

# The gender pay gap in Italy a multidimensional approach to gender discriminations

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## 1. QUESTIONING THE GENDER PAY GAP

Achieving the real gender equality is still a long way off, although women are increasing in education and employment participation for the lifelong economic independence. Until today, at the beginning of the third millennium, for equal work or for work of equal value, women earn less than men.

Gender equality is a fundamental right guaranteed by Art. 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Particularly, gender equality in pay is endorsed by the EU Legislation. The European Court of Justice, whose verdicts are fundamental in interpreting European Treaties and Recommendations, plays an important role in affirming principles of law that Member States should adopt. Since much longer than 50 years, the pay gap has been considered in European Commission's action plans and strategies to reduce gender discriminations and promote equality between women and men.

In all European countries gender discriminations have been effectively reducing as well as the gender pay gap (hereinafter GPG). However, recent policies and public actions seem to have soft impact on wage gap, if this does not get beyond the average of five-six years ago (EC, 2011). Currently, in the larger Europe, women earn on average 17, 5 % less than men.

Actually, the earnings averages used for the GPG are calculated as arithmetic means. The unadjusted GPG represents the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male employees and of female employees expressed as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male employees. It covers all economic activities except agriculture, fishing and p.a., and business with at least 10 employees. Gross hourly earnings include paid overtime and exclude non-regular payments (such as bonuses); part-time workers are included

This indicator has been defined as unadjusted (e.g. not adjusted with a view to individual characteristics that may explain part of the earnings difference) because it is meant to give an overall picture of gender inequalities in terms of pay. But, as commonly known, the GPG is the consequence of various inequalities, both structural and cultural, such as different kind of jobs, different working patterns, institutional mechanisms and systems of wage setting. Consequently, the pay gap is linked to a number of legal, social and economic factors which go far beyond the single issue of equal pay for equal work.

This paper focuses on the case of Italy, the State where, as statistics show, the average of the GPG is the lowest in Europe. In fact, currently, across the EU-27 it varies from nearly 31% in Estonia to below 5% in Italy.

The first section will try to explain and specify the low percentage, by giving a picture of the Italian labour market. In the following sections, the European normative framework, the Italian legislation and collective bargaining will be reported to outline the legal means preventing gender-based discriminations. Finally, Italian research projects aiming to find the social and cultural reasons underlying the GPG will be summary recalled.

## **2. THE GENDER-BASED INEQUALITIES IN THE ITALIAN LABOUR MARKET**

As just said, despite the principle of equality between men and women and the actions preventing gender discriminations, inequalities are persistent in the conditions of working. Some indicators drawn from recent statistics (EUROSTAT, 2007, 2011) could give a picture, though not exhaustive, of the workforce in the Italian labour market.

### **2.1. THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET**

From data gathered in 2010, in Italy, the female activity rate is the lowest in Europe (in EU-27 the average is 71, 0%, 77, 7% of men, 64, 5% of women). The Italian rate is, on average, 62, 2%, with a pick of 76, 9% of persons aged 25-54, in particular 73, 3% of men and 51, 1% women. The rate of female activity, age 15-64, is lightly increased.

The rate of unemployment places Italy at the eleven rank in Europe (note that in EU-27 is, on average, 9, 7%). The Italian rate of total unemployment is 8, 4%, 7, 6% of men, 9, 7% of women. Last year, the unemployment of young people, in particular young women, is increased, more than in Europe. The female unemployment rate generally decreases as higher is the level of educational attainment. In fact, the European unemployment rate of women decreases from 15, 6% of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education to 5, 7% of tertiary education level, and also in Italy from 12, 5% to 6, 9% (almost similar to men, which decreases from 9, 3% to 4, 5%).

It is worthy to note that in Italy, whereas in primary education the percentage of women is lower than men (respectively 28% and 41%), in secondary education higher than men (respectively 50% and 45%), and much more higher in tertiary education (respectively 23% and 14%), at the tertiary education level, the percentage of unemployed women is higher than men.

The rate of female employment has reached 46, 1%, still largely lower than in the European developed countries. The 58, 7% of the employment of women aged 25-54 is the lowest percentage in Europe (note that in EU-27 the employment growth rate, e.g. in 2010 compared to 2009, is -0, 5%, for women -0, 3%, in Italy, for men is -1, 2%, for women 0, 0%).

