in Welfare and HR Management** sought by Italian companies on the market today are addressed.

The second part consists of a real scouting of Italian innovative startups and scale-ups, which provide companies with these sought-after solutions in the market. As the main sources related to the scouting, information from the **AIDA** database was relied upon, i.e.: the database created and distributed by *Bureau van Dijk S.p.A.*, containing financial statements, master and product data of all active and bankrupt Italian corporations (excluding Banks, Insurance Companies and Public Entities). In it, there is detailed master and financial information on about 980,000 companies updated to the latest available year (2023), as well as time series of financial statements and numerous other data. In addition to the AIDA database, this study relied on the *Business Registry*, the *Chamber Office*, the websites of the companies surveyed, and a number of industry articles.

Regarding innovative startups, the selection criteria were as follows:

- Date of incorporation from 2019 onward
- Legal headquarters in Italy
- Products/services offered in the field of welfare and/or HR management
- Impact on at least 1 of the 17 SDGs

For scale-ups, the selection criteria were as follows:

- Date of incorporation before 2019
- Registered office in Italy
- Prominent activity in the relevant sector
- Revenues in the last available year in the range of millions of euros

In conclusion, the paper aims to provide a range of possible partners for companies working in the field of Social Sustainability, in which the themes of Open Innovation and Open Sustainability are combined and merged into a single concept, as was explored in Chapter 3.

### 3 CHAPTER 3: THE LANDSCAPE OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

As analyzed by the *United Nations Global Compact*<sup>1</sup>, **Social Sustainability** is about identifying and managing the impacts of businesses, both positive and negative, on people.

The report explains how the quality of a company's relationships and commitment to its stakeholders is critical. Companies affect, directly or indirectly, what happens to employees, workers in the value chain, customers, and local communities, and it is important to proactively manage these impacts.

A company's "*Social License to Operate*," or **SLO**,<sup>2</sup>, and the resulting trust of the local area in which the company operates, depends in large part on the company's own efforts at social sustainability. A lack of social development, including issues such as poverty and/or inequality, can hinder corporate operations and growth. On the other hand, actions to achieve social sustainability can open new markets, help retain and attract business partners or be a source of innovation for new product or service lines. Internal morale and employee engagement can increase, while productivity, risk management, and company-community conflicts can improve.

The first six principles of the UN Global Compact focus on this social dimension of corporate sustainability. Social sustainability considers the set of actions aimed at protecting and pursuing compliance with fundamental principles related to individual and community well-being, with particular reference to such indispensable issues as employee health and safety, women's empowerment and gender equality, social inclusion, adherence to and respect for human and labor rights, virtuous human capital development, care for children or people with disabilities, and approaches focused on corporate impacts on poverty. In addition, companies can also take further steps:

- Contribute in other ways to improving the lives of the people they influence, such as creating decent jobs, goods and services that help meet basic needs, more inclusive value chains.
- Making strategic social investments and promoting public policies that support social sustainability.
- Collaborating with other businesses, joining forces to have a greater positive impact.

It is from this last point that we connect to the concepts of Open Innovation and Open Sustainability, elaborating on them in the following section.

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<sup>1</sup> **The United Nations Global Compact is the world's largest strategic corporate citizenship initiative.** It was first proposed in 1999, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, by former U.N. Secretary Kofi Annan, who, on that occasion, invited the world business leaders present at the meeting to sign a "Global Compact" with the United Nations in order to address the most critical aspects of globalization in a collaborative manner. Launched operationally in July 2000, since then, **more than 20,000 companies from 167 countries around the world** have joined, creating a new reality of global collaboration.

<sup>2</sup> **SLO (Social License to Operate):** the definition comes to us from the academic publication "Social Acceptance and Oil Extractivism" dated April 9, 2024, by Professor Alberto Diantini. In it, the Professor explains how SLO is commonly defined as the level of social acceptance a company has in an area, a concept that comes in handy in demonstrating that company's contribution to local sustainable development.



## 3.1 Open Innovation and Open Sustainability

### 3.1.1 What is Open Innovation?

The topic of Open Innovation was first addressed in the essay "*The Era of Open Innovation*," written by **Chesbrough** in 2003. As theorized by **Chesbrough**, "*Open Innovation is a paradigm that asserts that companies can and should make use of external ideas, as well as internal ones, and access by internal and external routes to markets if they want to advance their technological competencies.*"

As reported by Politecnico di Milano's *Startup Thinking Observatory*, Open Innovation is a model of innovation in which companies, organizations and people collaborate with external actors, such as researchers, startups, universities and other companies, to develop new ideas, products or technologies. This approach is based on the idea that innovation should not be limited only to an organization's internal resources but can also benefit from external knowledge and expertise.

### 3.1.2 What is Open Sustainability?

Open Sustainability refers to a distributed and orchestrated process in which a central company interacts with its partners across organizational boundaries in order to more effectively achieve its sustainability goals (at the micro level), the sustainability goals of its direct networks (at the meso level), and the sustainability goals of its broader networks (at the macro level), both in the short and long term (Chakrabarti, Henneberg, & Ivens, 2020).

As can be deduced from the above, both concepts promote collaboration with external actors, but with some differences. In open innovation, this is done to stimulate innovation and increase competitiveness, whereas, **in open sustainability, the collaboration is geared toward solving global problems related to sustainability**. In both cases, accessibility of information and information sharing are essential. In the case of open innovation, it is about ideas and technologies, while in open sustainability it is about environmental and social data.

It is important for the reader, going forward in the thesis, to keep this point in mind, as seeking synergy between these two concepts is precisely the goal of the scouting that was carried out. As anticipated in the introduction and methodology, the purpose of the paper is to provide a range of Italian startups/scale-ups that offer innovative solutions for companies, in the area of Welfare and HR Management. Companies that, let us remember, have to cope with the new European directives on ESG and the global challenges of the 2030 Agenda on SDGs (further elaborations in the next paragraphs). **Therefore, in the Social Sustainability landscape, companies aim to find innovative solutions (open innovation) in the social sphere (the S of ESG), which at the same time have a positive environmental impact (open sustainability).**

## 3.2 What are ESG criteria

**ESG** stands for Environmental, Social, Governance and refers to a set of standards used to measure an organization, in terms of its economic, social and environmental impact.<sup>3</sup>

The criteria by which performance is measured are used by employees, suppliers, citizens, institutions, investors, financial analysts, banks, and insurance companies to learn about an organization's commitment to and performance related to sustainability and its exposure to risks, which arise from environmental, social, and regulatory compliance factors:<sup>4</sup>

- The criteria underlying Environmental's "E" are environmental criteria and relate to whether the organization is operating as an environmental steward. Therefore, they cover environmental issues such as climate change, greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), deforestation, biodiversity, carbon emissions, waste management, and pollution.
- Criteria related to the letter "S" are related to social impact and examine the relationship with employees, suppliers, customers, and in general with the communities with which the company operates or the people it deals with, including minorities
- Governance "G," finally, covers issues of corporate governance inspired by good practices and ethical principles. In this area, the criteria under scrutiny concern the logics related to executive compensation, respect for shareholders' rights, and transparency of corporate decisions.

A 2020 study, titled "Sustainability goes Mainstream" and conducted by **BlackRock**<sup>5</sup>; stated that among the three criteria Environmental, Social and Governance, the environmental dimension was prevalent over the "S" of Social and the "G" of Governance. The data collected from the 425 investors involved in the research, active in 27 countries and representing \$25 trillion, showed that the prevalence toward environmental issues was expected to grow over the next 3-5 years from 88 percent to 89 percent; for the Social aspect, which at 2020 was just over 50 percent, a growth from 52 percent to 58 percent was expected, while for the "G" of Governance a decrease in attention from 60 percent to 53 percent was projected. So, looking forward, over a five-year period, the aspect that would experience the most growth would be Social. **In this paper, the focus will be precisely on the aspects concerning the 'S' of ESG** (see more at paragraph 3.4).

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<sup>3</sup> Definition taken from a January 24, 2024 IBM article by Thomas Krantz and Alexandra Jonker, experts in Technology, AI and Sustainability.

<sup>4</sup> From an August 20, 2024, article by ESG360, by Mauro Bellini, creator of ESG360, EnergyUP.Tech and Agrifood.Tech of which he is currently Editor-in-Chief. He focuses on digital innovation, sustainability, ESG and agrifood, and issues related to industrial, energy and social transformation.

<sup>5</sup> Large investment firm, based in New York City. As of December 31, 2023, boasted assets of \$10 trillion.

### 3.2.1 The relationship between ESG and SDGs

As reported in the ESG360 article, edited by Mauro Bellini, a crucial reference point for ESG logic is *the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the program signed on September 25, 2015 by the UN General Assembly, that is, the governments of the 193 member countries. The 2030 Agenda is about commitments to people, prosperity and the preservation of the planet and is embodied in the **17 Sustainable Development Goals** or "**SDGs**," which make up a vast program of actions and interventions, which officially came into effect on January 1, 2016.

#### Why are the SDGs important for ESG?

According to Mauro Bellini, the 17 SDGs have become increasingly important, in relation to ESG and, in general, to the achievement of corporate sustainability goals, because they are key reference points for being able to evaluate projects, measure their progress, consolidate the results of each entity, and assess the overall contribution at the level of regional and national institutions. The 17 SDGs (Figure 1) also offer organizations the opportunity to make comparisons in relation to the contribution each reality is able to make for each goal.

## The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Figure 1: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Source: SDG Compass United Nations)

Table 1: List of targets for each SDG (Source: SDG Compass United Nations)

<b><i>SDGs' Goals</i></b>	<b><i>Target</i></b>
<b><i>Goal 1</i></b>	<i>End poverty in all its forms everywhere</i>
<b><i>Goal 2</i></b>	<i>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</i>
<b><i>Goal 3</i></b>	<i>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</i>
<b><i>Goal 4</i></b>	<i>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</i>
<b><i>Goal 5</i></b>	<i>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</i>
<b><i>Goal 6</i></b>	<i>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</i>
<b><i>Goal 7</i></b>	<i>Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</i>
<b><i>Goal 8</i></b>	<i>Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</i>
<b><i>Goal 9</i></b>	<i>Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</i>
<b><i>Goal 10</i></b>	<i>Reduce inequality within and among countries</i>
<b><i>Goal 11</i></b>	<i>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</i>
<b><i>Goal 12</i></b>	<i>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</i>
<b><i>Goal 13</i></b>	<i>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</i>
<b><i>Goal 14</i></b>	<i>Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</i>
<b><i>Goal 15</i></b>	<i>Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</i>
<b><i>Goal 16</i></b>	<i>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</i>
<b><i>Goal 17</i></b>	<i>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</i>

### *3.2.2 The benefits of ESG from a financial perspective.*

As anticipated in paragraph 3.2, ESG was created to monitor, measure and enhance the ability of companies to generate value, which includes environmental, social and governance issues. According to ESG360, finance plays a key role in ESG, and specifically refers to factors related to measuring the sustainability and social impact of a company or investment. Specifically, the financial world looks to ESG as a source of information and knowledge, which enables the following goals:

- **Directing the financing of sustainable projects.** It is critical for the financial sector to provide the capital needed to support projects and businesses that meet ESG criteria, and this includes investments in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, clean technologies, and all initiatives that contribute to environmental sustainability, social welfare, and good governance.
- **Risk assessment.** ESG factors provide greater insight into financial risks: companies that do not adequately manage their environmental impacts are exposed to greater risks, whether environmentally, legally, or related to operations and reputation. ESG factor analysis is an aid to a more accurate assessment of these risk factors.
- **Seeking transparency and clarity in reporting.** Transparency and reporting on ESG data increases knowledge of individual companies and the sectors in which they operate, contributing to greater overall transparency.
- **Creation and management of ESG-specific investments.** Investors are increasingly paying attention to ESG factors in their investment decisions; therefore, companies that meet these criteria can attract more investment. At the same time, investor pressure can push companies to improve their performance in ESG.
- **Creation of ESG financial products.** The financial sector can also promote sustainability through the development of specific ESG financial products such as green bonds, ESG investment funds, social bonds, or other investment formulas.

Continuing with ESG360's study, Bellini says that the financial sphere is experiencing a definite turn toward ESG investments, identifying five main reasons for this trend:

1. **Climate urgency:** global warming and its effects are pushing investors to consider the environmental impact of their choices.
2. **Social pressure:** new generations, increasingly sensitive to sustainability issues, are exerting strong pressure for capital to be directed ethically and sustainably.
3. The realization that **good governance** means stability and **less risk** for investors: well-managed companies tend to perform better in the long run and take less risk.
4. ESG investments can offer **competitive returns** compared to traditional investments.
5. **Regulation:** various regulations globally are pushing toward the adoption of ESG standards, making these investments not only ethically sound, but also compliant with future legislative guidelines (more on this at 3.3 ).

### 3.2.3 *The relationship between ESG and the digital world*

Bellini points out that when a company embarks on a journey to migrate its operations, in the direction of an arrangement that allows for improved environmental and social impact, it is managing a project that is essentially one of transition. The company seeks to move from a model in which it consumes matter, energy, time and skills at the human resource level, to a model in which it manages a responsible relationship with matter, with energy, with the values that come from people. The company therefore faces a very important transition: to do this it must prepare its organization, its production infrastructure, its employees, and its Governance in general, in order to support this new model.

This transition is not without risk, as adopting ESG criteria means adding new objectives - related to environmental and social impact - to existing business objectives, which always remain paramount. The path to ESG must therefore also consider factors related to "*Transition Risk*," i.e., risks related to the energy, digital, economic and in not a few cases even business model transformation of companies.

