

The Female Condition in Italy: A European Debate on Family-Work Reconciliation

This article focuses on combining professional development and family which affects the female world in a powerful way. The first part presents a comparison between some European countries and the Italian regions based on indicators from the labor market and the level of education among women. The next part analyses some indicators on maternity care services, highlighting the different European models. The article concludes with a logistic regression on the microdata from the Italian Labor Forces and reflections on policies to promote family-work management.

Keywords: *Work life balance, female employment, labour policies, family policies, fertility rates.*

Introduction

In accordance with Naithani¹ who presents a literature scenario of work-life balance between the XX and the XXI century, the work and family life spheres has significantly changed over a period of time. Many studies argued that a lack of worklife balance can affect health² and cause lower working individual's performance at workplace. Organisations need employees with improved work-life balance.

ILO argues that: "With globalisation and rapid technological advances, boundaries between work and home are blurring and demands on workers and enterprises have never been higher. This has meant increasing challenges for workers to be able to successfully reconcile the conflicting demands of paid work and their personal lives." This affects dramatically women's labour force participation and charge a "double burden" on women of both paid and unpaid work. In 1981, ILO signed the Convention no. 156 concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities. ILO Recognised the need to create effective equality of opportunity and treatment as between men and women workers with family responsibilities and between such workers and other workers.

In 1981, ILO established national recommendations:

- to enable workers with family responsibilities to exercise their right to vocational training and to free choice of employment;

¹Naithani P., 2010, "Overview of Work-Life Balance Discourse and Its Relevance in Current Economic Scenario", in Asian Social Sciences, Vol. 6, No. 6, pp. 148-155.

²Nandavanam Shivakumar K., 2018, Work Life Balance in the Health Care Sector, in Amity Journal of Healthcare Management, pp. 45-49.

- 1 - to take account of their needs in terms and conditions of employment
- 2 and in social security; and
- 3 - to develop or promote child-care, family and other community services,
- 4 public or private, responding to their needs.

5
6 Notwithstanding, the general recognition of importance of a good work
7 and life balance, a current study carried out by the University of Kent³, funded
8 by Economic and Social Research Council, highlights that a large proportion of
9 workers across Europe feel an inadequate work and family lives balance.
10 Chung writes that his analysis of the European data (EWCS, 2015) shows that
11 more than one out of five workers are too tired to do household work and more
12 than one out of ten workers feel like their jobs prevent them from giving time
13 to their family. The position of Italian workers is almost close to the EU28
14 average. Analysing 2010 ESS dataset, Chung shows that most workers (86%)
15 across Europe believed that a job that guarantees a good work/family balance
16 is an important indicator when choosing a job.

17 This study on the status of women in Italy intends to revisit some elements
18 that have been already investigated in the past, regarding the combination of
19 family and work and certain socio-economic conditions. Women are more apt
20 to take part in the labor market than in the previous decade, whether taking on
21 the role as an employee or executive. However, Italy, particularly the South, is
22 still disadvantaged and has lower fertility levels. Even today, the persistence of
23 gender gaps in the workforce is confirmed by the fact that women are paid less
24 than their men counterparts, are more inclined to precarious jobs and poverty,
25 and often employed in roles that do not take into account their real
26 qualifications of study or professional skills, oftentimes having a heavy amount
27 of domestic work weighing on their shoulders.

28 The report jointly prepared by the ILO and the OECD for the Japanese
29 Presidency at the G20 in Osaka of June 2019⁴, points out that these trends are
30 generalized and common to all advanced economies, not only in Italy: Italian
31 women, for example, continue to earn about 10% less than men.

32 Women are also more likely than men to be employed in some forms of
33 non-standard work (NSFE), e.g.: temporary work, part-time⁵, and on-call
34 work. In fact, the percentage of part-time employment in total employment is
35 confirmed to be even greater for women than for men in all G20 jobs during
36 2017, with a gender gap of around 30 percentage points in Italy, Germany,
37 United Kingdom, Argentina, Australia and Japan. These figures, on the one
38 hand, show an element of flexibility, while on the other hand, prove that there
39 are difficulties regarding the integration of women into the labor market.

³Chung E., 2017, WAF Work, Autonomy, Flexibility and Work Life Balance Project – Final Report, University of Kent, ESRC Economic and Social Research Council.

⁴“Women at Work in G20 countries: Progress and policy action - Paper prepared under Japan’s G20 Presidency (2019)”

Evidence of these difficulties emerge in detail through numerical accounting. For example, when analyzing the data from the 2018 annual report on the resignation among mothers and fathers, it showed that 45,900 out of 49,451 are voluntary resignations, of which 35,963 are working mothers and 13,488 are working fathers. The main reasons include incompatibility between employment and care of offspring (36%); hourly working conditions, distance from place of residence, no agreement for part-time or job modification (18%), transition to another company (33%). Out of 2,062 requests for flexibility, 423 were granted.

Therefore, the aim of this work is to investigate the results and impacts of policies pursued in recent years in order to improve the status of women and the tools adopted to deal with such emergencies.

Italy in the European context

Regional women's employment

This paragraph aims to focus on territorial disparities at the most disaggregated level, comparing Italy's 19 regions and two autonomous provinces with the rest of the European regions at NUTS2 level on the basis of two key indicators: employment and education for female workers. In comparison, with regard to employment rates, it is clear that the female population aged 15-64 has low employment levels in Italy, Greece, and Spain, although in the latter, the internal disparity is stronger as there are regions with rates similar to those in Northern Europe. With regards to education levels, a higher value of this indicator displays a greater propensity for women to work, therefore it constitutes a central element in our analysis, one of the reasons why a disadvantageous position emerges for the South. This is also evident in the next paragraph, which highlights employment rates by level of education and the number of minor children to be cared for in the household.

