

# Irish hospitality sector: low pay and flexible work

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- 1. Working Conditions in Ireland Project (WCIP):**  
introduction
- 2. Irish hospitality sector:** context and changing  
employment relations
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# Working Conditions in Ireland Project (WCIP)

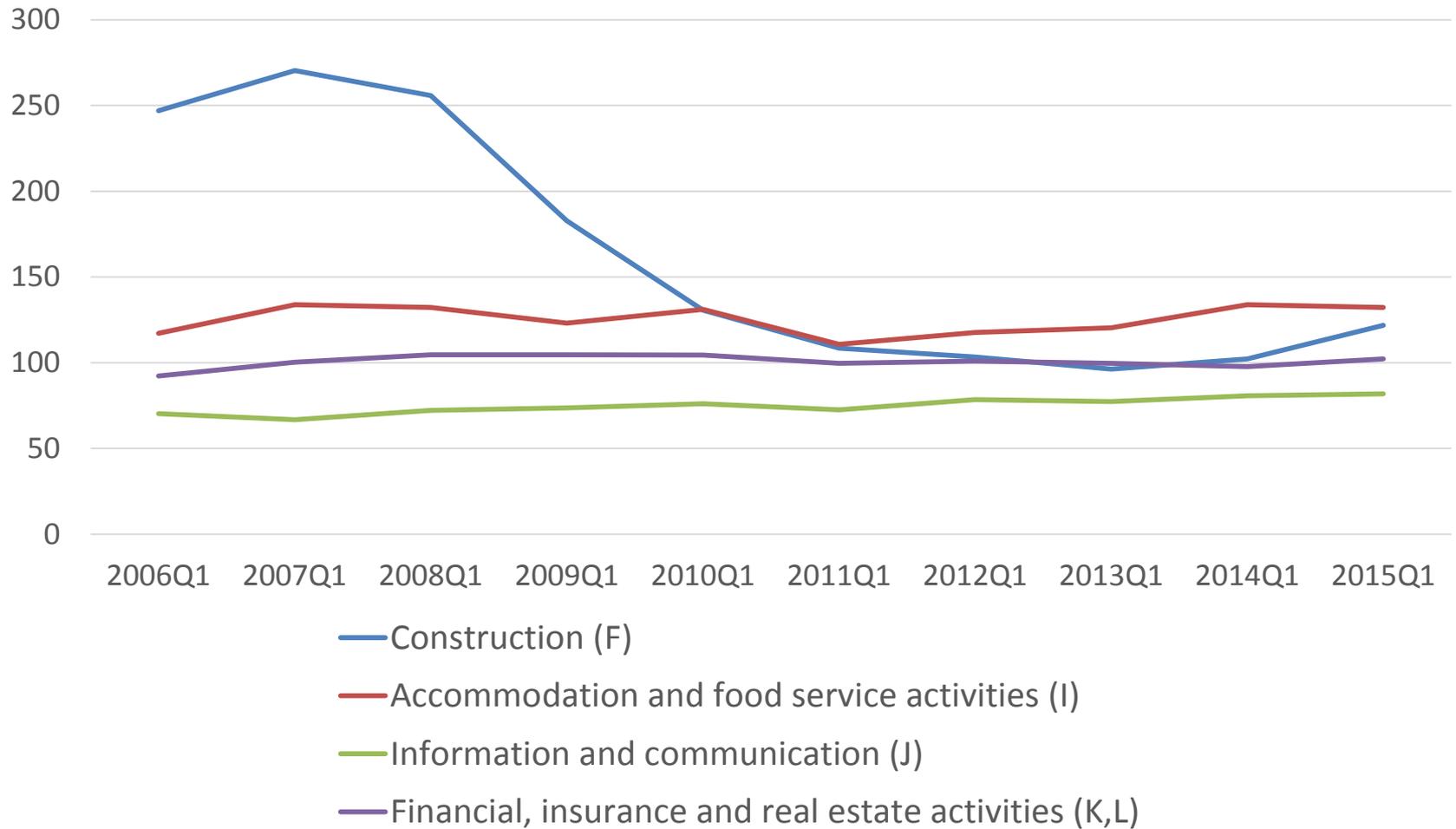
**Employment** in Ireland is now **growing** BUT how about **working conditions**?

