

Work-life Balance Policies: How to Face the Correlation Between Gender Gap and Vulnerability Risk?

Rosita Zucaro (INAPP), Marina De Angelis (INAPP)

The pandemic wave significantly aggravated the labour market structural gap, particularly the correlation between the gender gap and family care work. This kind of work is often invisible, although it is very burdensome constituting one of the main obstacles to overcoming glass ceiling and gender differences. In fact, the time dedicated to family care affects female employment rates, vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market and the gender pay gap.

The need for specific policies on this issue is crucial also in the post-emergency if the real goal is inclusive, economic, and sustainable growth.

Care work is invisible and is composed of a complex activity that articulates in forms of assistance that are not only direct, personal, and relational, such as breastfeeding a child, but also indirect, like cooking for an elderly parent or doing house cleaning. Considering this is not surprising that the amount of time dedicated to these activities is high in Europe.

Empirical evidence shows that 179 million hours a day are spent on care work, mainly concerning women of working age (between the ages of 25 and 54), who carry out 76.2% of total family care, namely 3.2 times more than men (ILO, 2018). On the other hand, two thirds convergence objective countries' adult population believe that the principal social role of women is the care of the home and family (Eurobarometer 2020).

In Europe, if we sum up paid work time with unpaid care work, the average working day for women would be almost forty minutes longer than men. Moreover, that figure has increased in recent years in many European countries, including Italy (1,2 minutes per day) (ILO, 2018).

Academics highlighted that unpaid care work translates in time poverty, which in turn translates into significant hidden poverty in women (Aloe,

2020).

In this paper, we will first analyze European work-life balance policies, thus, by means of statistical and econometrical analysis on EU-LFS data, in particular the ad-hoc module on reconciliation between work and family life, and EU-SILC we will identify the main characteristics of the caregivers and their risk of vulnerability, by country. In the case of Italy, we will also refer to INAPP-PLUS data.

Finally, the research aim is to provide policy recommendations by answering to the following questions: do the European work-life balance policies protect the caregivers from vulnerability risk? What kind of policies could better address this real risk?