Table 1. *Regional female employment in comparison with some European countries, class 15-64 years, 2014-2018*

Countries	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
UE28	59.5	60.4	61.3	62,4	63,3
Netherlands	68.1	69.2	70.1	71,3	72,8
Sweden	73.1	74.0	74.8	75.4	76.0
Denmark	69.8	70.4	72.0	71.5	72.6
Germany	69.5	69.9	70.8	71.5	72.1
Greece	41.1	42.5	43.3	44.4	45.3
Spain	51.2	52.7	54.3	55.7	56.9

France	60.2	60,5	60.8	61.1	61.8
Italy	46.8	47.2	48.1	48.9	49.5
Piedmont	55.9	56.9	58.2	58.8	58.9
Aosta Valley	60.8	61.4	61.8	62.7	64.1
Liguria	54.0	56.2	54.3	54.3	55.4
Lombardy	57.5	57.2	58.1	59.3	59.6
Bolzano Autonomous Province	64.3	64.3	66.4	65.9	67.9
Trento Autonomous Province	58.4	59.8	59.1	62.1	61.7
Veneto	54.5	54.0	55.2	57.1	58.2
Friuli-Venice Giulia	55.3	55.0	57.0	58.4	59.5
Emilia-Romagna	59.1	59.7	62.2	62.1	62.7
Tuscany	56.9	58.5	58.4	59.9	60.5
Umbria	53.6	55.3	55.2	55.1	54.9
Marche	55.0	54.1	54.4	54.3	56.4
Lazio	51.2	51.0	51.8	52.9	53.1
Abruzzo	43.4	43.0	44.6	45.1	45.6
Molise	38.9	39.5	42.0	42.8	42.0
Campania	27.5	27.4	28.7	29.4	29.4
Apulia	29.5	30.5	31.4	31.7	32.8
Basilicata	35.3	36.5	39.0	37.3	36.9
Calabria	28.9	28.6	29.2	30.2	31.0
Sicily	27.4	28.1	28.3	29.2	29.1
Sardinia	40.3	42.5	42.3	42.1	45.0

Source: Eurostat

The comparison of the employment rate explains the peculiar situation in Italy: only the province of Bolzano and the Aosta Valley are above the European average with a female employment rate of 67.9% and 64.1% respectively. Emilia Romagna followed with 62.7% and the province of Trento with 61.7%. The other regions of Central-North have rates between 53% in Lazio and 60.5% in Tuscany. The regions of the South are significantly different from those of the Central-North and the European average, with female employment rates falling from 45% in Sardinia to 29% in Sicily.

Table 2. *Percentage of women with a degree equivalent EQF to Level 5 to EQF 8, class 25-64 years, 2014-2018*

Countries	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
UE28	30.7	31.8	32.5	33.4	34.5
Netherlands	34.0	35.0	36.0	37.6	38.9
Sweden	45.0	46.7	48.0	48.6	50.1
Denmark	40.9	42.6	42.7	44.6	45.3
Germany	23.7	24.4	25.2	25.7	26.4
Greece	28.5	30.1	31.9	32.7	33.1
Spain	36.5	37.5	38.4	38.9	39.8
France	35.4	36.5	36.9	37.5	39.4
Italy	18.9	19.8	20.1	21.5	22.1
Piedmont	17.6	18.6	19.0	20.7	22.3
Aosta Valley	18.0	18.5	19.2	22.2	23.5
Liguria	22.1	22.4	22.4	23.4	25.9
Lombardy	19.7	21.5	21.8	23.5	23.9
Bolzano Autonomous Province	18.0	19.5	19.4	19.0	20.8
Trento Autonomous Province	20.4	21.6	21.2	23.3	24.5
Veneto	17.8	18.8	19.0	21.4	22.2
Friuli-Venice Giulia	18.6	19.6	19.4	23.0	23.7
Emilia-Romagna	21,1	23,1	23,8	24,1	25,1
Tuscany	19,4	21,4	22,9	23,6	24,7
Umbria	23,7	22,6	23,1	24,5	23,5
Marche	22,0	22,0	22,9	24,4	23,5
Lazio	25,7	25,6	25,3	28,1	28,6
Abruzzo	18,8	19,8	20,2	21,6	22,1
Molise	20,7	21,0	21,6	23,0	22,4
Campania	15,6	16,3	16,7	17,4	17,9
Apulia	15,2	15,1	15,5	16,1	16,8
Basilicata	17,3	18,3	18,9	18,9	18,8
Calabria	17,6	18,3	17,2	17,6	17,7
Sicily	14,4	14,5	14,7	15,3	15,7
Sardinia	15,7	17,8	18,7	20,2	19,5

Source: Eurostat

With regards to the level of education compared to most European countries, Italy shows a relative delay, which only partially improved in recent years, shown in the other indicator. The territorial analysis once again confirms the disadvantage in the southern regions, connected to the lowest positions of the European ranking.

Women with a higher degree than high school, equivalent to at least EQF5, account for 34.5% of the 28-country European average, with peaks in Sweden at 50% and values below 20% in the southern regions of Italy. Eurostat data allow regions to be classified according to the percentage of employees with a maximum level of education equal to the lower secondary school. Although the percentages in the Central-North are above 20%, they remain well below the EU28 average, explaining that the Central-North has historically directed young people towards post-graduate employment, favored by a more accessible market since the last decade.