Digital, however, can also be an "accelerator" for this transition. As the ESG360 report argues, for companies that are integrating sustainability into their business model, artificial intelligence is a factor in improving ESG performance by monitoring data that contributes to the construction of ESG factors and automating decision-making processes. AI enables the monitoring and analysis of all variables related to the environment, social issues and corporate governance, as well as offering the ability to simulate possible risk scenarios. Therefore, according to these considerations, Artificial Intelligence would enable AI to help companies precisely manage the aforementioned Transition Risk, allowing them to take advantage of data and knowledge with which to improve the effectiveness of risk management processes.

The report concludes by stating that the shift from a long-term to a medium-term, or even short-term, perspective should not be equated only with a form of acceleration; it is not just about "doing the same things in less time." The efficiency that comes through digital alone is not enough to make the paradigm shift required of companies.

To achieve the United Nations' 17 environmental goals, the relationship with resources needs to be reviewed, whatever type of company and the type of business it is involved in.

Reinforcing the concepts addressed by Mauro Bellini with ESG360, we also take over an article on ESG criteria prepared by PwC Italy<sup>6</sup>, from which I reworked three main concepts:

**1. Strategic reinvention**

Rethink the way you do business, integrating sustainability elements in order to align the objectives related to them with those defined in the business plan.

**2. Business transformation**

Integrate its operational processes with solutions compatible with the achievement of strategic objectives and develop systems for measuring and monitoring performance in the environmental, social and governance spheres of the business.

**3. Reimagined Reporting**

To rethink traditional reporting methods as a guide to its progress, through increasingly timely data collection processes, for the rendering of complete and reliable information aimed at consolidating a relationship of trust and transparency with stakeholders.

To summarize all that has been said so far, I think it appropriate to conclude the paragraph with these verbatim statements:

*"Sustainability understood in its three declinations, environmental, social and governance, increasingly permeates companies and society as a whole. The relevance of the issue is progressively reinforced by the demands of markets, financiers and regulations, which are becoming increasingly stringent, particularly in Europe. Data, measurements, processes and assessments are now central to this perspective, in favor of an increasingly quantitative and rigorous approach to ESG issues."*

Francesco Ferrara - Partner | ESG Leader, PwC Italy

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<sup>6</sup> With more than 364,000 people in 151 countries, PwC constitutes one of the world's largest professional services networks. In Italy, they are present in 24 offices with more than 8,000 professionals and provide a wide range of services in an integrated and multidisciplinary manner.



### 3.3 Legislation on ESG criteria

As anticipated in the subsection 3.2.2 (under 'Regulation'), there are a number of regulations that have been issued to incentivize companies to integrate ESG factors into their strategies. In a report on sustainability, prepared by PwC Italy, the *Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)* is mentioned. The report states that part of the European *Green Deal*<sup>7</sup> is the December 16, 2022 approval and publication in the EU Official Journal of Directive No. 2022/2464 on *Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)*.

The *CSRD* amends Directive 2013/34/EU, concerning the non-financial reporting requirement for large companies (*Non-Financial Reporting Directive*, Directive 2014/95/EU, acronym **NFRD**). There was an obligation for member states to transpose the new directive by 2024. **The main objective of the CSRD is to improve sustainability reporting**, thus going so far as to not only equate the relevance of ESG results with those reported in traditional statutory financial statements, but to recognize their connection.

In Italy, the directive was implemented with the publication of Legislative Decree No. 125 of September 6, 2024, in the Official Gazette on September 10, 2024. This piece of legislation, which came into force on **September 25, 2024**, introduces mandatory **sustainability reporting** for a wide range of companies operating in the country, with the aim of promoting transparency and corporate responsibility in ESG.

According to the ESG Italia portal<sup>8</sup>, in an article dated Nov. 6, 2024, the CSRD regulation is aimed at the following groups:

- **large companies and large groups** (including those that control companies or have subsidiaries in Italy), i.e., companies that exceed at least two of the following criteria for two consecutive fiscal years:
  - total assets on the balance sheet exceeding 25 million euros.
  - net revenues from sales and services exceeding 50 million euros.
  - average number of employees during the fiscal year greater than 250.

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<sup>7</sup> In November 2019, the European Parliament declared a climate emergency. After a few days, the commission presented a new strategy, called the European Green Deal. The Green Deal builds on the United Nations 2030 Agenda, of which it is an integral part, but identifies additional objectives: it consists of a package of strategic initiatives to put the EU on the path to a **green transition**, with the ultimate goal of achieving **climate neutrality by 2050**.

<sup>8</sup> **ESG Italia®** is a trademark registered with the *Italian Patent and Trademark Office of Mise*, where CEO and founder Marco Sponziello collaborates with a Team of ESG Consultants, specialized in organizing Environmental and Social Sustainability Strategies.



- **SMEs listed on regulated markets in Italy or the European Union**, which for two consecutive fiscal years fall within at least two of the following criteria:
  - total assets on the balance sheet: between 450,000 euros and 25 million euros.
  - net revenues from sales and services: between 900,000 euros and 50 million euros.
  - average number of employees during the fiscal year: between 11 and 250.
- **certain types of foreign companies with headquarters or operations in Italy**, including parent companies with branches, or subsidiaries in Italy;
- **insurance companies and credit institutions** (regardless of legal form).

**The following remain excluded from the application of the CSRD:**

- **Microenterprises** (even if listed) that for two consecutive fiscal years have not exceeded at least two of the following limits:
  - total assets on the balance sheet: 450,000 euros.
  - net revenues from sales and services: 900,000 euros.
  - average number of employees during the fiscal year: 10.
- **Bank of Italy**, alternative investment funds (AIFs) and collective investment undertakings (UCITS).

The Decree requires companies to include detailed information on corporate sustainability issues in their sustainability reporting, with a particular focus on **dual materiality**, focusing on:

1. **financial materiality**, i.e., how risks and opportunities arising from sustainability issues can affect financial stability and corporate performance. For example, a company's exposure to environmental risks (such as climate change) and **social risks (such as the conditions of workers in the supply chain/value chain)** can have significant financial consequences.
2. **impact materiality**, i.e., how the company's activities affect the environment, society and governance, and how the company works to prevent a negative impact on people and the planet.

Implementation of the new provisions will be phased in to allow companies to prepare and implement the processes necessary for comprehensive and compliant reporting.

The expected timelines for adoption are:

- **January 1, 2025:** for large enterprises, other than Public Interest Entities (PIEs), scheduled for adoption during 2024;
- **January 1, 2026:** for listed SMEs (excluding micro enterprises), small and non-complex entities, and certain types of insurance and reinsurance companies (such as captives);
- **January 1, 2028:** for parent companies from non-EU countries with significant operations in Europe.

The information must be structured according to the ***European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS)***, drafted by **EFRAG**<sup>9</sup>, a first set of which was adopted by the European Commission on July 31, 2023, i.e., application standards that will enable companies to meet their CSRD reporting obligations, to standardize **individual reporting** (for large companies and listed SMEs) and **consolidated reporting** (for parent companies of large groups) across member states.

➤ **Individual reporting:**

- description of business model and corporate strategy in relation to sustainability
- long-term sustainability goals
- role of governing bodies in managing sustainability issues;
- sustainability-related policies and incentives for members of the board;
- due diligence processes and identification of negative impacts on the value chain;
- major sustainability-related business risks and dependencies.

➤ **Consolidated reporting:**

- The parent company must provide unified reporting that includes all subsidiaries in the group and covers all sustainability issues relevant to the group as a whole;
- details of risks and impacts specific to the daughter companies;
- specification of subsidiaries that do not provide sustainability data: the parent company should indicate which subsidiaries included in the consolidation did not provide sustainability data and which are exempt from sustainability reporting.

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<sup>9</sup> **EFRAG** (European Financial Reporting Advisory Group) is an independent organization that is responsible for providing technical advice to the European Commission on financial and sustainability reporting standards for European companies.

Returning to ESRSs, the PwC Italy report illustrates the structure of this first set of 12 Standards, of which 2 are general and 10 are characterizing ESG criteria, as shown in the figure below:

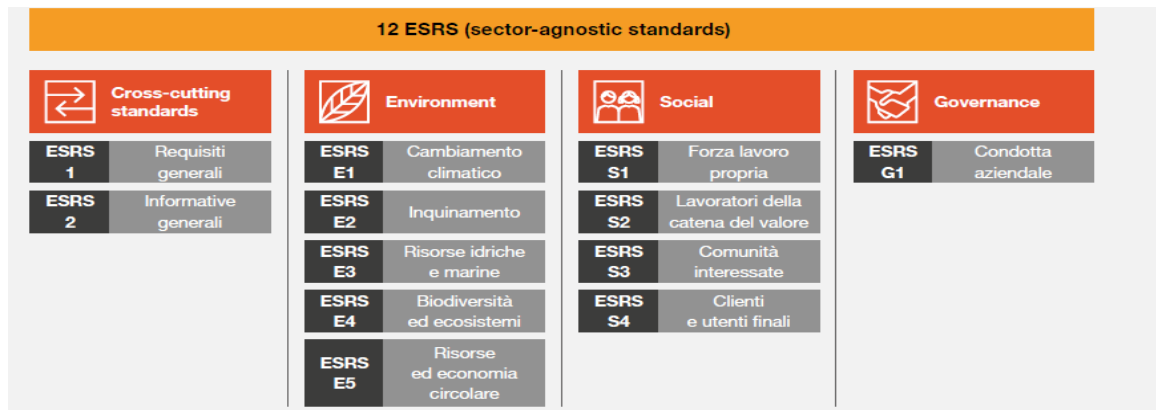


Figure 2: Types of ESRSs (Source: PwC Italy report on ESG scenario and CSRD directive)

### 3.3.1 The ESRSs

Regarding the 4 standards in the "Social" area, there are:

- ESRS S1: Own labor force
- ESRS S2: Workers in the value chain
- ESRS S3: Affected Communities
- ESRS S4: Customers and end users

To elaborate on PwC Italy's report, information from the ANNEX I published by EFRAG, dated December 22, 2023, in the Official Journal of the European Commission, was reworked to expand and clarify the new CSRD directive to support the large companies in Europe that will be the first to prepare sustainability reporting in 2025. In it, requirements are specified that will allow reporting on **impacts, risks and opportunities**, with regard to the three areas of ESG. In this paper, only the Social domain has been explored in depth, and specifically, we address the first two standards S1 and S2, which deal with the phenomenon of sustainability within the strategic processes of **human resource management and employee welfare**, of primary interest for the development of this thesis.

## **ESRS S1: Own Workforce.**

The objective of this Standard is to specify disclosure requirements that will enable users of the sustainability statement to understand the enterprise's significant impacts on its own workforce and related material risks and opportunities, including:

- (a) how the enterprise affects its workforce in terms of current or potential material positive and negative impacts;
- (b) the actions taken and the results of those actions to prevent, mitigate or remedy current or potential negative impacts, and to address risks and opportunities;
- (c) the nature, type, and extent of the enterprise's material risks and opportunities related to its impacts and workforce dependencies, and how the enterprise manages them;
- (d) the financial effects on the enterprise in the short, medium, and long term from the material risks and opportunities related to the enterprise's impacts and dependencies on its workforce.

### **General approach required**

To achieve the objective, this Standard also requires an explanation of the general approach taken by the enterprise, to identify and manage current and potential significant impacts on its workforce, in relation to the following social factors or aspects, including human rights:

- (a) **working conditions**, such as:
  - i. stable employment;
  - ii. working hours;
  - (iii. adequate wages;
  - (iv) social dialogue;
  - (v) freedom of association, presence of works councils and workers' rights to information, consultation and participation;
  - vi. collective bargaining, including the rate of coverage of the enterprise's workforce by collective agreements;
  - vii. work-life balance;
  - viii. health and safety.
- (b) **equal treatment and opportunity for all**, including:
  - i. gender equality and equal pay for work of equal value;
  - ii. training and skills development;
  - iii. employment and inclusion of people with disabilities;
  - iv. measures against violence and harassment in the workplace;
  - v. diversity.
- (c) **Other labor-related rights**, including:
  - i. child labor;
  - ii. forced labor;
  - iii. adequate housing;
  - iv. privacy.

ESRS S1 also requires an explanation of how these impacts, as well as the firm's dependencies on its workforce, may create material risks or opportunities for the firm. For example, in the area of equal opportunity, discrimination in the hiring and promotion of women can reduce the firm's access to skilled labor and damage its reputation. In contrast, policies to increase women's representation in the workforce and upper management levels can have positive effects, such as expanding the pool of skilled workers and improving the firm's reputation.

## **Scope of Application**

This Standard covers the enterprise's own workforce, which includes both people in an employment relationship with the enterprise, i.e., employees, and non-employees who have contracts with the enterprise to provide work (the "self-employed") or are provided by enterprises engaged primarily in "employment activities." This description provides users with an understanding of the enterprise's own workforce structure and helps contextualize the information provided through other disclosures.

This Standard does not cover workers in the value chain upstream or downstream of the enterprise, as these categories of workers are covered in **ESRS S2 Workers in the Value Chain**. Reporting under this Standard must be consistent, uniform and, where relevant, clearly linked to reporting on workers in the value chain under ESRS S2 to ensure effective reporting.