It can be interesting to consider the employment rates by sex and gender gap (here the gender gap is calculated as the difference between the male and female employments rates). Data show that in Europe the rate of female employment increases from 53, 7% in 2000 to 58, 2% in 2010, while the gender gap decreases from 17, 1% to 11, 9%. In Italy, the employment rate increases from 39, 6% to 46, 1%, and the gender gap decreases from 28, 4% to 21, 6%. The

size of percentages makes Italy placed among the last few countries in Europe.

To go in-depth, in Italy the 29, 0% of women are employed part-time, versus the 31, 9% in Europe and the 5, 5% of men. The 82, 1% of women are employed as employees (71, 4% of men), the 15, 8% of women are employers or self-employed (27, 5% of men). Women are largely working in health and care services, small commerce, education, while men in industry, business, professional occupations (note that data refer to persons aged 15-64 and are shown as a % of total employment).

With greater participation of women in the labour market and in education, one would expect a corresponding improvement in their working conditions. Instead, in Italy women are often concentrated in lower paid sectors. Despite the higher educational levels, the higher up the hierarchy in the organizations of work the fewer women there are. In the economic field, the share of women and men in decision making positions, such as leaders of corporate boards or leaders of business, including managers of small enterprises, is the lowest in Europe, varying from more 25% in Sweden and Finland, to the share under 5% in Italy.

Some analyses show that the pay gap between women and men is more evident at the highest levels of the hierarchy in private and public organizations of work. Actually, this explains the portion of the wage gap that cannot be explained by composition and retribution effects (GIANNINI, M., 2007; GIANNINI, M.; CIMINI, CH., 2007; GIANNINI, M. PARZIALE, F., 2010). In any case, for gender segregation in the lower paid sectors of the labour market and the low percentage in the key political and economic positions, it is easy that the wage average ends up to be higher than expected and the wage gap outcomes seem to be compressed.

## **2.2. THE PERSISTENCE OF THE GENDER PAY GAP**

Various effects have an important impact on the GPG: differences in the composition of the male and female workforce (composition effect), differences in the remuneration of the personal and job characteristics between women and men (retribution effect), differences in male and female labour force participation behaviour (participation behaviour effect) (ECC, 2003). No clear borders exists between the different effects.

In this perspective, many Italian studies (CNPPO, 2001; CNEL, 2006; LUCIFORA, C., 2003; BATTISTONI, L., 2005; RUSTICHELLI, E., 2005, 2007, 2010; GIANNINI, M., 2004, 2007, 2010) have tried to examine the causes of the persistent GPG in the Italian labour market. Different hypotheses have been presented.

Taking into account the composition effects, it is said that one of the main reasons is women' and men's educational and professional choices. This lets women be allocated in sectors in which lower pay and less opportunities in terms of promotions come together. Another reason is found in the reduced working time. In effect, the 5% is the differential in pay calculated on the basis of gross hours pay for equal work, but if we calculate the difference in the total amount we can find that women earn 20 points per year less than men.

The size of firms is a further issue that has been considered as cause of GPG. In fact, the work in small enterprises, which are widespread in the South of Italy, is paid less than in big enterprises, most of them located in the North. Therefore, women living in the South appear as prevailing employed in small enterprises and specifically in the economic sectors of

services, so being paid less than the majority of women living in the North and working in the big industry.

The effect of retribution on the GPG has been apparent in the analysis of the wide-industry bargaining as well as the company and district agreements. As it will be seen, a crucial point is the availability, that is, in reason, considered a criterion of efficiency in the enterprises. As rewarded, this strongly impacts on pay. Diametrically, beside maternity, the parental-care permissions are not paid. In Italy, nearly zero men uses these permissions. Just women ask for parental as well as care permissions, so much reducing pay, supplementary payments and even seniority connected to automatic promotions.

It could be said that the reduced gender availability and pay is the consequence of the traditional division of sexual roles, which continues to exist in family and in the larger society. This maintains the prejudices that end up to allocate women in lower classification levels and devalue their work in the labour market. So, as sustained (BORTONE, R.; CIMAGLIA, M.C., 2009), it is not far the hypothesis of collective gender discriminations in pay.