Aligning Professional Development and Childcare

The low participation of women demonstrate an unfavorable outcome from the Italian welfare and labor policies that seek to promote working life with family life, ultimately causing economic uncertainty and a consequential reduction in the fertility rate among Italians.

It is well known that there is a delay in the integration of a family into employment and the establishment of a family, while the average income is not adequate to cover the costs of private childcare, especially in the South.

Other European models are based on more structured social services, offered by the private and public system. Specifically looking at the UK, services are mainly offered by private centers. The German Bismark model is mainly based on providing services to those insured under the social security system, i.e. those employed. The social democratic experience of the Scandinavian countries highlights a state that has taken charge of these services in the face of high taxation. The Danish model is based on aid from educational services, guaranteeing nursery for 70% of children under the age of three.

Although the availability of care services is a key part of encouraging women's participation in the labor market, it must also be combined with appropriate policies.

In fact, the conciliation models are based mainly on care services and on the flexibility of working conditions. Countries such as Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands measure a high percentage of children in care at educational facilities from an early age. In Denmark, for example, 66% of children under the age of 3 spend at least 30 hours a week in educational facilities. In Italy, however, the percentage increases only from 3 years of age onwards (88%), while for younger ages, less than a third of them are being treated in kindergartens or playrooms.

Table 3. Percentage of children at formal educational facilities by age and hours per week (2017)

Country	1 to 29 hours per week			30 hours or more			1 hour per week at least		
	<3 years	3 years at compulsory school	From compulsory school to 12 years	<3 years	3 years at compulsory school	From compulsory school to 12 years	<3 years	3 years at compulsory school	From compulsory school to 12 years
Austria	13.9	64.3	55.4	4.3	23.7	44.6	18.2	88	100
Denmark	5.7	17.5	0.7	66	77.9	98.7	71.7	95.4	99.4
France	19.8	38.8	33.1	30.7	56.3	66.7	50.5	95.1	99.8
Germany	8.3	31.2	38.5	22	56.4	50.5	30.3	87.6	89
Netherlands	56.1	74.8	70	5.5	20.4	29.6	61.6	95.2	99.6
Sweden	15.6	19.9	50.6	37.1	77.6	49.4	52.7	97.5	100
Italy	12.1	20.9	14.5	16.5	67.7	85.5	28.6	88.6	100

Source: Eurostat

Countries such as Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands use part-time work in order to align women's work with childcare. In Austria and Germany, for example, it goes from almost 60% of women with a child to three-quarters of those with at least 3 children. Indeed, in the Netherlands, the proportion of women working part-time is also very high for those with only one child (76%) and it grows for those who have more than one.

Italy has lower percentages with part-time work, as shown by the figures from the Scandinavian countries and France. Unlike the latter, it does not present the same level of treatment measures, both in economic and in terms of services.

Table 4. Part-time employment percentage by gender, number of children and age of child under 6 (2017)

Country	Women			Men			Total		
	1 child	2 children	3 children and more	1 child	2 children	3 children and more	1 child	2 children	3 children and more
Austria	58.3	76	76.1	8.5	8.2	9.8	32.3	38.5	37.3
Denmark	21.9	26.8	36.3	7.5	5.5	4.2	14.3	15.8	19.8
France	27.6	36.8	43.1	6.5	6.4	6.2	16.5	20.3	21.1
Germany	55.6	71.8	74.4	6.3	6	8.7	29	34.3	32.9

Netherlands	76.2	86.3	82.6	16.3	15.9	16.2	45.4	49	45.6
Sweden	35.9	40.4	49.2	11.2	10.2	11.8	23.1	24.8	29.5
Italy	36.9	42.8	42.2	5.9	6.2	6.4	18.8	20.4	18.3

Source: Eurostat

The lack of adequate care measures and job flexibility is reduced by low employment rates for working mothers, which further decrease when you have at least 3 children.

Table 5. Employment by gender and number of children (2017)

Country	Women			Men			Total		
	1 child	2 children	3 children and more	1 child	2 children	3 children and more	1 child	2 children	3 children and more
Austria	74.6	70.9	56.4	91.7	93.1	82.5	82.7	81.6	69.2
Denmark	70.2	79.9	77.9	91.6	93.9	88.7	80	86.6	83.1
France	69.7	68.7	47.7	89.3	88.7	80.6	78.8	78.3	63.1
Germany	68.6	64.2	44.3	92.3	92.7	82.9	79.6	77.8	62.7
Netherlands	79	77.4	66.3	93.3	94.9	90.6	85.7	85.8	78
Sweden	78.5	85.8	82	93.4	95.5	88.7	85.5	90.5	75.6
Italy	56.6	52.3	38.3	87.4	87.2	80.3	71.2	69.3	58.8

Source: Eurostat

Italy's position is certainly close to those of other European countries if we consider the employment of graduates, for whom there is an employment rate that reaches 70%, even in the case of women with at least 3 children. This element confirms that the level of education among female workers is a key element in promoting female employment, even in the presence of a large family.