## **ESRS S2: Value Chain Workers.**

The objective of this Standard is to specify disclosure requirements to enable users of the sustainability report to understand the significant impacts on value chain workers related to the company's operations and its value chain, including those arising from its products or services, as well as its business relationships. In addition, the Standard aims to illustrate the associated material risks and opportunities, including:

- (a) how the enterprise affects workers in its value chain, in terms of actual or potential positive and negative material impacts;
- (b) the actions taken and the results of those actions to prevent, mitigate or remedy actual or potential negative impacts and to address risks and opportunities;
- (c) the nature, type and extent of the enterprise's material risks and opportunities, including those related to its impacts and dependencies on workers in the value chain, and how the enterprise manages them;
- (d) the financial effects on the enterprise's short-, medium-, and long-term performance of material risks and opportunities, including those arising from its impacts and dependencies on value chain workers.

## **General approach required**

To achieve this objective, the Standard requires explaining the enterprise's general approach to identifying and managing actual and potential material impacts on value chain workers in relation to:

- (a) **working conditions**, such as:
  - (i. secure employment;
  - ii. working hours;
  - (iii. adequate remuneration;
  - (iv) social dialogue;
  - (v) freedom of association;
  - vi. existence of work councils;
  - vii. collective bargaining;
  - viii. work-life balance;
  - ix. health and safety.
- (b) **fair treatment and opportunities for all**, including:
  - i. gender equality;
  - ii. equal pay for work of equal value;
  - iii. training and skills development;
  - iv. inclusion of people with disabilities;
  - v. measures against violence and harassment in the workplace;
  - vi. diversity.
- (c) **other work-related rights**, including:
  - i. child labor;
  - ii. forced labor;
  - iii. adequate housing;
  - iv. access to water and sanitation;
  - v. privacy.

This Standard also requires explaining how these impacts, along with the firm's dependencies on value chain workers, can create material risks or opportunities for the firm. For example, negative impacts on value chain workers may disrupt the enterprise's operations (such as customers refusing to buy its products or state agencies seizing its assets) and damage its reputation. Conversely, respect for workers' rights and active support programs (e.g., financial literacy initiatives) can generate opportunities, such as a more reliable supply or expanding the future consumer base.

## **Scope of Application.**

This Standard covers all workers in the value chain, both upstream and downstream, who are or may be materially impacted by the enterprise. This includes impacts related to the enterprise's own operations, its products or services, and business relationships. Included in the scope of the Standard are all workers excluded from the definition of "own workforce" (addressed in ESRS Standard S1).

Examples of workers within the scope of this Standard are:

- (a) workers from outsourced services who work in the company's workplaces (for example: third-party workers employed in catering or security services);
- (b) workers of a supplier having a contract with the enterprise who work at the supplier's premises, using the supplier's working methods;
- (c) workers of a "downstream" entity that purchases goods or services from the enterprise;
- (d) workers of an equipment supplier to the enterprise who, at a workplace controlled by the enterprise, regularly perform maintenance on the supplier's equipment (e.g., photocopiers) as stipulated in the contract between the equipment supplier and the enterprise;
- (e) workers located deeper in the supply chain who extract raw materials, which are then processed into components used in the enterprise's products.

The information provided should be consistent and, where relevant, clearly linked to reporting on its workforce according to ESRS Standard S1 to ensure effective reporting.

### 3.4 The Double "S" of ESG

Making a summary of the general concepts expressed so far, in the field of sustainability and ESG criteria, based on all the content viewed through academic sources, industry articles, guidelines from international organizations, research institutes, and company reports, from my own personal speculation I believe I can say that, in the Social sphere of ESG criteria, one can speak of a "double S": an internal S and an external S.

- **The internal S covers issues such as:**
  - Training and workers' rights
  - Equality, diversity and inclusion
  - Health, safety and well-being
- **The external S, on the other hand, includes:**
  - Consumer safety, data protection, and product quality
  - Impact on external communities and local institutions
  - Value chain and supplier management

For the purposes of the scouting carried out in this paper, as already extensively presented and explored in the literature review carried out in the previous paragraphs, the focus of this thesis is on the **internal S**, purely concerning employee welfare and human resource management, whose most common issues and most sought-after solutions currently on the Italian market are explored in depth in Chapter 4, entirely devoted to the Welfare and HR Management sphere.

## 4 CHAPTER 4: WELFARE AND HR MANAGEMENT

### 4.1 Historical Excursus on Corporate Welfare

To introduce the concept of Corporate Welfare, I believe it is important to provide a brief historical overview of the evolution of this area, through the main stages that have led this issue to become central within a company.

#### 4.1.1 *Early forms of corporate welfare*

We find the first hints of corporate welfare in England, when, at the turn of the late 1700s and early 1800s, the first laws limiting child labor were enacted, while in Italy we had to wait a century before the state did the same (from the article "Welfare in History," 2020, by Ernesto de Petra, a consultant specializing in corporate welfare).

At the same time, the first mutual aid societies, created by the workers themselves, were born in England, while the state began to create the first pension systems and enact the first laws to support the unemployed and work accidents.

In November 1942 the "*Report to the Parliament on Social Insurance and Allied Services*" was published in Britain. Its author, economist and social policy expert **William Henry Beveridge**, had been commissioned by the government to analyze social security systems. He sketched out a model in which all citizens would pay a weekly contribution to a national agency, thus insuring themselves against risks such as illness, disability or unemployment. Beveridge believed that it was the state's duty to protect citizens and citizens "from *cradle to grave*" ("from cradle to the grave") and to fight against the five "*great evils*" (Giant Evils): **misery, disease, ignorance, impoverishment** (Squalor) **and** idleness (Idleness) (*H.-J. Gilomen, S. Guex, B. Studer* (eds.), "*De l'assistance à l'assurance sociale*").

#### 4.1.2 *Corporate welfare in Italy*

The earliest forms of **Italian corporate welfare** are known as experiments in '**paternalism**,' a phenomenon that developed in the nineteenth century throughout Europe, with the aim of training and renewing the workforce to make the production process profitable. The focus on the worker was not due to any real interest in the worker's welfare, but rather to ensure the continued operation of industry without strikes and conflict. In the pre-unification phase, Italian companies were characterized by the presence of workers for very limited periods of time, with women and children predominating in the factory and receiving low wages.

The need to obtain a more stable and loyal workforce was expressed in a few companies, including the *Manifattura di Doccia* (Sesto Fiorentino, year of foundation 1737) of **Marquis Ginori**. The renowned Ginori porcelain factory implemented a model of advanced paternalism, providing its employees with housing, a food store, various training and technical drawing courses, and an elementary school.

Even, when the first 'Cassa di Risparmio' was established in Florence (**1829**), the marquis (who in the meantime had become Carlo Leopoldo) deposited a substantial sum there, so that in the event of an employee's absence due to illness, the employee would receive a subsidy from the common fund.



The fund included the marquis' generous payment, some employee savings, and various penalties, which the employees themselves had to pay in the event of failures at work. (Raffaello Lambruschini, "Eulogies and Biographies," pp. 176-177, 1872).

#### 4.1.3 *The advent of entrepreneur Adriano Olivetti.*

As reported by the corporate welfare platform Edenred, in a December 30, 2020 article, the first major corporate welfare experience in Italy is represented by the **Olivetti** company. Unlike the entrepreneurs before him, Adriano Olivetti was the first to break away from paternalistic principles and to strongly believe that the company had a real social responsibility, not only to its employees, but to the entire community.

Beginning in **1945**, he created a wide range of services in Ivrea, with the aim of covering almost all the needs of workers and their families: crèches and summer camps sprang up close to the 'Olivetti' factories, health services were strengthened, and each site was equipped with a canteen, an outpatient clinic and an infirmary. The company devoted special attention to maternity and childcare support, facilitating women's entry into the workforce-a major innovation in those years.

Another cornerstone of Olivetti's corporate welfare was the **vocational education of employees** through a training center for mechanics. Also among the entrepreneur's new ideas was the *Management Council*, which directly involved employees in making decisions about company management and employee welfare plans. An approach that resulted in a more serene, productive and loyal workforce.

#### 4.1.4 *The Second Welfare*

After the economic boom and 30 years of continuous growth, the 1970s heralded the beginning of a new phase of deep economic crisis, in which the entire *Welfare State* was challenged and, consequently, so was the entire corporate welfare. This phase of crisis (which in time turned into recession) was met with the implementation of the development of the so-called '**second welfare**,' that is, a set of foundations, associations, trade unions and businesses that used non-public resources, to supplement and assist the first welfare, that is, the one developed thanks to state funds.

Dec. 22, 1986 marked the first real regulatory breakthrough at the national level of corporate welfare: this occurred thanks to the introduction of Presidential Decree 917 (Dpr 917), or the *Consolidated Income Tax Act (TUIR)*, the purpose of which is to regulate welfare instruments, through the provisions concerning disbursements collateral to pay.

#### 4.1.5 Luxottica's Welfare Program.

One company that deserves special attention in the area of corporate welfare is undoubtedly Luxottica, a company founded in 1961 by Leonardo Del Vecchio that has become a world leader in eyewear production.

As reported on the SecondoWelfare platform, in a November 15, 2011 article by Giulia Mallone (a researcher specializing in corporate welfare), Luxottica's corporate welfare was born with the union agreement of December 2009, after a long process of consultation with the unions. In fact, in February 2009, with the signing of the *Memorandum of Understanding*, Luxottica proposed to the trade unions the implementation of a corporate welfare program aimed at the blue-collar and white-collar workforce, for a total of more than 7,000 recipients.

The union agreement signed in December 2009, recognizing the need to provide concrete support for employees' purchasing power with non-monetary forms of remuneration (complementary to traditional wages and production bonuses), established the *Governance Committee*. The latter is a bilateral body of company and union representation, whose task is to study and propose, with the help of a technical-scientific committee of experts, corporate welfare projects.

Among the initiatives introduced under the protocol agreed with the unions in 2009 are: scholarships and career guidance courses for employees' children, agreements with supermarket chains and stores for shopping, agreements with health and dental centers, aid for the use of transportation, and supportive social assistance reserved for families with problems of handicapped, drug addicts, and elderly people to be cared for.

## 4.2 Today's Corporate Welfare in Italy.

The interventions that a company can put in place, in order to guarantee its employees the expected work and personal well-being, concern two main segments: *work organization* and *benefits*, whether **fringe** or **flexible** benefits.

From the organizational point of view, the main corporate initiatives concern flexible working hours and the use of smart working, the availability of extra paid leave, health services, baby-sitting, widespread canteen and transportation to the workplace; of course, increased productivity is a prerequisite for the sustainability of the initiatives.

Regarding benefits, which are the second lever available to the 'company to foster the expanded well-being of the worker, a distinction must be made between:

- *fringe benefits*, which are subject to taxation because they are considered an integral part of remuneration and relate to tools used by the employee to carry out his or her work, such as mobile devices, cars for private use, meal vouchers.
- *flexible benefits*, exempt from the payment of taxes and contributions, if the amount paid meets thresholds defined by the norm, and are related to those goods and services of social utility listed in *Art. 51* of the **TUIR**, which aim to improve the well-being of the worker, both personal and family. Some examples are health insurance, home-work transportation reimbursement, leisure time (paid leave or extra vacation days).

#### 4.2.1 The Evolution of Welfare

With the passage of the *Stability Law* in 2016 (the year in which legislation dedicated to corporate welfare was reformed), the spread of welfare practices has grown significantly. This expansion of the phenomenon is mainly related to a strong growth in the use of fringe benefits, i.e. vouchers and purchase cards, expendable at commercial chains, stores, gas stations and so on. The graph below (Figure 3) shows the trend in the percentage of companies operating at low, medium, high and very high levels of corporate welfare, starting precisely from 2016 until 2024. A significant finding emerging from the chart is that, over this period, the share of corporate welfare considered to be at least of a medium level increased from 51.1% in 2016 to 74.5% in 2024. This is even more significant because it's due to the fact that, during the same time frame, the proportion of high and very high-level welfare rose from 10.3% to 33.3%.

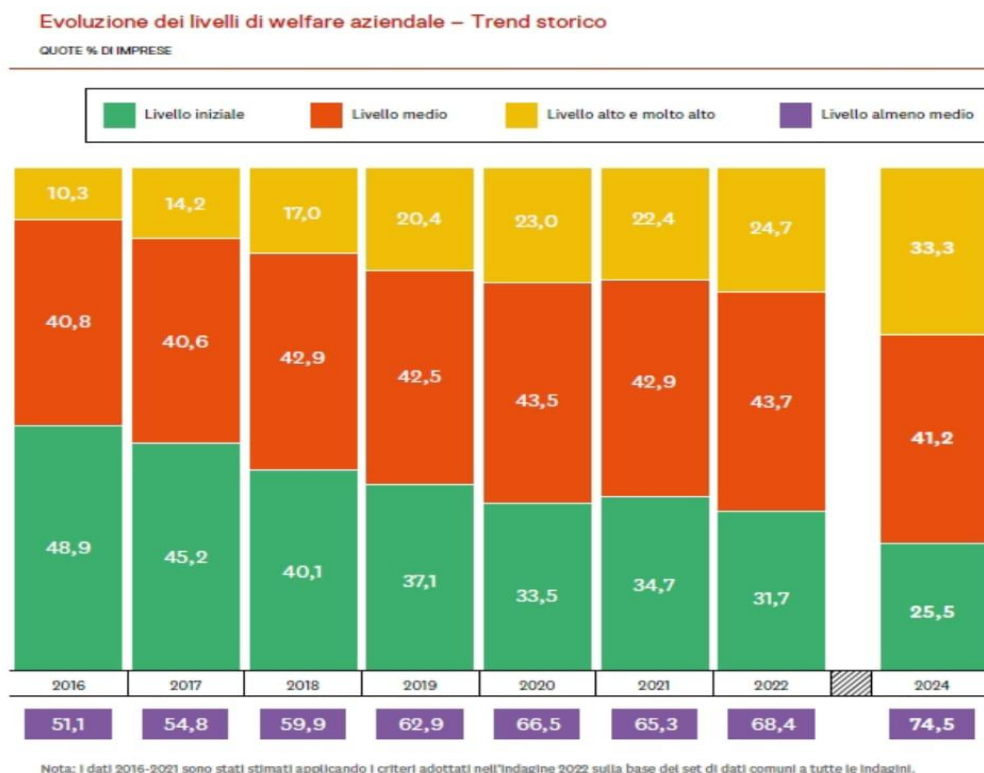


Figure 3: Evolution of corporate welfare (Source: Welfare Index PMI: 2024 report by Generali)

#### 4.2.2 Welfare types and developments

Corporate welfare is divided into three main categories (source *SecondoWelfare*):

- **Contractual Welfare:** consists of mandatory solutions for companies, defined by *National Collective Labor Contract (CCNL)*. Companies that adhere to a particular CCNL are required to offer specific welfare goods and services to employees.
- **Welfare linked to productivity bonus (PB):** Employees have the option to convert part or all of their production bonus into corporate welfare services. To implement it, an agreement between the company and employees is required.
- **Voluntary or 'OnTop' Welfare:** a flexible form of welfare that is unilaterally regulated by the company through an internal regulation. It is aimed at homogeneous categories of workers and is often linked to the achievement of company goals, which is why it is also called "premium."