From our point of view, the cause of persistent GPG is twofold. On one side, laws and actions preventing discriminations, as apparently neutral, does not take into account both potential direct and indirect discriminations, such as selectivity, endogenous and unobserved heterogeneous factors. On the other side, in a cultural perspective, institutional measures are not fully able to avoid the prejudices against women, their productivity, and talent in more payable working positions.

### **3. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN PAY**

To support the above mentioned hypothesis, the normative framework preventing from gender-based discriminations in pay will be reported and analyzed both at the European and Italian level.

#### **3.1. THE EUROPEAN NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK**

Last year again, the European Commission has adopted the Women's Charter and a Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015), having the headline target to raise the employment rate for women to 75% by 2020 and establishing equal pay for equal work and work of equal value among the five priority areas for equality between women and men.

At an earlier time, the Treaty of the EU (1957), the Lisbon Strategy (2000), and the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men (2006) have already highlighted the importance of reducing structural imbalances in the labour market, including the GPG as a precondition to the achievement of the overall objectives. In particular, the Employment Guidelines of 2003 asked Member States to encourage female labour market participation and achieve a substantial reduction in gender gaps in employment rates, unemployment rates, and pay, by 2010.

When, in 2003, women's gross hourly earnings were, on average, 16% less than men, the European Commission's Expert Group (ECC, 2003) provided empirical evidence on the extent and the evolution of gender imbalances in European labour markets, highlighted the cross-country differences in male and female labour market participation, the gender segregation by sector and occupation and the undervaluation of work in female-dominated sectors and occupations. The staff working paper suggested policies taking into account the multidimensionality of the GPG with particular attention to reconciling work and family life and in-depth analyses based on comprehensive micro-data for ensuring a high quality measurement of the phenomenon.

Nevertheless, in spite of the significant European Commission's impetus in addressing the GPG and the progress in measuring it by a multilevel approach, the persistence of GPG is evident in all the countries. Commission's Reports to European Parliament, the Councils presidencies and key stakeholders, such European social partners and Committee of the Regions (currently, 344 members and many alternate members, from all 27 EU countries), annually show cross-countries data.

EU Commission's Treaties and Directives, and lastly, the Manual for gender Mainstreaming of employment policies (2007), lead Member States to focus on gender discriminations in pay by adopting gender mainstreaming policies, through dissemination of information and initiatives concerning the job evaluation, interventions to sustain family-work balance, and to improve wages in female-dominated occupations.

The Member States are also involved in the EU Social Dialogue between European social partners, where the representatives of the Trade Unions and Employers' Organizations have reached a large number of agreements, which could implement themselves or be transforming into binding legislation. European Social Dialogue refers to discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions involving organizations representing the two sides of industry (employers and workers). It takes two main forms: a tripartite Dialogue involving the public authorities, and a bipartite Dialogue between the European Employers Organizations and Trade Unions.

As a result of their representativeness, European social partners have the right to be consulted by the Commission, and may decide to negotiate binding agreements. The institutional basis for Social Dialogue can be found in the EC Treaty. The Commission also regularly publishes Reports and other documents related to industrial relations, including a social dialogue toolkit. In 2005, the EU social partners carried out the Framework of Actions on Gender Equality addressing gender roles at work, equal pay, equality in decision making, and the reconciliation of work and personal life. As it will be seen, the role of social partners is relevant in removing gender discriminations in collective bargaining, particularly in occupational classifications to define retribution levels.

However, as it is recently found (SMITH, M., 2010), the implementation of European legislative and contractual framework has been shaped by systems of national rules and norms, and the advances in methodology of assessing the extent of the GPG underline the cross-country differences of composition, remuneration and participation behavior between male and female workforce.

The implementation of EU Directives and Treaties is not easy. To say, the legal notion of retribution appears to be almost vague. As punctually noted (CIMAGLIA M.C., 2009), such notion seems to enlarge the minimum wage by including eventually other rewards or benefits.

Also, the same principle of equity and gender equality in pay for equal work or the work of equal value seems to be postponed to the judgment on diverse factors that make jobs comparable (nature of work, conditions of training and work, etc).