1 **Table 6. Graduate employment by gender and number of children (2017)**

Country	Women			Men			Total		
	1 child	2 children	3 children and more	1 child	2 children	3 children and more	1 child	2 children	3 children and more
Austria	82	81.5	66.3	97.8	95.1	93.8	88.8	87.8	80.6
Denmark	76.4	84.3	90.1	92.7	96.8	88.4	82.9	89.1	89.5
France	75.3	83.6	74.9	95.5	94.7	93.4	85.2	88.3	83.1
Germany	75.3	74.5	66.2	95.5	96.9	94.8	85.2	86.4	82
Netherlands	88.8	86.8	85.1	96.9	96.4	95.6	92.2	91.2	90
Sweden	85.1	92.1	85.3	93.8	95.5	86.8	88.5	93.6	85.3
Italy	74.6	75.8	71.3	96	96.5	94.7	82.2	83.8	80.9

2 Source: Eurostat

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5 **Italy in Detail**

6
7 This paragraph highlights how the territorial gap in women's employment
8 is tightening under certain family conditions. Female employment generally
9 has a gap compared to male employment, which is even higher when women
10 are burdened with family workloads. Generally, a woman who lives alone, on
11 one side, has more time for work, yet on the other, she has a greater need to
12 work, perhaps she does not have any other income, neither deriving from
13 capital gains nor let alone other income earners, as in single-income
14 households. In this case, the employment rate exceeds 60% in the South,
15 although it is still far from the Central areas in Italy, which reaches 80% for the
16 same category, while the North reaches 90%. This gap, however, is in line
17 with the structural condition of the Italian business system. A woman who has
18 family commitments, on one side, is confronted with aspects related to the
19 structure of family services and a family model that remains very attached to
20 the female figure in the domestic environment. Therefore, the woman in a
21 childless couple has employment rates of around 50% in the South, while it
22 exceeds 70% in the Central-North. For women who also play the role of
23 mother, the rates are further reduced, especially in the case a child under two
24 years of age is present. The territorial divide between the North and South is
25 even greater in the case of single-parent women who are somehow forced to
26 work because they are the heads of families. With a rate of 80% in the North
27 and 71% in Central Italy, the employment rate of single-parent women in the
28 South stands at 44%. If the child is less than two years old, the rate in the
29 South decreases to 36% compared to 72% in the North and 59% in Central.

30 Conversely, the unemployment rates of single-parent women are around
31 18% and the inactivity rate reaches 36%. The latter even increases to 55% if
32 the woman is in a partnership and has children.
33

Table 7. *Employment rate for women aged 25-49 for role in the family, presence of young children and geographical distribution (2018)*

	Single	Women with partner and without children	Mother					
			Total	With a child 0-2 years old	Couple with children		Single-parent	
					Total	With a child 0-2 years old	Total	With a child 0-2 years old
North	89.0	79.0	69.2	64.3	67.8	63.8	80.0	72.5
Centre	83.4	73.3	64.6	59.3	63.5	59.3	71.5	59.2
South	62.6	49.2	36.4	33.7	35.5	33.5	43.8	35.0
Italy	81.5	71.1	56.5	53.1	55.3	52.9	65.6	55.3

Source: Istat Report, Workforce Survey Analysis, p. 175

From the summary of the data shown in the table, it is clear that the territorial gap is more marked in the case of female employment. The following table presents employment, unemployment and inactivity rates by territorial breakdown, gender, and family status.

Table 8. *Occupancy rate by gender and family type and age group 25-49 Italy*

	Single	Couple with dependents	Couple without dependents	Single-Parent Male	Single-Parent Female	Total
Italy - Male						
Employed	1467551	3935227	962052	64941		6429771
Unemployed	147258	253168	54621	7309		462356
Inactive	172619	226066	48096	6671		453452
	1787428	4414461	1064769	78921		7345579
Employment	82.10%	89.14%	90.35%	82.29%		
Unemployment	8.24%	5.73%	5.13%	9.26%		
Inactive	9.66%	5.12%	4.52%	8.45%		
Italy - Female						
Employed	801306	3015189	857008		467780	
Unemployed	87488	343011	100023		98949	
Inactive	132768	2004576	228796		148096	
	1021562	5362776	1185827		714825	
Employment rate	78,44%	56,22%	72,27%		65.44%	
Unemployment	8,56%	6,40%	8,43%		13.84%	

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rate						
Inactive	13,00%	37,38%	19,29%		20.72%	
Centre-North - Male						
Employment	1150993	2680389	789426	45073		
Unemployment	77336	93036	30117	4353		
Inactive	63744	57792	25283	1776		
	1292073	2831217	844826	51202		
Employment	89.08%	94.67%	93.44%	88.03%		
Unemployment	5.99%	3.29%	3.56%	8.50%		
Inactive	4.93%	2.04%	2.99%	3.47%		
Centre-North female						
Employed	655679	2289241	727499		359194	
Unemployed	49100	181628	75787		53490	
Inactive	69406	934788	131594		61028	
	774185	3405657	934880		473712	
Employed	84.69%	67.22%	77.82%		75.83%	
Unemployed	6.34%	5.33%	8.11%		11.29%	
Inactive	8.97%	27.45%	14.08%		12.88%	
South - Male						
Employed	316558	1254838	172625	19867		
Unemployed	69922	160131	24504	2957		
Inactive	108876	168273	22813	4895		
	495356	1583242	219942	27719		
Employment	63.91%	79.26%	78.49%	71.67%		
Unemployment	14.12%	10.11%	11.14%	10.67%		
Inactive	21.98%	10.63%	10.37%	17.66%		
South - Female						
Employed	145627	725948	129509		108586	
Unemployed	38388	161383	24236		45460	
Inaactive	63361	1069788	97202		87068	
	247376	1957119	250947		241114	

Employment	58.87%	37.09%	51.61%		45.04%	
Unemployed	15.52%	8.25%	9.66%		18.85%	
Inaactive	25.61%	54.66%	38.73%		36.11%	

Source: LFS Istat, second quarter 2018, own elaborations.