- **Job quality dimensions(ETUI): wages, non-standard employment**, working time and work-life balance, working conditions and **job security**, skills and career development, collective representation

**WCIP:** Primarily qualitative study: interviews with workers and Trade Union officials

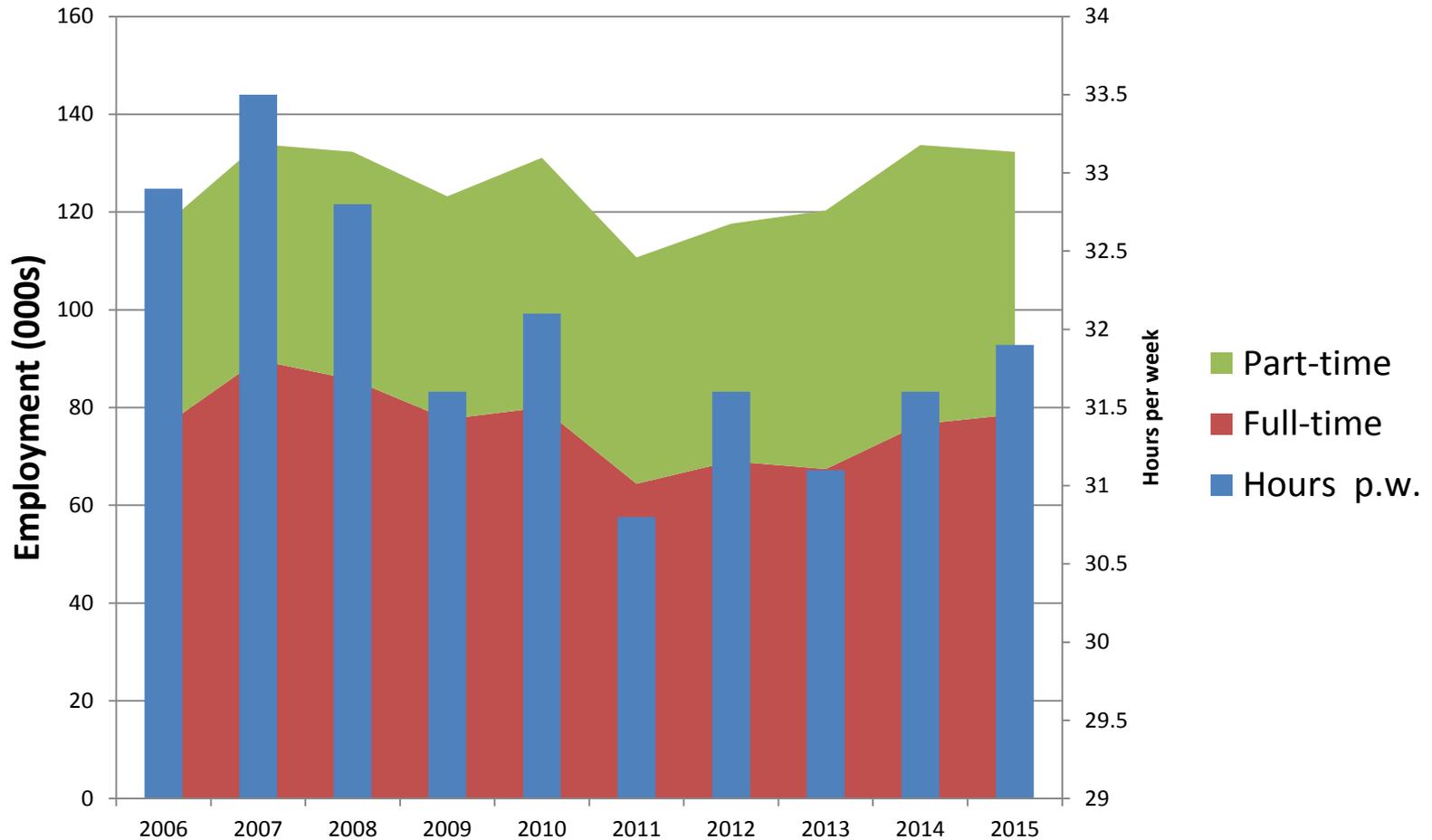
**Four sectors:** construction, hospitality, ICT, finance

