

## CONCILIATION POLICIES

### What we mean by conciliation policies

By conciliation we mean a complex set of measures which are closely interwoven.

**The word conciliation can be used to mean work/life conciliation, but can be also used in a broader meaning.**

The first conciliation measures were designed as “one-way” equal opportunities measures for the women who entered the labour market with a view to supporting them in their dual role of mothers and wives, on the one side, and workers, on the other.

### The current situation

**There is still a conflict between the profession, motherhood and family, as well as the inadequacy of services preventing approximately 650,000 mothers to enter or re-enter the labour market:** this is a sign of the delay with which the conciliation problem is tackled and, at the same time, it coincides with a growing demand for services.

**Over one million "grandmothers" have to set in so as to face the lack or the excessive cost of services or the reluctance to entrust children to others.**

In Italy, the demand for care services, which is relatively low compared to the whole population of inactive women for family reasons, is also determined by the presence of a large number of caregivers, especially grandmothers or family members of elderly people over 55 years, who have to face the lack or the excessive cost of services or the reluctance to entrust children and elderly people to others. On the one hand, their presence prevents the conciliation conflict from emerging and, on the other, partially explains the low female activity rate because these caregivers, due to their age, are hard to be made active.

Nevertheless the number of these caregiving women is bound to decrease, especially after the reform of the pension system which has raised the retirement age: they should stay at work longer and hence there will a reduction in the time they can devote to their grandchildren and family members in need. Therefore, the decrease of caregivers will increase the demand for care services both for children and for non self-sufficient adults. The phenomenon of inactive and elderly caregivers who have to set in to face conciliation problems occurs mainly in Italy and, to a much lower extent, in France and the United Kingdom, while is basically non-existent in most countries of Northern Europe.

**For many mothers working is not profitable.** The reasons why mothers consider care services for children inadequate are mainly two:

1. **55%** of them think they are too expensive;
2. **only 16%** of them report their absence in the area where they live.

Hence, the main reason pushing a significant share of mothers not to work is rational: when the cost of services for domestic work and child care is higher than the expected salary, working is not profitable.

The current situation is as follows:

- **66%** of Italian workers cannot change the time of entry and exit from work and a very small share, if compared with the rest of the EU Member States has a **bank of hours** with which to meet family needs, particularly the unexpected ones.
- **Only 29%** of Italian female employees work part-time, compared to a European average of 32%, but for half of them this is not a voluntary choice; often this part-time contracts partially hide non-regular work.
- **Corporate welfare is widespread only in a few large companies.** Only a few Italian innovative companies are testing really flexible organizational models which, despite ever less predictable demand peaks and declines, allow to fully achieve work/life conciliation.
- **Parental leave is scarcely used** in Italy because it is poorly paid (at most 30% of final salary), unlike what happens in the countries of Northern Europe.

The division of domestic and family work was not called into question, but the attempt was simply made to enable women to shoulder family commitments without having to be subjected to discrimination at work.

**Over the years the priority of these tools has shifted towards more emphasis laid on greater gender equality and sharing of rights and responsibilities and the principle of equality to which this notion refers.**

**Currently the idea is ever more prevailing that the search for new ways to reconcile family and work life regards everybody and that measures must be taken to enable both men and women to better shoulder work and family tasks and responsibilities in the various life phases,** by enabling everybody to rebalance the time devoted to work and family according to their needs and wishes, thus preventing and avoiding discrimination and processes of exclusion from work and career.

### **The various intervention areas**

We can distinguish between the various conciliation measures in relation to the following intervention areas:

- ◆ **support to the sharing of caregiving tasks and responsibilities;**
- ◆ **working time** (family-friendly forms of labour organization, part-time contracts, job sharing, teleworking, etc.);
- ◆ **caregiving services;**
- ◆ **support to career and development of professional skills** (information activity within companies on the right to leaves, mentoring activity, training at company level);
- ◆ **economic support** (soft tariffs and rates, economic aid, conciliation vouchers);
- ◆ **territorial governance measures** (social development master plan, working time territorial plan, traffic plan, zoning plans, etc.).

Hence a complex system of tools and policies ranging from equal opportunities to working time, family policies and policies to manage time and life within cities.

Conciliation policies must have an impact on different levels considering the various subjects involved:

- ◆ on the one side, the **individuals** considered in all their choices, relations, family and personal needs which require policies going well beyond the mere family work sharing between men and women;
- ◆ on the other side, the **companies** for which more flexible corporate policies are required to meet not only companies' needs, but also the needs of the men and women working for them, thanks to support systems such as kindergartens, infant schools, canteens, etc.)
- ◆ Also **cities** and **territories** must be considered, with the whole set of services supplied by public and private entities, as well as non-profit organizations.

This integrated system is what is now commonly defined as territorial welfare which, together with corporate welfare, is designed to effect a structural change of labour organization for it to become more family & people-friendly.

**With the Jobs Act the current government** has implemented significant work/life conciliation measures, which we think can be further developed, particularly through negotiations between the parties, where conciliation can play a fundamental role for change.

**In particular, the forms of flexibility** which, in the Jobs Act, enrich the current rules and regulations, are designed not only to reaffirm the principle of fostering the "mother-child relationship" without relinquishing to protect their health and by extending and expanding parental leave, but also to support parenthood.

Recently progress has been made also on domestic violence and work. I wish to underline the Jobs Act measures to support female workers who are victims of violence and harassment. For the first time leaves are envisaged also for them: **a new way to share a problem** which so far has been experienced and lived by victims in absolute isolation and loneliness. Gender violence victims will be entitled to specific leaves and shall be included in duly certified protection pathways. It is a significant step in a country where much progress must still be done to fully achieve the goals of conciliation and sharing of responsibilities. We are on the right path and we hope that it will also be a smooth process.