In conclusion to the thorough paragraph on Italy, the data of two logit regressions are presented: the first displays the dependent variable as the rate of inactivity; in the second, the employment rate. Both of these regressions include the employee's gender, education level, family status, and area of residence in dependent variables. The variables that show the greatest negative weight in the probability of being employed are "living in the South" with a coefficient of -1.23 and "being female" with a coefficient -1.11. The variable "male single-parent" is also less likely to be occupied, with a coefficient of -0.89. This highlights how the family load constitutes an obstacle to work in any case. The regression applied to the rate of inactivity as a dependent variable confirms that family loads and the presence of other income earners in the family make it more likely not to participate in the labor market. In addition, two additional factors that have a strong impact should be mentioned:

1. Being graduated increases the likelihood of being employed and decreases that of being inactive
2. Living in the South is a disadvantage for anyone, even for those without family members.

Table 10. Regression logit -Employment Rate Dependent Variable (R2 0.13)
cut1 -1.937083

Independent variables	Coef.	Standard error	z	P>(z)
Female	-1.11	0.011	-994.52	0.000
South	-1.23	0.001	-1125.51	0.000
Couple with children	-0.47	0.001	-346.27	0.000
Single-parent Female	-0.70	0.002	-336.8	0.000
Single-parent Male	-0.89	0.004	-212.45	0.000
With at least a secondary school diploma	0.72	0.001	659.45	0.000

Source: LFS Istat, second quarter 2018, own elaborations.

1 **Table 11.** *Logit Regression Tab – Inactive rate Dependent Variable (R2 0.13)*
 2 *cut1 2.756641*

Independent variables	Coef.	Standard error	z	P>(z)
Female	1.38	0.0013	1065.3	0,000
South	1.12	0.0012	927.46	0,000
Couple with children	0.67	0.0016	412,8	0,000
Single-parent Female	0.54	0.0024	222.77	0,000
Single-parent Male	0.83	0.0049	167.94	0,000
With at least a secondary school diploma	-0.67	0.0012	-552.06	0,000

3 Source: LFS Istat, second quarter 2018, own elaborations.
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6 **Family policies in the hands of Member States**

7
 8 The comparison between the percentages of children taken care by care
 9 services in some European countries compared to Italy is not only different
 10 with the number of places available, but also with Government assistance. For
 11 example, at least 75% of the costs are covered by the government for children
 12 under school age and all children are entitled to be taken into care from the age
 13 of 26 weeks, within 3 months from when the request is presented. Parents with
 14 incomes of less than 551,700 Danish krone may also apply for government
 15 assistance as percentage of the subsidy could be covered in proportion to their
 16 income. Children are also entitled to participate in a club and/or after-school
 17 activities from 6 to 10 years that extend the hours of care and allow women
 18 workers to work full time.

19 In addition to care services, family-friendly measures may also include
 20 other factors, such as childcare, family allowances, and medical care. Overall,
 21 these are the various tools which help families by supporting parenting and
 22 could possibly have a positive impact on fertility rates and the balance between
 23 family and work.

24 According to an analysis of data from the European⁶ Commission source
 25 and from some national social security sources and welfare institutions, it is
 26 possible to identify some help tools for families who match the criteria in some
 27 Member States of particular interest for our work within Scandinavian and
 28 Central European countries.

29 The Danish social security system (Udbetaling Danmark) provides for
 30 family allowances to be paid quarterly, in advance, until the children's 18th
 31 birthday. These allowances depend on the age of the children and can be
 32 reduced by 2% if the household income exceeds 782,600 Danish krone. For
 33 children under 3 years of age, the contribution is 4.557 Danish krone quarterly;
 34 for children aged 3 to 6, the contribution amounts to 3,609 Danish krone; for

⁴www.ec.europa.eu

children aged 7 to 14, 2,838 Danish krone, while 15-year-olds up to the day before the age of 18, the contribution is equal to 946 Danish krone per month. Additional subsidies are awarded to single-parent families, retired families with dependent children, and other categories of disadvantaged families.

The Danish health system is basically publicly funded and also provides a reimbursement system in case the patient turns to the private sector. Up to 18 years of age you are entitled to prevention and orthodontic treatment for free, while for adults the costs are partially taken on by the patient.

The Danish⁷ parental leave system is accessible regardless of employment status. It is permitted, as long as they have been employed the day before they have applied for leave, at least 160 hours in the previous 4 months, and at least 40 hours for each of the previous 3 months. For self-employed people, they must have worked at least 6 months in the year prior to maternity leave and have worked at least 18.5 hours (half of 37 contract hours) a week in the month prior to their leave. Unemployed people receiving unemployment benefits and students are also entitled to maternity benefits. The monetary subsidy depends on the company's profit; In the case of self-employment, you must have received at least 223,600 Danish kroner in 2018. Unemployed people receive a sum equal to the unemployment benefit which replaces the unemployment benefit during maternity leave up to the established ceiling for all. Employees receive a compensation proportional to the hours worked. In the case of full-time work (37 hours) and income above 20,254 Danish kroner per month, that category is entitled to the cap which is for all three categories of employment status of 4,300 Danish kroner per week (2018 figures).

Sweden provides automatic allowances for each child up to the age of 16, which can be extended until the 20th year or at least until the completion of compulsory studies. From the age of 20, students can access various grants and scholarships.

The Swedish health system is publicly funded, provides for caps on spending on drugs and medical examinations around 200 euros per year and is completely free up to 23 years of age, even the dental system provides for children 2-3 years of age with regular visits.

