

LIVE TO WORK? NO. WORK TO LIVE

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The Americans call it the "Great Resignation" and it is the phenomenon by which a large number of people, employed in the most diverse sectors of activity, are leaving their jobs. The reasons behind this irreversible personal choice are different but can be traced back to the same single and pressing need: to improve one's well-being.

If even before the pandemic, thanks to the entry of new generations into the labour market, the issue of well-being was making its way into companies and law firms, Covid-19 has given it greater relevance. The lockdown forced people to stop their routine and change their habits, making them reflect on the kind of life they want and value the things that are really important, such as feeling good, dedicating time to themselves and their loved ones. And if a job doesn't allow this, then it's worth to quit it.

"You are not your job", wrote author **Chuck Palahniuk** back in 1996 in his first novel Fight Club. And 26 years later, millions of workers have fully embraced this philosophy. Millions, yes. In the United States about 4 million workers have been quitting their jobs each month, out of a workforce of around 160 million people.

Some data

The numbers in Europe are much lower and, indeed, in some cases they are even against the trend – in Spain, for example, the number of resignations between 2020 and 2021 has fallen (barely 30,000 professionals voluntarily resigned from their jobs, according to Social Security affiliation data) – for

various reasons: one of them is that in the US it's easier to resign since it's not as difficult to find another job. While in the US the unemployment rate at the end of 2021 was 3.9%, in Spain it was 13%.

In Portugal, the trend is even more diluted, most likely because the country has already taken several measures to improve the work-life balance of workers. These include, for example, the introduction of a law, at the end of 2021, that prevents employers from contacting employees during non-working hours. However, according to a survey by Michael Page conducted on 6,000 candidates between July and September, worker turnover is also on the rise in the country. 62% of respondents have already changed jobs, while 24% are in the process of doing so and just 10% say they have no plans to change jobs.

Despite the numbers recorded so far in the region, experts are not optimistic about the future, arguing that discontent at work is common and that it is growing. The willingness to look for new opportunities may increase once the labour market shows concrete signs of recovery. The reason for this is that workers have changed their mentality and priorities. According to the Randstad Workmonitor 2022 survey (on a sample of over 500 respondents in the country), workers in the Iberian Peninsula give priority to their private life over their professional life (65% in Spain and 65% in Portugal) and would leave their job if it prevented them from enjoying their life (45% in Spain and 40% in Portugal). Moreover, 29% of workers would rather be unemployed than unhappy at work.

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