Considering currently available sources, SecondoWelfare **estimated** that, in 2023, corporate welfare (between platform transacted and fringe) was worth more than 3.3 billion euros (Table 2): the market growth was +3.5% percent between 2021 and 2022 and more than 6.5% between 2022 and 2023.

Table 2: Estimated market value of corporate welfare in 2023 (Source: *SecondoWelfare*)

	<i>CCNL</i>	<i>PB</i>	<i>On Top</i>	<i>Total value</i>
<i>Workers involved</i>	2.867.447	720.000 (estimated as an avg of 25% from 2.876.957 workers)	3.000.000 (estimated)	
<i>Average value</i>	230 €	800 €	700 €	
<i>Market value</i>	659.512.810 €	576.000.000 €	2.100.000.000 €	3.335.512.810 €

### 4.3 Corporate welfare solutions in the Italian market

Currently, as described in Generali's report, the most sought-after areas of corporate welfare in the Italian market are:

<b>Health and care</b>	Check-ups (blood tests, cardiology examinations); Agreements with outpatient clinics, dental offices; Prevention services (pap-test, breast examination); In-house medical counter; Health and prevention campaigns (smoking, nutrition); Social and health services (recovery centers, psychological assistance, rehabilitation); Flu vaccination; Remote medical consultations; Home visits on request; Assistance to elderly and dependent family members (service delivery or expense reimbursement)
<b>Work-life balance</b>	Hourly flexibility beyond contractual flexibility (example: hour bank); Smart working/distant working; Full maternity/paternity leave supplementation; Additional paid maternity/paternity leave; Company transportation; Arrangements with local transportation services; Company services for children: company daycare centers, preschools, play centers, after-school care, baby-sitting
<b>Economic support for workers</b>	Ticket restaurant; Gasoline vouchers/support for car expenses; Company canteen; Agreements with canteens/restaurants in the area; Free or subsidized housing; Agreements for the purchase of consumer goods; Reimbursement of public transportation subscriptions; Subsidized loans; microcredit, guarantees for mortgages
<b>Human capital development</b>	Specialized/advanced vocational training; Organization of team-building events; Participation in conferences/study days (in-person or distance); Language training; Talent enhancement initiatives: scholarships, master's degrees/business schools, foreign study trips
<b>Support for education and culture</b>	Collaborative initiatives with schools and universities (curricular internships, school-to-work alternation); Reimbursement of nursery and kindergarten fees; Reimbursement of services other than fees: textbooks, teaching materials, transportation, canteen; Reimbursement of fees from elementary school to university; Recognition of merit (awards, scholarships)  Scholastic/vocational orientation; Arrangements with gyms/sports centers; Corporate initiatives for culture and leisure; Travel, stays, recreational experiences; Summer and winter centers for family members; Subscriptions to cultural events (cinema, theater); Extra-professional training (music, theater, photography)
<b>Rights, diversity and inclusion</b>	Initiatives for people with disabilities; Assistance with paperwork for non-EU nationals; Language training for non-EU nationals; Housing supports for non-EU nationals; Cultural mediation for non-EU nationals; Possession of charter of values/code of ethics/conduct; Adoption of a process for reporting misconduct in the workplace; Programs for the enhancement of equal opportunity and women's leadership

## 4.4 Introduction to HR Management.

Technological evolution, global pandemic, increasing market competitiveness, and growing demands for an **inclusive** and **sustainable** work environment are just some of the challenges facing today's companies. In this context, human resource management (HR management) plays a crucial role in driving organizations toward success.

Each year, **Gallup**, the American multinational analytics and consulting firm, publishes an overview of the "state of the art" of the contemporary workplace, called precisely "**State of the Global Workplace**," based on interviews (online questionnaires) with more than 100,000 employees in 136 countries, examining the role of work in people's physical health and mental well-being

The report reveals that:

- only 23% of employees **worldwide** felt engaged and motivated at work (Figure 4)
- 43% felt "disconnected" from work in the past 30 days.
- 55% of employees surveyed said they had experienced or witnessed discrimination in the workplace.
- 45% of employees said work flexibility (such as remote work or flexible hours) was important to them, but only 28% said they actually had it.
- only 22% of employees said they had high confidence in their organization's ability to manage change.

### Employee Engagement

Based on Gallup Q12 items; see "Appendix 3: Support Information" for item wording.

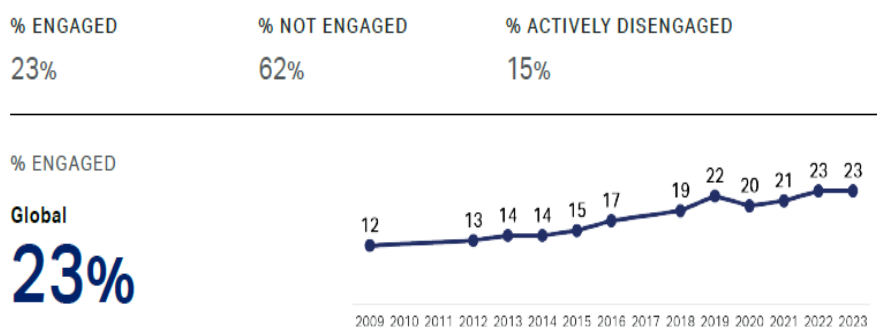


Figure 4: Percentage of engagement in the world (Source: State of the Global Workplace, Gallup, 2024)

This data points to the need for companies to focus not only on productivity and growth, but also on creating a work environment that is inclusive, flexible and can manage change effectively.

Gallup's report shows that business leaders should develop a *positive organizational culture* to improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

## ENGAGEMENT

Low employee engagement costs the global economy **\$8.9 trillion, or 9 percent of global GDP**. Engagement, or the active involvement of workers, is a crucial factor in business success and employee well-being. According to Daniele Di Fausto, CEO of eFM and Founder of Venture Thinking, *"We need to start from the spaces that put every single person in a position to give their best, as a natural consequence of a state of well-being."* Di Fausto stresses the importance of work environments that foster well-being and the resulting creativity and productivity, creating a positive corporate culture that incentivizes the active involvement of workers.

## PRODUCTIVITY

When workers are **actively engaged**, **absenteeism is reduced by 78 percent** and **productivity increases by 17 percent**. These data highlight how engagement not only improves the physical and psychological state of employees, but also has a direct impact on business results. Giuseppe Capicotto, General Manager of eFM, says, *"The challenge is to move from place monofunction to multifunction. A hybridization on the ground that allows people to choose their places of experience every day."* Capicotto promotes a flexible, hybrid approach to workspaces, where versatility and the ability to adapt to workers' daily needs become essential to maintaining high levels of productivity and well-being.

## CONNECTION

**Twenty percent of employees** globally experience daily **loneliness**, a number that rises to **25 percent** for **fully remote workers**. Loneliness is a growing problem, especially with the rise of remote work. Daniele Appetito, CEO of eFM North America, comments, *"Today, it is crucial to focus on the relationships that are unleashed in the workplace."* Appetito highlights the importance of creating opportunities for interaction, education and networking among employees, even in work settings that transcend traditional corporate spaces. Informal relationship moments that combat loneliness and foster a sense of community and employee growth.

## Conclusions

The Gallup 2024 report highlights the need to rethink work spaces and dynamics to improve employee engagement, productivity and relationships. Investing in worker well-being is not only a moral duty, but an economic imperative to reduce the costs associated with dissatisfaction and absenteeism. The goal for companies is to transform workplaces into dynamic ecosystems where they can foster personal and professional relationships, and consequently fostering retention, i.e., employee loyalty.

#### 4.4.1 HR Management Solutions

Based on the study conducted by Gallup, it is important to keep an eye on 12 key HR issues:

1. Employee Wellness (Employee Wellness)
2. Corporate Branding (Employer Branding)
3. HR Process Automation (HR Process Automation)
4. HR Data Analytics (HR Data Analytics)
5. Diversity and Inclusion (Diversity and Inclusion)
6. Employee Experience
7. Corporate Training
8. Talent Management (Talent Management)
9. Artificial Intelligence (AI)
10. Recruiting Marketing (Recruiting Marketing)
11. Digital Onboarding (Digital Onboarding)
12. Workforce Planning (Workforce Planning)

##### 1. Employee Wellness (Employee Wellness)

Employee wellness, also known as "employee wellness," refers to all the efforts and initiatives a company undertakes to improve the health and well-being of its employees.

Therefore, to target employee wellness, it will be critical for HR:

- *be able to measure the well-being of the workforce*
- *consider employee well-being as a primary factor and part of what the company promises to candidates*
- *Find solutions that can improve the overall well-being level of employees*

Creating greater work-life **balance** ("**work-life balance**," as we have seen when talking about welfare) is something that can be approached through flexible working, for example: in fact, there are already many companies that have tested the waters, offering their workforce solutions such as **smart working or short weeks** (four working days), to improve employee productivity and well-being.



## **2. Corporate Branding (Employer Branding)**

Corporate branding, or employer branding, is a communication strategy that companies use to promote their image and value as an employer.

This is important because more and more candidates consider not only the job itself, but also the company they work for.

- *Strong corporate branding can attract top talent and enhance the company's reputation as an employer, resulting in increased employee satisfaction and engagement.*
- *Well-defined employer branding can also improve employee retention, reduce recruitment costs, and improve candidate quality.*

For these reasons, corporate branding has become such an important topic in human resources, and marketing support and social media presence have become essential to creating attractive corporate communication.

## **3. HR process automation (HR Process Automation)**

HR process automation makes it possible, thanks to new digital tools, to streamline many business processes in HR such as:

- *Recruiting*
- *Onboarding*
- *Attendance tracking*

In addition, HR process automation can help with employee data management, performance appraisals, employee training and development, and compensation management. The use of technology tools such as HR software can enable the automation of these processes, reduce human error, increase efficiency, and improve the quality of decisions. This allows HR staff to focus on more strategic and value-adding activities for the organization, thereby improving the employee experience and the effectiveness of the company as a whole.

## **4. HR Analytics**

By HR Analytics, we mean the use of data analytics as strategic and operational decision support.

Data analytics provides a better understanding of the workforce and labor market trends, helping to make decisions about workforce management and business strategies.

In addition, HR Analytics enables the identification of areas in which to improve employee performance and identify gaps in training and skill development. This can lead to greater organizational efficiency, productivity and competitiveness, as well as greater employee satisfaction.

Finally, using HR Analytics can help predict and prevent problems such as **absenteeism** and **turnover**, enabling organizations to take preventive measures in a timely manner.

To use HR Analytics, organizations must have data collection and analysis tools, advanced analytical skills, and the ability to process and interpret the information collected accurately and effectively.

## **5. Diversity and Inclusion (Diversity and Inclusion)**

Inclusion and diversity will need to be part of the corporate culture, as it is a fast-growing trend and an increasingly important factor for candidates.

The goal of D&I is to create a work environment that supports diversity and promotes inclusion of all employees. This can lead to greater creativity and innovation in the workplace, improved interpersonal relationships, and increased employee satisfaction.

Some of the interventions that can foster these aspects:

- *Training programs*
- *safe work environments*
- *creation of zero-tolerance policies for discrimination and harassment*
- *creation of a work environment that respects the diverse physical abilities of employees*
- *adoption of a corporate culture that encourages diversity and inclusion.*

## **6. Employee Experience (Employee Experience)**

Constituting the Employee Experience are the experiences that employees have, from the selection process to the end of the employment relationship. To optimize it, it is therefore essential to build, from the first approach with the company, a positive work environment. To achieve this, organizations must consider employees' expectations, needs, and emotions and try to meet them.

Employee Experience has become increasingly important in HR, because, a positive employee experience can lead to better business results, employee retention, and greater talent attraction, thus helping organizations reduce hiring and training costs and improve overall company productivity.

## 7. Corporate Training (Corporate Training)

Corporate training can take several forms:

- *training courses*
- *workshops*
- *coaching*
- *mentoring*
- *leadership development programs*

The benefits of corporate training are many. First, training helps improve employees' performance by providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to perform their jobs to the best of their ability. Second, training can improve employees' motivation and commitment by making them feel that they are appreciated and valued by the company, helping to foster *retention*.