The Swedish social system⁸ also provides subsidies to cover rents for families with children who fall under certain conditions: dependent on family income, amount of rent paid, number of children living and the size of the residence.

Parental benefits can be made in Sweden from 60 days before birth for both parents (not just for the expectant mother, as long as she communicates the name of the other parent to whom she intends to transfer part of the leave). Permits for medical examinations may also be included. The parental allowance is proportional to the salary you received before the reduction in maternity hours. Parents who decide to allocate leave can take a total of 480 days off, of which 390 are paid in proportion to their salary, according to the

⁷ www.borger.dk

⁸ www.forsakringskassan.se

1 calculation adopted by the health benefit system, and a further 90 equal to 180
 2 Swedish Krona per day. In the case of multiple children, the available days of
 3 leave go to 660 (2 children), 840 (3 children) and 1,020 (4 children) and the
 4 days with an allowance of 180 Swedish krona per day are the last 180 days in
 5 all cases. Leave can be requested up to the child's 12-year age or until the 5th
 6 grade is completed. The amount of allowance depends on the applicant's
 7 employment status and how many days he worked before his leave. Those who
 8 have worked at least 240 consecutive days and perceive at least 82,100
 9 Swedish krona per year, are entitled to the minimum allowance equal to that of
 10 sickness, equal to 80% of the salary if required for 7 days a week, up to a
 11 maximum of 989 Swedish krona per day. Those who have worked less than
 12 240 days or do not have income or have their own business from which they do
 13 not receive a salary, can receive 250 Swedish krona per day for about 7,500
 14 Swedish krona per month. If you are unemployed and receive unemployment
 15 benefits, you are entitled to a maternity allowance that is proportional to your
 16 previous salary if you have worked for at least 6 months. Self-employed people
 17 who can provide their salary from their company are entitled to receive a
 18 compensation proportional to this for a maximum of 967 krona per day.

19 The Netherlands has a welfare system⁹ similar to the Scandinavian system,
 20 paid four monthly in advance, but, unlike the Danish one, the amount increases
 21 as the child ages. The contribution is 229.41 euros up until 5 years, while from
 22 6 to 11 years is 268.95 euros, and from 12 to 18 years is equal to 316.41
 23 euros. Families with low income are entitled to extra child benefits. Families
 24 are also entitled to a contribution to support the costs of nurseries and
 25 kindergartens in proportion to the days they attend and their income.

26 With regard to the Dutch health system, it is mandatory to be insured to
 27 receive reimbursement of your medical expenses and the reimbursement fee
 28 depends on the type of insurance you take out. The higher the deductible for
 29 the policyholder, the lower the annual premium. Each year the ministry sets
 30 reimbursement fees for each type of medical and pharmaceutical expenditure.
 31 Dental expenses are partially covered by adult insurance and entirely for every
 32 type of intervention and prevention for minors.

33 Maternity leave in the Netherlands lasts a total of 16 weeks (20 in the case
 34 of twin birth) which can be taken from 4 to 6 weeks before childbirth (8-10 in
 35 the case of twin pregnancy) and subsequent after birth. The employee is
 36 entitled to 100% of his salary up to a maximum of 214.28 euros per day. The
 37 other parent is entitled to 5 days of parental leave.

38 The Austrian¹⁰ Government provides subsidies to families with children
 39 regardless of their income situation. Until the child's 3-year term, you are
 40 entitled to 114 euros per month, rising to 121.90 from the age of 3 to 9,
 41 increasing to 141.50 from the age of 10 until the age of 18. Children who are
 42 not self-sufficient receive an additional subsidy, possibly until the age of 25 for
 43 some special cases, which can amount to 165.10 euros per month (there are

⁹ www.svb.nl

¹⁰ www.oesterrich.gv.at

1 surcharges for families with multiple children). Additional benefits are provided
2 for low-income or disadvantaged families. There are also child tax credits.

3 The health system is based on insurance that covers all medical expenses
4 for the policyholder and his/her family members.

5 Austrian maternity leave starts 8 weeks before the presumed birth and can
6 be extended depending on the system chosen: a flat rate system which entitles
7 each parent to a maximum of 365 days of paid leave, which can be taken up to
8 851 days of the child from 14.53 to 33.88 euros per day depending on the total
9 duration of the leave. If both parents apply for such leave, they can reach a
10 total of 426 days to be enjoyed by the end of 1.063 days of the baby. You can
11 opt for another system that pays 80% of your salary up to a maximum of 66
12 euros per day for a period that does not exceed 365 days of the child if
13 requested by a single parent, 426 days if requested by both. In addition, both
14 parents in Austria are entitled to unpaid leave until their child is two years old.

15 France is known for its supportive system for families which boosts birth
16 rates. The welfare¹¹ system is complex and provides for numerous benefits for
17 their children up to the age of 20. Family allowances are granted to families
18 once their second child is born and onwards. These allowances increase from
19 the third child or more, and there are additional subsidies for the number of
20 dependent children and income. Additionally, extra subsidies are available for
21 single-parent families and other benefits for certain cases of hardship. Large
22 families with economically dependent children over the age of 20 can receive a
23 lump sum allowance if their monthly income does not exceed EUR 932.29.
24 Families receive a baby bonus, which is a monthly bonus for children from
25 birth up to three years of age, that acts as a subsidy for parents who have
26 reduced their income because they have chosen to raise their children part-
27 time, to contribute to the family's expenses for baby-sitting activities.

28 In France, the subsidy works very well to contribute to the cost of renting a
29 house and subsidy for moving into a larger residence for families with three
30 dependent children.