Providentially, the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice has assessed principles of law directly enforcing the State legislation, as the exclusion of social security's payments (Cases: Defrenne I, 1971; Worringham-Humphreys, 1981; Barber, 1990; Magorrian-Cunningham, 1977; Deutsche Telekom, racc.I-799; C-128/93, Fisher, Racc., I-48533), works requiring physical stress (Case: Macarthys Ltd. c. Wendy Smith, 1980), and the inclusion of the seniority, eventually with employer's justification about its relevance for worker's performances in the case of gender discrimination (Case: Cadman C-17/05).

Further, the Court of Justice has affirmed principles, indirectly referring to gender equality in pay, first, regarding the work in decentralized firms (Case: Lawrence C-320/00), and second, the independent works hiding the real dependent nature (Case: Allonby C-256/01). Finally, the Court has put much emphasis to job evaluation systems, as sources of gender discriminations based on arbitrary settings of jobs and of prejudices in the employers' culture. In some cases (Cases: Murphy C-157/86; Danfoss C-109/88; Enderby C-127/92), the Court has given importance to gender discriminations as effects of apparently neuter job evaluation, where tasks of superior value are accomplished with inferior pay, or evaluations lack transparency, the burden of proof being in charge of employers.

### **3.2. THE ITALIAN NORMATIVE APPROACH**

In Italy, the Constitution and laws preventing gender discriminations in workplaces establish that women and men shall be held equal in earnings.

The Italian Constitution has laid legal foundations for future normative changes, by establishing the principle that women cannot unjustly, unreasonably or arbitrarily be discriminated and treated as inferior or superior to men simply because of their gender attributes. Specifically, Art. 3 and 4 prohibit any discrimination due to sex among other conditions. Art. 37 prohibits any form of pay discrimination based on sex. Art. 51 guarantees the right to equal access and advancement in office careers and free elections of profession.

Since the seventies, when Trade Unions were fighting for the labour rights, the Statute of Workers (Act n.300 of 1970), in Art. 15, nullifies acts or pacts, which are aimed at discriminations in the workplace. Although this norm intended to protect unionists or workers affiliated to Trade Unions, or workers having been on strike, at the end it explicitly prohibits sexual discriminations as well as the racial, political, religious and ethnic ones.

More recently, the Italian legal system has introduced the Equal Opportunities Code (hereinafter EOC) (Legislative Decree n. 198 of 2006, modified by Legislative Decree n.5 of 2010). The EOC is an organic legislation that emends the previous discipline, as Acts n. 903 of 1977, n. 125 of 1991 and n. 215 of 1992 on gender employment and affirmative action policies. Art. 1 of the EOC prohibits any form of gender discriminations, and affirms the principle of equality and equal opportunities for women and men.

Specifically, Chapter «Equal Opportunities in Economic Relations» of the EOC addresses direct and indirect discriminations in every aspect or condition of pay for equal work and work of equal value, including discriminations in classification systems, tasks and promotion

assignments, seniority and earning-related (even contribution-related) pensions.

As observed, it is legally established that gender-based discriminations in pay should be prevented on behalf of the principle of equity and equality. Nevertheless, this principle is limited by the fact that the apparently neutral legal rules have been shaped on the male breadwinner pattern, which was prevailing in the past industrial society (BORTONE, R.-CIMAGLIA, M.C., 2009). This has been drawn up from the notion of retribution in the Italian Civil Code (hereinafter ICC).

Precisely, Art. 2094 of ICC establishes that pay for work is in obligatory charge of employers as partners in employment relations and the amount of pay includes additional money for overtime, night, annual and public holyday work, vacations and diverse supplements for piecework, incentives, allowances, extra pay. But, it cannot be considered as pay those monetary rewards that employers give at his own discretion or at his own free will, without any, even indirectly, connection to the work.

The pay standard corresponds, therefore, to the wage for time standard of work, and this is set down in the collective bargaining. For supplements, non-working holydays are hourly paid, but the holydays as well as night and overtime work are paid with an additional percentage of money, which is entrusted to collective bargaining. Further supplements for shift work including nights and holydays heavily increase the pay standard.

For example, in the Distributive Trade sector, the more important collective bargaining set up 15% more of the hourly pay standard for the overtime work exceeding 41 hours to 48, and 20% for over 48 hours in a week, while overtime work in holydays is paid 30% more, and night overtime work 50% more (similar settlements on overtime work in Metalworking and Textile sectors have been reported in BORTONE, R.- CIMAGLIA, M.C., 2009).