## 8. Talent Management (Talent Management)

Talent Management (Talent Management) is a strategic approach that organizations use to attract, manage and develop their talent and core competencies. The main concepts associated with talent management, which can be useful for those working in human resources, are:

1. *Identify the key qualities needed to perform a given job*
2. *Offer competitive compensation and benefits to increase the bond between employee and company*
3. *Retaining talent through a process of professional development and growth*
4. *To plan for the future by offering new challenges to stimulate their capabilities*

To conduct it in the best possible way, it is therefore essential to start with identifying the training needs, specific to each employee, defining the goals to be achieved and the levels of competence to which they aspire to arrive, through targeted training.

## 9. Artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence is becoming increasingly present in recruitment processes, thanks to its data analysis and machine learning capabilities. In this context, AI algorithms can be used to **analyze applications, identify the most suitable candidates, and predict future employee performance**, but also to **support HR** in their tasks (see HR process automation and data analytics). AI could help simplify and improve every area of HR processes, reducing time and costs and increasing the accuracy and objectivity of assessments.

## **10. Recruiting Marketing: a new way to attract and retain**

Recruiting marketing is a marketing strategy geared toward finding and selecting the best candidates for a company. It consists of using marketing techniques and tools to attract, engage and retain desired candidates, with the goal of creating strong brand awareness and positioning the company as an employer of choice.

Interest in recruiting marketing is growing steadily as companies are becoming more aware of the importance of attracting and retaining top talent to succeed in today's competitive marketplace. Recruiters will have to start thinking like marketers, with a view to promoting the company and no longer just the individual job ad (as was done in the past).

## **11. Digital onboarding (digital onboarding)**

Digital onboarding is done by integrating the new employee into the organization, through the use of digital tools and technologies.

The goal is to ensure a positive onboarding experience, and the process can take place through a variety of activities, including the use of online collaboration platforms, chatbots, video tutorials, e-learning, and other resources, through:

- *The submission of digital documents for signature*
- *The creation of a corporate account*
- *Accessing information on company benefits and policies*
- *Online training on company rules, processes and procedures*

In addition, digital onboarding can improve the employee experience by providing employees with immediate access to company information and resources, increasing their confidence and motivation. Finally, using advanced technologies, the progress of the onboarding process can be monitored more accurately and its effectiveness can be evaluated over time, allowing the company to make any changes and improvements.

## 12. Workforce Planning (Workforce Planning)

Workforce planning (Workforce Planning) is a key process for optimal use of an organization's resources. To carry it out in the best possible way, it is essential to:

- *Analyze the human resources available at that time*
- *Identify future workforce needs*
- *Identify key competencies*
- *Identify competency gaps*
- *Plan development actions to fill skill gaps*
- *Monitor and evaluate progress*

### What makes this planning essential?

First, it enables organizations to more accurately forecast and manage human resources, resulting in improved efficiency and productivity.

Second, it helps reduce the risk of turnover, as organizations can predict future staffing needs and ensure that there are enough qualified employees to meet them. Finally, workforce planning can help organizations develop a corporate culture focused on employee training and development, which can improve employee satisfaction and engagement.

We conclude the report with a comparison of average engagement levels around the world, and the engagement levels found by **Gallup** in companies operating at a high level from a Welfare and HR Management perspective (Figure 5):

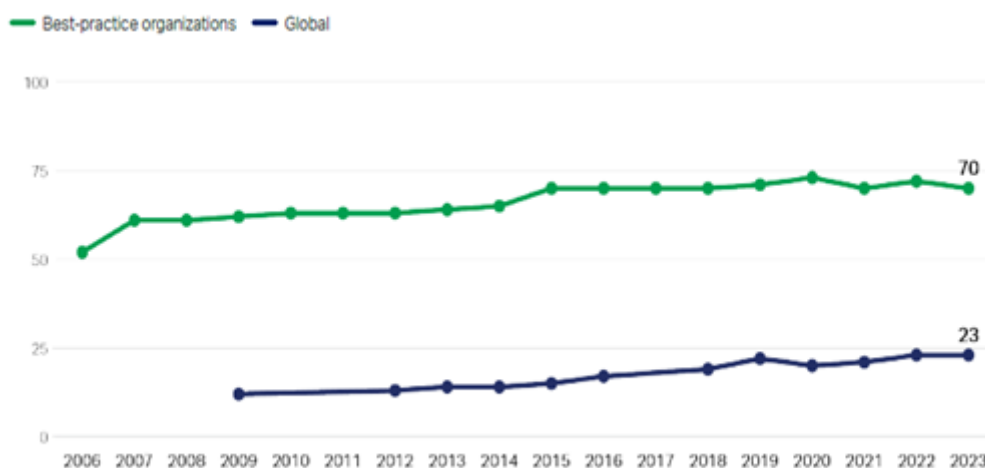


Figure 5: Worldwide annual employee engagement vs Best-Practice organizations' one (Gallup, 2024)

## 5 CHAPTER 5: SCOUTING

As anticipated, in this chapter, a search was conducted for the top Italian startups and scale-ups offering innovative solutions in corporate welfare and HR management, with a total of 20 companies selected. For each of these, a section regarding the company profile and a section describing the products/services offered are provided. In addition, regarding the services offered, the category of solutions offered is also given, from those found in Chapter 4, and the SDGs impacted, based on the type of services available.

### 5.1 Innovative Startups

The following startups are registered as "innovative startups" in the AIDA database and, as anticipated in the methodology, were selected because they meet the following criteria:

- Date of incorporation as of 2019
- Legal headquarters in Italy
- Solutions in the area of Corporate Welfare and/or HR Management
- Impact on at least one of the 17 social development goals

### 5.1.1 Gudol Srl Benefit Company

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 29/09/2022
- Registered office address: Lungo Po Antonelli 21, Turin
- Website: <https://gudol.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 0
- Revenues from sales (2023): €570,072
- Net profit (2023): €12,957
- Share capital (2023): €1,044
- Financing received: /
- Partners: Betacom, Round Capital, Aon, Well-Work

#### Description of activities

Gudol S.r.l. Benefit Company offers innovative and customized corporate welfare solutions designed to improve employee welfare and optimize tax benefits for businesses. Through specialized consulting, it supports companies in creating tailored strategies adaptable to their specific needs.

Among its main services, Gudol offers digital management of meal vouchers via app, which simplifies use for companies and employees. It also offers discounts on train travel for commuters and provides free training courses to foster employees' professional growth.

Not least is the "**Club Gudol Extra**" program, which provides access to discounts on healthcare services through the **Aon OneNET** network of more than 12,000 facilities and professionals throughout Italy.

In addition to benefits for companies and workers, Gudol stands out for its social commitment, **allocating part of its profits to projects of collective relevance**. In this way, its approach to welfare not only improves the quality of life in the company, but also contributes to the **well-being of the community**.

- Solutions category offered: health and welfare; economic support for workers; human capital development.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and Welfare)

**SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

**SDG 17** (Partnership for the Goals)

### 5.1.2 Winwelfare Srl-Sb

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 30/03/2021
- Registered office address: Via dei gelsomini 19, Modena
- Website: <https://winwelfare.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 0
- Revenues from sales (2023): €62,801
- Net income (2023): 445€
- Share capital (2023): 3,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: /

#### Business Description.

WinWelfare offers customized consulting and solutions for businesses. It uses a technology platform to analyze business needs and propose tailored welfare plans, with a focus on optimizing tax benefits and improving employees' working conditions.

WinWelfare's main initiatives include the **W-Campus program**, a training project aimed at employees and their families, with the goal of developing soft skills and strengthening the bond between workers and the company. The more ambitious program, on the other hand, is **"Impact for Future" (I4F)**, which aims to offer companies the support they need to undertake the transition to a business model that not only benefits the company itself but also has a positive impact on society.

Their approach is based on three pillars, which are: people, sustainability and processes:

People: benefits, training, parenting support and staff welfare

Sustainability: social impact statement, sustainability statement

Processes: digital transformation

- Solutions category offered: health and care; economic support for workers; work-life balance; human capital development; employee welfare; diversity and inclusion; corporate training.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and well-being)

**SDG 4** (Quality education)

**SDG 8** (Decent work and economic growth)

**SDG 11** (Sustainable cities and communities)

**SDG 12** (Responsible consumption and production)



### 5.1.3 Tundr Tech Corporation Ltd.

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 30/03/2021
- Registered office address: Alzaia Naviglio Pavese 78/3, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://tundr.tech/>
- Number of employees (2023): 13
- Revenues from sales (2023): €24,434
- Net Profit (2023): -686.747€
- Share capital (2023): 83,000€
- Funding received: in 2022, Tundr cashed in a €1.7 million pre-seed round.<sup>10</sup>
- Partners: /

#### Activity Description.

Tundr Tech Corporation S.r.l. is an innovative startup specializing in the digitization of corporate welfare. It offers an all-in-one platform that simplifies benefits management for companies and employees. Tundr's main solution is the **Tundr Card**, a multifunction card that gives employees access to an extensive network of online and physical stores in Italy. This card can be used for various purchases, including fuel, mobility and shopping vouchers, giving workers the freedom to choose the benefits that best suit their needs. In addition, **Tundr** provides the **Tundr App**, an intuitive mobile application that allows employees to easily manage their benefits.

For companies, Tundr offers the **Tundr Web App**, a web platform that streamlines the delivery and coordination of the company welfare plan. This simplifies document management and communication with employees, reducing the burden on the HR department.

Finally, Tundr stands out for its commitment to sustainability and **social responsibility**. The **Responsible Supply Chain Policy** ensures that every business in the network is selected according to sustainability parameters, contributing to a more responsible future. It also promotes the conscious use of welfare credits, fostering sustainable performance that supports the green economy.

- Solutions category offered: work-life balance; economic support for workers; HR process automation.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and well-being)

**SDG 8** (Decent work and economic growth)

**SDG 12** (Responsible consumption and production)

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<sup>10</sup> Press release link: <https://bebeez.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/CS-Tundr.pdf>

#### 5.1.4 WelfAire Srl benefit company

##### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 16/11/2022
- Registered office address: Via delle Forze Armate 260, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://welfare.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 0
- Revenues from sales (2023): €11,900
- Net profit (2023): €3,974
- Share capital (2023): 3,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: /

##### Activity Description.

WelfAire is a corporate welfare platform that uses artificial intelligence to optimize access to services and benefits, regardless of company size. Its structure is based on the use of AI to analyze data generated by its network of companies and users to personalize welfare proposals and respond in a targeted way to individual needs. Through a social commerce model, WelfAire enables all companies to get the same opportunities, facilitating access to a wide range of services, including gym memberships, **parenting support**, **medical exams**, and **cultural activities**.

In addition, the platform allows companies to share with each other the agreements they have made with local stakeholders, thus expanding the opportunities available to employees. This approach fosters community growth and allows for an ever-expanding and convenient offer. Employees can take advantage of these benefits through a **personal card**, which allows them to easily access discounts and deals, and to leave reviews of the services they use. The startup also offers a **mobile app** to simplify the management of conventions and improve work-life balance.

- Solutions category offered: health and care; work-life balance; support for education and culture; employee wellness; artificial intelligence; HR process automation; HR data analytics.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and well-being)

**SDG 5** (Gender equality)

**SDG 17** (Partnership for the Goals)

### 5.1.5 Jet HR Ltd.

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 14/12/2022
- Registered office address: Corso di Porta Vigentina 13, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://www.jethr.com/>
- Number of employees (2025): 40 (source: <https://www.ufficiocamerale.it/>)
- Revenues from sales (2023): €48,096
- Net Profit (2023): -1.143.775€
- Share capital (2023): 21,000€
- Funding received: in June 2023, it was awarded a €4.7 million pre-seed round. In September 2024, a record new investment round of €12 million, bringing total investment to €16.7 M. (Source: <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/>)
- Partners: Exor Ventures, Italian Founders Fund

#### Activity Description.

Jet HR is a startup offering an innovative technology solution to simplify payroll and human resources management in companies. The platform uses artificial intelligence and automation to streamline the **payroll** process, allowing companies to accurately and timely calculate payroll, deductions, and taxes, thereby reducing errors and management time.

In addition to payroll management, Jet HR also handles other aspects of human resources, such as **attendance, leave, benefits, and company policies**, centralizing all employee information.

The platform is designed to facilitate interaction for both HR and employees, and ensures compliance with tax and labor regulations while protecting sensitive data. In addition, it can be integrated with other existing business systems, further improving efficiency and reducing the administrative burden for companies.

- Solutions category offered: HR process automation; HR data analytics; artificial intelligence.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 9** (Industry, innovation and infrastructure)

**SDG 17** (Partnership for Goals)

### 5.1.6 Workabilia

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 18/10/2022
- Registered office address: 95 Piazza Capranica, Rome
- Website: <https://workabilia.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 0
- Revenues from sales (2023): 6,500€
- Net profit (2023): 900€
- Share capital (2023): 10,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: /

#### Business Description

WorkAbilia is a socially oriented innovative startup dedicated to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the world of work. It adopts a *Disability Management Total Outsourcing (T.O.D.M.)* model<sup>11</sup>, which supports companies at **all stages of the employment inclusion process, from the selection of candidates with disabilities, to their integration and professional growth**. This approach is developed on three levels: strategic, operational and design, and aims to create truly inclusive work environments, in which the abilities of each individual are valued to the fullest.

To achieve this goal, the startup offers services to schools, employment agencies, public bodies and companies, facilitating the matching of supply and demand through a multifunctional digital platform. The latter, makes it possible to guide users toward the most suitable training paths, provide tools for acquiring new skills, and facilitate matching between candidates and companies. To this end, WorkAbilia uses the **ICF** methodology<sup>12</sup>, recognized by the World Health Organization, to identify and enhance the specific skills of each person, focusing on the verification of so-called "super-skills," or talents that can become strengths in the world of work.