31 The¹² French health system operates under an insurance system that allows
32 you to contact various clinics and private doctors, paying a general rate and
33 receiving a reimbursement of three-quarters.

34 Maternity leave includes 16 weeks, 6 weeks before childbirth and 10
35 weeks post-birth. On the arrival of the third child, the weeks of leave are
36 extended to 26, which 8 are before birth. Parental leave at birth is 11 days for
37 the father, 18 in the case of twin births. The amount of allowance received is
38 calculated on the basis of the salary received in the previous three months, up
39 to a maximum of 10,131 euros per quarter.

40 The German social security system provides benefits for spouses and
41 dependent children up to 21 years of age if unemployed, extended to 25 if
42 receiving an education. The German system also establishes additional benefits
43 that can be used for 2 to 12 months up to 14 months of the child's life for

¹¹ www.cleiss.fr

¹² www.ameli.fr

1 parents who are not working or who are employed for up to 30 hours a week to
 2 take care of the newborn. These subsidies can be extended to relatives up to the
 3 third degree if the parents do not receive the benefits directly. Extra benefits
 4 are provided for single-parent families, up to 18 years of the child.

5 The health care system works with insurance. Additionally, there are also
 6 subsidies for rents and for landlords who are struggling to cope with household
 7 costs.

8 With regard to maternity leave, they range from 6 weeks before childbirth
 9 to 8 after, which extends to 12 in case of a premature birth or twin. For female
 10 workers, maternity benefits are calculated on the basis of the previous wage.

11 As we previously mentioned, according to the 2016 Svimez Report, the
 12 European Foundation for Working and Living Conditions carried out a study
 13 by identifying three main clusters of countries and the measures taken to align
 14 both family and work.

15 Denmark, Sweden, Austria, France and Germany have fully developed a
 16 system of aligning family and work which often combines a good level of
 17 flexibility in working hours with extended parental leave, accompanied in
 18 some cases by job security and career opportunities.

19 The Netherlands relies mainly on flexible working hours, with the risk of
 20 not guaranteeing the safety of a career path since that is mainly linked to full-
 21 time work.

22 Italy is one of the countries in the middle of this division, using flexible
 23 working hours less than the others. Italy does provide family allowances for
 24 employees, domestic workers, individual managers, and pensioners. This
 25 contribution is essential for dependent spouses, children, siblings,
 26 grandchildren until minors and dependents are the age of 21 and classified as
 27 students or apprentices. This is criteria is obtained according to the type of
 28 household, the number of members of the household, and the total income of
 29 the household-with more favorable amounts allocated for situations of
 30 particular discomfort. In Italy, a family allowance of 13 monthly payments was
 31 introduced in 2015, granted by Inps, to families with at least 3 children and at
 32 an economic disadvantage.

33 Italy generally has a health system that is freely accessible, although it is
 34 not always efficient. Mandatory maternity leave permits up to two months
 35 before childbirth to three months post-birth. The mandatory parental leave for
 36 fathers is 4 days to be taken in the first 5 months of the child's life. The
 37 allowance for parental leave is 80% of the salary. Optional parental leave is the
 38 responsibility of both parents, who are in constant employment, within the first
 39 12 years of the child's life for a total period between the two parents of no more
 40 than ten months. Months rise to 11 if the working father abstains from work for
 41 an ongoing or fractional period of at least three months. This overall period can
 42 also be used by parents at the same time. One of the main characteristics of
 43 mandatory parental leave in Italy is that they are in favor of mothers, only in
 44 the case of adoption can the father be replaced if the mother resigns or if the
 45 natural mother dies or does not take care of the child, even if it is noted later in
 46 this study that the European directives promote equal recognition of that right.

Parents who opt out of parental leave can claim a nursery bonus of 1.500 euros as a contribution to the expenses incurred for childcare. With the 2020 Budget Act, the nursery bonus has also been revised and corrected, which is being revised by the Economic Status Indicator. Previously the amount was 1,500 euros, however from 2020 the amount will reach 3,000 euros awarded to families with an Economic Status Indicator up to 25,000 euros; for those with an Economic Status Indicator from 25,001 to 40,000 euros will be equal to 2,500 euros.

For families with high incomes, however, the contribution will be awarded, up to a maximum of 1,500 euros (basic amount of the nursery bonus).

Families can apply for a baby bonus to be received in the form of a birth premium. The text of the 2020 Budget Act eliminates the income limit of 25,000 euros for access to the baby bonus. From the 1st of January, all families with children born or adopted during the year will be able to apply for it. It will only be recognized for one year and in fact becomes a "universal access" benefit. The universal benefit will be divided into three bands of Economic Status Indicator:

- annual allowance of 1,920 euros for families with minors under the Economic Status Indicator of no more than 7,000 euros;
- annual allowance of 1,440 euros for families with minors Economic Status Indicator above the threshold of 7,000 euros and not more than 40,000 euros;
- annual allowance of 960 euros for families with minors of Economic Status Indicator over 40,000 euros.

In the case having a child, born or adopted during 2020, the amount of the allowance increased by 20%.

The Fund is the new addition to 2020, acting as a contribution for the substitution of breastmilk, helping women who suffer from pathological conditions that prevent the natural practice of breastfeeding, up to the maximum annual amount of 400 euros per newborn. The Fund has a budget of 2 million euro for 2020 and 5 million euro from 2021.

The bonus, provided for mothers who cannot breastfeed, can be paid until the sixth month of the newborn's life. It will be a decree of the Ministry of Health by March to establish the economic requirements for access to the public assistance program and for who is suitable to obtain.

