

QUESTION No. 186.25

Intermediate staff at USI and SUPSI: the numbers and the burden of precarious employment

According to Article 10(2) of the University Act (LSU), the working conditions of staff are regulated by collective labour agreements (CLAs); however, if they are subject to internal company regulations, the working conditions of professors, managers and intermediate staff (assistants, doctoral students, post-docs, researchers) are exempt from this obligation. At USI and SUPSI, while administrative staff are subject to a CLA, academic staff are essentially subject to the applicable staff regulations.

As part of the national day of action against the Federal Council's cuts to research, trade unions and student associations highlighted the precarious working conditions faced by mid-level staff (assistants, doctoral students, post-docs, researchers, etc.). In this regard, they denounced, for example, the excessive use of fixed-term contracts, chain contract renewals and forms of 'unpaid' work. At the cantonal level, this issue was also raised at the conference organised on 1 October by the VPOD trade union entitled: 'Middle management, between research cuts and precarious work'.

According to data from 2021, 78.4% of academic staff at universities and polytechnics are on fixed-term contracts, and for mid-level staff, this figure rises to 88%¹. According to a 2022 survey, three-quarters of researchers over the age of 46 are still on fixed-term contracts². More specifically, based on reports received in Ticino, there are also cases of repeated chain contracts lasting well over 10 years. These are worrying and emblematic indicators which, in themselves, reflect the precarious situation affecting this category.

In the context described, it therefore seems necessary to clarify the working conditions of mid-level staff at USI and SUPSI, who are not currently covered by a collective labour agreement. These universities should aim to establish themselves as socially responsible employers, guaranteeing the necessary job stability and attractiveness.

In light of the above, I ask the following questions:

1. What has been the number of fixed-term and permanent contracts for mid-level staff over the last three years, broken down between USI and SUPSI?
2. How many of these fixed-term contracts have been renewed for 5, 10 or 15 years at USI and SUPSI (broken down by university and years of renewal)?
3. How many fixed-term contracts for mid-level staff have been converted to permanent contracts in the last three years at USI and SUPSI respectively?
4. What is the average employment rate for academic staff and how many contracts in this category are for less than 50% of full-time hours at USI and SUPSI?
5. How is social security coverage for part-time workers assessed, considering, for example, that at SUPSI the LPP coordination deduction is applied twice in the case of employment levels below 50% and work carried out for at least two employers?

¹<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/catalogues-banques-donnees.gnpdetail.2022-0054.html>

²https://www.snf.ch/media/en/dUHc9D1PqYBUbJv8/Report_Early_Career_Researcher_Survey_FORs.pdf

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6. What are the minimum and maximum salaries for middle management at USI and SUPSI, how were the classification criteria defined and how is the allocation of roles determined?
7. What concrete steps are planned to stabilise employment relationships and improve working conditions for middle management at USI and SUPSI?
8. Is it not time to ensure that a collective labour agreement is also concluded for middle management, as is the case for administrative staff?

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