- Solutions category offered: human capital development; support for education and culture; rights, diversity and inclusion; corporate training; HR process automation; talent management.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 4** (Quality education)

**SDG 10** (Reducing inequality)

**SDG 17** (Partnership for the Goals)

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<sup>11</sup> T.O.D.M.: translated, the management of people with disabilities by companies is completely outsourced.

<sup>12</sup> The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) is part of the WHO Family of International Classifications. The text of the ICF was approved by the 54<sup>th</sup> *World Health Assembly* (WHA) on May 22, 2001, and has been accepted as one of the United Nations Classifications (source: Italian Health Classifications Portal). The information provided by the ICF describes situations related to human functioning and its restrictions.

### 5.1.7 Wefar Ltd.

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 9/06/2022
- Registered office address: Via di Terranuova 50, Montevarchi (Arezzo)
- Website: <https://wefar.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 0
- Revenues from sales (2023): €2,960
- Net Profit (2023): -24.085€
- Share capital (2023): 100,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: Gefar Srl, Edotto Srl

#### Description of activities

Wefar S.r.l. is an innovative startup focused on improving corporate welfare. Born from the collaboration between Edotto and Gefar, two companies committed to promoting healthy and productive workplaces, Wefar offers technological tools to monitor and **increase employee satisfaction**.

The main product offered by the startup is **GefarApp S**, a digital platform designed to assess organizational well-being and implement effective welfare policies. This application allows companies to collect real-time feedback, via anonymous questionnaires, on the needs of their employees, facilitating the identification of areas that need intervention to improve **motivation and productivity**. In addition, GefarApp S supports the creation of customized corporate welfare plans aligned with employee expectations.

Indeed, Wefar's approach is based on the belief that employee welfare is a key element for business success. Therefore, Wefar's solutions aim to create **inclusive** and motivating work environments, helping to reduce absenteeism and turnover, and enhance **engagement**. In addition, the app allows the company to take advantage of a **data-driven approach to decision-making**, as, through questionnaires, it enables management to make informed decisions and monitor the effectiveness of actions taken.

- Solutions category offered: employee well-being; employee experience; diversity and inclusion; HR data analytics.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and well-being)

**SDG 8** (Decent work and economic growth)

**SDG 9** (Industry, innovation and infrastructure)

### 5.1.8 Idea Welfare Srl

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 03/12/2021
- Registered office address: 95 Viale Algeria, Rome
- Website: <https://www.ideawelfare.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 2
- Revenues from sales (2023):
- Net income (2023): €6,783
- Share capital (2023): 20,000€
- Funding received: /
- Partners: /

#### Description of activities

Idea Welfare Srl offers customized corporate welfare solutions with the aim of improving employee welfare and optimizing costs for companies, especially SMEs. The offer of this startup is mainly divided into two proposals:

**IDEA Easy:** This solution allows the management of liberality, contractual welfare from CCNL, ad personam benefits and fringe benefits. It is designed for companies that want to quickly implement a welfare plan without complexity.

**IDEA Business:** Aimed at those seeking maximum flexibility and customization in their welfare plan, this offering provides dedicated consulting to analyze the specific needs of the company and its employees.

The goal is to create a balanced mix of flexible benefits, health, care, telemedicine, protection and welfare services, without burdening the internal HR department.

The most popular vouchers and services offered by Idea Welfare mainly concern leisure, work-life balance, professional growth, parenting support, and care for the elderly or individuals in need

- Category solutions offered: health and care; work-life balance; financial support to workers; employee welfare.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and well-being)

**SDG 5** (Gender equality)

**SDG 8** (Decent work and economic growth)

### 5.1.9 Dokimazo Ltd.

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 27/11/2023
- Registered office address: Via Luciano Manara 15, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://dokimazo.io/>
- Number of employees (2024): 0
- Revenues from sales (2024): /
- Net profit (2024): /
- Share capital (2024): €10,000
- Financing received: /
- Partners: /

#### Business Description.

Dokimazo is an innovative startup specializing in the enhancement of individual skills through artificial intelligence-based solutions. Their main platform, called "**Skill Wallet**," allows users to explore, document and share their skills, facilitating professional and personal development. This tool offers personalized learning suggestions, integrates certifications from training partners, and enables sharing of successes with potential employers or within the same work environment.

For organizations, Dokimazo offers solutions to create customized training paths, assess the effectiveness of learning through integrated *assessment* tools (AI-generated quizzes, assessment tests, automated feedback), and certify employees' acquired skills by comparing them with target competencies.

With the Skill Wallet, training needs analysis aligns with business and HR management goals, and individual resources can easily monitor their skill level in real time. In fact, thanks to artificial intelligence, the platform helps business management **define key competencies for each role** through benchmarks and standard taxonomies. Employees can also enrich their wallet by entering activities outside of work, and managers can confirm the skills their employees have acquired.

- Category solutions offered: HR data analytics, employee experience, corporate training, artificial intelligence, workforce planning.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 4** (Quality education)

**SDG 8** (Decent work and economic growth)

**SDG 9** (Industry, innovation and infrastructure)

### 5.1.10 Up2You Ltd.

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 15/01/2020
- Registered office address: Via Pietro Orseolo 12, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://www.u2y.io/>
- Number of employees (2023): 31
- Revenues from sales (2023): €1,574,290
- Net Income (2023): -945.907€
- Share capital (2023): 26,000€
- Financing received: €3.5 million. In 2022 Up2You won a seed investment round led by Azimut and also underwritten by CDP Venture Capital, as well as the contribution of *business angel* Flavio Pok, founder of Italian Fresh Food. (Source: <https://startupitalia.eu/>)
- Partners: 24Ore Business School, Politecnico di Milano

#### Activity Description.

Up2You is an innovative startup that offers a range of digital solutions designed to help companies measure, reduce and offset their environmental impact, fostering a concrete path to sustainability. Among the main solutions is **CliMax**, an advanced platform that allows companies to calculate their carbon footprint, identify key emission sources and provide strategies to effectively reduce them. To support transparency and communication of sustainability efforts, Up2You has developed **Choral**, a tool that facilitates **sustainability reporting** by guiding companies to collect and analyze environmental, social and governance data in accordance with international standards. Another innovative solution is **PlaNet**, a gamification-based system that actively engages employees in the green transition process, incentivizing them to adopt more sustainable behaviors through challenges, quizzes and interactive activities.

In addition, Up2You offers **sustainability training** programs designed to educate corporate staff on ecological transition issues and decarbonization goals, providing practical skills for integrating sustainability into the company's daily operations. In addition to this, the startup offers **social impact projects**, which enable companies to support environmental initiatives with direct benefits for local communities in developing countries, combining emissions offsets with a concrete commitment to social welfare.

- Solutions category offered: human capital development; corporate training.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

**SDG 12** (Responsible consumption and production)

**SDG 13** (Fighting climate change)



### 5.1.11 Genius4u Ltd.

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 23/09/2019
- Registered office address: Via Risorgimento 440, Zola Predosa (Bologna)
- Website: <https://www.genius4u.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 3
- Revenues from sales (2023): €109,315
- Net Income (2023): -52.498€
- Share capital (2023): 11,000€
- Financing received: 100,000€. Genius4u was one of 8 startups selected by Personae, the program of the CDP National Accelerator Network. (Source: <https://startupitalia.eu/>).
- Partners: DoubleYou, Jointly, Welbee

#### Activity Description.

Genius4U is an innovative startup offering a corporate welfare platform focused on **time-saving** services for employees, with the aim of improving work-life balance. The services offered are divided into 3 categories:

##### 1) Genius **Everyday**

Practical services for everyday life: car washing, mail, pharmacy, grocery delivery, errand management, and many others.

##### 2) Genius **Care**

Services for personal and family well-being: the platform provides professionals for child, elderly or pet care, parenting support, specialist medical examinations, as well as consultations with osteopaths, massage therapists or beauticians.

##### 3) Genius **Community**.

Corporate services to strengthen corporate ties, such as: conventions, events, sports activities, time bank.

The platform is active 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, and a counter allows tracking time earned and CO2 saved (aggregating services to optimize travel), as one of the stated goals of the platform is to monitor impact indicators, to provide corporate clients with the data needed for CSRD reporting. The startup provides a **timesitter** (with a preference for selecting female figures), i.e., a dedicated figure who handles the request, executes the service and delivers the result to the employee, either in the office or at home, depending on the solution chosen.

Indeed, one can choose between **light**, **easy** and **VIP** solution. In all three cases, once you make the payment online, you will have a remote timesitter. With the easy and VIP solution, there will be a dedicated person present directly in the company. With VIP, you also get home delivery of the service.

- Solutions category offered: health and care; work-life balance; employee wellness; diversity and inclusion; employee experience.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and well-being)

**SDG 5** (Gender equality)

**SDG 8** (Decent work and economic growth)

### 5.1.12 Walà Srl-Sb

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 19/11/2021
- Registered office address: Via Guido Reni 13, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://walawelfare.com/>
- Number of employees (2025): 3 (from official website)
- Revenues from sales (2023): €111,992
- Net profit (2023): €3,446
- Share capital (2023): 10,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: Eetra Srl-Sb, Paths of Second Welfare

#### Activity Description.

Walà is a consulting benefit company that works alongside companies, public bodies and the third sector in the design and implementation of innovative organizational welfare plans. The startup's goal is to create positive impacts by involving all stakeholders, basing its activities on the concept of "**circular welfare**," the purpose of which is to generate value and growth not only for companies but also for **people**, the **territory** and **communities**.

Among the main services offered are: consulting for the design of tailored welfare and organizational wellness plans; operational support through **temporary welfare managers**, i.e., a professional appointed, for a limited and predetermined period of time, to manage and implement welfare strategies within an organization; and the promotion of **territorial welfare initiatives** in collaboration with local entities and associations and pathways dedicated to **diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I)**. Walà also offers **specific training** for organizations and institutions on the topics of **corporate welfare**, ESG (with a focus on **social sustainability**) and **effective resource management**.

To this end, Walà, in collaboration with **Eetra Srl-Sb**, has created the "*SOWE-Sustainability in Welfare*" methodology. **SOWE** is proposed as a tool for companies that aim to integrate social sustainability into their strategies, improving their overall performance while ensuring a positive impact on stakeholders and local communities. The purpose of the methodology is to help companies in their social sustainability analysis by identifying macro-areas of reference within which indicators are selected that align with the different categories of the **ESRS** standards.

A final relevant innovative tool proposed is **WIN** (*What I Need*), a proprietary tool developed by Walà in collaboration with Percorsi di Secondo Welfare, which consists of an adaptive digital questionnaire that allows companies to analyze the real needs of employees and obtain strategic data through a dashboard, facilitating the design and monitoring of welfare plans.

- Solutions category offered: human capital development; rights, diversity and inclusion; employee well-being; employee experience; corporate training; workforce planning.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and Welfare)

**SDG 5** (Gender Equality)

**SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

**SDG 10** (Reducing Inequality)

**SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

**SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production)

**SDG 17** (Partnership for the Goals)

### *5.1.13 Ollipay Srl-benefit company*

#### **Company Profile.**

- Date of incorporation: 19/12/2022
- Registered office address: 34 Siccardi Street, Cavallermaggiore (Cuneo)
- Website: <https://ollipay.it/>
- Number of employees (2025): 3 (source: Chamber office)
- Revenues from sales (2023): €56,385
- Net Profit (2023): -80.380€
- Share capital (2023): 160,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: Well-Work Srl(<https://www.well-work.it/>)

#### **Business Description.**

Ollipay is a startup created as a spin-off of Well-Work, a corporate welfare provider and benefits company committed to promoting employee wellness and enhancing the local area.

The startup aims to encourage conscious and local consumption by simplifying the use of corporate welfare at local businesses and commercial services. Ollipay aims to be an alternative to large retailers, international e-commerce platforms and fuel stations, which have traditionally been included in welfare circuits. The goal is to improve the quality of life of employees and support the economic and social development of the local area by encouraging sustainable consumption models.

For companies, Ollipay makes it possible to enrich the corporate welfare plan with flexible and customizable credit for employees. The latter, for their part, can use the welfare credit at nearby businesses they frequent on a daily basis, and in the event that a business is not yet in the circuit, they have the option of inviting it to join the network, thus making welfare truly useful in their everyday lives.

For merchants, joining the Ollipay circuit means receiving payments to their current account within 72 hours, with no setup or activation costs, and accessing a stream of new customers, helping to strengthen local commerce and the neighborhood economic fabric.

- Solutions category offered: work-life balance; economic support for workers.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and Welfare)

**SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

**SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

### 5.1.14 Eetra Srl-Sb

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 17/03/2021
- Registered office address: Via Sansovino 3, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://eetra.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 2 (INPS data)
- Revenues from sales (2023): €254,907
- Net profit (2023): €9,934
- Share capital (2023): 20,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: Walà Srl-Sb

#### Activity Description.

EETRA specializes in ESG consulting, with the goal of guiding organizations in the transition to sustainability through a multidisciplinary approach. The company offers a wide range of services, including strategy and support in the analysis of KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), development of plans for the purposes of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, as well as assistance in ESG reporting and sustainability reporting, in accordance with international standards.

As a highlight of its offering, EETRA has developed "**Tiaki**," a proprietary algorithm for ESG rating processing and a range of customizable data-driven solutions to innovate management processes and monitor the sustainable development path of client companies. A special focus is on responsible supply chain management and diversity and inclusion policies and projects, as well as helping companies in obtaining Well and **Fitwel** certifications for health and wellness in the workplace.