The European Union's approach to work/life balance

On June 13th of 2019, the European Council adopted the proposal to encourage women's participation within the labor market. This proposal stems from previous work which had been temporarily interrupted in 2015 with the Parental Leave Directive and provides for legislative and non-legislative measures that have the aim of redistributing the family load between both

1 parents and other family members. The proposal is to establish at least 10 days
 2 of leave to coincide with the birth of the child to be compensated according to
 3 the social security system of the sickness allowance. The goal is to allow the
 4 transfer of leave from one parent to another, reduce the months that cannot be
 5 transferred from the current minimum of four to only two, allow alternative
 6 flexible forms of work, reviewing care leave for family in general equal to at
 7 least 5 days a year, allow both parents to request hourly reductions and
 8 flexibility of time and place of work until their child turns 8. European
 9 measures focus, in essence, on the objective of protecting against gender
 10 discrimination and encouraging gender balance, also making better use of
 11 European funds for care services and removing economic disincentives to
 12 access the labor market.

15 **Final Conclusions**

17 By comparatively addressing the female issues in the South, allows us to
 18 grasp in fine detail one of the more central issues that remain unresolved in our
 19 country, particularly for women, marking a stark contrast of sensitive gaps with
 20 the rest of Europe. This discussion for women is closely linked to the
 21 discussion of the South: the main indicators of the labor market show that the
 22 disadvantage of our country is largely linked to the values belonging to the
 23 southern regions. The pending problem of the economic and social cohesion of
 24 our country will for the majority depend on the ability to fully incorporate the
 25 potential knowledge and competence of women, especially young women, into
 26 the workforce. The reduction in the gaps between male and female participation
 27 rates that has affected the European Union during the recent economic crisis
 28 has not translated into an increase in the family employment rate in our
 29 country, which has remained substantially at the low pre-crisis levels. Not only
 30 has the modest share of southern women with employment remained stable,
 31 but for young women in the South, the difficulties in accessing work do not
 32 seem to diminish, despite higher education.

33 In summary, Italian female workers have well exceeded the education
 34 levels of males in recent years, but still occupy very low positions at the
 35 European level. Women are the engine of innovation, more interested in
 36 culture, and ready to experiment, why increasingly taking on the role as head
 37 of the household. However, this growth in educated labor supply has reduced
 38 the cost of skilled labor. The defensive response strategies of the Italian work
 39 system to the ruthless international competition on low-innovation products,
 40 have generated a growth in low-cost unskilled occupations. The crisis has
 41 aggravated a socio-economic structure that in the South pushes women towards
 42 a "shadow cone" made of precarization and wage penalty, which makes it even
 43 more alarming, in the medium to long term, the prospects of the South are a
 44 more uncertain the path of escape from the crisis of the whole country.

45 Unfortunately, this is also associated with low fertility rates and a general
 46 procrastination for having the birth of a first child, abandoning the

1 Mediterranean model of a woman with a purely domestic role to move to a
 2 model in which women try to stabilize themselves in the labor market, but with
 3 difficulties. It is the economic conditions and the social structure described so
 4 far that have the greatest impact on social behavior. A workforce that does
 5 not offer employment opportunities, a welfare system insufficient to provide
 6 childcare services, which are essential to promote a balance between work and
 7 family. Additionally, young people are doomed to delay the conquest of
 8 independence and autonomy. As various surveys have shown, the increasing
 9 weight of the challenges in the professional world (unemployment, precarious
 10 work, and insufficient income) possibly cause the young people to leave their
 11 households in the South.

12 Policies should act in a synergistic way to facilitate the employment of
 13 young people and to intervene with measures that would speed up their
 14 autonomy and their possibility of building a family unit. Unfortunately, low
 15 fertility rates also depend on young people who choose to delay the process of
 16 making a family, resulting in a vicious cycle whereby economic difficulties
 17 and a lack of balanced measures lead to a lack of procreation. The collapse of
 18 the birth rate in advanced societies is certainly no stranger to these dynamics,
 19 and it is a decisive component of the negative demographic spiral of the South
 20 that is shrouded in the social reflexes of an economic crisis. The stereotype of
 21 the southern woman, housewife and prolific, fortunately is abandoned. Yet it is
 22 replaced by the condition, certainly not exciting, that a southern woman who is
 23 not prolific, because she is not a worker.

24 While it is true that the social (and institutional) structure of the South
 25 tends to consolidate and re-propose a "marginal" role of women, the opposite is
 26 also true: it is precisely this condition of women that, leaving untapped
 27 potential for human capital, therefore development, contributes to maintain the
 28 state of affairs in the South. However, an increasing number of women are
 29 escaping from this vicious cycle, emerging in the world of liberal professions,
 30 entrepreneurship, school and research, cultural industry, and world of art. Their
 31 growing presence, however, is not always (indeed, very rarely) matched by
 32 their relative weight in top positions, of which, political representation is an
 33 obvious point.

34 All the signs, however, indicate that the process of economic and social
 35 affirmation of women – although "institutionally" underprivileged – does not
 36 stop, even in the South. And it is the young, educated, and qualified women
 37 who are the main resources on which the South must aim for an innovative,
 38 sustainable and sustainable development perspective – to help "reverse" the
 39 decline of the entire national production system.

40 In conclusion, there are two other important factors, also mentioned in the
 41 Employment Outlook 2018. The OECD introduces an important element that
 42 can adversely affect the careers of women, who for family reasons, move away
 43 from the labor market or reduce their hours. Additionally, another element of
 44 discouragement is due to tax policies that adversely affect households with
 45 higher incomes.

46