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Paper proposal

**Public service employment relations in the EU countries after the crisis:
a fundamental change or business as usual?**

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Full Professor of Economic Sociology, University of Milano, and President of the Assessment Committee of the University. He has served as a member of the ILERA Executive Committee (2006-2012) and as President of the Italian Association for the Study of Industrial Relations (2006-2011). Recent publications: *Public Service Management and Employment Relations in Europe. Emerging from the Crisis*, London-New York: Routledge 2016 (coeditor with Stephen Bach).

ABSTRACT

In many countries all over the world, in the Americas as in the European Union, the economic crisis which followed the 2007 subprime crack and the 2008 Lehman Brothers collapse has heavily hit the employment levels, wage dynamics, working conditions and pension benefits of public employees, and significantly affected the employment relations institutions and practices in the public sector.

In a 2013 important article (Harry Katz, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*), the question was raised whether post-crisis US public service employment relations present discontinuities deep enough to configure a ‘fundamental transformation’ of previous patterns, to some extent resembling the transformation that occurred in the US private sector employment relations in the 1980s. The answer provided by that article was negative. The aim of the paper here proposed is to discuss whether this conclusion holds also in the post-crisis European context.

In almost all EU countries, public administrations and public service employment have been one of the main targets of governments’ responses to the economic and sovereign debt crisis. The stricter

constraints of the new EU economic governance have made containing or cutting public expenditure, of which wage and salaries of public employees are a key component, a prominent concern that has not been confined to countries covered by an assistance program from the Troika. Along with employment levels, working conditions and wage dynamics, governments' measures have significantly affected also employment relations institutions and practices.

The relevant question that the paper wants to explore is therefore whether post-crisis public service employment relations in the EU countries present discontinuities deep enough to configure a fundamental transformation of previous patterns. This issue will be addressed updating the empirical evidence and the analysis of a recently published collection of national case studies on 12 EU countries, with a special focus on the rowing, albeit indirect, role of the EU economic governance on national public service employment relations.