Other collateral elements of the pay are granted as obligatory integrations, also occasionally, for different categories and classifications, for seniority, and more, the so called «super minima» wages at individual or corporate level, Christmas bonus, danger money, rewards for efficiency, fringe benefits. The elements included in the total amount of the retribution, as the severance pay («deferred retribution») and security contributions, regulated in legislation (Art. 12 Act n.153 of 1969 - Legislative Decree n. 314 of 1997) and settled in collective bargaining, represent the consequence of current retributions.

The result is that the pay is a very complex settlement, and it is evident that, on one side, payments for overtime and public holyday working are effectively addressed to persons not charged of social and familiar responsibilities, as women generally do, and on the other side, rewards for better performances are subjected to evaluations and judgments.

To complete, it is necessary to note that the pay for part-time workers, the majority of which are women, is directly subjected to the EU principles, and, in the Italian legislation, Art. 23 of the Legislative Decree n. 276 of 2003 sanctions the right to hold them not inferior to full-time workers in paying, as long as the working period (*pro rata temporis*).

Nevertheless, apprenticeship, working-training, insertion contracts, and in recent times, if explicitly laid in national or district agreements, also women in insertion, (Legislative Decree n. 35 of 2005, converted in Act n. 80 of 2005) are dismissed from the common principle of equality in pay. That being so, there are workers held inferior in classification and payment systems.

## **4. THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ON PAYMENT SYSTEMS**

The analysis of the Italian legislation has shown that the effective pay is a set of elements, each of them defined by different sources. The major source is the collective bargaining. Specifically, the industry-wide bargaining provides the minimum standard and calculation criteria, while the company-level or district-level bargaining set up the system to calculate the amount of supplementary pay.

### **4.1. GENDER ALLOCATION IN LOWER PAID SECTORS AND CLASSIFICATION LEVELS**

The Italian collective bargaining has been examined in order to test the hypothesis that the GPG is linked to the allocation of women in economic sectors where pay is generally lower. Although the difficulties due to the Italian structure of Labour Relations, pay and classification systems in different sectors have been compared (BORTONE, R.; CIMAGLIA, M.C. 2009).

Preliminarily, it is to consider that, in Italy, workers are grouped by category and sector to which the company belongs, so that similar skills, that are present in different categories of workers, could be differently paid. Also, as aggregative models among enterprises depend on free choices of employers, different agreements could cover the same sector. This is the case of the Machinery-Metalworking sector, where the same Trade Union faces four Employers' Association. In the other way, one agreement could cover many sub-sectors, each of them requiring specific adjustments in the collective bargaining. This is the case of the Textile.

Then, minimum wages of different classification levels in the same category and in different categories of workers do not display equivalence. Also, the reference to the four categories provided by Art. 2095 of the ICC (managers, cadres, employees, salaried workers) is unlikely to allow margin for correlation between classification levels and actual tasks. The only way to compare specific rules and pays lays in setting up a range of classification levels in companies of the same sector, by referring to legal categories, and considering skills of workers and employees as analogous.

So, although difficulties in finding out differentials in pay in different industry-wide agreements, some homogeneous classification systems have been examined in order to compare retributions. The analysis has proved that the hypothesis of the allocation of women in economic sectors where pay is generally lower, or in male-dominated sectors where women earn less than men, is only partially true.

Let us consider in detail the Machinery-Metalworking, which is a male-dominated sector, and the Textile-Clothing, which is female-dominated one. Data show that at the same classification level, the GPG is higher in the former sector than in the latter one. It is also to note that the range of differentials is higher in the Machinery-Metalworking than in the Textile-Clothing, while for men the pay gap is, in size of percentage, more wide-ranging than for women.



As final result, it has been found as evident that changes in the organizations and production patterns, which require adaptive managerial strategies and flexible work, have strong impact on classification systems. In such a turbulent context, the amount of pay for each level depends on wages and monetary supplements negotiations, as well as the weight, in terms of influence, of specific professional groups within the Trade Union.

## **4.2. JOB EVALUATION AND GENDER DISCRIMINATIONS IN PAY**

Supplementary pay, as regulated in decentralized collective bargaining, seems to be the main source of gender discriminations. It is to remind that wide-industry bargaining points out criteria defining the unfixed and additional fraction of wage as relating to the productivity in companies or districts.