- Solutions category offered: employee wellness; diversity and inclusion; HR data analytics;
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and Wellbeing)

**SDG 9** (Industry, innovation and infrastructure)

**SDG 10** (Reducing Inequality)

**SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

**SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production)

## 5.2 Scale-Up

This section reports on scale-ups, i.e., companies that are at a later stage than startup for the following reasons:

- Date of establishment at least more than 5 years ago
- Proven business reality in the industry
- Larger company size
- Higher revenues than a startup

For the purposes of this paper, the criteria considered were as follows:

- Date of incorporation prior to 2019
- Registered office in Italy
- Prominent activities in corporate welfare and/or HR management
- Revenues in the hundreds of thousands of euros (or higher) range
- Impact on at least one of the 17 social development goals

### 5.2.1 *Welfarebit Srl*

#### **Company Profile.**

- Date of incorporation: 03/03/2017
- Registered office address: Via Borromei 2, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://www.welfarebit.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 9
- Revenues from sales (2023): €929,481
- Net profit (2023): 120,548€
- Share capital (2023): 92,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: ESG Italy, Innova Srl

#### **Business Description.**

**Welfarebit** is a company specializing in the design and management of customized corporate welfare plans, offering flexible digital solutions to improve employee welfare and optimize tax benefits for companies. Through its platform, Welfarebit enables employees to access a wide range of benefits and services, including shopping vouchers, reimbursements for educational and health expenses, training courses, family services, and local conventions.

**Welfarebit** supports companies with dedicated consulting through its **Welfare Specialist** service, offering assistance at all stages of the process: from design to operational management of tailored corporate welfare plans, ensuring compliance with current regulations. To further enrich its offering, Welfarebit collaborates with **ESG Italia**, creating new opportunities for companies that want to embark on a sustainable and ESG-conscious path. In addition, Welfarebit promotes **territorial welfare**, encouraging the use of local suppliers and thus contributing to the economic growth of the area and the welfare of the community. This is the context for the partnership with **Innova Srl** (another company engaged in the dissemination of corporate welfare plans), in a project named **"Welfare di Marca,"** to contribute to the economic and social growth of the Misa and Nevola valley in the Marche region.



Thanks to Welfarebit's **on-demand** mode, employees can access a wide range of services, customizing their experience according to the needs of the moment. In addition, they can retain their regular and trusted providers by requesting the company to enter them into the system at no additional cost.

- Solutions category offered: health and care; work-life balance; economic support for workers; human capital development; support for education and culture.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and Welfare)

**SDG 4** (Quality Education)

**SDG 5** (Gender Equality)

**SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

**SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

**SDG 17** (Partnership for the Goals)

### 5.2.2 DoubleYou Ltd.

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 1/07/2014
- Registered office address: Via Enrico Caviglia 11, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://double-you.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 74
- Revenues from sales (2023): €12,315,694
- Net profit (2023): €2,675,241
- Share capital (2023): 30,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: since 2016, the majority of shares have been acquired by the Zucchetti Group

#### Description of activities

DoubleYou is a consulting and service company of the Zucchetti Group specializing in Welfare Management. DoubleYou's team of consultants provides support to client companies during all phases of implementing a corporate welfare project: from the analysis of the business context to the sociodemographic one, from the detection of needs to the elaboration of a tailored welfare plan, and the monitoring of the plan's progress. Its **ZWelfare** web platform, integrated with Zucchetti payroll systems, simplifies the provision of **flexible benefits**, offering workers a wide range of services: reimbursements for educational and welfare expenses, vouchers for leisure, sports and culture, healthcare solutions and gift cards for consumer goods.

In addition, thanks to the **Voucher on Demand** service, employees can apply for customized conventions, further expanding wellness opportunities. In 2017, it introduced **Welfare Manager** and **Vendor Manager**, tools for monitoring welfare plans and managing relationships with network vendors, respectively. Since 2020 DoubleYou has increased its commitment to environmental sustainability by expanding its **Mobility Management** services. In 2022 it launched the new **ZWelfare Artemisia** platform and expanded consulting services toward diversity and inclusion issues. From 2024, the platform will also provide an **Advisory Area** dedicated to client project management.

- Solutions category offered: health and care; work-life balance; economic support for workers; support for education and culture; rights, diversity and inclusion; and employee welfare.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and Wellness)

**SDG 4** (Quality Education)

**SDG 5** (Gender Equality)

**SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

**SDG 10** (Reducing Inequality)

**SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production)

### 5.2.3 Eudaimon S.p.a.

#### Company Profile

- Date of incorporation: 22/07/2008<sup>13</sup>
- Registered office address: Piazza Pietro Pajetta 2, Vercelli
- Website: <https://eudaimon.it/>
- Number of employees (2023): 48
- Revenues from sales (2023): €8,799,342
- Net profit (2023): €1,652,709
- Share capital (2023): 200,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: part of the Epassi Group since 2023

#### Business Description.

Eudaimon is a leading company in the corporate welfare sector, the first player in Italy to deal with corporate welfare and in the creation of innovative solutions for employee welfare and business competitiveness. Through its **Welfare Experience** digital platform, developed on *Salesforce technology*, it enables companies to effectively manage **flexible benefits**, offering workers access to reimbursements for education, healthcare, sustainable mobility, leisure and family expenses. The company also stands out for its focus on the individual, providing services for parenting care, elder care, mental and physical well-being, and preventive health programs.

With the **Euty** project, it enriches the corporate welfare concept by introducing dedicated **welfare coaches**, training webinars and customized guidance tools. In addition to developing tailored welfare strategies, Eudaimon supports internal communication with **welfare marketing** actions and monitors the impact of initiatives through advanced reporting. The company is a founding member of AIWA (Italian Corporate Welfare Association) and coordinates the IEP (Enterprise and People) Network, a network of companies that collaborate to develop innovative solutions in the field of corporate welfare. In 2021 it became a Benefit Company, and in 2022 it obtained **B-Corp<sup>14</sup> certification**, confirming its commitment to sustainability and positive social impact.

- Solutions category offered: health and care; work-life balance; economic support for workers; support for education and culture.
- SDGs impacted:
  - SDG 3** (Health and Welfare)
  - SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth)
  - SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities)
  - SDG 17** (Partnership for the Goals)

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<sup>13</sup> In March 2002, Eudaimon Srl was founded, then since 2008 changed its name.

<sup>14</sup> **B-Corp** certification identifies organizations that, in addition to pursuing economic profit goals, also meet the highest standards of environmental protection and social equity. It is a certification issued by the U.S. nonprofit [B-Lab](https://www.bcorporation.net/), and the process for obtaining it is far from trivial. (Source: <https://www.digital4.biz/>).

### 5.2.4 Jointly - The Shared Welfare Srl

#### Company Profile

- Date of incorporation: 15/04/2014
- Registered office address: Via Flavio Baracchini 2, Milan
- Website: <https://www.jointly.pro/>
- Number of employees (2023): 49
- Revenues from sales (2023): €5,527,580
- Net Profit (2023): -676.707€
- Share capital (2023): 21,000€
- Funding received: closed a €5 million round in 2022, led by Azimut Digitech Fund (source: StartupItalia)
- Partners: Azimut, Gellify, Badacare, MobilitySquare

#### Activity Description

Jointly is a scale-up specializing in **Corporate Wellbeing**, with an integrated ecosystem of solutions to improve employee well-being and strengthen corporate engagement. At the core of its offering is **JOY**, a digital platform that integrates all employee wellness benefits and initiatives. Solutions offered include flexible welfare plans with access to more than 110,000 services through e-commerce, health and prevention pathways with 24/7 medical consultations and more than 6,000 affiliated medical centers, support for working parents with children aged 0-18, assistance through caregivers caring for dependent family members, and programs to improve physical well-being. For the purposes of *people caring*, the partnership with *Badacare*, another startup that offers precisely caregivers for individuals, is strategic. In addition, solutions are offered to optimize home-work mobility, reducing costs and environmental impact. Again, there is a strategic partnership with *MobilitySquare*, which focuses on sustainable mobility. In addition to service delivery, Jointly provides **strategic consulting** to develop customized welfare plans, supporting **employer branding** and measuring the ESG impact of initiatives, and to analyze diversity and inclusion issues within organizations in order to implement effective welfare initiatives to support gender equality.

- Solutions category offered: health and care; work-life balance; economic support for workers; rights, diversity and inclusion; employee well-being; corporate branding.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and Wellness)

**SDG 5** (Gender Equality)

**SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

**SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

**SDG 17** (Partnership for the Goals)

### 5.2.5 Glickon S.p.a.

#### Company Profile

- Date of incorporation: 27/02/2014
- Registered office address: Via Giacomo Leopardi 1, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://it.glickon.com/>
- Number of employees (2024): 21
- Revenues from sales (2024): €863,233
- Net Profit (2024): -1.984.482€
- Share capital (2024): 138,000€
- Funding received: in May 2022, the company announced a Series A investment round, with €3 million subscribed by Synergo Capital SGR's Sinergia Venture Fund as lead investor. It had previously raised another 2.4 million from Seed rounds, according to the official website. (Source: [en.glickon.com](https://en.glickon.com))
- Partners: Golden Goose, What Bank!, Reda

#### Activity Description.

Glickon S.p.A., founded in 2014 in Italy, is a company specializing in HR Tech and People Analytics, aiming to transform the work experience through Artificial Intelligence and data analytics. The core of its offering is Mine, an advanced platform that helps companies collect and interpret strategic information about people, improving **talent management** and employee engagement. Within **Mine**, **Mine Engagement** enables analysis of employee engagement levels and provides insights to optimize productivity and organizational well-being, while **Mine Attraction** supports the selection process, strengthening employer branding and improving the candidate experience by analyzing feedback in real time. For deeper insight into business dynamics, **Organization Overview** identifies informal leaders and fosters team collaboration. In addition, Glickon leverages generative AI with **Flow**, a GPT-3-based platform that supports recruiters in creating customized job postings and feedback, and with **Fit Index**, which automatically assesses compatibility between candidates and open positions.

Through integration with leading ATS and HCM systems, such as Bamboo HR, Workday and SAP SuccessFactors, Glickon offers advanced solutions to help companies make more informed and strategic talent management decisions. Glickon S.p.A. has established several strategic partnerships to improve the work experience and human resource management in client companies. Notable among these is a partnership with **Golden Goose**, a well-known Italian fashion brand. Together, they have developed a comprehensive **Employee Experience** journey, including **onboarding**, training and engagement, through a customized digital platform.

- Solutions category offered: employee wellness; corporate branding; HR process automation; HR data analytics; employee experience; corporate training; talent management; workforce planning; artificial intelligence; recruiting marketing; digital onboarding.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 3** (Health and Wellness)

**SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

**SDG 9** (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure)

**SDG 10** (Reducing Inequality)

**SDG 17** (Partnership for the Goals)

### 5.2.6 MYCO Ltd.

#### Company Profile.

- Date of incorporation: 12/01/2017
- Registered office address: 14 Via Pastrengo, Milan, Italy
- Website: <https://www.myco.it/>
- Number of employees (2025): 1 (source: Chamber Office)
- Revenues from sales (2023): €832,789
- Net profit (2023): €46,936
- Share capital (2023): 10,000€
- Financing received: /
- Partners: Over The Bumps Srl

#### Business Description.

MYCO is a company specializing in HR Tech and HR Innovation, offering technology and consulting solutions to support companies in the full cycle of **talent management** and digital transformation. In fact, among its main services, **MYCO** has developed **MYCO Talent** Platform, an HR platform dedicated to Talent Management, for talent assessment and analysis. In addition, it has developed assessment (evaluation) tools such as **Effectiveness**, a questionnaire for analyzing personality in the professional field. In addition to the above, there are numerous tests and questionnaires, each covering a different aspect, for example: cognitive, motivational, digital aptitude or business climate.

An additional service available, among the innovative solutions offered, is the **Smart Recruiting** Platform, MYCO's platform that leverages Artificial Intelligence to automate selection processes prior to the individual interview, thus optimizing time and reducing the workload of recruiters. The Smart Recruiting Platform can screen CVs to identify technical competencies (hard skills) and administer online assessments to assess soft skills. Using an advanced algorithm, the platform generates a final ranking, identifying ideal candidates based on pre-defined parameters by recruiters based on business needs.

Finally, MYCO offers **KaizeM** Continuous Feedback, a mobile app for continuous feedback between colleagues. It consists mainly of two modules:

**KaizeM Performance:** is MYCO's solution for managing and optimizing corporate performance appraisal, suitable both for those introducing a measurement system for the first time and for those who want to simplify and automate existing processes.

The platform is available in three versions:

1. **KaizeM Performance Silver:** for startups and SMEs that want to start a performance evaluation system quickly and easily.
2. **KaizeM Performance Gold:** offers advanced features over the Silver version, allowing dynamic management of performance targets and real-time processing of Bonus and Productivity Rewards. Ideal for SMEs and large companies that want to consolidate their evaluation model.
3. **KaizeM Performance Platinum:** In addition to the features of the Gold version, it enables optimization of people engagement and development by identifying the most effective KPIs. It is the most advanced solution, suitable for large companies seeking an advanced performance appraisal system.

**KaizeM Talent:** is a solution designed to manage employee development and career, aligning skills, values and business strategies. The platform accelerates continuous growth processes, allowing you to visualize excellence, identify areas for improvement and build targeted development paths. KaizeM Talent promotes **empowerment**, increasing skills and awareness through structured feedback; is **goal-oriented**, helping track progress and goal achievement; and strengthens **leadership**, fostering a cooperative and participatory management style.