# Employment in Ireland: construction, hospitality, ICT and finance 2006-2015



(Source: CSO Database)

# Irish hospitality sector: employment, hours and earnings



- **Hospitality sector in Europe:** low pay and bad working conditions (Baum 2007; Klein, Hasselink et al 2003)
- **Limited professional opportunities:** lack of adequate training and clear career paths
- **Casual contracts,** low pay, limited opportunities => increasing reliance on **transient workforce** (Ruhs and Anderson 2010; Wickham et al 2009)
- **Short term savings** on labour costs BUT **high turnover of staff**

# Irish hospitality sector: changing employment relationship

## Once upon a time....

- For some: a working class **profession** - training, clear **career paths**
- **Job security** in an occupational labour market

## Late **1990s** and early **2000s**

- Flexible work for **flexible workforce**

## After the **economic downturn**

- Further **casualization** and '**enforced**' flexibility

# Hospitality sector: flexible contracts and low earnings

**Hospitality sector:** low paid and casual jobs before recession

- Growing number of **part-time jobs**
- **'Almost-full-time'** jobs

**'If and when'** (casual) contracts:

- Hours not guaranteed
- Notion of flexibility
- BUT: refusing to take on hours often problematic

# Hospitality sector: unpredictability of shifts and income

*P: They [the managers] write on the roster, they write for example: **start at 8am and finish at 3pm** but next day you come and you see that you have work until 5pm not until 3pm (...) You never know, you can't plan anything. And now it is even worse because they put the roster on the wall the last day, on Sunday. They put the roster on the wall so for example if you have on Monday your day off you can't make a plan for your day because you didn't know [that] you will have tomorrow a day off*  
*(...)*

*A: ok, so how much did you get per week?*

*P: **200-300..400 it depends***

*A: how then can you plan financially?*

*P: **you can't make any plan...you live in that hotel...like all your life is in the hotel** because you don't know, you just have to go to the hotel, that's all...*

*(Accommodation assistant, large hotel)*

# Flexible contracts: who benefits?

**Earnings** in the Irish hospitality sector **lower** than the full-time **minimum wage salary**

**Flexibility** as a requirement; shifts assigned at last minute

- **Minimum hourly rate** but **unpredictable income**
- Finding additional employment not possible
- Possible difficulties with **social welfare entitlements**

**Working time** as form of **control**:

- Flexibility that suits the employer!

**ALSO:** Changing definition of an hour; illegal deductions

## Getting regular hours

*I was doing very well. In the [name of the fast food chain]. I think it was like that ‘cause I was there for so long. ‘Cause generally, the longer you were there, the more hours you would get out of it. And I was doing pretty much full time hours. Well, ‘full time hours’... I had **very good hours** and they were **always fairly regular**. I knew that I was always going to work on Friday and I was always going to work on Saturday.*

(Former Fast Food chain worker)

## Changing definition of 'an hour'

*Well to speak honestly **30 minutes for one room is not enough...because** a lot of tasks, a lot of things to do and also we have two beds in each room, so if there are four people or three people you have to change two beds...**It takes 35/40 minutes, even so, if you're lucky** and you have a clean room - it saves you but otherwise **you can't finish in time. Nobody from cleaning department, housekeeping department, are going to lunch [because they have to] finish their work in time...***  
(Accommodation Assistant, large Dublin hotel)

# Further implications for working conditions

## **Health and safety** implications

- Fewer people doing more work: increased pressure
- Fear from reporting minor accidents

## **Career paths** and training

- Lack of formal training provided by the employer
- Removal of apprenticeship schemes

**High turnover** of staff; **transient** workforce, **precarious** employment...

## Raising **minimum hourly rate**: does it really work?

Accommodation and food service activities (I)			
		2015Q1	2016Q1
	Average Weekly Earnings (Euro)	313.4	312.15
	Average Hourly Earnings (Euro)	12.27	12.48
	Average Weekly Paid Hours	25.5	25

(Source: CSO StatBank)

## **Trade Unions**: making ‘bad jobs’ good again? (Osterman, 2008)

### Examples of **good practice**:

- Regular hours, stable earnings
- Low turnover of staff and overall benefits for the business

# THANK YOU!

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