Since 1993, when the Italian Government and Social Partners signed a Protocol, a system to define the structure of pay was set up. The two levels of collective bargaining were connected in a framework of income and employment policy. In other terms, in this set of rules the additional pay for results was connected to company performances, which could be differently defined.

A further Protocol, signed in July 2007, has provided incentives to companies, which would have given pay for results to workers, as defined in collective agreements. This would have reduced labour costs together with introducing allowances and awards. In other terms, companies were called for a contractual system adjusted to flexible and temporary requirements of the production.

At that time, the regulation of the unfixed portions of wage, such as pay for results, was prevailing in company agreements and becoming relevant in district bargaining as well. Nevertheless, till now, the decentralized bargaining has not yet been formalized (BORTONE, R.; CIMAGLIA, M.C. 2009). In any case, today, the percentage of collective agreements on pay for results exceed the 80% and many companies apply indicators of performances, such as availability or quality, to define different amounts of supplementary pay. See agreements in sectors, such as Textile, Metalworking or Communications.

In effect, since the end of seventies, changes in international markets have led companies to make organizations more flexible, services and commodities more competitive, and consequently, to require workers more involved in company goals. Being old systems of pay unable to balance new worker's performances, such as self-determination, self-control, responsibility and ability in decision making, new systems of pay are arising as based on results and total quality.

Currently, new systems of pay combine the old quantitative and temporal parameters with the new. It is the case of multi-factor incentives, applied at level of company or groups, calculated with different or mixed criteria, based on years or results, granted in different ways.

So, employers discretionally give supplements and awards, as allowed in the collective agreements. In this case, gender stereotypes can operate and the male-dominated culture of work can impact on systems of supplementary pay. To say, the availability, which is relevant both to achieve the company goals and to evaluate worker's performances for awards, once applied as general parameter, could come out as a factor of gender discrimination. Consider women charged of family responsibilities, therefore unavailable and, consequently, forced to

miss awards.

Appropriately, the judgments of the Court of Justice remind that every evaluation should not only match company goal but also consider worker's troubles, that could consist in reduced earnings. Therefore, criteria of job evaluation should be discussed in order to make transparent all the elements of the evaluation and effective the criteria of work of equal value, as EU norms require.

As seen in the case of gender availability, social events could produce discriminatory effects in labour relations. It seems therefore important to remove the causes of inequality although these causes could be regarded as external to the working conditions. To say, the services to sustain the family-work balance, to improve transports, civic organizations, as the Act n.53 of 2000 requires (BORTONE, R. in this volume).

## **5. GUIDE-LINES TO PREVENT THE GENDER PAY GAP**

The Italian case clearly show that the traditional normative and collective bargaining approach on pay remain ineffective and unable to prevent gender-based inequalities.

### **5.1. NEW APPROACHES IN LAW AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

It is clear that the GPG is unlikely to be solved by legal means alone, because they deal with only discriminatory effects organizational models and strategies turn out. A multidimensional approach is needed. Anyway, this is the track both UE and ILO are pointing out. Specifically, in the OLI Report (2007) on fundamental rights in the labour relations, the integrated approach is underlined as only able to know and avoid discriminations.

In particular, according with OLI recommendations, since the GPG is the indicator of wide-ranging discriminations and the legislation in most of countries is no more adequate, anti-discrimination laws should adopt a multidimensional approach.

Moreover, the role of lawyers and judges, equipped with new skills by training, should be considered crucial in implementing new norms and adapting them to empirical cases. Finally, States should monitor all discriminatory factors, mainly to make social groups aware of their discriminating conditions of work.

In other terms, it is to consider that the legislative framework needs to be complemented with active enforcement and a range of policies on different fronts in order to bypass the underlying social causes of gender discriminations. The pressing question is to know the determinants of the discrimination in wages and the working and social conditions in which this can be produced.

Also the traditional contractual means seems to be unable to prevent gender-based inequalities. Think on the regulation of pay systems. In most of work organizations, the managerial strategies, which have to face the turbulence of markets and technological innovations, require more involved workers, new skills and abilities. In this context, every company or sector adopt specific regulations in distributing incentives and rewards.

