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**A system of indicators to measure decent work.  
Application to the pilot case of the Montsià region  
(Tarragona, Catalonia)**

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## ARTICLE SECTION

### **A system of indicators to measure decent work. Application to the pilot case of the Montsià region (Tarragona, Catalonia)**

*Abstract:* The insecurity and job vulnerability of the 21st century are pending issues. That is why access to Decent Work has become a necessity in modern societies, engaged in a rate of productivity that not only leaves little room for personal and family life, but has also made precariousness in a large problem. Local actors that are an important part in decision-making need tools to measure and implement policies that lead to achieving dignity at work, as stipulated by large international organizations such as the ILO and the WHO. This article presents a system of indicators that make it possible to measure the impact and quality of employment policies. A system of indicators that has already been successfully applied in the Catalan region of Montsià.

*Key words:* Decent Work, decent work indicators, work-life balance, employability, productivity.

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## IDEAS CLAVE / HIGHLIGHTS / IDEES CLAU

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. El Trabajo Decente se ha convertido en una necesidad de las sociedades modernas.</li><li>2. La calidad del empleo medida a partir de cinco variables</li><li>3. Seis dimensiones para valorar e implementar el grado de alcance de los acuerdos internacionales vigentes.</li><li>4. Un sistema de indicadores que constituya un marco institucional fuerte de evaluación.</li><li>5. Definición de Trabajo Decente adaptada al territorio para ofrecer soluciones óptimas adaptadas a la realidad local.</li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Decent Work has become a need for modern societies.</li><li>2. Labour quality measured by five variables.</li><li>3. Six dimensions to assess and implement the implementation of existing international agreements.</li><li>4. An indicator system to provide a strong institutional framework for evaluation</li><li>5. Land based Decent Work definition to offer optimal solutions adapted to the local reality.</li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. El Treball Decent s'ha convertit en una necessitat de les societats modernes.</li><li>2. Definir la qualitat del treball mesurada a partir de cinc variables.</li><li>3. Sis dimensions per avaluar i implementar el grau de consecució dels acords internacionals existents.</li><li>4. Un sistema d'indicadors que constitueixi un marc institucional fort d'avaluació.</li><li>5. Definició de Treball Decent adaptada al territori per oferir solucions òptimes adaptades a la realitat local.</li></ol> |
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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

The uncertainty and job vulnerability of the 21st century are pending issues. That is why access to Decent Work has become a need in modern societies, engaged in a rate of productivity that not only tightens time for personal and family life, but also makes precariousness a large problem. Different authors agree on Decent Work to promote social justice, social equity, safe and productive labour, worker honor and rights, association freedom, as well as collective bargaining with effective participation of workers. Under this postindustrial era, within knowledge economy context, labour productivity is no longer measured by hours devoted to labour but its qualitative outcome. Therefore, so called “inactive time” or labour interruptions for mind and body to recover become central for the worker retake work with renewed energy and vitality, which ultimately benefit in terms of productivity and efficiency. Labour precariousness helps to identify low quality employments, violating workers’ rights. Labour precariousness turns to be one of the main problems, society faces towards uncertainty generated by the new economic production model. Under this scenario, the discussion presented shows the increasing relevance of the access of active population to Decent Work, as a reference measure, following International Labour Organization standards.

To understand the relevance of the different variables to consider when discussing about Decent Work, it needs to be considered the current performance of labour market and its forecasts, characterized by rapid changes and fragile and vulnerable labour offer. These, combined by sudden global emergencies, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, reveal weaknesses of the current economic system and the challenge of thinking about different labour types and measurement standards to avoid the extreme vulnerability faced by an important share of the society. Local actors, who are an important part in decision-making process, need tools to measure and implement policies that lead to achieve dignity at work, as stipulated by large international organizations, such as ILO (International Labour Organization) and WHO (World Health Organization). Come up with a land-based definition of Decent Work allows to identify and redesign a new society model for the future. It contributes to the territorial strategy vision, to the coordination of different public institutions and local actors creating synergies and guaranteeing a more efficient management of territorial resources and needs.

Based on a case study, this article presents an indicator system that makes it possible to measure the impact and quality of the implementation of employment policies within the region of Montsià, Catalonia. This area is characterized by problems related to a border area: service provision duality from different public administrations, lack of coordination of public authorities belonging to different administrative units, lack of SGI (Services of General Interest) provision in certain locations, but also suffering of long-term unemployment, derived from a structural transition, not yet finished and resulting on a number of workers who lost their employment and has no longer room in the resulting economic structure. Unemployment problems combined with duality of public policies competences, turned up Montsià to be a proper pilot study area to define a land-based Decent Work definition and design an indicator system to measure the extent to which Decent Work standards are met in the employment offers in the area.

Literature review of existing regional labour policies, combined with in-depth interviews and focus groups to local stakeholders helped to identify key territorial aspects in terms

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<sup>1</sup> Traducción exclusiva de los autores / Authors’ exclusive translation.

of labour precariousness in the territory, to first define Decent Work in the region of Montsià based on a common consensus, followed by the development of an indicator system to measure Decent Work in the region. Actor mapping included representatives of local and regional policy makers, most relevant firms in the region, labour unions and a wide range of unemployed population. All them were invited to take part in the different participative dynamics, including focus group and interviews. Their involvement in the design of the indicators system allowed to evaluate and implement a set of measures responding to their specific needs.

The set of 22 indicators is classified under six different dimensions. These dimensions allow to classify the different indicators based on a common description and measurement objective. The six dimensions identified intend to cover the different aspects considered when defining a quality employment, as agreed by the European Commission, ILO and WHO: access and treatment equality, minimum wage, healthy working time, safe working environment, labour quality, social protection and dialogue. Each indicator has been land-based designed to offer optimal solutions adapted to local reality, offering measurable data from reliable sources of information. The Indicator system is accompanied by a handbook where it's detailed the definition, objective and typology, the data sources and frequency to collect them, how to calculate the indicator, as well as optimal values and timeframe (short, medium, or long run) so they meet the intended standards. The two main sources of information to build up the indicators, regional and local statistical data mainly from Statistical Bureau of Catalonia (IDESCAT) and data to be collected by the agents in charge of implementing the indicators system. All the information described comes detailed for every indicator in an individual technical card.

This pilot study aims to bring a land-based perspective to a transversal concept which involves not only active population but also economic agents, such as firms' representatives, labour unions and policy makers. It aims to contribute to the progress and evolution in the understanding of the importance and negative implications, either in social and economic aspects, of labour offers which do not meet with the minimum standards of Decent Work and need to be overcome. The local vision of the concept makes it possible to establish a solid institutional framework to demand companies to meet with international labour agreements for dignity within employment offers, at the time it guarantees better working conditions for the workers. It constitutes a step forward towards administrative decentralization, to offer optimal and closer solutions adjusted to local needs designed from a thorough knowledge and in-depth analysis of the territory, to contribute to the redesign and development of a new society model for the future.