- Solutions category offered: human capital development; HR process automation; HR data analytics; employee experience; corporate training; talent management; artificial intelligence; recruiting marketing.
- SDGs impacted:

**SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

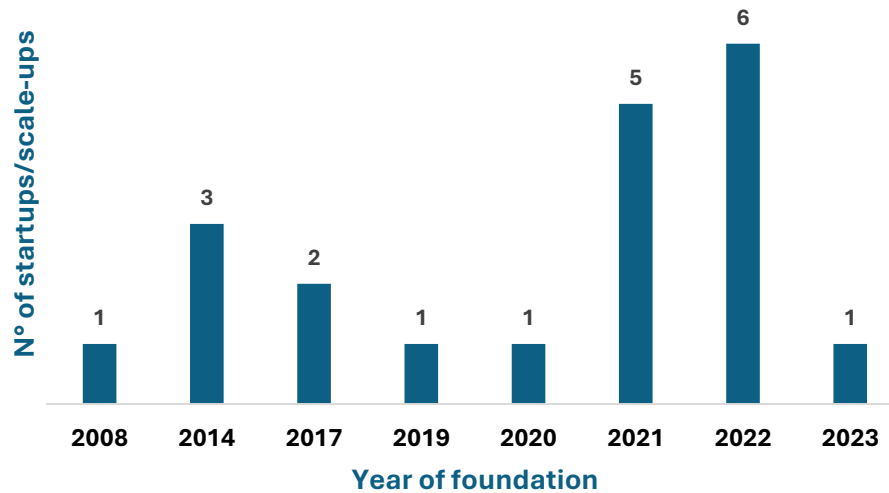
**SDG 9** (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure)



### 5.3 Scouting summary

To provide a summary overview of the scouting process, several charts have been included with the aim of illustrating the key findings of the research. Table 3 shows the year of foundation of the selected companies. It is immediately evident that there was a significant surge in startups focused on welfare and HR management during the 2021–2022 period, which coincides with the Covid-19 pandemic and the immediate post-pandemic phase.

Table 3: N° of startups/scale-ups per year of foundation



The majority of the identified companies (Table 4) were founded in Lombardia region (12 out of 20), including both startups and scale-ups. Similarly, 12 of the startups currently have fewer than five employees (Table 5). At the top of the list is **DoubleYou**, with 74 employees, significantly ahead of **Jointly** and **Eudaimon**, which have 49 and 48 employees respectively. Among the startups, **Jet HR** stands out, with data from the Chamber of Commerce indicating it had 40 employees between late 2024 and early 2025: a number expected to grow further, as this startup is expanding at an impressive pace.

Table 4: Distribution of startups/scale-ups across geographical regions

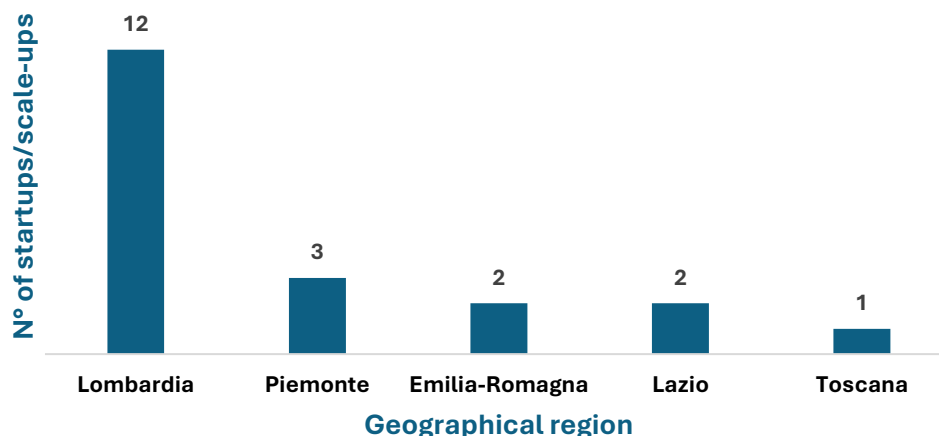
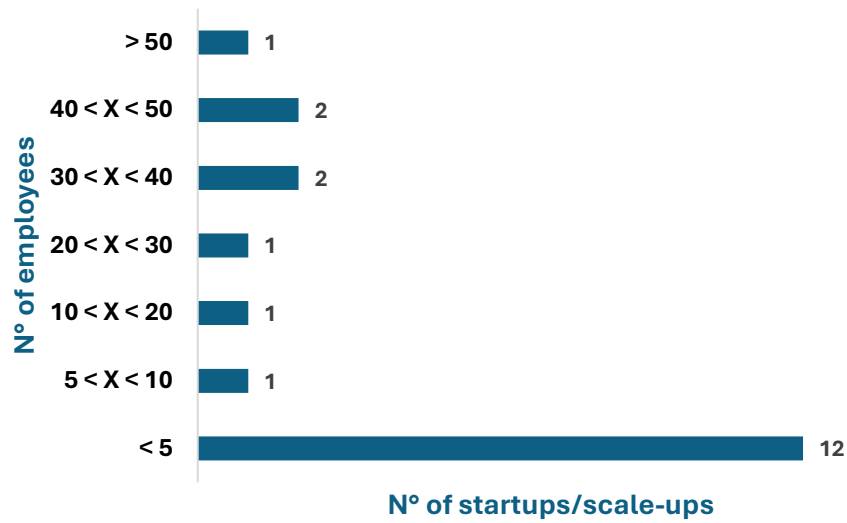
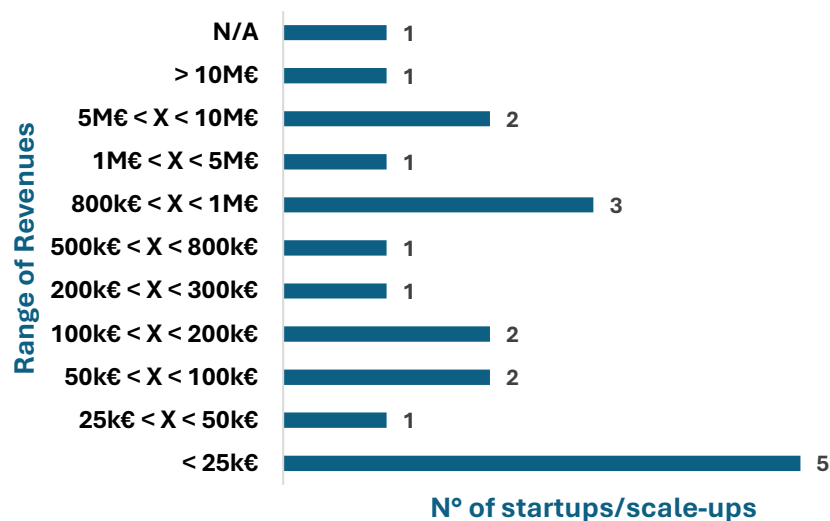


Table 5: N° of startups/scale-ups per range of employees



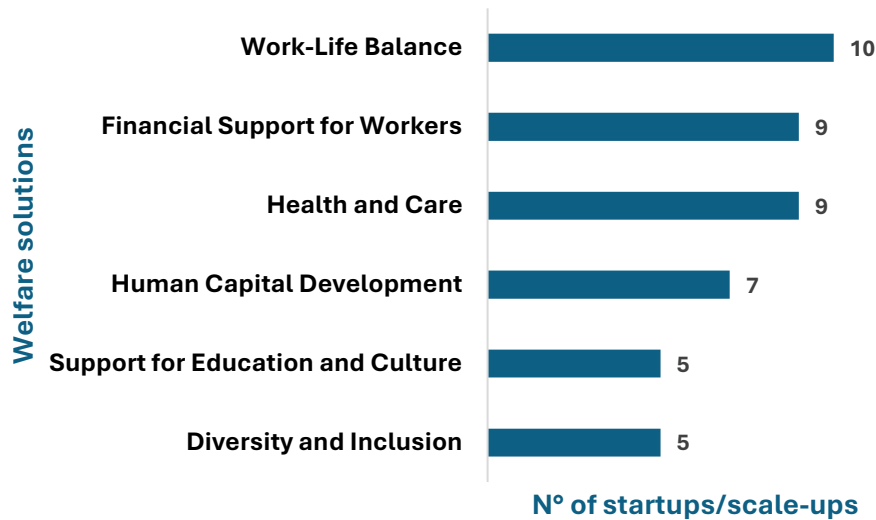
In terms of revenues (Table 6), according to data from the AIDA database, **DoubleYou** is the only scale-up to surpass the €10 million annual revenue threshold, reaching €12 million. It is followed by **Eudaimon** with €8.9 million and **Jointly** with €5.5 million. The results of this chart are reasonable, considering that most of the companies identified in the scouting process are startups with only a few years of activity. Therefore, focusing solely on revenue could be misleading, especially in cases like **Jet HR**, which, in the meantime, is raising several millions through investment rounds.

Table 6: N° of startups/scale-ups per range of revenues



Regarding the types of solutions offered, in the area of corporate welfare (Table 7) the most common is **work-life balance**, with 10 out of 20 companies offering this type of service. In second place, tied, are **financial support for workers** and **health and care** solutions, followed closely by **human capital development**, completing the top three categories. Demonstrating the growing importance of corporate welfare, each type of welfare solution is offered by at least 25% of the companies identified in this scouting.

Table 7: Ranking of Welfare solutions



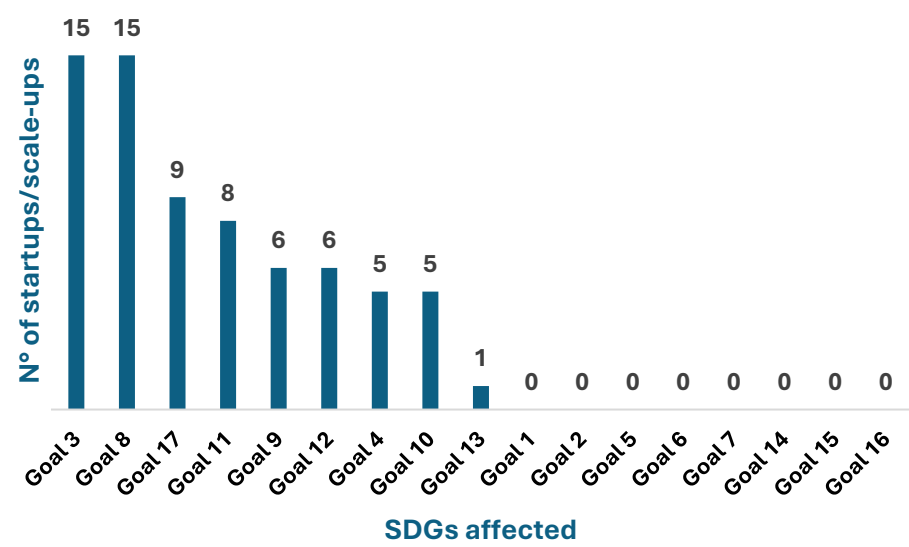
As for HR solutions (Table 8), **employee well-being** ranks highest, also with 10 out of 20 companies focused on this aspect. Rounding out the most frequently offered solutions, each proposed by 7 companies, are **corporate training**, **diversity and inclusion**, and **HR data analytics**. Additionally, **25% of the companies** are currently implementing **Artificial Intelligence solutions**, while the least common offerings include **recruitment marketing**, **employer branding**, and **digital onboarding**, the latter being a solution offered solely by **Glickon**.

Table 8: Ranking of HR solutions



Finally, in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals (Table 9), a clear majority (75% of the identified companies) are aligned with **Goals 3 and 8**. Goal 3 promotes health and well-being, while Goal 8 addresses inclusivity, decent work, and sustainable economic growth; principles that are fully aligned with the concept of **Social Sustainability**.

Table 9: Ranking of the Social Development Goals



## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The research path carried out in this thesis allowed us to analyze the concept of social sustainability, with a specific focus on corporate welfare and HR Management solutions proposed by Italian startups and scale-ups. After outlining the theoretical and normative context (in particular the ESG criteria and the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda), a targeted scouting was conducted to identify innovative entrepreneurial realities capable of generating positive impacts on workers' welfare, productivity and the surrounding social context, with a focus therefore on the S of ESG.

The methodology adopted, based on specific selection criteria of the most representative and innovative Italian startups and scale-ups, allowed to offer an updated and concrete picture of emerging practices in Italy, offering itself as an important contribution for companies interested in integrating social sustainability into their strategies.

The analysis highlighted how the adoption of **Open Innovation** and **Open Sustainability** models is a key factor in fostering the development of flexible and customized solutions, capable of responding to both the needs of companies and employees. In particular, the companies analyzed demonstrate a growing commitment to improving the quality of work life, promoting inclusion and enhancing human capital.

The work also highlighted the key role that technology, AI and new digital tools are taking on in human resource management, as well as the importance of compliance with new European regulations, particularly the CSRD directive and ESRS standards. These elements offer new opportunities to make social sustainability more measurable, traceable and integrated into business processes.

**What has emerged is that corporate welfare is no longer an ancillary "benefit," but a real strategic investment. In a context where people's welfare directly affects productivity, retention and corporate reputation, conscious and sustainable human resource management can no longer be ignored.**

Looking ahead, it will be interesting to explore how these solutions may evolve as a function of the integration of social sustainability and economic performance, as well as to assess the impact of the widespread adoption of ESG practices in Italian SMEs. Collaboration between companies, institutions and innovators represents a strategic lever to address future challenges, generating shared value and actively contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda goals.

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