In the Italian research project (GIANNINI, M., 2009), the analysis of the collective bargaining highlights the growth of individualized pay systems, which allows company strategies to evaluate the work with large autonomy and no restrictions (BORTONE, R. - CIMAGLIA, M.C., 2009). This is a starting point for gender-based discriminations as connected to prejudices in evaluating and paying women less than men.

## **5.2. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM A RESEARCH PROJECT**

Recent Italian surveys (GIANNINI, M. 2009; RUSTICHELLI, E., 2007, 2010) have further proved that the legislative and contractual regulation, far to be neutral, has different impact on women and men. Also, it has been made evident that less opportunities of a well paid work are connected to gender relations in the larger society, so that the participation behaviour in the labour market of women and men is different.

In the Report of the survey at the national level (RUSTICHELLI, E., 2010), individual ways of balancing work and family responsibilities are explored. A big sample of resident families, including about 10.000 workers, are interviewed to get out their individual and social characteristics, their training and professional biographies. It has immediately appeared that the sequence in female participation patterns in the labour market is: more education-more participation, and also more education-fewer children-more participation.

The impact of parenthood on the lifetime earnings and on the work time of women is clear and, more so, on the GPG. The difficulties of balancing family and work are relevant for both the lack of welfare institutions, and the unequal distribution of family responsibilities. Consider that in Italy the gender inequality in domestic responsibility is much higher than in Europe, as statistical data show (ISTAT, 2008).

Where family or partner provide economic and cultural resources, the impact of inequality in domestic responsibilities and parenthood on female earnings seems to be reduced (GIANNINI, M., 2007). As the earned income generally comes together with social standing and professional positions, both dependent and independent, the social stratification is found as having a crucial impact on the GPG.

In the Report of the survey, which has gone into more depth at the regional level (GIANNINI, M. 2009), the relationships between employment and family life and employment and pay are explored. A multidisciplinary approach, such as econometric and casual models, and sociological non standard methods, has been used for pointing out the underlying social causes of the GPG.

The result is that men consider working time and pay as important as connected to working conditions while women consider working time and pay more important as connected to family responsibilities, or to family supports. This happens in every socio-economic Italian context, almost independently on changes of last years.

In addition, focusing on the relationship between gender, working time, family time and partner relationship, it has been pointed out that, mainly for families with at least two children, the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities leads women to earn about from 260 to 560 euro less than men. So, the asymmetric relations in the family are once more proved to have a crucial impact on GPG in the labour market.

Also, the retribution as well as job evaluation effects on pay have been analyzed as perceived by the interviewed women. The analysis of legislative and contractual framework for payment systems has allowed to sample organizations by sector and size: one big enterprise, two small-medium enterprises and one department in the public administration. Each organisation has been considered as a case-study focusing on women behaviour face to entrepreneurial strategies in allocation and evaluation of work. It should be said that most of the interviewed women are employees.

In the big enterprise, gender discriminations mainly concern the difficulties in promotions, what could explain the GPG in the higher levels of company hierarchy. Few women are able in negotiations to get more paid working positions and additional payments as well. Differently from men, nearly all women give importance to the commitment, loyalty and cooperation with the management.

In the medium enterprises, gender inequalities seem to arise, women being paid less than men because unable to negotiate acknowledgments and awards. Nevertheless, ways of balancing work and family time are well arranged in a context of paternalistic evaluation of work. This has brought the payment system to be based on individual trust, beyond the collective agreements. Finally, in the small enterprises, the labour relations seem to be harmonious. The women interviewed try to get economic independence and let work prevail over the difficulties of the family-work balance.

From the surveys, here briefly reported, it emerges that the GPG is the effect of diverse models of behaviour. All women have to face entrepreneurial strategies in organizations still built upon male breadwinner models. Most of women show themselves as unable to abandon the traditional model of female behaviour. Certainly, some of them, prevalingly young women high qualified and working in big enterprises, are much involved in careers but rarely minded to renounce family and children, although difficulties in couple arrangements and family-work balance.

To close, it is evident that the legislative framework need to be complemented with policies providing the opportunity for innovations. Addressing the particularities of the GPG in different organizational sittings could help identify which initiatives and practices are appropriate. Promoting transparency at the organizational level and adopting new mechanisms could offer means to focus the attention and action and promote progress (SMITH, M., 2010).

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